ABANDONMENT – WHO, HOW, WHY: A CASE FOR A MULTIFACETED UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS’ CRY FROM THE CROSS IN MARK 15:34

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INTRODUCTION

In Mark 15:34, Jesus cried out, ‘ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?’ which is translated, ‘MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?’ Whether these words are accepted as a direct quote from Christ while he hung on the cross or are, as some contend, Mark’s choice of the words that he believed would best express a fuller understanding of who this Jesus is, there exists a mystery. Each word uttered in this passage is significant but for this study, our focus will be on the use of “forsaken”, addressed from this point forward as the issue of abandonment. On the surface, the argument over abandonment tends to take one of two sides. Either one can take what Mark wrote at face value, believing that Christ was truly experiencing genuine abandonment by the Father. Or, as G. C. Berkouer addresses, “We are confront(ed with) a way of thought which practically conforms to a question once expressed in the Middle Ages: ‘How can God be forsaken by God?’” This line of thought often results in the conclusion that real abandonment could not have taken place, for if so, it would somehow result in disunity within the Godhead.

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1 Mark 15:34, NASB

2 William Telford. *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 41-44. It is here where Telford sees Mark choosing to express his understanding of Christ to his readers, and this motivation has to be considered when we read the words Mark chose to include in 15:34. Telford states that “He (Mark) wishes readers to see more primitive understandings of Jesus’s person and mission ‘superseded’ by more exalted ones...The true Messianic role, in other words, was one that demanded suffering and death in a spirit of self-sacrificing love. Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: the Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) xxxvii. Best states that “It is probably best then to suppose there existed a pool of pre-Markan traditions about the Passion from which preachers and evangelists selected the material appropriate to their particular audience. Millard Erickson. *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1991) 457. Erickson refers to that statement made in Mark 15:34 as “reported as coming from Jesus. As such, they are subject to debate over whether they are his authentic words and truly represent his self-understanding, or whether they are interpretations by the Gospel writers.

However, what if there were a third option? What if we are not forced to choose one side of the argument or the other? This study will argue that instead of an "either/or" choice on the question of abandonment, what instead is needed is a multifaceted view of the abandonment issue that takes into account the who, the how, and the why of the issue.

Abandonment Who? When this study examines the question of who is abandoned on the cross, it will do so from the position that actual abandonment did take place when Christ took the sin of mankind upon himself. This view of Christ bearing our sins is a necessary component of the various atonement theories that exist. Within these atonement theories there exists a need for God’s justice. As Paul Tillich puts it, “violated justice cannot be reestablished by the message of the divine alone. For love becomes weakness and sentimentality if it does not include justice.”⁴ Therefore, as Christ took these sins of mankind upon Himself, part of the experience that His humanity dealt with was genuine separation. This was not necessarily because the Father somehow had to “look away”; it was rather because mankind’s sins have created a real separation from God and a genuine experience of abandonment. Thus, Christ experienced the abandonment (separation from God) in our place and because of our sins. However, at the same time, we cannot say Christ himself was abandoned. Gregory of Nazianzus states clearly that “It was not he (Jesus) who was forsaken either by the Father or by his own Godhead...he (Jesus) was in his own person representing

Therefore, this study will make the argument that to accept Christ’s experience of the consequence of a real abandonment or separation from the Father does not also have to result in “God forsaking God”.

Abandonment How? The “How” question is not dissimilar to the “Who” nor to the “Why” question, as they all have overlapping elements. However, the issue of “How” is sufficiently important to be addressed individually. The question that Berkouwer helped remind us of, “How can God forsake God?”, is a legitimate concern. Some Christians fear that accepting a paradigm of abandonment and separation when referring to Christ and the Father may lend support to those who want to build a wall between the Father and Christ, in an effort to refute Christ’s full divinity. Instead of weakening Christ’s divinity, this study will argue that the power of God the Father was on display in Christ as he took our sins upon himself, and subsequently experienced abandonment from the Father as a result of God’s justice. This was a necessary aspect of the most powerful display of God’s power and love.

