

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 28: Mark 15:21-47

Introductory Exercise: How important is the cross for understanding the character of God?

The story of the crucifixion proper starts with the conscription of Simon the Cyrene to carry the cross-beam. Where is Cyrene, and what does that tell us about the crowd at this execution and the population in Jerusalem more generally? What bit of translation does Mark have to do to establish the location?

The first reference from Psalm 22 in this episode is not from the words of Jesus but of the narrator. What detail from Psalm 22:18 does the narrator see fit to include here? What hour does the text specify as the time when the crucifixion begins? How do the soldiers carrying out the execution finish up the "royal" mockery at Golgotha? With his "royal council" at his right and left, what inscription appears above the cross of Jesus? Does your Bible have a Mark 15:28?

In Mark's version of the crucifixion, Jesus suffers verbal abuse from all gathered in the place. (His account differs from Luke's and John's in this way.) How does Mark's version of the story fit with what Mark has written earlier in the book? In what ways are the abuses spoken against him ironic?

How does the scene at the death of Jesus relate to prophetic texts like Joel 2:10? How does it relate to what Jesus was saying in Mark 13:24-27? What does darkness-in-the-middle-of-the-day do in terms of the story Mark is telling, and how does this change in the setting fit with the change in the people of Jerusalem?

When Jesus quotes Psalm 22, what do the people think he is saying, and how does their inability to hear relate to what's come before in Mark? In Mark 15:38 and 15:39 (the first time a mortal declares Jesus the Son of God in Mark), what happens to Jesus's two great enemies, and are these signals of defeat or victory? In 15:40-41, which of Jesus's followers are highlighted, and how are these followers in particular important to what comes later in Mark and to the character of the early Church?

When Jesus's body needs burying, who does the work, and what does this indicate about the power of the crucifixion? What is Pilate's callous reaction to Joseph's request?