

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)*

Truly This Man Was The Son Of God!

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Mark 15:33-47

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Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to Mark 15:33; that’s on page 853 in your pew Bibles. In a sense this is the 3rd message in a 3 message series. We have slowed down over the last couple of weeks in order to keep pace with the Gospel of Mark. Mark slows down when he gets to the narrative of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. I’ve told you a couple times that scholars sometimes refer to the Gospel of Mark as a Passion narrative with a preamble, meaning that Mark’s focus and interest is primarily on the sufferings of Jesus Christ – everything else is set up! Everything else we’ve looked at – all the stories, all the healings, all the miracles, all the teaching – that has all been set up. We were told all of that so that we would understand this. Mark told us those things so that we would understand what is happening in this story. He wants us to know who dies and why it matters. So everything we’ve talked about thus far has been preparing us for this critical and foundational story. This is the story of the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 33.

33 And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.” 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the

temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 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!"

40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

42 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. 45 And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. 46 And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid. (Mark 15:33–47 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

As I mentioned Mark told us the things that he did so that we would understand the significance of this moment. This is the **MOMENT**. This is the **HOLY CENTRE** of the Christian faith. The Apostle said:

we preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23 ESV)

We preach **THIS**.

THIS STORY.

THIS MOMENT.

THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE.

So we want to make sure we understand it and to do that we need to begin with a very basic question. We need to make sure that we understand who exactly it is that is dying on the cross.

Who Died?

To answer that question we have to go back and review the story that Mark has narrated for us and when we do that we remember that the first thing that people noticed about Jesus was his unusual authority as a teacher. He was not just another rabbi talking about things that Moses said. He was different. He was unique. He was authoritative. He was prophetic. Do you remember

that?

In the first story Mark tells us – after Jesus had been baptized and gathered a little group of disciples – he launches out and he begins to preach in the synagogue in Capernaum and do you remember the reaction? Mark tells us. He says:

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. (Mark 1:22 ESV)

Jesus was “one who had authority” – he didn’t just explain stuff God had said in the past – he wasn’t just a preacher like me – he said new stuff on behalf of God – a preacher isn’t supposed to do that. My job is to stand up here and say let’s open the Word of God. And then we read it and I explain it and we apply it to our daily lives – that’s what a preacher does, but that isn’t what Jesus did. He said NEW STUFF.

That’s crazy.

That’s dangerous.

That’s heretical – unless you are the one that the Bible prophesied would come.

Do you remember that? That’s in Deuteronomy 18 – we read that last week in our RMM readings.

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen” (Deuteronomy 18:15 ESV)

So Moses said – in one of his last sermons before dying – that ANOTHER prophet like me – another person who SPEAKS the very WORDS OF GOD – another prophet like that will come at some point in the future. He’ll be a Jew, like you and it is to him that you must listen.

God told the Jewish that through Moses then he gave them a warning. He said:

I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18–19 ESV)

So God said I'm going to send you a prophet like Moses. He will speak only the Words that I give him. And I will judge you based on your reception of him.

That's who died on the cross that day.

The prophet like Moses.

1. The Prophet Like Moses

The Jews did not receive him the way God said they should and he will require it of them.

The challenge in the text is pretty obvious. This person that God says is coming – this Bible breathing prophet like Moses – will be the dividing line of human history. If you receive him as the heaven sent Word of God then you will be saved. You will be inside the people of God and welcomed into the presence of God for all eternity. But if you reject him; if you mock him and discount him, as so many did on that day, then you will be outside. Cut off. In the dark. Away from God. Forever.

That's who died on the cross.

Jesus Christ. The prophet like Moses. The dividing line of human history. The Word of God in human flesh.

2. The Son Of David

But he wasn't just the prophet like Moses, he was also the Son of David, the Messiah – the Christ of God - Mark has made that point to us several times. That's sort of the easy one in Mark's Gospel – everybody knew that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of David – even blind people knew that. Mark tells us about a guy named:

Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:46–48 ESV)

Even blind people knew that Jesus was the Son of David! Even Peter got that one. Jesus asked the disciples one time who they thought he was and Peter said:

“You are the Christ.” (Mark 8:29 ESV)

The word “Christ” means “anointed one”, it means “King” – the long awaited Son of David who would sit on Israel’s throne.

Everybody saw that; blind people saw that, Peter saw that, but what they didn’t see was that Jesus was also:

3. The Suffering Servant

That is the root of the confusion and even disillusionment among many of Jesus’ followers. There are two threads of anticipation in the Old Testament. There is the wide and thick and prominent Messianic Thread. There are lots of passages about a coming King – a Son of David – who would defeat their enemies and restore the nation and reign in righteousness and bring in the eternal Kingdom of God. Those were the GOOD passages in the Old Testament – those were the verses that got made into plaques and that were inscribed on coffee mugs and T-shirts in Old Testament times – metaphorically speaking. Those were the good verses.

