Cry Of Dereliction Or Cry Of Judgment? Mark 15:34 In Context

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The trinitarian theological implications of Jesus’ cry from the cross have sidetracked scholars from the context. The theme of judgment against the Jews is strong in the surrounding verses, and the Gospel repeatedly follows rejection on the part of the Jews with reception on the part of Gentiles. Psalm 22, to which allusion is common elsewhere in chapter 15, expresses judgment issuing in universality. The centurion confirms this, functioning as a symbolic recipient of the gospel following the judgment sign of the veil-rending. In the cry from the cross, Jesus the sufferer prophesies as the representative of the Jews, pronouncing their rejection and the hope of the gospel for all people.

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Interest in the psychological and doctrinal implications of Jesus’ cry, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” has left unexplored the idea of judgment as the unifying theme of Mark 15:33-39.

Consideration of these verses as a unit reveals much more than a series of statements and events commonly treated to various degrees in isolation from one another. When these subunits are considered as sequential or even consequential, the passage yields important insights regarding Mark’s purpose.

The quotation of Ps 22:1 itself, preceded by allusions to the same Psalm in 15:24 (Ps 22:18) and 15:31 (Ps 22:8), demonstrates Mark’s purpose here to show Jesus as the righteous innocent whose death is part of a plan prefigured in the Scriptures. This is simple and entirely consistent with Mark’s larger theme. Unfortunately, commentators from the patristic period onward leave Mark’s well-marked trail at this point to speculate about the implications of the cry for trinitarian theology and the precise nature of Jesus’ feelings and experience. This non-Markan path is now so well-beaten that it is difficult to recognize it as a detour. Yet a direction straight ahead affords a view that takes the passage as the thematic destination of the entire Gospel narrative. The purpose of this article is to call attention to...

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