

Mark's use of Isaiah

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KEY WORDS

| Mark | Isaiah | Servant of the Lord |
| New Testament use of Old Testament | Hermeneutics | Markan Christology |

ABSTRACT

Mark's gospel makes plentiful cryptic references and allusions to the Old Testament whilst being sparing with explicit quotations. Texts from Isaiah are frequently alluded to. This study examines Mark's use of these texts in order to ascertain the essential theological burden that is drawn from Isaiah. It is apparent that Mark has drawn on three core themes and developed them in his Gospel. Firstly, that the 'way' of the Lord coming to save is the way of Jesus to the cross. Secondly, that Jesus characterises the divinely-appointed, Spirit-filled servant of Yahweh. Thirdly, that Jesus characterises the enigmatic suffering servant of Yahweh.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to study how the author of Mark uses texts from Isaiah and synthesise the contribution that Isaiah makes to the theology of Mark's Gospel. Specifically, this will involve a consideration of which Isaianic texts are quoted or alluded to in Mark, and their significance in both their original contexts; commenting on the hermeneutical methods employed by Mark in his use of these texts; and synthesising the exegetical and hermeneutical data in order to articulate the essential theological burden that Mark draws from Isaiah.

Some preface remarks are necessary. Firstly, this work will include exegetical and hermeneutical notes on the chief quotations and allusions to Isaiah in the gospel of Mark, namely¹:

- a) Isaiah 40.3/Mark 1.2–3
- b) Isaiah 64.1/Mark 1.10

- c) Isaiah 42.1/Mark 1.11
- d) Isaiah 43.25/Mark 2.7
- e) Isaiah 49.24/Mark 3.27
- f) Isaiah 63.10/Mark 3.29
- g) Isaiah 6.9–10/Mark 4.12
- h) Isaiah 29.13/Mark 7.6–7
- i) Isaiah 6.9–10/Mark 8.18
- j) Isaiah 52.13–53.12/Mark 8.31, 9.12, 9.31, 10.33–34, 45
- k) Isaiah 66.24/Mark 9.48
- l) Isaiah 56.7/Mark 11.17
- m) Isaiah 5.1–2/Mark 12.1
- n) Isaiah 19.2/Mark 13.8
- o) Isaiah 13.10/Mark 13.24–25;
- p) Isaiah 53.11–12/Mark 14.24
- q) Isaiah 53.7/Mark 14.60–61, 15.4–5

Secondly, I will take a canonical approach to the book of Isaiah in this essay and consequently will not engage in discussions surrounding the compilation, text², authorship³ or division of

1 This list was generated from Watts, R. E. "Mark." Pages 111–249 in *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007, and from the list of quotations and allusions in the Greek New Testament (UBS4).

2 Wyngaarden, M. J. "The Servant Of Jehovah In Isaiah And The Dead Sea Scrolls." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 01:3 (Summer 1958), pp. 20–24.

3 Cowles, H. "On The Authorship Of Isaiah 40–66." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 030:119 (July 1873), pp. 521–533.

Isaiah⁴.

Thirdly, with reference to his hermeneutical methods, Mark does not seem to differ significantly from his contemporaries. In short, Mark – and the other NT authors – were ‘explaining what the Old Testament means in light of Christ’s coming’⁵.

Fourthly, it must be acknowledged that Mark’s use of OT texts is both sparing and cryptic:

Mark’s allusive use of scripture contributes significantly to the plot of his narrative. Mark, the narrator, uses the Hebrew Bible much as Jesus, in the narrative, uses parables, miracles, and symbolic acts. His use is principally allusive rather than explicit quotation, so that only those who know the Hebrew Scriptures recognize either the biblical references or their significance within the present context. If Mark’s readers are to have ears that hear and eyes that see who Jesus truly is, they must exercise their spiritual senses, especially with reference to the Hebrew Scriptures.⁶

Finally, Stein has highlighted a number of key exegetical issues that must be recognised in Mark’s gospel, including the significance of the first verse, the demonic Christological statements, the significance of Mark’s summary statements and the significance of repetition (in particular, repetition of the passion prediction)⁷; likewise, trying to ascertain what kind of audience Mark was writing for leads us to

4 Osgood, H. “Isaiah The Myth And Isaiah The Prophet.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 058:229 (January 1901), pp. 68–87.