But there were some other verses. There was another thread about a Suffering Servant who would have to DIE for the sins of the people.

Isaiah the prophet spoke about that person. He said:

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.

14 As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

15 so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. (Isaiah 52:13–15 ESV)

So a Servant is coming from the Lord who will act wisely – he will know what has to be done – and he will be HIGH AND LIFTED UP. But not in the way people expect. In fact when people

see him HIGH AND LIFTED UP they will be astonished – his appearance will be so marred, he won't even look human! But from that place, from that place of brutality and unspeakable suffering he will SPRINKLE MANY NATIONS and become Lord of many people – even the great and mighty people of the earth.

Isaiah said that – what about him? Peter saw Jesus as the Messiah but he was OFFENDED when Jesus said that he was also the Suffering Servant – do you remember that? Jesus started talking about suffering:

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” (Mark 8:32–33 ESV)

You don't understand Peter – just like Isaiah prophesied. Your perspective is too human. Its too small. You think that all you need is a LEADER PETER, but you are way too far gone for just that. You need more than a King Peter, you need a Savior. You need someone to deal with the problem of your sin.

Jesus said that he was that guy. He said he came to suffer for our sins. And he did.

3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3–5 ESV)

That's who died upon the cross.

Thanks be to God!

But there is more. And so much more. He was also:

4. The Son Of God

That's the central thesis and the theological climax of Mark's Gospel. This is what he set out to prove. He told us that in the very first verse. Mark 1:1 says:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Mark 1:1 ESV)

That's what this story is about. I'm going to show you who Jesus is and what Jesus did for our salvation. Like a good High School essay Mark gives you the thesis at the very start of his presentation. And then he puts the climax in the mouth of the most unlikely of people in verse 39 of the story we just read.

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 15:39 ESV)

That's the climax of the story! Everything Jesus did in his life, in his suffering, in his death – climaxes and culminates right here - as a Gentile soldier confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

No human being had ever said those words before.

Not Peter.

Peter knew that Jesus was the Messiah but he didn't know this.

Not Mary. Mary knew a lot of stuff, she knew that the birth of Jesus was unusual and she knew that he was destined for the rising of falling of many but she didn't know this – she never said this.

Up until this point the only people who knew this in Mark's Gospel were the demons.

The demons knew this. Mark told us that in Mark 3:11:

whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."
(Mark 3:11 ESV)

So the demons knew this but this is the first time a human being has said these words.

"Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39 ESV)

Mark has been leading us to the place where we will agree with this man. Again – that’s been the whole point of his Gospel. He told us that in verse 1, he presented evidence all throughout and then he challenges us here – are you going to be less responsive to this evidence than a simple, crass, hardened Roman soldier?

He saw it – he saw less than you – and still he confessed the obvious. Truly this man was the Son of God.

Can you say that?

Do you say that?

Is that your understanding here today?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh doing for us what we could never do for ourselves?

Do you believe that?

Because Mark has given you more than enough evidence. He told you that Jesus forgave sins. He said to the lame man:

“Son, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:5 ESV)

Everybody knew what that meant – that’s a claim to Divinity. The scribes knew what that meant. They said:

“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7 ESV)

That’s exactly right boys – who can forgive sins but God alone? And yet the lame man walks. So who do you say that Jesus is?

And Mark showed us Jesus walking on water – he did a lot a little reprisal of the Old Testament story of God passing by Moses in all his glory – do you remember that? That’s an obvious claim to Divinity – James Edwards puts it this way:

As in the forgiveness of sins (2:10) and in his power over nature (4:39), walking on the lake identifies Jesus unmistakably with God.¹

Jesus has not been subtle – he’s putting it out there and Mark has been showing us Jesus saying and doing all this GOD STUFF so that we can agree with the centurion. He wants us to look at Jesus Christ upon the cross and to declare with this Gentile:

“Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39 ESV)

Can you say that today?

If not why not?

You’ve seen the evidence and you have heard the testimony of Christ himself. At his trial the High Priest put him under oath and asked him:

“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” 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)

The High Priest asked him two questions and he got three answers in response, Jesus is not holding back. High Priest asked him: are you the Christ and are you the Son of the Blessed that’s two questions and Jesus gave him three answers. Listen again:

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)

I am the Christ. I am the Son of God and I am also the Son of Man. I’ve got a bonus for you!