Abandonment Why? The “Why” question, as stated above, does share some similarities with the “Who” and “How” questions, but it also possesses a completely unique aspect of abandonment which needs to be addressed. Mark 15:34 is widely accepted to be a direct quote from Psalm 22:1. This fact is not in dispute. However, what is in dispute is why Mark chose to


use this portion of the Psalm in his Gospel. Why is it absolutely essential that if one accepts that Mark was alluding to the lament portion of the Psalm, he also intended his readers to accept the thanksgiving portion as well? This study will further argue that Mark’s intent here was to show Christ in the motif of the “Suffering Servant”, a motif that his readers would have been familiar with. Additionally, it is only as the “Suffering Servant” that Mark’s readers can fully grasp the “Why” of the question, resulting in the understanding of why mankind, despite the experience of abandonment he feels as a result of his sin, is never truly abandoned by God.

Section 1 – Abandonment, Who?

There is no debate, at least among those whom we would classify as orthodox Christian theologians, historians, and scholars, that a man, Jesus of Nazareth, was crucified on a hill in Jerusalem sometime during the first third of the first century of the current era. This fact has even been accepted by most secular historians. But the question of “Who” cried out in Mark 15:34 from that cross of crucifixion, for the purposes of this study, is more about the “Who” concerning Christ’s humanity and Christ’s divinity. This is not a return to the old debate that was prevalent in the early church, where there was an ongoing attempt to claim that it was only the human nature, and not Christ’s divinity, who suffered and died on the cross. Rather, the


Millard Erickson, commenting on this widely held notion, which still exists today, writes that “it is sometimes supposed that the suffering of Jesus was experienced only by his human nature, and the anguish expressed (‘my God, my God,’ rather than ‘my father, my father’) was that of a human. Millard Erickson, The Word Became Flesh (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991) 543.
issue of “Who” was abandoned must be approached from a level that fully appreciates that abandonment was a real experience by Christ's humanity. In addition, it must also be approached from the reality that neither His humanity nor His divinity was ever ultimately abandoned by the Father.

Let’s first address the issue of the actual abandonment that was experienced by Christ as referenced in Mark 15:34. The mystery of Christ’s dual nature, of his full humanity and full divinity, tends to also include other paradoxical aspects with which our finite human understanding struggles. When we read Mark’s words in 15:34, even if it is understood as a direct word-for-word quote that Christ cried out, it seems quite evident that He who hung on that cross was experiencing real pain and real suffering. In addition to the physical suffering, all accounts indicate, as R.T. France puts it, “an agonizing expression of a real sense of alienation.”

To overlook or discount this would also overlook the predicament that mankind was in that required such a sacrifice. John Wesley considered Christ’s cry and feelings of abandonment to be real. In his commentary on Mark 15:34 and Matthew 27:46, he writes that Christ experienced “a most distressing sense of his (God) letting loose the powers of darkness upon him (Christ), withdrawing the comfortable discoveries of his presence, and filling his (Christ’s) soul with a terrible sense of the wrath due to the sins which he was bearing...treating him as an enemy, while he bore our sins.”

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9 John Wesley, *John Wesley’s Notes on the Entire Bible, The New Testament.* (Accessed from http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/notes.i.html 4/11/2012.) It should also be noted that it is the contention of this study that Wesley’s use of “letting loose” and “withdrawing”, which seem to reflect an action by God, should instead be viewed as the resulting consequence of mankind’s choice to sin.
Although this study would not support all that Paul Tillich believes about Jesus, including his notion of Christ experiencing some form of doubt as he hung on the cross\textsuperscript{10}, there is something to be said about his understanding of the human predicament of estrangement from God that speaks directly into this issue. Tillich stressed that we cannot forget that for God’s love to be on displayed on the cross, His justice must likewise be evident. One of the results of mankind’s sin was a real separation between God and mankind. This separation, of mankind’s own doing, results in a real abandonment by God. Separation from God, which in its most basic understanding would be a separation from all that is good, leaves mankind alone, abandoned in his own personal hell. This feeling of abandonment, experiencing a self-manifested hell, had to be a part of what Christ experienced on the cross. If Christ took our sins upon Himself to atone for them on the cross, He likewise had to take upon Himself all that those sins represented. “God’s atoning activity must be understood as his participation in existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences. He cannot remove these consequences; they are implied in his justice. But he can take them upon himself by participating in them and transforming them for those who participate in his participation.”\textsuperscript{11}

