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# Isaiah in Mark

## Lesson 14

### “Conclusion and Summary”

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**Objective:** To understand how Isaiah is used by Mark to proclaim the good news to his original audience and to understand how this should be understood by us today. How should the gospel message impact our lives. The historical and cultural barriers often cause us to miss, or even misinterpret the message of Mark. This then inhibits transformation into the image of Christ.

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**Materials:** Books, Journal articles, Targums, the Syriac Peshitta and interviews.

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**Procedures:** To outline the issues that confront us as we seek to comprehend more fully the powerful ways that the Old Testament, and in particular Isaiah challenged and transformed the world-view and the lives of first century believers. In doing this, it is hoped that we can then transform that understanding into a contextual milieu that will allow our lives to be impacted by the Gospel in the powerful, transformative way that it impacted that first audience.

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As we began this study, it was always meant to be more than just an intellectual exercise. For Mark, when he wrote his Gospel account that was the case, and it is the aim of this study to do more than merely impart knowledge. Mark intended for his audience to be challenged to see the world from a different perspective, to live differently, to have different goals and desires. In order to accomplish this goal, Mark felt it was important to set the story he was telling into the proper contextual framework, and in so doing to assert that the message and mission of Jesus were more than the message and mission of an ordinary person, it was the message and mission of God. As the message and mission of God this story was meant to transform the perception of reality for the audience. The audience was intended to begin seeing their reason for existence, their purpose in life, in a different way. They were to begin to live their lives in the way that Jesus lived his life, not merely as a moral and good man, but as a servant of God, serving his purposes and not some destiny that was false and fleeting.

Mark, in his opening statement, outlines from the very beginning his conviction that what he is writing is the account of the

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“The beginning (Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah.” His task was to connect his telling of the story of Jesus with what God had already indicated would happen. Mark intended to recount his telling of the story fixed firmly to the matrix of the Gospel as had already been recounted by Isaiah. As he does this, he follows a rabbinic practice that much of his audience will have been familiar with to some degree at least.

In order to understand Mark’s message, one needs a greater understanding of how the Old Testament should both inform us, and act as a transformative force in our lives today. As a result of our modern propensity to neglect the Old Testament, people today most often have a very Greek, Platonic view, of what happens to a person after death and this effects dramatically their view of the kingdom of God and the Gospel message in particular. Here is the issue: many people in the church, and in the world at large, believe that the goal of the Gospel message is to get us to heaven. Technically, this is a pagan perspective, not a biblical one. The message of the Gospel is not that we are being called to go to God in heaven, but that God’s

goal is to come to us, to have relationship with us. Jesus is called *Emmanuel* (“God with us”) and not *Elemmanu* (“us with God” - I made this word up, it does not occur in the Bible as far as I am aware). The point is that these are two very different concepts; one makes sense of the resurrection, which is the central tenet of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:3), the other is considered heresy.<sup>1</sup> One fits the context of the Bible, while the other perverts that context.

Another issue, is the equation of the kingdom of God in some way with a particular nation, or form of government, such as democracy. The kingdom of God, that is described in the Bible, is not, nor will not be a democracy, it is a theocracy (ruled by God) as Paul makes clear particularly in 1 Corinthians 15.<sup>2</sup> The kingdom of God does not equal the United States, the United States and its people

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80 - “For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; **who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians, ....**” Justin Martyr lived from A.D. 100-165.

<sup>2</sup> “24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.” NRSV

may choose to align themselves with God, but they are not the nation of God described, or even envisioned by Mark, in his Gospel, or in the Bible. Mark envisions something far more dramatic, where God himself rules while he is in the midst of his people, on the earth. It is the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup> The original audience of Mark spoke his language, shared his cultural perspective, and held to the hope envisioned by their understanding of the prophecies of Isaiah, and others, that composed the Old Testament.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are generally held to subscribe to what is at times termed a “promise-fulfillment” schema. This means that these Gospels regard the events they relate to, regarding Jesus Christ, to be the fulfillment of corresponding earlier events, or of prophetic predictions witnessed to in the pages of the

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<sup>3</sup> Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them as their God;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;

<sup>4</sup> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.”

Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> Morna Hooker states that more citations in Mark's Gospel are drawn from Isaiah than from any other book of the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup> If we fail to understand where Mark gets the hope and aspirations that he expresses as being fulfilled in Jesus then it is far more likely that we are going to create an artificial construct based upon our own hopes, aspirations, and beliefs. Our tendency will be to be guided by what meets our needs as an audience rather than to hear the message of the Gospel that Mark intended. This then, has become idolatry.

We need to hold in view the fact that the parting of the ways between Jews and Christians came about over a lengthy period, at different times in different places, in different ways and over different issues. Noting this longer period of parting is important to our discussion because so often we, especially in Churches of Christ, have acted as if on the day of Pentecost the New Testament dropped into the lap of the church and the church went a separate way from the Jews. Those that became Christians on that day, and for a

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<sup>4</sup> Hugh Anderson, "The Old Testament in Mark's Gospel," in James M. Efird, ed., *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1972), pp. 280 - 306.

<sup>5</sup> Morna D. Hooker, "Isaiah in Mark's Gospel," in Steve Moyise, and Maarten J.J. Menken eds., *Isaiah in the New Testament*, in *The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel* series (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), pp. 35-49.

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considerable period afterward, were all Jews and it would be a great many decades before Gentiles would come to be the dominant group within the church. As I said earlier, the Scriptures of the early church were the Old Testament, they did not have the writings of the New Testament. When they read Scripture in church it was from the Old Testament. Later, probably much later, perhaps a hundred or so years later, churches would begin to have several of the books that make up our New Testament today.

We need to understand that the Gospel of Mark was written by a Jew, to an audience that was certainly very familiar with Judaism if not significantly Jewish. In light of this, it is important to note that the founding moment for Israel as nation was the Exodus. It shaped their national identity, their character, and set the stage for the work of the prophets that would be so important before, during, and after, the Babylonian exile began. The prophets used the Exodus as a paradigm for the deliverance that they announced. Many groups within Judaism would take up this paradigm as a way to describe themselves and their journey. Such groups as the Essenes, who established their community in the desert at Qumran (the Dead Sea

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Scroll community), and even the group that in the Book of Acts is described as “the Way,” (Christians) would take up this paradigm. As conflict arose with other groups within Judaism, it was often the case that the prophets, and especially Isaiah, was used as a source of material to support the claims of one group over another as happened with the Essenes and Christians, especially as they related to other Jewish groups.<sup>6</sup>

When we studied Isaiah in the Spring, the focus was upon how the original audience will have interpreted what Isaiah delivered to them. The focus here is on understanding how the first-century audience understood Isaiah’s prophecies and how Jesus fulfilled many of those prophecies. Isaiah’s prophecies were seen as a new exodus for the people taken into captivity in Babylon. By the time we come to the first-century the prophecies of Isaiah were very much seen by the Jews as yet unfulfilled, or at least still awaiting complete fulfillment. Mark links John the Baptist with the divine emissary that went before Israel in the formative stages of their nation in the Exodus account. This portrays the magnitude of the account that

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<sup>6</sup> Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark*, pp. 3-4.



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Mark is recounting in his Gospel. This is to be seen as an event greater, in importance, than the exodus in the time of Moses. The understanding of the ministry of Jesus, as conveyed by Mark, is deeply anchored in the history and the expectations of the Jewish people while at the same time reorienting things in powerful and surprising ways that convey a God of tremendous love compassion, and patience.

We have the account of the baptism of Jesus at the hands of this emissary (John the Baptist), passing on the mantle, pointing the way to God's Messiah. John makes the issue of repentance a critical issue in Mark's Gospel and it acts as a theme that will be woven into the account and lend credence to the reorientation of these Old Testament passages in ways that challenge and draw the people to change direction. Baptism, which had been practiced before by the Jews was given fresh impetus as a marker of change. Jesus undergoes baptism and the heavens themselves are torn open and the veil of separation between heaven and earth is ripped while the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus. We are then informed by the voice from heaven of who Jesus is, and then there is his testing in the


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wilderness that will act as a prelude to his ministry. Jesus then calls disciples and begins his ministry in powerful ways as the kingdom of God breaks into the realm of men and the kingdom of Satan begins to be pushed back. This is evidenced by Jesus' teaching and especially in the driving out of demons. In this way the beginning of kingdom of God coming to earth is announced. It is a new exodus.