Let’s talk about that. The Son of Man died on the cross that day – who is he?

¹James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 198.

5. The Son Of Man

Well Jesus tells us who he is by referring to a passage from Daniel 7. Look carefully at the words he uses. He says:

you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” (Mark 14:62 ESV)

That’s a quote from Daniel 7:13-14:

“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)

Jesus says: “I am the everlasting Lord who will rule over all things as human beings were originally created to do. I will be under the Father and over everything else. I will be the human being that you could never be.”

Are you seeing that?

You have to see that to understand exactly what is happening on the cross. You see if Jesus were ONLY the Son of God – as if you could be ONLY the Son of God – but if Jesus were only the Son of God – if he were only A DIVINE BEING and NOT ALSO A HUMAN BEING — then the cross would only be a DISPLAY it could never be AN ATONEMENT. It could never be a redemption. It could never have anything to do with us. It would JUST BE GOD showing how awesome he is but it would not address in any meaningful way the tragedy of the human condition. For Jesus’ death to mean anything it has to be A HUMAN DEATH.

Because that was the deal.

God said to the first human:

“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16–17 ESV)

God said that to the first human – he said that to the first Adam – he said you are Lord of the earth! Fill it and have dominion over it – it’s yours! But in the day that you choose anything other than me – in the day that you lift yourself up to become like a god deciding right and wrong for yourself – on that day you will surely die.

That was the deal that God made with human beings.

So for the death of Jesus to mean anything for human beings, he had to be a human being. He had to be a son of man.

And so he was.

He was.

Jesus was TRULY HUMAN.

You can hear that in his final words on the cross. Listen to what he says:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34 ESV)

Jesus Christ said that on the cross! As the Son of Man – as a real human being – he said that on the cross. He could not have said that if he was ONLY the Son of God. He said that – he said that really and truly – as the Son of Man. Theologians are very careful here, they say: “With respect to his human nature Jesus was forsaken of God.”

So this really happened. Jesus wasn’t just throwing out Psalms – this was a real thing. William Lane says here:

“The cry of dereliction expressed the unfathomable pain of real abandonment by the Father.”²

I’m going to read that again because I wonder sometimes whether we believe it.

² William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 573.

“The cry of dereliction expressed the unfathomable pain of **real abandonment** by the Father.”³

REAL ABANDONMENT.

As the Son of Man – as the HUMAN BEING HE WAS AND WE COULD NEVER BE Jesus was REALLY ABANDONED BY GOD.

That’s what Paul means when he says:

he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV)

In assuming our sin Jesus assumed the consequences of our sin – which is separation from God, alienation from God and DEATH AT THE HAND OF GOD.

That was the deal.

And this was the price that was paid.

That’s what Mark wants you to see. He wants you to see exactly WHO died on the cross.

And of course he wants you to see that so that you can understand WHY Jesus died on the cross.

Why?

And there really is just one essential answer to that.

1. **Because he loves you**

Now you say wait a second pastor, the cross is also a demonstration of the justice of God – absolutely. I know that. We read that a couple of weeks ago. The Apostle Paul says that in

³ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 573.

Romans 3. He says:

25 This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25–26 ESV)

So YES! The cross of Jesus Christ was a demonstration of the righteousness of God. It showed that he was JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Christ.

YES.

But.

Here's the thing.

God also could have showed that he was JUST by crucifying YOU on the cross. He could have demonstrated his righteousness by crucifying ME on the cross. Who would have accused God of wrong had he chosen to do so?

Not me. I'm a sinner. I'm a rebel. I broke the deal. I chose other than God. I elevated my word over the Word of God and the wages of sin is death.

God could have showed himself JUST by nailing ME to the cross.

But he could only have shown himself LOVING by nailing JESUS to the cross.

So that's what he did.

He did that for you and he did that for me.

There are many ways in which God could have shown himself righteous:

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

That is the ESSENTIAL message of the cross.

God knew the deal. God WROTE THE DEAL. And he knew that we would break the deal. At that moment – at that realization – God could have chosen to kill us and to start over with some other object of his creation. He could have put his image on monkeys, or elephants or angels or he could have made something entirely new. He could have done that – and he would have been ENTIRELY JUST IN DOING THAT.

But instead he did this.

He took on flesh and dwelt among us!

He kept our side of the deal and he paid for our sins in his body on the cross.

Because he loves us.

Oh how he loves us.

See him there upon the cross.

See from his head, his hands, his feet - sorrow AND LOVE flow mingled down.

See how he loves us!

See how he loves you and me!

That is the message of the cross. That is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God! Let's pray together.