

Mark's Passion

Each Gospel leads the reader or listener to a front-row seat at the passion of Christ. How does Mark recount this vital history? What does he intend to achieve through his presentation? How can we most effectively preach the Easter story in Mark?

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I. Passion Prefigured in Mark

- A. At baptism and transfiguration (1:11; 9:7) Jesus is referred to as God's "beloved Son" (cf. Gen.22:2 allusion? See also Mark 12:6 in the parable of the tenants.)
- B. When Jesus is taken away, then his followers will fast (2:20). Does fasting suggest mourning here in Mark? If so, then Isaiah 53(LXX) may be in view – his life taken away from the earth.
- C. The Jewish leaders discussed how to "destroy him" (3:6)
- D. Judas' betrayal is mentioned (3:19)
- E. John the Baptist's violent death may suggest similar is coming for Jesus, since they have various parallel features in life and ministry (6:14-28)

II. Passion Predicted in Mark

- A. 8:31 – First Prediction

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

 - 1. Necessity of Jesus's death – "must suffer . . . and be killed"
 - 2. Antagonists of Jesus's death – "the elders, chief priests and scribes"
 - 3. Mechanism of Jesus's death – "cross" (8:34 – first mention)
- B. 9:31 – Second Prediction

"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

 - 1. Passive nature of Jesus's death – "is going to be delivered"
 - 2. Antagonists of Jesus's death – "the hands of men"

3. Timing of resurrection after Jesus's death – "after three days he will rise."

C. 10:33-34 – Third Prediction

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

1. Location of Jesus's death – "we are going up to Jerusalem"
2. Passive nature of Jesus's death – "will be delivered"
3. Antagonists of Jesus's death – "the chief priests and scribes"
4. Legality of Jesus's death – "condemn him to death"
5. Gentile involvement in Jesus' death – "deliver him over to the Gentiles."
6. Details of suffering in Jesus' death – "mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him."
7. Timing of resurrection after Jesus's death – "After three days he will rise."

III. Passion Portrayed in Mark

A. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, cleanses the temple and gives the parable of the tenants. (11:1-12:12)

1. The crowds celebrate Jesus
2. The authorities are afraid to arrest Jesus because of the crowds

B. The authorities attempt to trap Jesus, but fail (12:13-13:37)

1. Jesus navigates the traps set by Pharisees, Sadducees & a scribe, so they ask no more questions (12:34)
2. Jesus taught in the temple (12:35-44) and about the temple (13:1-37)

C. The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread arrive (14:1-25)

1. The authorities plan to arrest Jesus after the feast

2. Jesus is anointed for burial, prompting Judas to betray Jesus
 3. Jesus celebrates the Passover, reinterpreting it to point to his own death
- D. The group goes to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus is betrayed and arrested (14:26-52)
1. Disciples' scattering and Peter's denial is predicted (and contradicted)
 2. Jesus prays in Gethsemane, alone
 3. Jesus is betrayed with a kiss and the disciples are scattered
- E. The religious night trial of Jesus takes place, while Peter suffers his own trial (14:53-72)
1. Jesus is tried by the high priest, chief priests, elders and scribes
 2. The call for testimony was chaotic and unprepared, but Jesus, when forced, gives the testimony needed to condemn him
 3. Peter denies Jesus
- F. The Roman morning trial of Jesus takes place (15:1-20)
1. Jesus barely responds to Pilate
 2. Jesus dies in the place of sinner Barabbas as Pilate condemns Jesus to crucifixion
- G. The crucifixion and burial of Jesus (15:21-47)
1. Jesus's saving power is mocked by all
 2. Darkness accompanies Jesus's death, as does the tearing of the Temple curtain (a sign for the Romans and a sign for the religious rulers?)
 3. The Roman centurion exclaims, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"
 4. Both Jewish (Joseph, Mary and Mary) and Roman (Centurion) confirmation of death is given

The Old Testament is quoted directly by Jesus in 12:10-11 (Psalm 118:22-23) and 14:27 (Zechariah 13:7) to explain his death. Mark also leans on Psalm 22 to describe the righteous sufferer.

H. The resurrection of Jesus (16:1-8)

1. The women go to the tomb, where a man (angel) announces Jesus has risen and is not here
2. The women flee, astonished and fearful.

IV. The Significance of Jesus's Death in Mark

A. Jesus's death brings atonement. (10:45; 14:24)

1. Mark 10:45 - ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
2. Mark 14:24 – ²⁴And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

B. Jesus's death is a model for disciples to imitate. (8:34)

1. Mark 8:34 -³⁴ “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
2. There is the negative counterpoint in the disciples failure at Gethsemane, fleeing, and denying him.

C. Jesus's death points to both poles of his identity (10:44; 15:2)

1. He is servant – “slave of all” (10:44)
2. He is King – Nobody calls him king until Pilate does in Mark 15:2, but then he is called king six times in thirty verses (15:2, 9, 12 – Pilate; 15:18, 32 – mockers at crucifixion; 15:26 – inscription over cross).

See Orr, 141-160.