

Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

Condemned and Crucified

June 10th, 2018

Mark 14:53-15:32

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Introduction:

Good morning! I want to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Mark chapter 14.

Today, we are going to be dealing with 51 verses. The average chapter in the Bible is made up of 26 verses so we are covering a fair deal of ground this morning. The Passion Narrative –the story of Jesus’ sufferings – takes up almost the entirety of chapters 14 and 15. By way of example, the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 received only two paragraphs. Why is that? Obviously, Mark understands the crucifixion to be the very heart of the Christian faith. He doesn’t leave any details out in this story because he wants us to see and understand just how important the suffering of Jesus was for our salvation. In fact, that’s where our text this morning ends. The chief priests looked at Jesus on the cross and laughed:

“He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” (Mark 15:31b-32a ESV)

But the cross IS our salvation. If you have turned from your sin and placed your trust in Jesus Christ then you are SAVED, and you are saved because Jesus has endured everything that you should have endured. In last week’s text, we saw that Jesus endured betrayal for us. Today, I want to walk with you through this text and to ask one question of it:

What Did Christ Endure for My Salvation?

Look with me now at verse 53 of chapter 14. Hear now the holy, inspired, living and active Word of the Lord:

⁵³ And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” ⁵⁹ Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” ⁶¹ But he remained silent and made no answer. (Mark 14:53-61)

The first thing we see in the text is that:

1. He Endured Injustice

The council was scrambling for something that they could pin on Jesus. They brought forward unvetted witnesses to hurl accusations at Jesus, but the accusations never held up because they were all contradictory – that tends to happen with lies. The whole case looks more like an angry mob crying out for blood than it does a fair trial overseen by the high priest. One commentator notes:

Nearly every detail of Jesus’ trial violates the rules for capital cases prescribed in the Mishnah.¹

The Mishnah refers to Jewish law. What we’re meant to see here is that Jesus’ trial was unjust in every way. It had to be. It’s hard to condemn an innocent man. It’s even harder to condemn a sinless man. And that’s who Jesus is.

Have you ever been treated unjustly? Perhaps people have spread untrue rumors about you, or misrepresented you in some way. It hurts, doesn’t it. Jesus is familiar with that pain. He willingly

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 443.

endured that pain to set you free.

Hear this: Our innocent Saviour was condemned as guilty in an unjust trial so that guilty sinners like you and me can be found innocent before a perfectly just God. He was scandalously accused so that we could be scandalously forgiven. Isn't that incredible?

Look with me now at verses 61-65:

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need?"⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death.⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows. (Mark 14:61-65 ESV)

Here we see that:

2. He Endured Rejection

Up until this point in Mark's Gospel, Jesus has been silencing anyone who might reveal his divine identity. But now, in the face of suffering, the time for full disclosure has come.

This text answers one of the greatest objections against Christianity that our Muslim friends raise. Many Christians are caught floundering and confused when a thoughtful Muslim says: "Jesus never ONCE refers to himself as God. He always refers to himself as the son of man. A son of man is not a god... He is just another prophet." Could you answer that objection? If not, you should make some notes right now and make a point of memorizing some verses because you NEED to have an answer for that one. If Jesus is not God, then this is all meaningless!

But He is God. He tells us so right here in our text. In fact, He ascribes three titles to Himself in these two short verses. The high priest asked Jesus:

"Are you the **Christ**, the **Son of the Blessed**?"⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the **Son of Man** seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:61-62 ESV)

Christ is another term for Messiah. It is the same Greek word. It refers to the promised one who

will come to overthrow the corrupt rulers of the world and who will restore and lead God's people. The "Son of the Blessed" is simply another way of saying the Son of God. The high priest asks Jesus if he would dare to affirm himself as the Messiah and the Divine Son and Jesus answers: "I am the Messiah, and I am the Son of God **and I am the Son of Man too!** And you will be witness to my glory! You wield your authority now, but in a short while you will see me in authority riding on the clouds!" Jesus is referring to a prophecy in the book of Daniel. In Daniel 7 we read:

¹³ "I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came **one like a son of man**,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
¹⁴ **And to him was given dominion**
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14 ESV)

Friends, memorize these two verses! Jesus has been referring to Himself as the Son of Man all throughout Mark's gospel. Here, as He stands trial before the high priest, He reveals exactly what He means by that title. Jesus understands Himself to be the one who will sit at the right hand of God and who will be given dominion, authority and glory. He is the Messiah, He is the Son of God, and He is the Son of Man. In case there was any question as to whether that was what Jesus REALLY meant, the response of the high priest removes all doubt. He tears his garments and accuses Jesus of blasphemy.