So as a result of Christ’s participation with mankind and his atoning act on the cross, he was truly and actually abandoned. But abandonment, forsakenness, alienation, or whatever label we give it must also include an understanding that God always has within His power the ability to overcome it. Tillich continues, “According to the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ,

\textsuperscript{10} Paul Tillich. \textit{Systematic Theology}. Vol. 2…132, Tillich views in Christ’s cry from the cross in Mark 15:34 as one who was experiencing some doubt as to his Messianic role. Tillich writes, “We can also refer to his doubt about his own work, as in his hesitation to accept the messianic title, and, above all, his feeling of having been left alone by God without God’s expected interference on the Cross.

there are...no traces of estrangement between him and God and consequently between him and himself and between him and his world...he is not estranged from the ground of his being.”

Athenasius also speaks to the fact that as we look upon Christ on the cross, at no time should we conclude that we see anyone other than God.

For who, seeing a body proceeding forth from a virgin alone without man...seeing the substance of water changed and transformed into wine...he went upon the sea also as its master, and walked as on dry land...feeding so vast a multitude on little...did he show himself to be any other than the very Lord whose providence is over all things?...Now these things showed that Christ on the cross was God.

In the writings of Asterius the Sophist we can see an understanding that while Christ experienced the consequence of abandonment while acting in His atoning role on the cross, He was still the very God incarnate.

(Christ) did not lose his divine power. Even when he hung on the cross, (as God) he bore heaven and earth. Though he hung alongside robbers, he was marveled at by the angels. Though he was derided by the Jews, he handed over the spirit to the Father. Though he was laid in the tomb, he emptied the rooms of Hades. And though he bore the fetters of the dead, he shattered the bonds of death. Though he was condemned by unbelievers, he will come as judge of the living and the dead.

SECTION 2 – ABANDONMENT, HOW?

When the issue of abandonment asks the “How” question, this study contends that it can be done in a way that shows how Christ experienced real abandonment on the cross, while at the same time neither his humanity or divinity was weakened in the process. In order to


establish this, we must address the concerns of those who have asked the particular question, “How can God forsake God?” as discussed by G.C. Berkhouwer. These individuals contend that any conclusion that results in Christ experiencing abandonment or suffering of any kind not only weakens our understanding of His dual nature, but assists those who would love nothing more than to draw a line of separation between God and Christ, and thereby remove the validity of Christ’s full divinity.

For us to accept a real abandonment concerning Christ on the cross in Mark’s account in 15:34, we must do so by adjusting how the issue of abandonment is viewed. We must view abandonment, separation, alienation, and the like through the correct lens. We must understand that what took place on the cross was a necessary result of (1) mankind’s choice to sin, and (2) the need for God’s love to be realized and expressed through the justice that had to be carried out through the atonement. This lens must operate with God’s unfathomable love at its center. We must also remember, as Paul Tillich has already established so well for us, that God’s love must include His justice. To deny God’s justice as a part of atonement, which must include the reality of Christ’s experience abandonment and suffering on the cross, would ultimately result in a denial of God’s love.

A second way to approach this question of “How” is to understand that the abandonment and suffering that Christ experienced on the cross was also shared by God the Father. This sounds like a radical assertion but when taken from the proper perspective, this study contends it is as essential as the assertion that Christ experienced real suffering and abandonment on the cross. Millard Erickson, in wrestling with this issue of How God could ever

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15 See G.C. Berkouwer. The Person of Christ...221. This is again the reference to the question that some in the Middle Ages asked, “How can God forsake God?”
suffer, views it like this. “I would propose that God experiences vicariously the suffering of all of his children, and especially experienced the suffering of Jesus, with whom he had a uniquely close relationship. What human parent does not share in the suffering of a child whom they truly love.”