5 Enns, P. *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005 (kindle edition), location 2321.

6 Caneday, A. B. “Mark’s Provocative Use of Scripture in Narration: ‘He Was with the Wild Animals and Angels Ministered to Him.’” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 9 (NA 1999), pp. 19–36.

7 Stein, R. H. “Exegetical Issues in Mark’s Gospel.” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 08:3 (Fall 2004), pp. 4–11.

notice similar features⁸. All of these issues will feature in this study.

ISAIAH 40.3/MARK 1.2–3

In its original context, Isaiah anticipates the coming of YHWH to his people’s aid in a New Exodus⁹. The mention of ‘a highway’ denotes processional preparation and thereby the importance of YHWH, rather than a literal, physical highway¹⁰; the sense is to make appropriate preparations for YHWH’s anticipated arrival¹¹. The ‘voice’ is anonymous¹² but this poses no problem; the coming of YHWH to his people’s aid is an event of such significance that it *requires* announcement:

God is seen figuratively as coming from his distant residence in Sinai to aid his people in their hour of distress. The people cannot help themselves, and there is no one else, so God himself must come.¹³

Given Mark’s sparing use of direct OT quotation, and the likely Roman Gentile audience, this opening quotation is remarkable¹⁴. Mark’s ‘prismatic’¹⁵ use of this text so early on in his

8 Stein, R.H. “Is Our Reading The Bible The Same As The Original Audience’s Hearing It? A Case Study In The Gospel Of Mark.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46:1 (March 2003), pp. 63–78.

9 Watts, R. E. “Consolation Or Confrontation? Isaiah 40–55 And The Delay Of The New Exodus.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 41:1 (NA 1990), pp. 31–59.

10 Motyer, J.A. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999, p. 300.

11 Smith, G.V. *Isaiah 40–66*. Kindle edition. New American Commentary Series. Tennessee: B & H Academic, 2009, location 2491.

12 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 2491.

13 Oswalt, J.N. *The Book of Isaiah: chapters 40–66*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998, p. 52.

14 Edwards, James R. *The Gospel according to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002. p. 26

15 Caneday, “Mark’s Provocative Use of Scripture in Narration.”

gospel thus makes a clear identification of Jesus with YHWH; John the Baptist's announcement of the coming Christ is to be understood in the same category as Isaiah's 'voice' announcing the coming of YHWH to aid his people¹⁶. Mark appears to link these two quotations¹⁷, from Malachi and Isaiah, because Malachi contains a clear mention of God's appointed herald, and Isaiah 40.3 contains a fitting comment; they share generally 'the idea of a herald for the eschatological coming of God'¹⁸. Isaiah's text is quoted from the LXX, and αὐτοῦ is substituted instead of τοῦ θεοῦ; this may be an intentional device in order to allow 'the Christian reader to understand the κυρίου of the previous line to refer to Jesus'¹⁹. Similarly, Mark aligns 'in the desert', the place where – in the LXX and MT – God will prepare the way for his people, with Jesus' forerunner²⁰.

Thus 'in 1.2–3 the groundwork is already in place that will define and characterise Jesus' bearing throughout the Gospel'²¹. Jesus' person and work is identified with God's person and work. From the start of the Gospel, 'the way of God is ultimately the way of Jesus to the cross.'²²

ISAIAH 64.1/MARK 1.10

Isaiah is reviewing Israel's tragic past²³, and wishing for a divine theophany like those of

his people's history²⁴. An accurate rendering of the Hebrew gives the sense, 'oh, that you had rend the heavens and come down...'²⁵; Isaiah wistfully wishes that YHWH's 'inactivity' had ended long ago²⁶; he struggles to understand 'why God would let the situation get so desperate without having done something about it.'²⁷

Mark's choice to use the verb σαχίζομένουσ makes his allusion to this Isaianic text readily discernible to readers who were accustomed to the Hebrew text קרע of Isaiah. Intertestamental rabbinic tradition spoke of the *bat-qol*; the whisper of God's voice since the last of the prophets, anticipating the return of God's voice²⁸. Moreover, there is intertestamental evidence anticipating that the Messiah would be endowed with God's Spirit.²⁹ Thus what Mark writes here is staggering; YHWH *has* torn open the heavens, he *has* spoken from heaven, and his Spirit *has* come down – there is some rabbinic evidence to suggest that, from the Hebrew of Genesis 1.2, God's Spirit was likened to a dove – and endowed his servant figure³⁰ in a profound way (cf. Isa. 11.2; 42.1; 61.1), expressed εἰς αὐτόν in the Greek. Thus Jesus' submission to John's baptism becomes his commissioning; the one for whom John has been preparing, the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit, is now equipped for that role³¹.

16 Watts, R. E. "Mark." Pages 111–249 in *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007.

17 Sanders, H. A. "The New Testament Quotation of a Twice-Repeated Prophecy." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 071:282 (April 1914), pp. 275–282.

18 France, R.T. *The Gospel of Mark*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary Series. Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002, p. 63.

19 France, *Mark*, p. 64.

20 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 27.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

23 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 518.

24 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 21194.

25 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 518.

26 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 21194.

27 Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 621.

28 1 Enoch 49:3; 62:2; 1QS 4:6; see also Edwards, J. R. "The Baptism of Jesus According to the Gospel of Mark." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991), pp. 46–47.

29 Edwards, *Mark*, p.36.

30 Cranfield, C.E.B. *The Gospel According to St. Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. Cambridge Greek Testament Commentaries. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, p. 52.

31 France, *Mark*, p. 76.

ISAIAH 42.1/MARK 1.11

This text is characterised by the language of ‘presentation’; YHWH presents his servant and commissions him to do justice³². Contrary to collectivist theories, a close examination of the first servant song concludes that the anonymous servant ‘can be neither Israel nor Cyrus nor any person other than the royal Davidic Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ’³³. The servant is inseparable from YHWH’s mission, for he will put his personal presence upon him. At this stage in Isaiah, the servant’s task is more clearly discernible than his identity. ‘Bringing justice to the nations’ may be best understood as bringing definitive revelation about God and his will, to the world³⁴; he is a nonviolent figure achieving justice for the nations under the Spirit of YHWH’s direction³⁵. The delight that YHWH takes in this unnamed servant is a stark contrast to his displeasure at his ‘blind’ servant Israel (cf. Isa. 42.18–22)³⁶.

In Mark then, this allusion serves to confirm Jesus’ self-consciousness as God’s son and servant³⁷. It is debatable whether ‘my Son’ represents ‘my servant’ of Isaiah 42.1, although in the context it would appear highly likely that Mark is making a deliberate allusion to Isaiah 42.1, as God’s Spirit is put upon Jesus. In rabbinic tradition the concept of the *bat-qol* anticipated the time when God would again speak definitively³⁸; Mark states that this has

happened at the presentation of YHWH’s servant–Son Jesus. Thus Jesus’ baptism marks ‘the confirmation of Jesus’ Sonship and the commencement of his servanthood’³⁹; we must note that the God’s words to Jesus at his baptism do not so much establish as presuppose a Father–Son relationship; εὐδόκησα is a timeless aorist⁴⁰.