The Son of God has revealed Himself to the high priest, the leader of God's people. The high priest ought to fall on his face in worship and adoration, but instead Jesus is met with rejection. As the Apostle John wrote:

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (John 1:11 ESV)

He endured rejection for us.

Look with me now at verses 66-72:

⁶⁶ And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. ⁶⁹ And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” ⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” ⁷² And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept. (Mark 14:66-72 ESV)

Here we see that:

3. He Endured Denial

Peter is the alpha male of the 12 disciples. His denial escalates as the story progresses. We first find him keeping a distance from Jesus, warming himself by a fire. But after he is questioned by a servant girl he retreats even further to the gateway. There he is questioned again, twice, at which point he begins to curse and swear. Notice that he only ever refers to Jesus as “him.” He can’t even bring himself to say the name of his Saviour and Friend. Verse 72 is gut-wrenching:

And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept. (Mark 14:72 ESV)

Peter is backslidden. He was tried and found to be a coward. He promised to stand with Jesus but in the face of persecution he couldn’t even bring himself to speak our Lord’s name. Jesus has been rejected by the chief priests who were blind to his true identity, but I imagine that this wound would have been felt much more deeply. Peter knows who Jesus is. He loves Jesus... and yet he denies him.

Look with me now at chapter 15:

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ³ And the chief priests accused him of many

things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. (Mark 15:1-5 ESV)

Here we learn that:

4. He Endured Slander

Wrongful accusations were hurled at Jesus, beginning with his trial before the high priest but now carrying forward to his trial before Pilate. As the accusations continued to mount, you would expect that Jesus would make a case for himself. That’s what you or I would do, isn’t it? But that’s not what Jesus did. Consider with me this prophecy from the book of Isaiah:

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7 ESV)

The high priest was appalled by Jesus’ silence. Pilate was astounded. In the face of numerous false accusations, Jesus stood silently and received them all.

Take a moment with me and think back to the very beginning of the Bible where we fell into sin! In the Garden, God accused Adam of eating from the forbidden tree – a sin that he clearly committed – but he responded by pointing fingers and making excuses. But Jesus, after being accused of false crimes and upon being slandered mercilessly received his accusations in silence.

I think there’s a profound lesson for us here: We are excuse-makers. We see that all throughout Scripture and we see that all throughout our lives, don’t we? So, how did Jesus save guilty excuse-makers? By suffering injustice without raising a single objection. He endured slander to set us free.

Look with me now at verse 6:

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for

you the King of the Jews?"¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.¹² And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?"¹³ And they cried out again, "Crucify him."¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him."¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion.¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. (Mark 15:6-20 ESV)

Here we learn that:

5. He Endured Abuse

In verse 15, Pilate orders that Jesus be scourged in advance of the crucifixion. Scourging was a horrific practice that was often implemented to hasten the death of those who were to be crucified. A leather whip with bone and metal intertwined was used to rip the flesh off of the prisoner's body. The scourging was so severe that it would often leave bones and ligaments exposed. The fact that Jesus collapsed under the weight of his cross and the speed at which he died suggests that he received a merciless scourging.

The King of kings stood in the midst of His people and they mocked him. They clothed him with a purple cloak – purple being the most expensive dye of the ancient world and therefore, the colour worn by royalty – and they made him a crown of thorns. They pressed this crown into his head and the thorns pierced his scalp. They saluted him and then they proceeded to beat his head with a stick all while they spit on him and hurled their insults at him.

Very practically, one of the hardest objections that you will face from someone who is wrestling with their faith is the objection: "Why would God allow this horrible thing to happen to me?" It could be sickness, or the sickness of a loved one. It could be abuse. Why does God allow us to endure the things that we endure?

There's no stock answer for that one, is there? The best thing to do in that moment is to listen and to fight the urge to try and explain away tragedy. But when you do open your mouth, make sure that you point them here. We don't know why we endure the suffering that we endure, but we do

know this: Jesus has entered into our suffering. He is intimately familiar with it.