It would seem that just as denying God’s justice leads to the denying of His love, so would denying God’s capacity to suffer. This study contends that the One who suffers as a result of His unfathomable love is not a victim of suffering that comes from outside of His own being. No one can make God suffer; rather, it is a voluntary act of his own volition. Just as He laid down His life and took our sins upon Himself because of His love for Mankind, so too is the case with the issue of suffering and abandonment.

Paul Tillich also hits on this when he writes that “the picture of Christ crucified is the impression of his self-surrendering love. This love awakens in man the answering love which is certain that, in God, love, not wrath, is the last word.” It is also important that the love we see in Christ on the cross as He suffered and experienced what separation (abandonment) from God had done to mankind, only has the necessary atoning aspect if Christ is God at that moment and through the entire passion event.

Therefore, the question of “How could God abandon God?” is not a question to be feared, but instead can be viewed as the only way God’s love could rescue mankind. This view, this study contends, upholds the unity and the power necessary within Christ’s full humanity and divinity.


SECTION 3 – ABANDONMENT, WHY?

The “Why” question that will be addressed in this portion of the study will focus on “Why” Mark chose to include the first verse of Psalm 22 as a part of his account of Christ on the cross, and whether it is legitimate to look beyond the portion of Psalm 22 that Mark directly quoted. This study will argue that it is not only legitimate, but also that only by including both the lament and thanksgiving portions of Psalm 22 to Mark 15:34 can the reader grasp the full meaning that Mark intended.

Holly Carey, in her work *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark’s Gospel*, argues that applying the entirety of Psalm 22 to Mark 15:34 is the only legitimate way to view Mark’s use of Psalm 22, and is what she calls “a reading that embraces the original context of the psalm as a contextual reading of the psalmic citation of Mark 15:34.” In stating this, Carey further argues that what Mark is doing is drawing upon the *Suffering Servant* motif, a motif, she contends, that was not only something that was common within other Jewish and early Christian writings, but was also a motif that his readers would have possessed a knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, his allusion to this motif in 15:34 was done as an effort to assure his readers that although the Suffering Servant in Psalm 22 may have appeared for a time to have been abandoned by God in the lament portion (Psalm 22:1-22), the thanksgiving portion (Psalm 22:23-31) reveals that ultimately this is not the case. The bulk of

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18 Holly J. Carey. *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*... 2-3.
this final section will take a more detailed look at Carey’s argument, and in doing so will strengthen what was argued in the previous “Who” and “Why” sections.

As was stated in the Introduction of the study, Holly Carey contends that there is no argument that what is quoted in Mark 15:34 is the first verse of Psalm 22. But what is not agreed upon is whether it is legitimate to assume that more than the first verse of Psalm 22 is implied by Mark. Those who do not think it is legitimate have chosen to accept only an atomistic reading in Mark 15:34. “‘Atomistic’ indicates that the portion of the psalm actually cited is the only portion of the passage that is relevant for interpretation in its new context.”

Carey points out that many who argue for an atomistic reading of Mark 15:34 believe that those who attempt a cultural contextual reading often do so because they find difficulty in dealing with the suffering aspect that is found in Psalm 22:1. And, as R.T. France believes, it also weakens the picture of real anguish, suffering, and abandonment that Christ was experiencing. He writes,

But it is illegitimate to interpret Jesus’ words as referring to the part of the Psalm which he did not echo. As throughout the crucifixion scene, it is the suffering of the righteous man in Psalm 22, not his subsequent vindication, which is alluded to. But the fact that Jesus can still appeal to ‘my God’ places his sense of abandonment poles apart from a nihilistic despair, this is the ‘cup’ which he has willingly accepted from his Father’s hand.

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19 Holly J. Carey. Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 3.

