

The Suffering Servant: Rescue Reconstituted

Mark 14:12-25

There's really nothing quite like a good rescue story. Once you start reading about the 33 Chilean miners who were trapped in 2010 for 69 days in a collapsed mine it's hard to stop. After herculean efforts all 33 were rescued from the mine. Or, we could tell the story in 2018 of the boys soccer team from Thailand that got stuck in a cave system that was filling with water and ultimately were rescued two weeks later by people from all over the world in a massive rescue effort. The lengths we humans will go to rescue someone in danger are extraordinary.

If you were a Jew living in the early first century, there was one rescue story that beat all others and your family would celebrate it and remember it once a year. The day on which you would recount the story and eat a meal in celebration of the rescue was called Passover.

If you were a Jew living in Israel your identity as a Jew would have been quite strong. Your people had been enslaved for hundreds of years in Egypt, but God had promised the founder of your people, Abraham, that He would ultimately give his descendants a land they could call their own. God remained faithful to this promise by rescuing your ancestors from slavery in Egypt. He did this by a series of 10 plagues culminating in a final night when a lamb was killed and blood was smeared on the doorposts to protect them from the Destroyer. As the people waited for God's judgment to fall on Egypt they ate a meal made up of the lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. Through the death of the lamb God's people were spared and the next day they departed from slavery in Egypt, never to return again.

This story was the quintessential story of redemption and salvation in the entire history of the Jewish people. Nothing was more important to the identity of the nation of Israel than the fact that God had rescued them by His mighty arm. Because of the significance of this rescue, the Jews were to celebrate the Passover meal every year to remember and rejoice in what God had done for them.

It's no accident that as the Gospel of Mark is approaching the death of Jesus that he emphasizes the Passover and God's rescue of Israel. Notice with me from our

passage from last week, Mark 14:1 and the first verse of our passage today in 14:12. The Passover was the paradigm of rescue in the OT because it led to the exodus from slavery and life in the Promised Land. God's rescue of His people will now undergo a dramatic shift and reconstitution around the person of Jesus Christ. He will bring about a new exodus that will fully and finally deal with our core problem. So, this morning we want to look at **2 Ways God's Rescue is Reconstituted around Jesus for our Salvation.**

1. God's Rescue Arrives by a Sovereign Strategy (vv. 12-21)

If you begin reading in chapter 14 it would be easy to get the impression that events are beginning to unfold which Jesus has no control over. The most powerful religious leaders are conspiring against him and one of Jesus' own disciples has joined with them to betray Jesus into their hands.

God's rescue doesn't happen by accident. God doesn't make the best of a tough situation. All the events of the next few chapters move ahead under the direct supervision of God's sovereign hand. Everything happens according to His timing and that includes the fact that Jesus is crucified on the day when the Passover lambs were offered as sacrifices and it includes the sinful betrayal of Judas. God is a master painter, brushing each stroke, the dark and the light, to showcase His redemption of His people.

Let's begin in verse 12. We traditionally see this Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples as taking place on Thursday and that is right. But the Passover lambs were offered in the temple on Friday afternoon. So what gives? Keep in mind that the Jewish day begins at sundown, so the disciples begin inquiring about the meal after sundown on Thursday, which would have been the same "day" as Friday afternoon. The disciples direct this question to Jesus and make it clear that it will be His Passover meal. This is because the Passover was eaten in a group but there was always one man who would preside over the meal, in this case, Jesus.

Jesus gives them specific instructions. Look at verses 13-15. The disciples ask this because you had to eat the Passover dinner within the city limits of Jerusalem, so they couldn't eat in Bethany where they were staying. They are to find a man carrying a water jar on his head. This would have been unusual, normally women carried water jars on their heads. I think it's likely that Jesus had some sort of pre-arrangement with the master of this house but sending the disciples to find this

man on the street shows a level of foresight and knowledge that cannot be human in origin. Notice verse 16.

Despite the plot going on to arrest Jesus by stealth, He is not a pawn who will be thrown aside by the powerful. He is actually in complete control and His control extends to events well before the Passover week. Let's turn our attention to verses 17-21 where we see his sovereign strategy on full display.

Let's read verses 17-18. So, if the events of verses 12-16 happen after sundown on Thursday evening, they actually gather for the meal quite late. The room where they were celebrating was probably quite large and most likely included more people than just the 12 disciples. There were probably women and children and perhaps some other close associates of Jesus eating together. But of course, he was eating at the table with the twelve and the others, if there, would have been scattered around the room in other places.

During the meal Jesus addresses the disciples by explaining that He knows exactly what will happen to him. Of course, you and I know that Jesus will be betrayed, but this is the first the disciples hear of this and it is shocking to them. To imagine that one within their own ranks will turn on Jesus is disheartening and they can't imagine who it might be. Look at verse 19. Jesus answers in verse 20.

The point of verse 20 is just that the betrayer would be one of the twelve. If you can picture the situation, there would have been a bowl of oil and herbs to dip your bread into, and you would have shared the same bowl with those seated near you. All the disciples had dipped in the same bowl as Jesus and others in the room had not, so Jesus is making the point that one closest to him would betray him. This may surprise the disciples, but this reality goes back, even to the OT. Look at the beginning of verse 21.

Jesus sees His death and betrayal as promised and planned by the OT. But which OT passage is He referring to? We can't name one in particular but there are at least a couple of threads that anticipate this aspect of God's plan for the Messiah. First, when you read the Psalms written by David you find David suffering as King and being betrayed by those closest to Him. Passages like Psalm 41:9. Jesus cries out from the cross with words from Psalm 22, which is a passage David writes about his own suffering. Jesus sees himself as fulfilling the pattern set by David as the King. Second, as we'll see throughout Mark 14-16, Jesus is to be identified

with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 53. In Mark 14:21 when Jesus says the Scriptures must be fulfilled I think He is identifying His experiences with those key OT characters who suffered and were betrayed according to God's plan.

But even though this betrayal unfolds according to God's plan, that doesn't eliminate the culpability of the one sinning, in this case Judas. Look at the rest of verse 21. This is an amazing look inside the way in which God governs the universe. Everything moves according to His plan. Nations rise and fall and God ordains all the tiny little decisions and actions that bring nations to power and strip them of that power. Charles Spurgeon described God's sovereignty this way:

"I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes—that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens—that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence—the fall of sere leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche. He that believes in a God must believe this truth. There is no standing-point between this and atheism. There is no half way between a mighty God that worketh all things by the sovereign counsel of his will and no God at all. A God that cannot do as he pleases—a God whose will is frustrated, is not a God, and cannot be a God. I could not believe in such a God as that." – Charles Spurgeon

And yet, human beings are morally responsible for our decisions and actions. We are not robots. We cannot just throw our hands up and say, well, God ordained it. We make very real decisions that have very real consequences. Judas made a choice here and that choice was his alone and he lived and died with the results of that choice. But all of this fits with the sovereign plan of God to rescue and redeem His people. Acts 2:22-23 says it quite clearly.

This doctrine causes us to bow in worship to a God this powerful who oversaw the betrayal of his Son for our redemption. And the events of Passover and betrayal will bring about our rescue as the final Passover lamb reconstitutes God's redemption around himself by his atoning sacrifice.

2. God's Rescue Arrives by a Substitutionary Sacrifice (vv. 22-25)

We often take our understanding of the death of Jesus for granted. Keep in mind that up until this point in the Gospel of Mark the disciples had had very little specific instruction as to why Jesus would die. Jesus had mostly just explained that he would die.

Now, we come to the actual Passover meal and Jesus will teach the disciples the meaning of his death through the mechanism of the Passover. Jesus will be a new Passover sacrifice that will bring about a new Exodus for God's people. When you understand the rescue that God brought to Israel out of Egypt you will understand the rescue that Jesus brings to His people by His sacrifice.