Jesus is portrayed as battling demons and disease and there is no indication of conflict with human beings, or human institutions initially. In chapter 2, however, it becomes clear that the ministry of Jesus will bring him into conflict with other human beings and human institutions. As the kingdom of God comes into this realm in new, and powerful, ways it is inevitable that conflict will ensue. Rather than being discouraged by this we should be encouraged as this is a sign that the kingdom of God is alive and well, and the greater the conflict the more it is a sign that the kingdom of God is encroaching into territory claimed by the enemy. Jesus begins this phase of his ministry by casting light on the heart and motives of those who are in positions of leadership. These leaders are shown to be in opposition to the coming kingdom of God.


Jesus heals the sick, the lame walk, and the sinners are forgiven. There is a link with Isaiah and his message, especially with the message of Isaiah 65. Despite there being no direct quotes of Isaiah in some sections of Mark's Gospel we should keep in view the prophecies of Isaiah, as Mark has informed us from the beginning that the good news he is conveying is "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah ...." Jesus makes it clear time and time again that the old Jewish law was not intended to harm human beings. This is seen in his practices and interpretation of the Sabbath laws. According to Jesus, "The Sabbath was begotten (γίνομαι) for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; ...." The Pharisees will display their true colors as they plot the destruction of the one who brings the kingdom of God into this world. Their hearts, methods, and motives are all cast in darkness.

The first part of 3:7-12 emphasizes the scope of Jesus' popularity while the second part, verses 9-12, sets the stage for the major theme that will start here and go to the end of the book, continually noting the encroachment of the kingdom of God. As we see the popularity of Jesus growing and his appointing of



disciples, so also will the opposition to the ministry of Jesus grow as well. The threat from Jesus' popularity is more dangerous to his well-being than the threat from his adversaries. He is so popular that he is in danger of being crushed. That will change, but even early in Mark's Gospel we can already see the growing opposition coming from the scribes from Jerusalem.

As Jesus ministers, the demons proclaim who he is and Jesus commands them not to speak. As accusations are put forth that Jesus does this by the power of Beelzebul he will counter these claims with arguments showing how ridiculous it is that he might be driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons. At the same time, he will introduce teaching designed to guide his audience to the truth: the truth that the kingdom of God is coming, and as its agent Jesus is overpowering the dominion of Satan. In the midst of all of this Jesus will appoint the twelve disciples who indeed will be given the task of proclaiming who He is to the world. This task falls not the angels of heaven and certainly not the demons, but to men. Jesus goes on to warn those making false accusations about him that they are in danger of being guilty of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, since this is the source of his



power. To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is to put oneself in danger of an eternal sin; and making oneself beyond forgiveness.

Some were likely concerned that the kingdom of God, that Jesus was preaching, did not fit with what they imagined it would be, and therefore they were possibly having doubts. The teaching that Jesus gives in Mark's Gospel is intended to explain what is happening in order to bolster their faith and confidence. It is perhaps important for us to remember that all of the warnings and teachings of Jesus come in the context of a message delivered to those who are insiders, rather than to outsiders. The warnings of Jesus come to those who should already be beneficiaries of the grace of God. Jesus used parables because this was a common teaching technique, but in part, parables are used because the message requires explanation from Jesus and it provides him an opportunity to separate those who are going to be disciples and those who are not. For those who are disciples, explanation will come, for those who are not disciples this same message will be a message of judgment. This certainly fits well with the background of Isaiah as a backdrop for the message of Mark. Certainly Isaiah

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chapters 1-12 deliver this message and it is especially prominent at chapter 6 of Isaiah.

