

*Where we start . . .*

From time to time, Christians “quote” Scripture; we do it to make a point or support an idea we might have. What is the difference between merely “quoting” a passage and allowing a passage of Scripture to shape your thinking?

*What we read . . .*

Many times in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus makes reference to the Scriptures. When He does, He does more than merely “proof text” His idea; His thinking is rooted in and flows out of Scripture. That is important to keep in mind as you read about Jesus’ final moments on the cross in Mark 15:33-39.

The words Jesus cries out make up the first line of Psalm 22. Why might Jesus cry out using the words of that Psalm?

Turn to Psalm 22 and read it. What is the general sense or tenor of that psalm?

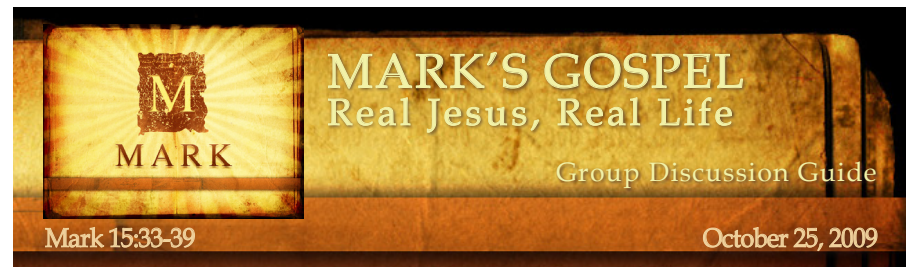
How does that psalm reflect what is going on in Jesus’ own experience on the cross?

Although it might initially sound as if Jesus is in despair, what suggests that He, in fact, is depending radically on His Father?

How does Psalm 22 end? What is in view in this psalm that Jesus embraces and cites as He gives His life on the cross?

*Why this matters . . .*

Psalm 22:27-31 leads us to understand what is in view as the end point of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. How does that end point shape the way you understand what Jesus did for you in suffering on the cross?



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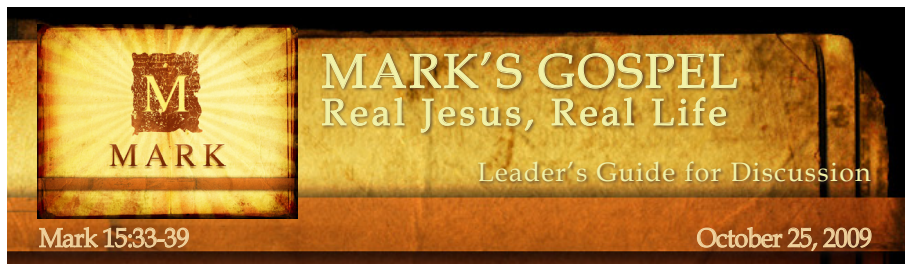
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*Diving in . . .*

We gather around the cross of Jesus in this portion of Mark. We turn our attention to the death of the Son. Of interest is how Mark presents the picture to us. Much of his attention (in 15:21-41) is seemingly on those *around* the cross. Little mention is made of Jesus hanging on the cross, even though He is obviously the key figure. Thus, when Mark *does* turn our attention to Jesus Himself, it is as if Mark is shining a huge spotlight on that moment. We *must* pay close attention to the few words we hear from Jesus that Mark reports; the way Mark tells the account, he is calling attention to these words. And what we find is that Jesus is quoting Psalm 22.

Why does Jesus do this? Well, unlike some who “use” Scripture to make their own points, Jesus’ life and thinking flowed in Scripture-informed ways. When Jesus quoted Scripture, He was embracing the flow of thought in the text and was stepping into what the Scriptures were saying (rather than simply offering a “proof text” to make a point). That being the case, Jesus’ quoting of Psalm 22 calls our attention not only to the particular words Jesus cites, but the whole of the psalm as well. And we deepen our understanding of what was happening by wedding the message of that psalm with the picture Mark gives us.

*Discussing . . .*

Although it is not a light-hearted matter when someone misuses Scripture, you might find a way to keep from embarrassing anyone with the opening question by looking for humorous ways that you have seen or heard Scripture misused. The goal is not to reprove your group for poorly handling the Word of God, but to raise the awareness of the difference between simply “quoting” a verse (perhaps, out of context) and having your thinking shaped by Scripture (resulting in Biblical passages seeping into your speaking).

Clearly, Jesus was not one who “used” Scripture; His thinking was permeated by and shaped by Scripture. When He cited a passage, it was because He was, in a real sense, living in the reality of the passage. What this means is that when we turn to the crucifixion scene and hear Jesus cry out in the words of Psalm 22, He is doing much more than merely using the words of that psalm. The message and meaning of that psalm are part of His thinking and His understanding, and by letting the words of that psalm flow from His lips He is letting His hearers (and us) know that He is

anchoring Himself in that passage of Scripture.

The psalm is a psalm of David; David prayed this prayer in time of personal trouble. But it has long been understood that David, under the inspiration of the Spirit, speaks not only of his own suffering but prophetically pictures the suffering of the Messiah, Jesus, as well. (You might spend a small amount of time noting the prophetic foreshadowings of Jesus’ crucifixion that are pictured in the psalm.)

As you read through and reflect on the psalm, it is impossible to overlook the sense of suffering and sorrow that wells up from the language. That is certainly part of what can and should be noted. But as you pay attention to the language of the psalm, there are a number of other very significant points to be seen. For example:

By speaking of God as “*my* God” (22:1), the psalmist/Jesus makes clear that He has not abandoned faith in God nor is without relationship. The sense of abandonment is real; Jesus is bearing the weight of the judgment of God against the sin of the world in His own person. But Jesus has not despaired of trust in His Father.

Although the psalmist/Jesus suffers, He does not suffer under the scorn of God. God does not despise Jesus, even as the judgment for sin is laid on Him; people scorn and despise Him (22:6). However, like in Isaiah 53 where it is clear this suffering is not man-driven but God-given, here we see the same thought (22:15). It is God who brings His Son to death.

The cry of suffering is not detached from the rest of the psalm. And, this psalm ends on a different note than that of despair. What is transpiring for the psalmist/Jesus will result in praise to God, announced to others (22:22-23).

The final end point of the psalm points to righteousness being proclaimed to a people far off and a celebration of what God, Himself, has done (22:31).

Thus this psalm underscores the truth that the suffering of Jesus on the cross was a work of God; the suffering was not the result of the Father’s displeasure in the Son but of the Father’s judgment against sin that will result in God’s praise and the proclamation of His righteousness.

The psalm hints at so much of what really was going on in the cross. It reminds us that the death of the Son was in the mind of God long before the religious leaders planned Jesus’ death. It reminds us that what happened to Jesus was not the result of a tragic turn of events but the outworking of the plan of God for our good and for His glory. Jesus’ cry from the cross, recalling the words of Psalm 22, may touch our hearts with sorrow for His suffering but can ultimately usher us into times of joyous worship for what God has done.

“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You!” (Psalm 22:27)