

Mark's 'Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ'

Jesus taught the sufferings of the Son of Man (Mark 8:31 - 9:1)

Jesus knew that he would suffer. He planned his life to make sure he was in the right place at the right time. He did not *enjoy* the suffering but he *endured* it in order to obey his Father's will. People of every age have tried to explain away the sufferings of Jesus. Their objections range from men writing things after the events, to building a good story, to God making a mistake and under-estimating what man would do.

Isaiah prophesied: 'It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer' (53:10). Jesus believed this and did not shrink away from all it entailed.

The unfolding of his suffering.

In Mark 8:31 Jesus begins to teach his followers what he knows about his sufferings. Isaiah has told us the suffering was *planned* by God. Leviticus 17:11 explains that the shedding of blood is the *provision* of God for man's sin. John 1:29 shows us the *purpose* of God: 'The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' The events that led up to Jesus' death were no mistake, but rather a miracle of God attributable to his plan and purpose.

The ugliness of his suffering

Jesus gradually builds on his teaching about suffering to the disciples (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). There was betrayal, as he was let down by those he loved. He was given away by those to whom he had given himself. There was condemnation. They said he had spoken against God, when in fact he was God speaking. They said he deserved to die, when he was the only One present who deserved to live. Jesus predicted the physical and mental pain; the spoken words used to slash open his heart; the human strength used to lacerate his back. But while they showed contempt and spat on him, he showed compassion and suffered for them.

Jesus spoke of his death. The horrible hanging death of crucifixion was among the worst the barbarous Romans were capable of. The human weight on spiked hands and feet, the excruciating pain of breathing in

such a position, the agony of a broken body added to the broken heart. Jesus suffered for the people he loved.

The uniqueness of his suffering

Of course there were many who suffered such a death at the hands of the Romans, so what makes the death of Jesus so special? Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Mark begins in 1:1 and concludes in 15:39 with references to this truth. God as a man. God in a man. God made flesh and living among us. Jesus Christ was also the Son of Man. He was made like us, tempted like us, in every way human like us, so that he could be our substitute before God when the time came for judgement on sin.

Paul puts it beautifully in 1 Timothy 2:5-6: 'For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time.' Jesus Christ is the only mediator between you and God. Jesus Christ is the only One who paid the ransom for you. Jesus Christ is the one and only way for you to come alive in God.

The understanding of his suffering

Up to this point we have omitted one great fact also predicted: 'After three days he will rise again' (8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Death was not the end of Jesus - the grave was not his goal. His goal was glory, but he knew there could be no resurrection without death first. God demonstrated his love for us in Christ's death. God delivered him from death and declared him to be the Son of God with power.

The unrepeatability of the offer

In Mark 8:34-37 everyone is urged to *come* after Jesus to *cut loose* from the world, to *carry* their cross (whatever it may be), and to *commit* everything, for always, to Jesus Christ. Are you with him or are you against him?