God works to draw his children back into their covenant obligations and to insure that their devotion to the covenant is truly from the heart. Certainly in the time of Isaiah, and the time since, the Jewish people realized that things were not as they should be with regard to their covenant relationship with God. To deal with this discomfort and brokenness, the Jews had sought to rectify this through religious ritual observance and traditions. Instead, what God desired, and what was needed, was justice. Jesus, in each parable tries to focus the attention of his audience on faithfulness while explaining that for some the Gospel would bring judgement.

Mark portrays Jesus as the Yahweh-Warrior of Isaiah. As such Jesus does combat in chapter 5 with the forces of Satan, with his demonic forces. He combats the power behind the idols of the nations and defeats them. Jesus even does this involving pigs, the very sacrificial animal that were a favorite sacrificial animal in the demonic idolatry of the nations. Jesus does this after going through the heart of enemy controlled territory, the sea. As part of

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this Yahweh-Warrior imagery with the author of Mark we see the imagery from the exodus account that is highlighted by Isaiah brought into focus. This imagery can be seen in the sea, and in the drowning of the enemy (the demon possessed pigs) in the sea. The enemies of God are destroyed.

The response to the miracles of Jesus is one of fear, and people at times express the sentiment that they would be better off without Jesus. This is often the response of people today to an encounter with Jesus. Those that would be expected to be the first to recognize and accept this inbreaking of the kingdom of God into the world actually are some of its staunchest opponents. This too serves as part of the backdrop for the Gospel of Mark. How is it possible that the leaders of the Jewish people can be found to be in opposition to the coming of the Messiah, even being participants with those who killed him? This too is woven into the texture of the Gospel account as explanation of how the people chosen by Yahweh could continue to be blind to his coming, choosing their own wisdom and understanding over that of Yahweh and his warrior Jesus.

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Mark uses the warnings from the Old Testament itself such as from Malachi and Isaiah to form the backdrop of explanation for this troubling array of events. In Mark 7, the particular warnings of Isaiah 29:13-14 are used to explain the unfortunate precedent that continues to be followed by the leadership of the Jewish people. They are now set on the same path that previously led to their exile. They fail to follow the wisdom and guidance of God and instead continue to follow their own wisdom and understanding and this will end in disaster for them.

The issue of ritual purity was a major concern for the Jews. Jesus conveys teaching that cuts to the heart of this concern and declares that it is not the case of what one puts into their body that creates impurity, but what comes out. He challenges the religious leaders to see that in their practices they are actually breaking the law of God in both intent and actuality through their traditions. Jesus declares them to be hypocrites and lawbreakers. He then moves from challenging his accusers to trying to teach the crowd the truth of his message. He challenges them to an ethical purity that honors God and his commandments over and above the traditions of men.



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In the account of the Syrophenician woman, Jesus deals with more false notions from his audience. This time he deals with the idea that the priority of salvation was first to the Jew and then to the Gentile and that somehow the salvation of God was not sufficient, but limited in some way. In a powerful and sweeping manner Jesus deals with these hot topics with a mastery and majesty that must have left his audience breathless. This was an issue that was deeply engrained in the interpretations of Isaiah particularly and would continue to be an issue into the era of the time of Acts and beyond. Jesus acquiesces to the request of the woman because she reorients the discussion in a manner that indicates here great understanding of God, and his plan for salvation. She understands that the grace of God is sufficient for all, there is no shortage, or limit to it.

As we come to the feeding of the four-thousand we are meant to hold in mind the context of Isaiah and its emphasis on compassion as a motivation for God's actions on behalf of his people. Seeing this trait in Jesus, allows us more fully and clearly recognize it as the motivation of God throughout history. Another aspect of this story is to recognize the back story of the exodus

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account as God has continually sought the redemption of his people. We are meant to recognize that each of us faces our own exodus story. We are challenged by the need for redemption from slavery, the need for us to trust God, and by the compassion of God as the motivation for this act of redemption. Jesus represents both the true Israel, and also acts as the instrument of God's redemption. He fulfills the destiny of Israel and of the Messiah of God. The challenge of Isaiah is to see this, and not to be blind to it and Mark takes up this same goal. We can also see in this God's vision for humanity.