20 Holly J. Carey. Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 3

21 R.T. France, The Gospel According to Matthew...399. It should be noted that R.T. France is actually commenting on Matthew’s Gospel where Matthew, in the exact same manner, uses Psalm 22:1 in 27:46. Based on R.T. France’s comments, we can conclude that he feels that same about Mark 15:34. Carey also adds that “R. France is convinced that reading the exegesis of the whole psalm into the few words of Jesus is to undermine the effect that Mark intended, which was one of extreme agony. Holly J. Carey. Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 4.
Another argument for an atomistic reading comes from R. Gundry. “R. Gundry argues that the possibility that Jesus’ citation is an indication of confidence is the deliverance of which Ps. 22:23-32 speaks is weakened by the fact that there are instances throughout the gospels where citations are made from the middle of scriptural passages.”

Faced with these two opposing views, what does Carey offer in rebuttal? Her argument, that it is legitimate to view that Mark intended all of Psalm 22 to be a part of Mark 15:34, is based on an historical understanding that both within Jewish and early Christian traditions, the first verse or few lines of a Psalm used by a teacher or leader of worship, called an incipit, created a culture whereby listeners would automatically recite and apply the remainder of the Psalm.

Holly Carey contends that ‘it is known that the ancients would cite the first line of a psalm or text in order to convey the meaning of the whole.’ Furthermore she points out that “incipits sometimes functioned similarly to titles in that they served to indicate that the remainder of the psalm was implied in the context in which the incipit was located.” Carey lays out a detailed argument to support her contention about incipits. There is not sufficient space in this study to give voice to all that Carey presents, but in the opinion of this study the most powerful of all her arguments lies in what is known about the use of incipits within the context of synagogue worship. She writes, “The fact that the psalms were chanted both by the individual leader of the service and often repeated or ‘filled in’ by the audience of worshippers

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22 Holly J. Carey. Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 3-4.
23 Holly J. Carey. Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 3.
24 Holly J. Carey. Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 107.
indicates that the latter would have had to be familiar with the whole psalm in order to participate in this part of the service."\(^{25}\)

When Carey indicates that worshippers would have been “familiar with the whole of the psalm,” she implies that these same worshippers would have been required to have both the knowledge of the actual words of the Psalm and the implied understanding of what the Psalm was indicating. Is there any support for the claim that Mark’s readers would also have understood the implied meaning, including the motif of the Suffering Servant?

Ernest Best, in *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology*, does not necessarily believe we can make the claim that Mark’s readers would have automatically picked up on the implied “Suffering Servant” motif in 15:34, but he does believe that Mark’s readers would have had enough knowledge to have seen Mark making a number of implications concerning Christ. He believes there is also enough known about Mark’s community of believers to claim that Mark and his readers would have had shared beliefs unique to their own small community, and “this implies that Mark’s hearers already possessed some understanding of much of the material he used...In essence, what Mark offered his hearers was a commentary on what they already knew.”\(^{26}\)

Thus, as Best has argued here, there seems to be support that we can make the assumption that the readers of Mark, who were also within his immediate cultural context, would have had a basic knowledge of what Mark was implying in 15:34. In addition, if we are willing to accept the fact that much of what we read in Mark’s Gospel would have been a part

\(^{25}\) Holly J. Carey. *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*... 113.

\(^{26}\) Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion*... xxxi.
of what he had been teaching concerning Christ for at least two decades prior to his writing of his Gospel, this would seemingly lend additional support to Best’s claim. But, as is most important for this study, would this implied understanding have included the Suffering Servant Motif?

To argue for a common understanding of the Suffering Servant motif within the cultural context of Mark and his readers, Carey turns to support from other extra-canonical and non-canonical writings, as well as writings from the Qumran community from the same era as Mark’s Gospel. She claims that within these other writings we can also see an understanding of the Suffering Servant in Psalm 22. Carey’s strategy is to argue that if these other writings included this or a similar motif, then “these issues were ‘in the air’ during the time of Mark’s gospel and were part of his milieu. This creates a strong possibility that Mark and his implied readers would have also used and regarded both the motif of the Righteous Servant and the psalms in the same, or a similar way...”

