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Salvation's Plan

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Mark 9:30 "Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it."

This is partly why he is not wanting a crowd at this point - as Toby said last time Jesus loves to spend time teaching the disciples. They are the ones who will spread the word after he has ascended - and we are now moving towards Jerusalem gradually.

Mark 9:31 "For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.""

What's new here? How is it different to

Mark 8:31 "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

Some differences I noted are these: this time it's Jesus' actual speech, rather than reported speech. I've got 'words of Christ in red' here. Secondly, it does not use the word 'suffer' this time. Also no reference to the leaders of the Jews - the emphasis is on man.

Similarly, he refers to himself as Son of Man. I think they know who he's talking about here.

Later in this passage he actually refers to himself as 'the Christ', which is very unusual, and doesn't quite fit into the scheme. If you remember, Jesus doesn't call himself the Son of God at all in this gospel. Mark does in Mark 1:1. Peter calls him the Christ in Mark 8:31. Then earth-shatteringly Jesus acknowledges who he is in Mark 14:61 and finally it's given to the Roman centurion to recognise him, Mark 15:39. Remember this gospel was written to encourage the Christians being persecuted in Rome.

"It also needs to be noted that in fact the three passion predictions do not simply duplicate but supplement one another, none of them telling the entire tale. Only the first mentions the rejection by the authorities explicitly; only the second mentions the betrayal; only the third mentions the condemnation to death, the scourging, mocking, and spitting by Gentiles. Together they gradually reveal to the reader or hearer an ever fuller portrait of the passion narrative." Witherington, B., III (2001) *The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical commentary*. p. 243.

Betrayal is a new idea here 'paradidomai- 'handed over', 'delivered.' In the OT it's usually a pejorative term meaning judgment.

What is new is that *paradidōmi* is made a technical term for Jesus' passion. This verb is used by the Master in his predictions of his passion ("The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of men") and by the evangelists; and St. Paul mentions it: "The Lord, on the night that he was handed over (*en tē nykti hē paredideto*) took bread...It is certain that the first Christians saw Christ's crucifixion less as an atrociously painful form of torture than as an ignominy and a result of perfidy.

Spicq, C. and Ernest, J.D. (1994) *Theological lexicon of the New Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

There are some other powerful references to 'delivered' or 'betrayed' with reference to Jesus:

Romans 8:32 " He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Also Romans 4:25 " who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification."

As we come up to Easter, we will be reflecting again on Jesus death, which we won't reach for a while in our study in Mark. Those soldiers who mocked Jesus: you're the King, are you?!

It's worth saying at this point that the passion narratives, the accounts of the Last Supper, evening after, the trial, Jesus whipping, and his crucifixion etc., are all given a vast amount of space in each of the gospels. One week in his life is focused on in several chapters. Whereas other parts are glossed over very quickly. It shows the overwhelming importance of Jesus death. It's why he came.

Mark 9:32 "But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him."

They did not understand. This is in keeping with the disciples' ignorance and hardening of heart. Perhaps Jesus himself seemed upset at this. A foreshadowing of Gethsemane? In Matthew it says they are distressed, rather than not understanding.

Mark 9:33 "Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?""

The fishing, farming, and manufacturing industries of Capernaum were served well by the presence of an important imperial north-south trade route - Lexham Geographic Commentary on Gospels.

Unlike John, for example, where Jesus goes up to Jerusalem three times during his ministry, Mark has Jesus spend a lot of time in and around Galilee (and obviously, as we've seen, travelling quite far around as well), but once he starts going up to Jerusalem, he doesn't return. There is one passing reference to Galilee after his resurrection, Mark 16:7. We do know that Jesus went back to Galilee after he rose, of course, from accounts in John etc.

Greco-Jewish culture was awash with regulations about who went first. Who ate first, who entered buildings first, who was named first etc. Precedence was a massive thing. So perhaps it wasn't quite as vain as we think for the disciples to naturally discuss this. It's not something we're preoccupied with in our culture.

Just to give an example, there were rules about if you walked three abreast, the most important one had to be in the middle. Or in society in general, the learned men were the most important. The King was more important than the priest, who was next. At the bottom of the pile was the released slave who had embraced Judaism. Other examples that you might recognise from the O.T. is that the younger girl should not marry before her sister. Also, a marriage ceremony takes precedence over a funeral. In a synagogue if there is a bride and bridegroom and a mourner, the mourner leaves afterwards. Who gets to wash their fingers first? Highest in rank to lowest, if no more than five. Brothers would sit according to age. ON dangerous roads the lowest in rank would travel first. The man should not follow the woman. Women ride behind men. Etc. Etc. When climbing up a ladder or stairs, the highest in rank goes first.

Singer, I. (ed.) (1901–1906) *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, 12 Volumes*. New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls.

Mark 9:34 "But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest."

Notice they kept silent. They don't bring it up. Mark continues to present the disciples as foolish, proud - argumentative. In Matthew it's slightly different, where they present this question to him; no reference to squabbles etc. In Mark 10 we'll get more of this from James and John.

Perhaps it emerged because of the choice of Peter, James and John who went up the mountain. And their awareness of their failure with the boy with the unclean spirit. And maybe with the sense that Jesus wouldn't be with them forever, who might 'take on his mantle', be his successor, as it were!

Mark 9:35 "And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.""

Ryle: "The world's idea of greatness is to rule, but Christian greatness consists of serving...Is there any service that we can render to our fellow Christians? Is there any kindness that we can show them to help them and promote their happiness? If there is, let us do it without delay." *Expository Thoughts on Mark*

Mark 8:34 " When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.""

Mark 9:36–37 “Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 37 “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.””