The Pharisees, in calling for a sign in Mark's account, most clearly demonstrate the common human tendency of seeking to test God rather than to trust God. The path of the new exodus is the same as that of the old exodus, it is a path of faith, trusting in God's righteousness and strength, in spite of the appearance of overwhelming odds against redemption. We are called upon to trust that God's vision of the world is indeed reality and not to trust in our own hearts and our own vision.

Mark calls upon us to recognize that the journey of faith is one that is fraught with dangers, distractions, enemies, and loss of

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hope, but that with God all things are possible. Jesus, as God's representative brings that hope and message to life. On the mount of transfiguration we have the scene of Moses and Elijah appearing, and of the appearance, and the likeness of Jesus being transformed. All of this takes place in the sight of James, Peter, and John and it very much seems reminiscent of Moses going up on Mount Sinai with Aaron, Nadab and and Abihu. This scene indicates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the coming of a prophet like Moses and more than that he is indeed the son of God. This is clearly an indication that the kingdom of God has come with power as God's own son is testament to this fact. We have here an affirmation that God has indeed crowned Jesus as king of his kingdom. We also have an answer to the complaint of Isaiah 63:16 that God does not acknowledge the crying out for deliverance of Israel. He has answered and he has come in person.

As confirmation of the unique status of Jesus we have the incident at the foot of the mountain where the demon possessed boy is relieved by Jesus of a demon that normally could only be removed by a god, or his agent. Jesus shows his power to do this

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by removing the demon after being petitioned by the boy's father.

At 9:42, Jesus begins talking about Gehenna, a word that is translated in some versions as "hell." Built on the foundation of Isaiah, Jesus teaches his disciples that it would be better to lose a part of their body rather than to be cast into Gehenna. There is a great opportunity here to apply some good biblical teaching regarding "hell" and "Gehenna." Much of our modern conceptual framework is flawed due to the intrusion of Greek ideas. Jesus clearly wants his disciples to know that there will be a judgment and that they need to live in such a way as to avoid the negative consequences that will result from such a judgment.

During the ministry of Jesus, the Pharisees, who we often see as traditional and conservative members of Jewish society, question Jesus regarding divorce, which is meant to be a trap because it was a very hotly debated issue in Israel. It was hotly debated not only because of the societal and familial pressure that have always been there, but because this was an issue linked to the matter of covenant faithfulness, particularly in relation to God being faithful to Israel. This was an issue where the rabbis debated the nature of God, the nature of covenant and the matter

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of evil existing in the world. Some even accused God of unfaithfulness because of the Babylonian captivity and the oppression of foreign nations against Israel. The answer that Jesus gives, draws upon the original intent of God in marriage and indicates clearly that divorce was not a part of that original intent and that the breaking of covenant is an extremely serious matter. Basically, the answer that Jesus gives is that God does not break covenant and the covenant of marriage should be treated as God treats covenant, seriously, and in line with the views of God, and not in line with the views of men.

In his teaching and ministry, Jesus addresses the issue of wealth and power; first in the encounter with the rich man (Mark 10:17-22) and then in the request of James and John (Mark 10:35-45). Jesus indicates the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God, which is given to the humble, the poor, the weak, and the servant. This, when seen in the full context of what Jesus is about to endure for covenant restoration, served as a powerful force of change for the early disciples of Jesus as it should for us today. The entire perspective of the world was challenged and then ultimately changed. Before, they had seen wealth and power

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as indications of the blessing and affirmation of God whereas Jesus calls them to see things very differently. Jesus challenges them to see humility and persecutions as things to be valued in the kingdom of God rather than the things traditionally valued by the world.

As we come to the passion of Christ we come to a part of the Gospel of Mark that is permeated through and through with citations and allusions to Scripture. Mark seldom makes it clear that this is what he is doing, but rather there seems to be the expectation that his audience will be so immersed in the Old Testament that they will make the connections. Mark, in these last three chapters (14-16) will relate to other parts of Scripture besides Isaiah, such as Daniel 7, Zechariah 9-14 and the Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer. The Servant Songs of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 53, are especially important for Mark in chapter 15.