To support Carey’s argument that the Suffering Servant motif (which is also referred to as the Righteous Sufferer) was common during Mark’s era, she offers a number of examples. These examples include *Joseph and Aseneth*, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, and the one that this study will focus on, *The Hodayot of the Qumran Community.*

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27 Holly J. Carey. *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*... 95.

28 Holly J. Carey. *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*... 119. Carry sees a possible allusions to Psalm 22 in *Joseph and Aseneth*. One of these possible allusions in in 12:11, “Save me, O Lord, deserted as I am, For my father and mother denied me. Because I destroyed and shattered their gods; And I have no other hope save in thee, O Lord; For thou are the father of the orphans, and the champion of the persecuted, And the help of them that are oppressed.” H.F.D. Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament*. David Cook Tr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.)

29 Holly J. Carey. *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross*... 125, references the Wisdom of Solomon as one of the other writings that featured both the lament and thanksgiving portions from Psalm 22, in addition to allusions to the Suffering
Within the Qumran writings there exists a figure known as the Teacher of Righteousness. There have been some who have tried to identify this Teacher of Righteousness. One in particular is J.L. Teicher. Teicher has associated the Teacher of Righteousness with a group of Jewish Christians known as the Ebionites. F.F. Bruce does not agree with Teicher’s claims, or with others who have wanted to make a direct connection with Christ Himself. However, Bruce does see many shared characteristics between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus Christ. “Both were founders of new communities which claimed to represent the faithful remnant of Israel. Both laid down the outlines of a creative method of biblical interpretation which formed the groundwork of their followers’ theological beliefs and directed their course of action. Both were highly venerated by their followers…” However, Bruce does not agree with a direct identification of the Teacher of Righteousness with Jesus Christ. He believes there are too many differences between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus to support such a claim. This study believes that the most important of the differences he includes

Servant. It is in Wisdom 2 where Carey sees the lament portion from Psalm 22. This can be seen in Wis. 2:10, where we see the phrase, “Let us oppress the righteous poor man…”, 2:12 “Let us lie in wait for the righteous man…, and 2:18, “for if the righteous man is god’s son…” Then in Wisdom 5 Carey sees the thanksgiving portion form Psalm 22. Wis. 5: 1, “Then the righteous man will stand with great confidence…, 5:2, “When they see him, they will be shaken with dreadful fear, and they will be amazed at his unexpected salvation…, 5:4-5, “We thought that his life was madness and that his end was without honor. Why has he been numbered among the sons of god? And why is his lot among the saints?” Wisdom of Solomon, The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is copyright ©, (Accessed from http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/r/rsv/rsv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=3905445, April 9, 2012.)


31 Joseph, A. Fitzmyer, Essays on the Semitic background of the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997) 339. Fitzmyer writes, “As the name of a sect, this word appears for the first time in Irenaeus. He offers no explanation of its meaning or origin, but several were given in antiquity. They were called the Ebionites: (a) because of the poverty of their intelligence; (b) because of the poverty of the law which they followed; (c) because of the poverty of the opinions they had of Christ; (d) because they were ‘poor in understanding, hope, and deeds’.”

is that “Jesus was hailed by His first followers as the long-expected Messiah, [whereas] it does not appear that the Teacher of Righteousness claimed messianic dignity for himself or received it from others.”

However, associating the Teacher of Righteousness with Jesus Christ, or even with any particular Christian or Christian community like the Ebionites, is not what Carry believes is important. Her claim is that all that has to be shown concerning the Qumran writings, or in its motif of the Teacher of Righteousness, is that this motif “parallels the Markan presentation of Jesus [as the Suffering Servant] as an exemplar for his own community.”

Even more important for Carry is what she sees in how the writer of the Qumran’s Teacher of Righteousness makes “extensive use... of both sections of the psalm [psalm 22]...both in the lament and in thanksgiving – which corresponds to the way Mark invests his story of Jesus with the language of this psalm.