The Passover meal celebrated by Jews was obviously filled with meaning and remembrance. The meal was celebrated with teaching and explanation. Listen to Exodus 13:8-10. The Jewish Mishnah gave instructions on how to fulfill this command to teach during the Passover. Listen to this passage from the Rabbinic Mishnah:

"A second cup [of wine] would be mixed for him. And here the son asks [questions to] his father. And if the son has no understanding [in order to ask questions], his father teaches him [to ask]: "Why is this night different from all [other] nights? On all [other] nights, we eat chamets (leavened grain products) and matsa, [but] on this night, it is all matsa. On all [other] nights, we eat other vegetables, [but] on this night, it is all bitter herbs. On all [other] nights, we eat meat roasted, stewed or boiled, [but] on this night, it is all roasted. On all [other] nights, we dip [vegetables] once, [but] on this night, we dip [vegetables] twice." And according to the son's understanding, his father instructs him. He begins [instructing him about the Exodus story] with [the account of Israel's] shame and concludes with [Israel's] praise (glory)"

The people present at the Passover would have expected some explanation of the elements, but what they get is far different from expected. Look at verse 22.

Rather than explaining what had happened for Israel in Egypt, Jesus now centers the elements of the meal on himself. The most natural way to take these words about the bread is that his body will be broken in death. But the disciples must have pondered what this meant for them since Jesus took the bread and distributed among them and they ate. Clearly, they would somehow participate in and receive some benefit from his body being broken.

But the cup brings even more clarity to the death of Jesus. Look at verses 23-25. After the disciples drink the cup Jesus gives three major points of explanation that help us to understand his death. First, he says that the wine is his blood of the covenant. He's pulling these words from Exodus 24:6-8. After God has given the people the 10 commandments and the rest of the words of the covenant he made with them, Moses ratifies and seals the covenant between God and the people by sprinkling blood on them. Here, the disciples aren't sprinkled but they do drink this cup showing their participation in this covenant. What covenant would this be?

Rather than the covenant at Sinai that God made with Israel, this is a new covenant spoken of in Jeremiah 31. This is a covenant that brings forgiveness of sins and a new heart to those to whom it is given. This is a defining moment in redemptive history. God is inaugurating a new covenant through the shedding of the blood of a new Passover lamb.

But the second major point of explanation is found in the next words of verse 24. This blood will be poured out for many. Here Jesus is alluding to another key passage of Scripture to teach the meaning of his death and this one is Isaiah 53. Not only will he inaugurate a new covenant with his death, but he will atone for the sins of his people with his blood. Let's look at the work of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.

What do we find is true of the servant who suffers in Isaiah 53? He suffers, not for his own sins, but he suffers as a substitute for others so that their sins will be atoned for. Listen to the language of substitution. Verses 4-6. Now verses 11-12. Jesus uses this language at the Passover of his blood being poured out for many to tie His work to this passage. He is the suffering servant who will atone for sin by the gift of his own life for another.

The blood that Jesus speaks of in Mark 14:24 is shorthand for his sacrificial death. In the OT the animal sacrifices were perfect and spotless animals offered to God. The sin and guilt of the sinner was imputed or transferred to the sacrifice and the sacrifice was offered as a substitute "for" or "instead of" or "on behalf of" the sinner. The result was the cancellation or removal of the sin from the sinner because of the shedding of the blood of the sacrifice.

Jesus is saying here that his blood will be poured out in that same way, except different. Listen to Hebrews 9:12-14.

The third and final point of explanation regarding the death of Christ is found in verse 25. Jesus' death will secure our redemption but it will ultimately one day fully bring about God's kingdom reign. Jesus here looks beyond his death and you could even say beyond his resurrection to the final consummation of his work when he will be enthroned and reign over all as king of kings and Lord of Lords.

Let's think back to the Passover meal that the average Jewish family would have celebrated during Jesus' time. As the Father of the house taught and explained what God had done for their ancestors, what was the response of the people listening? What were they supposed to do? I'll let the Jewish Mishnah tell you.

"In every generation a person must see himself as though he [personally] had gone out of Egypt, as it is stated, "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt'" ([Exodus 13:8](#)). Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, lavish, bless, extol, and adore He Who made all these miracles for our ancestors and for us: He brought us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to [celebration of] a festival, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption. [Therefore,] let us say before Him, Halleluyah!"

How much greater should our joy be when God's rescue has been reconstituted around Jesus.