Mark uses irony powerfully and frequently here and as the scene of chapter 15 opens we find the Jews, handing Jesus over to Pontius Pilate. In an ironical twist the Jewish leaders seek to ally themselves with their arch-enemy in order to kill God. In spite of the might of Israel and the seemingly all powerful Roman empire

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we see events continuing to unfold according to the design of God, through a man dying on a cross. Jesus fulfills Scripture after Scripture, and for those that are not deaf and blind the ancient prophecies are fulfilled in what appears to be the weakest moment in the ministry of Jesus, which by the way, is actually a moment of his greatest triumph. Even in this moment Jesus “amazes” Pilate even in his silence.

We see in this section, Mark masterfully telling the story of how God takes what the world considers weakness and defeat and turns it into an expression of strength and victory. Even the horrific act of crucifixion is transformed from a moment of shame and cursing into a moment of exaltation and blessing. The death of Jesus is not unique because it is about a man dying, but because it is about God dying. In gentleness and submission he reaches out to His children and dies rather than destroys. In despair and forsakenness Jesus continues to trust and obey having a vision for what can be, and what is, rather than what appears to be. We know that Jesus is God’s Messiah, in part we know this because he continually fulfills the words of the ancient prophecies even as he dies. The hand of the divine is seen in the life, and even in the

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death of Jesus. Israel once again rejects God as king. In this chapter we see the way opened up for Gentiles to come and be blessed as we have the Temple veil ripped from top to bottom and surely it is profound that the Centurion seems to recognize that there is something unique in the death of this man over the death of others he has seen. For the readers of this Gospel, challenges are made to see life, death, and God in a different light. We are called upon to see that God would rather die than harm, he would rather be cursed than curse and he seeks relationship continually even among those who reject his rule. He seeks sight where there was blindness and he seeks hearing where there was deafness. He seeks restored relationship where it has been shattered and forsaken. All of this is expressed in a context claiming as its foundation the words of Isaiah the prophet.



# Synopsis

As we began this study the goal was to explore how Mark conveyed in his Gospel the understanding that this message was the message that was previously proclaimed through Isaiah the prophet. This perspective permeates and challenges us as we explore the meaning and methodology of Mark. Writing with this as the structural matrix for his proclamation has major repercussions not only for the original readers of this Gospel account, but also for us today. It challenged those first readers to see the message and ministry of Jesus in the light of the prophet's words. This created a perspective that greatly enhances our understanding and perception of the message that is being conveyed.

So often we see the fulfillment of a prophecy as important as an expression of the miraculous foreknowledge of God and his control over the history of men, but there is much more going on than this. In part the thing that is powerfully important for us is not that God is in control and powerful, but that he seeks to communicate with us, and he is in control and powerful. In our

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exploration of Mark we have sought to understand the message that is being communicated by Mark in a quest to understand God, his nature, and his desires for his creation, and the challenges that this poses for us daily in our lives.

Mark challenges us in his Gospel to see what we have been blind to, to hear the message that we have been deaf to, and to be transformed by what we hear and see. We are challenged to be a people transformed by God more fully and completely into his image. A message that is proclaimed powerfully, and graphically conveyed through the life, death, and the resurrection, of Jesus Christ. The challenge of Jesus, as seen through the words of Isaiah the prophet is to see an image of God where power is proclaimed through passionate suffering, and powerful transformation. We are to see God as a God who is willing to suffer, and who does suffer, and bleed, and die, for his people. A God who does not give up, but continues proclaiming his love even if it kills him; and it does.

# Questions

1. What are some ways that you see Mark using the words of Isaiah in his Gospel account?
2. Why do you think it is important for Mark to link his telling of the Gospel to Isaiah?
3. How is Mark's anchoring of his understanding of the message of Jesus Christ valuable for us today?
4. What are some ways that Mark's usage of Isaiah challenges your traditional view of the Old Testament?
5. What are some ways that the power and knowledge of God are highlighted in the fulfillment of ancient Jewish prophecies?
6. What are some ways that Mark challenges your view of God in his Gospel?
7. What are some ways that the ministry of Jesus is challenging to you?
8. Why do you think Jesus had to die?
9. If you were God what are some ways that you would have done things differently when Jesus was being crucified? Why?
10. How does the image that Mark paints of God differ from the image normally given of God?