Section Three - Summary

It is the opinion of this study that Carey’s argument for a cultural contextual reading concerning Mark 15:34 is legitimate. Carey has shown sufficient evidence that the use of incipits, which led worshipers to apply the entirety of psalms both in recitation and in application, would have been a practice that Mark’s readers would have been aware of. In addition, this study also supports claims, both from Carey and Best, that Mark’s readers in his

33 F.F. Bruce, The Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran Texts... 31. [Whereas] added for clarification.

34 Holly J. Carey . Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 105 [as the Suffering Servant] added for clarification.

35 Holly J. Carey . Jesus’ Cry from the Cross... 123. [psalm 22] added for clarification.
immediate community would have already had a sufficient understanding of what Mark believed about Christ. And if the motif of the Suffering Servant was Mark’s intent in using Psalm 22:1, then his readers would have very likely understood this.

But, as this study has previously stated, we still have to ask ourselves if we can say with confidence that Mark did indeed intend his readers to see the Suffering Servant motif in 15:34. Even with the large amount of support that similar motifs existed in contemporary writing, this is still a difficult question to answer with absolute certainty. However, as will be shared in greater detail in the conclusion portion of this study, this question must be answered in the affirmative. And, as will also be discussed, this study believes the answer lies in what was argued in the “Who” and “How” portions of this study.

CONCLUSION

The questions that have been addressed in this study concerning the who, the how, and the why of abandonment have all been working toward presenting a new understanding of the abandonment that took place in Mark 15:34. The goal was to present an option whereby abandonment could be seen in a multifaceted way that would allow both sides of the original argument to not only find support for their position, but at the same time gain a greater understanding and acceptance of the other.

Even more important, as far as the argument for a new multifaceted reading is concerned, this study believes that this can only be achieved and sufficiently supported when the portion of Psalm 22 used in Mark 15:34 is viewed from the perspective of a cultural contextual reading. This study contends that only when both portions of Psalm 22 (the lament
and the thanksgiving) are applied can readers see how the multifaceted abandonment option becomes coherent.

As was argued in Section One of this study, it was because Christ took mankind’s sins upon Himself on the cross that he also took upon Himself the consequences that accompanied mankind’s sin. These consequences, which resulted in mankind experiencing separation from God, created in man a feeling of real abandonment from God. In addition, this separation or abandonment, which Paul Tillich helped us see clearly, was a necessary component of God’s justice, without which God’s full expression of His love could not be realized. Thus, within the lament portion of Psalm 22 we see Christ cry out in a condition of real suffering and real abandonment. But, as this study has also argued, it is within the thanksgiving portion of Psalm 22 that we also come to see that the abandonment was not a complete and ultimate abandonment.

Psalm 22:24 reads, “For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor has He hidden His face from him, But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.”36 Within this verse and throughout the entirety of the thanksgiving portion of the Psalm, the reality concerning abandonment is made clear. For just as the Suffering Servant was not ultimately forgotten or abandoned by God, neither was Christ. And because Christ took our place on the cross, neither is mankind.

The situation of estrangement between mankind and God is similar to a marriage between a man and a woman. If the actions of one or both of the members of the marriage leads to an estrangement between them, as long as the couple does not divorce, they are still

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36 Psalm 22:24, NASB
married. And more importantly, there still remains a hope for reconciliation. In the situation between mankind and God, it was mankind’s sinful actions which led to the estrangement. But unlike in the analogy of the married couple, the solution for reconciliation of this estrangement between mankind and God was only something that could have been accomplished by God through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Therefore Christ, as God, not only sympathized with mankind’s predicament, He also provided the hope and reality of a reconciliation.

Christ, as God, did indeed experience real estrangement and real abandonment. And as God, Christ’s actions on the cross in atoning for mankind’s sins were able to reveal to mankind that they were never ultimately abandoned by God. Thus mankind can realize the reconciliation that Christ, as God, made possible on the cross, a reconciliation that is available if mankind will only accept it.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