This would not be usual. Children were seen as low status. To give a child prominence is unusual. He is putting the child in the middle, giving it the highest status. But then he takes the child in his arms. This is the only gospel where he does this. No idea of gender of child. It's neutral. The word for child and servant is the same in Aramaic. Talya.

Jesus demonstrates what it means to 'receive'. It feels a bit like hosting, welcoming. 'In My name'. This is the name of Jesus. In the interests of the kingdom. The church must always champion the rights of children. And the special place God has for them.

Jesus physically shows his affection for the last and the least by embracing the child. Servants had more rights than children in Greco-Roman society. It's worth being aware that unlike today, Jesus doesn't mean be humble like a child, or childlike and simple: rather using them as symbols of the least important people.

“So Jesus is challenging his disciples and all his followers to see everyone as significant, not just the important ones. Arguments about who are the greatest are absurd because of his. Authentic followers of Jesus do not despise the 'little people'.” Schnabel. TNTC on Mark.

Only use of the word 'sent' in relation to Jesus. We see it in the parable of the vinedressers, for the vineyard owner sending his son, which is comparable to Jesus. 'Sent' is much more common in John. This verse comes up in all the gospels, he who receives me receives him who sent me.

Mark 9:38 “Now John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.””

This appears again to be about who is in and who is out. Notice this person is not part of Jesus' retinue of followers. John made a decision, as someone of status. Perhaps they want exorcism to be limited to the Twelve alone. Prestige. It's not been long since the disciples were attempting to cast out a demon and couldn't. Interesting that this person WAS able to cast out the demon. Why is John mentioning this? It's about acceptance - 'in my name'. This person had overstepped the mark.

Mark 9:39 “But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me.”

Is John again surprised by his response? Jesus comes back with a gentle rebuke. One commentator calls this the 'mistaken zeal of John'. Jesus used 'delayed' action methods of teaching in order to give them as much time as possible in which to decide.'

They may not turn out to be a true follower of Jesus in the long run; but they should not be excommunicated.

'an unaffiliated sympathizer who associates himself with Jesus is not to be put into the category of a declared enemy.' Schnabel, E.J. (2017) *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. Edited by E.J. Schnabel. London: Inter-Varsity Press (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), p. 226.

Mark 9:40 "For he who is not against us is on our side."

It's clear that we are either for Jesus or against him. But if you haven't declared to be against Jesus, according to this, you're on his side.

But Jesus gives his disciples time to decide, and he gives others time as well. Jesus does not force the question, and there are several examples of people who take their time to make a commitment, not least the disciples!

We ought to look at the 'parallel' passage to this in Acts. It has some interesting differences to this little event:

Acts 19:13–17 "Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."

We've got some people who are not following Jesus using his name. Itinerant exorcists. And then the seven sons of Sceva.

Differences: they are unsuccessful in their exorcism (although the Jewish exorcists possibly are successful). This is also a powerful demon. Are all seven men there at once? Makes you wonder what happened to the disciples in Mark 9 when they tried to exorcise the demon out of the boy! That shook them up so much.

Notice what Cecil Polhill says about this:

Two lessons emerge from the story. For one, Christianity has nothing to do with magic. The name of Jesus is no magical incantation. The power of Jesus drives out the demonic, and his Spirit only works through those who, like Paul, confess him and are committed to him.

Second, the demon did confess the power of Jesus over him, "Jesus I know." Compare Jas 2:19, "Even the demons believe and shudder." The people of Ephesus recognized this and extolled the powerful name of Jesus as a result (v. 17). What was true for them is still true. In the name of Jesus is all the power needed to drive out the demonic forces in every age. Polhill, J.B. (1992) *Acts*. Nashville: Broadman &

Holman Publishers (The New American Commentary), pp. 404–405.

The kingdom of God has more open boundaries than we think: “committed disciple and sympathetic fellow traveller find their place.” France.

Mark 9:41 “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

No-one has a monopoly of the work of the kingdom. We must accept the success of others humbly and rejoice in it, as Paul did (Phil. 1:18). No work done for Christ will go unrewarded, whoever does it.[“Mark,]”[Cole, R.A. (1994) in Carson, D.A. et al. (eds.) New Bible commentary: 21st century edition. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, p. 965.]

This in a way links back to the debate over status. Status is not important at all. And yet those who serve the people of God will receive great reward. It puts me in mind of the widow who fed Elisha, who then got her son restored to life. Being around the kingdom of God is a blessing in itself.

Witherington: Those who treat Jesus’ agents well are in fact treating Jesus well, since in the early Jewish way of thinking “a man’s agent is as himself” (cf. the appendix below). Jesus adds that such hospitable treatment will not lose its reward.[The Gospel of Mark: a socio-rhetorical]commentary[Witherington, B., III (2001) . Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 271.]

Also, as Matthew Henry says: This is a reason why we must not discountenance and discourage those who are serving the interests of Christ’s kingdom, though they are not in every thing of our mind and way.[Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one]volume[Henry, M. (1994) . Peabody: Hendrickson, p. 1798.]

This is the moment where Jesus refers to himself as the Christ, almost in passing - did you spot it? It’s a wonderful acknowledgement to the disciples: they are ALL his, ALL share the name of ‘children’ of God. By the way, there are a couple of other references to ‘the Christ’ where he is not directly saying that HE is the Christ, Mark 12.35 and Mark 13.21.

1 John 3:1 “1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

Note we get an ‘assuredly’ here. Jesus notches up the emphatic nature of his teaching here. When you engage in His mission, heaven is watching. That’s what we need to know! Isn’t that exciting?

The Hand That Signed The Paper

The hand that signed the paper felled a city;

Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,

Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;
A goose's quill has put an end to murder
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,
And famine grew, and locusts came;
Great is the hand that holds dominion over
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not soften
The crusted wound nor pat the brow;
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;
Hands have no tears to flow.

Dylan Thomas, 1936