Jesus entered into our suffering to make a way for us to enjoy God forever in Heaven. In Heaven there will be no more sickness, no more tears, no more abuse, but the only way that we could get there was if Jesus came down and suffered in our place. And He did that. In the midst of our suffering, let's remember that we worship a Saviour who is familiar with our sorrows. He willingly took them upon Himself so that we could be free.

Look with me now at verse 21:

²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews."

²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. (Mark 15:21-32 ESV)

Here we learn that:

6. He endured humiliation

The crossbeam of the cross was placed upon Jesus' ragged shoulders and he was commanded to carry his torture device to Golgotha but he was so weak from his scourging that he collapsed in front of the onlooking crowd. They stripped him and gambled over his clothes as He hung naked on the cross. Not only was Jesus crucified with common criminals, but the dying criminals used their final moments to berate and insult him.

The cross was more than a means of execution. The Romans designed the cross to demoralize their opponents. Death by crucifixion was horrific, barbaric and humiliating. As Jesus hung on that cross for the sins of the world, the crowd hurled insults at him. "He saved others," they mocked, "but he can't even save himself."

But it was on the humiliating cross where Jesus set us free from our sin once and for all. That's the final thing that we learn in our text this morning:

7. He endured so that we could be saved

I want to draw your attention back to Jesus' trials before the high priest and Pilate. Jesus endures betrayal, injustice, rejection, denial, abuse and humiliation and he stands firm to the end. This sounds so much like Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant:

The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting. (Isaiah 50:5-6 ESV)

Jesus left his heavenly throne for this. He saw the plan – he saw all that He would have to endure – and He didn't turn his back on the plan. Isn't that remarkable? He came to earth knowing that He would suffer and die, and for what gain? He had every comfort. He lacked nothing.

But we lacked. We were separated from God and at war with one another. We had no way to right all of the wrongs that we had committed. So, God came to earth, clothed in human flesh. He taught us, loved us, healed us, amazed us, and then He suffered and died for us.

Isn't it interesting that, sandwiched in between these two trials that Jesus endured we find a story about Peter undergoing his own trial? In between Jesus' courageous and selfless resolve before the high priest and Pilate, Peter is portrayed as cowering in fear – before a servant girl no less!

That contrast right there is a beautiful illustration of the Gospel. This story isn't about Peter, is it? It's about Jesus! Peter's weakness is only put on display in this text to highlight the resolve of our Saviour. Jesus succeeded where we failed – he stood firm where we crumbled in fear. We are no different than Peter – we possess the same weakness and we are capable of the same failures. Our lives bear witness to that. Who here has spoken courageously for Christ at every opportunity? Who here has obeyed the law perfectly? Who can argue with God's verdict?

as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10 ESV)

Not one. We are tried and found wanting, but Jesus is tried and found WORTHY! He is the Faithful One and He is the only hope for backsliders, cowards and sinners. James Edwards says something so helpful here. In his commentary, he observes:

Mark may have concluded this section with Peter’s story to remind his persecuted congregation in Rome that not even the best Christian or lead apostle is immune to apostasy. Nor (as we shall see) is he beyond the promise of grace! The church can be honest about sin – even the sins of an apostate apostle – because it is so convinced of grace. “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Romans 5:20).²

The church in Rome needed that reminder. We need it to.

Do you feel like a failure this morning? Have you endured a test of faith recently? Perhaps you’ve denied Jesus before your family or your co-workers. Perhaps you’ve been forced to endure sickness or loss and your faith has shrivelled up as a result. Perhaps you’ve fallen away, and you don’t even know why.

I want to remind you this morning that Jesus didn’t die on the cross for perfect people. He died on the cross for failures. He obeyed for us, He endured for us and He died for us because He knew that we couldn’t do it for ourselves. The church is a collection of rebels, failures and sinners who have been transformed by the grace of God. Peter was a coward in today’s text, but after Pentecost – after being filled with the Spirit of God – he became a courageous champion of the gospel. His story didn’t end here.

Friends, your story doesn’t need to end here either. Bring Jesus your failures. Bring him your fears, your anxieties and your sins. Lay them on him and he will take them to the cross. He will endure every punishment that your sins deserve. He will remove your sins from you as far as the east is from the west. He will see it through. Turn to Him and lay hold of Him in faith.

² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 451-452.

This is the gospel. This is our hope. And this is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray.