

The Gospel of Mark.`

Study Week 6 – The Road to the Cross

Mark devotes half of his short gospel to the events leading up to the death of Jesus, therefore it is important.

1. Jesus is King – the Son of David

- Another of Mark's themes is that Jesus is King, perhaps not directly evident in the first half of the gospel, but on route to Jerusalem, this theme comes to the fore.
- Bartimaeus receives his sight. 10:46-52
 - One thing not looked at in Mark is the Messianic Secret. Jesus in the earlier part of his ministry seems to want to keep his identity secret.
 - Mark 1:34, 43. 3:12. 4:11. 5:43. 7:24, 36. 8:26. 9:9.
 - As they leave Jericho, the last leg on the final journey into Jerusalem where Jesus knows he will meet his death.
 - Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. This blind man, sees who Jesus is.
 - Son of David is a messianic title. David was the great king of Israel who we read of in the O.T.
 - The hope of all Israel was found in God's promise to David in 1 Chron. 17:10-14. "I will raise up your offspring...I will establish his throne forever"
Bartimaeus recognizes that Jesus is king.
 - Promise was given to David when he was in his palace at Jerusalem. The Messianic secret is unveiled as Jesus heads towards Jerusalem.
 - The context of this Davidic covenant was that David had wanted to build a temple for God, but God said no, but that God would establish a house for David. Jesus was not going just to Jerusalem, his destination was the temple. The centre of worship, the place where God meets with his people.
 - Jesus is the fulfilment of this amazing promise, Israel's king.
 - Note Jesus question – what do you want me to do for you? This is the same question Jesus asks James and John, who we said didn't understand – Bartimaeus response is simply I want to see.
 - Bartimaeus is healed and follows Jesus
- **The Triumphal Entry.**
 - A kingly procession. The arrival of the king.
 - A donkey used by kings when they arrived in peace, if in war they would use a war horse.
 - The laying of cloaks, the waving of palms. "Blessed is the coming of our father David"
 - Jesus proceeds to the temple and takes a look but as it is late there is nobody about so they leave.
 - The next day turns over the tables in the temple.
 - Signifies Jesus anger at a human level of the exploitation and commercialisation, but also an anger in his spirit, that the leaders are using the temple for a different purpose to what God intended.
 - Signifies judgement that is coming. AD70 temple was destroyed.
 - Signifies that the system of temple sacrifice is coming to an end, God is bringing in his promised kingdom, but not centred around the

Jerusalem temple, but around Jesus, God's sacrifice...the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

- ... and the leaders we read plot to kill Jesus
 - Then the parable of the tenants – here we see in parable what is happening in life. Jesus, the son of the landlord has returned to the vineyard, but they plot his death.
- **Jesus is both Lord and Son of David 12:35-37.**
 - Psalm 110, a response to the “whose authority”? debate with the priests
 - A messianic Psalm that is part of Israel's covenant hope.
 - Jesus explains it in terms of that the one who is David's Son is also one whom David calls Lord.
 - Jesus is unveiling the Messianic secret, Jesus is king, but he is one who is greater than David, he is David's Lord, David's God.

We need to recognize Jesus as King. We celebrate our king, we worship our king, we bow before our king. Jez the non-royal. If I examine the reasons for this, part is that I have a resistance to being ruled! I want to be ruler of my own life. This attitude is a problem for the Christian, being a Christian is recognizing the rule of Jesus over our lives, the rule of God over my actions, my thoughts, my possessions, my relationships, my ambitions...every aspect of life – Jesus is king

One day King Jesus will return to this earth, not along the dusty roads of Palestine, but in the clouds, in his glory to bring the reign of sin and evil in the world to a decisive end and reveal his eternal kingdom. Paul tells us in Phil 2:10... at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.

2. The Last Supper/The Garden

- It was the Passover feast. Jews remembered year after year for centuries, the day that God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Deliverance came from the slaughter of a lamb or goat, its blood was painted on the door frames, the angel of death passed over. The feast was intertwined with a re-telling of that story of deliverance. The feast itself becomes the story.
- Jesus at this, his final Passover with his disciples reworks this feast and tells a new story, he was to become the Passover lamb. He was going to die and bear the judgement of the father so that God's people could go free.
- Jesus takes these great symbols of Jewish hope and identity. Messiah, Temple, Passover and redefines what they mean and that they are truly centred around himself. In doing so he redefines what it means to be the people of God.
- Another thing that we see at this Passover and shortly after as they go out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus begins to separate himself from his disciples.
- He tells his disciples that they will all desert him. He takes Peter, James and John away from the rest to pray in deep distress and sorrow. He then leaves those 3 whilst he goes away alone to pray to the Father.
- Jesus must face his ordeal alone. Abba Father he prays, if it is possible spare me from this hour, from this cup of suffering.

When Paul instructs the Corinthian church he tells them that when they meet they should partake in, breaking bread, sharing wine – telling a new story that Jesus' body was broken, his blood was shed, so that we might be free. That is what we do when we break bread, we tell ourselves the story

of Jesus death, but not only to ourselves, we proclaim, we tell one another that Jesus died for our sins, that Jesus has delivered us. I tell you that Jesus died for me and that Jesus died for you. You tell me that Jesus died for you that Jesus died for me. It unites us, it binds us together in Christ.

In Leviticus 16 we read of the day of atonement (Yom Kippur). Once a year the priest would take 2 goats. One would be sacrificed on the altar as a sin offering for the people Lev 16:17. The other goat was the scapegoat. The High Priest was to lay his hands on the head of the scapegoat and confess, the wickedness, the rebellion and all the sins of the people, laying them on the goat. The goat was lead into the wilderness and released the scapegoat symbolizing the removal of sin. It was necessary that Jesus distanced himself from his disciples. He typified the scapegoat, the sins of the people were laid on him and he would bear them on his own body. The disciples sin, our sin is taken away by Christ.

3. Arrest and Trial

- Jesus finishes His prayer and is arrested by the men sent from the chief priests
- Mark notes in verse 50 that everyone deserts him as Jesus predicted.
- He is tried and convicted on a charge of blasphemy. In answer to the High Priests Question "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? Jesus answers "I am". We have heard through the story Mark introduces it, The voice of God announces it at Jesus baptism, we heard it from the mouth of demons and unclean spirits. Peter has declared it and the blind man Bartimaeus has seen it! Here Jesus acknowledges his true identity knowing that it would lead to his conviction.
- Jesus is then sent before Pilate. The Jewish leaders don't have the authority to pass a sentence of death, only the Roman governor has that prerogative.
- A murderer called Barabbas was also being held prisoner and presumably awaiting to be sentenced. Pilate had a strange custom at Passover of releasing one prisoner at the request of the people.
- The Priests however had somehow stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barrabas. Pilate offers them Jesus or Barabbas. They shout for Barabbas
- There is an interesting irony in the name of the one they demanded to be freed. Bar..as we saw signified son of... Abba is the word for Father. So Pilate offers Barrabas, son of the father or Jesus son of God. In the garden Jesus had prayed Abba Father, if he could be spared his suffering. The one who would be spared would be Barabbas, the son of Abba.
- Pilate asks the crowd what should be done with Jesus, the one you call king. Crucify him they shout.
- York minster... a dark picture, a reflection, I was there.
- The crowds shouted crucify him, Jez is shouting crucify him, but there is another voice at the scene. The voice of God, who earlier we heard pronouncing this is my beloved son, the voice of God speaks out ...crucify him. God's voice not the voice of a guilty man or a manipulated crowd, but the voice of a loving father who is willing to allow his own son to die, so that the guilty ones may go free.

There is a sense in which we are all Barabbas. We are all sons/daughters of our father. We are all guilty having broken the law of God. The judge cries out who shall I let go free...and God the Father calls out Barabbas, let the sons, let the daughters go free. Crucify the Son of God. Jesus becomes the substitute for a guilty man, a sinner, a murderer. This is the gospel, Jesus stands as our substitute and pays the price of our sin, of my sin, of your sin.

4. Crucifixion and death

- Jesus is led out to be crucified
- Unable to bear his own cross, the soldiers force a visitor to Jerusalem. Simon of Cyrene father of Alexander and Rufus.
- It is possible that Alexander and Rufus are known to Mark or at least are known within the early church. It feels like that. In Romans 16:13 Paul sends greetings to a man called Rufus and so there is a possibility that Rufus ends up in Rome, and lends weight to the idea that Mark wrote his gospel to Gentile Christians in Rome.
- Jesus is offered wine mixed with Myrrh. This was a narcotic and would have dulled the pain that Jesus would suffer. Jesus declines, he would face the punishment with his senses intact.
- Then on the cross Pilate has written above his head "King of the Jews", perhaps in scorn, perhaps to upset the rulers of the Sanhedrin
- He is mocked and ridiculed, by the people who are looking on at the scene, by the priests and the teachers of the law, by those who are crucified with him.
- At the ninth hour we hear the awful cry. My God, My God, why are you forsaken me.
- The mocking crowds around him, betrayed, denied and deserted by his closest companions, but now the full horror of his isolation is expressed in this cry "why have you forsaken me" ...his own Father from eternity past turns his face away from Jesus in his suffering. His own Father, cannot look on Jesus as he bears the sin of the world. He is totally desolate, the scapegoat
- As he breathes his last - The veil of the temple is torn in two. The temple is finished, its purpose, as Jesus has been telling his disciples, is now redundant and fulfilled in Jesus himself. He is the Passover lamb, he is the perfect sacrifice and we are forgiven.
- A Roman Centurian watches the scene is the first to speak...Surely this was the Son of God. Significant of course, if as thought Jesus writes to the Christians in Rome. Romans are included. He is their king, he is their temple, he is their sacrifice.
- Not that the Jews are excluded, we find that Joseph of Arimathea a member of the Sanhedrin, but one who was looking forward to the arrival God's kingdom. He is first to touch the body of Jesus after his death.
- On resurrection morning, some women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus body, they find he is not there, an angel tells them that He has risen. It is these women who are first witnesses to the resurrected Lord.

5.Mark 1:1 "the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

What a story!