Caneday observes that, with subtle irony, Mark’s baptism narrative foreshadows the crucifixion narrative, thus forming an *inclusio* structure whereby the whole gospel moves from the anointing (baptism) to the enthronement (crucifixion) of the Son of God⁴¹.

ISAIAH 43.25/MARK 2.7

In contrast to Israel’s failures, which have been outlined in the preceding verses, God promises that he will wipe away their sins⁴²; he declares forgiveness. Not only will God defeat the ‘gods’, but he will defeat sin itself⁴³. The repetition, ‘I, even I’, adds emotional intensity, and the ‘blotting out of sins’ is cast clearly as a divine attribute. ‘For my own sake’ highlights that the motives for forgiveness originate within God’s very nature.⁴⁴

This declaration of YHWH’s forgiveness is precisely what Mark portrays Jesus as making, and precisely why Jesus is met with such a response in Mk.2.7, where the entire

32 Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 109.

33 Lindsey, F. D. “Isaiah’s Songs of the Servant Part 1: The Call of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1–9” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:553 (January 1982): p. 12–27.

34 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 318.

35 France, *Mark*, p. 81.

36 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 4000.

37 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 54.

38 ‘The *bat-qol* (= ‘daughter of a voice’, i.e. an echo of a heavenly voice) is in Jewish thought an inferior substitute for the Word of God given directly to the prophets by the Holy Spirit ... apparently Mark was thinking in terms of a

bat-qol, and we may assume that Jesus had thought of the message he had received in that way too. During his earthly life his intercourse with the Father was subject to human conditions and limitations.’ Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 54.

39 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 38.

40 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 55.

41 Caneday, A. B. “Christ’s Baptism and Crucifixion: The Anointing and Enthronement of God’s Son.” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 08:3 (Fall 2004), pp. 70–81.

42 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 5318.

43 Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 161.

44 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 340.

interrogative sequence carries the clear tone of an unspoken charge of blasphemy⁴⁵. The authority Jesus is claiming here was unexpected and unanticipated:

The classic description of the Messiah in *Psalms of Solomon* 17–18 speaks of his overcoming demons, ushering in a perfect government, judging the godless, and of his righteousness and even sinlessness (17:36), but not of his ability to forgive sins...forgiveness of sins remains everywhere the exclusive right of God.⁴⁶

It is clear that Jesus is exercising the divine prerogative⁴⁷. Thus Dunn, 'it is impossible to soften the Christological force of 2.7,10: Jesus is able and has authority to forgive sins, not merely to declare them forgiven.'⁴⁸

ISAIAH 49.24–25/MARK 3.27

There is some disagreement between Masoretic and Qumran readings of this text⁴⁹. In the context, YHWH asserts his power over and against the 'mighty', the foreign conqueror⁵⁰. God is affirming his superior force and his righteousness⁵¹; hence the emphasis of v. 25 ('I myself will contend...'). כן can communicate an adversative sense following a negative, which may be the sense here. The sense of contrast is heightened by אף; 'even though it is not easy, the prey *will* be taken from the mighty man'⁵². No particular enemy or military defeat is mentioned, rather 'the force of the statement

45 France, *Mark*, p. 126.

46 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 78.

47 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 98–99.

48 Dunn, J.D.G. *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990, p. 27.

49 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 11693–11715.

50 *Ibid.*, location 11693.

51 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 396.

52 Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 314.

emphasises only God's role in this marvellous act of deliverance'⁵³.

Again, Mark's allusion is cryptic. Jesus identifies himself with YHWH, as the one who will bind the 'strong man'⁵⁴. The 'prey' of Isaiah 49.24 are people whom Jesus rescues from Satan's oppression, and the 'binding' is being achieved by a man through whom the Spirit of YHWH is working⁵⁵. This binding of Satan, implemented through real conflict, is eschatological; his power is broken but not yet finished. Moreover, this concise parable reveals something important of Jesus' self-understanding; 'as the Son of God, he does something for humanity before doing something to it.'⁵⁶

ISAIAH 63.10/MARK 3.29

Isaiah's choice of terminology, 'my Holy Spirit', is rare in the OT⁵⁷. Most likely his use of the descriptor 'holy' is to highlight that God's people have become his enemy⁵⁸ by assailing his holiness⁵⁹. Indeed, rebellion is essentially hostility to God's transcendent power and perfection; thus sin is finally a matter of the will⁶⁰.

In context in Mark, Jesus' exorcisms have been attributed to Satan by the accredited theological teachers⁶¹. It is this allegation – that Jesus' empowerment is from Beelzebub,

53 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 11715.

54 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 137–139.

55 France, *Mark*, p. 172–174.

56 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 122.

57 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 20844.

58 Watts, "Mark," in Beale and Carson, *Use of the Old Testament*, p. 149.

59 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 514.

60 Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 607.

61 Cranfield, *Mark*, p.141–142. Cranfield quotes Calvin, 'Christ did not pronounce this decision on the mere words they uttered, but on their base and wicked thought.'

not the Spirit of God – that represents ‘total repudiation’ of God’s rule and a posture of deliberate antagonism and rejection⁶². Since his baptism, Jesus has been authorised by the Spirit of God; thus any person attributing his work to the devil is lost without hope⁶³. Jesus shows that it is his accusers who are blasphemous, because they have attributed the Spirit’s work to Satan⁶⁴.

ISAIAH 6.9–10/MARK 4.12

There is a distinction between inner and outer faculties made here, thus Isaiah’s hearers may ‘hear, but not understand’. Isaiah’s commission is to tell God’s message to a people whose inner faculties will not recognise or accept it. The only possible response will be to tell it again⁶⁵.

Isaiah 6.9–10 is used extensively in the New Testament, and the different writers present ‘complementary notions regarding the theology of obduracy’⁶⁶. Although I cannot here engage at any length with related text–critical discussions⁶⁷, two textual observations are noteworthy. Firstly, Mark’s quotation appears to be from the Targum rather than either the Hebrew text or the LXX⁶⁸. Secondly, there is no evidence of a mistranslation, in contrast to the suggestions of some commentators⁶⁹. Mark seems intent to hold divine sovereignty and

human responsibility in tension⁷⁰.

His use of *iva* connotes the *purpose* of this concealment⁷¹. The significance of this quotation is less that of fulfilment, and more of ‘typological correspondence’⁷²; those who hear Jesus’ parables but are not enlightened are like Isaiah’s hearers. Moreover, they – like Isaiah’s hearers – are nevertheless part of the divine plan. In Mark, the apparent difficulties of this text dissipate if it is understood that the focus is not so much on an *intention* that the parables be not understood, but on a confident *fact* that they will not be understood. If this is true, then the context of Isaiah’s text fits well. In fact, the only remarkable difference is that Jesus affirms that – unlike Isaiah’s ministry – his parables will find some ‘good soil’ to take root in⁷³: ‘God’s self–revelation is truly revelation [because] it is precisely *veiled revelation*.’⁷⁴

ISAIAH 29.13/MARK 7.6–7

Isaiah writes here of religion without reality; of the use of correct words but wayward inner devotion. Indeed, even what has the appearance of an ‘heart response’ – their ‘fear’ – is in response to the teaching of man⁷⁵.

Outside of Mark’s opening, this is the only explicit reference Mark makes to Isaiah, which highlights its significance⁷⁶. This theme of internal and external inconsistency is picked up in Mark’s gospel, reaching its climax in Jesus’ statement in 7.8, ‘you leave the commandment

62 France, *Mark*, p. 174–176.

63 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 123.

64 Stein, *Mark*, p. 186.

65 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 78–79.

66 Mills, D. W. “The Use of Isaiah 6:9–10 in the New Testament with Special Attention to the Gospel of John.” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 04:2 (Fall 2002), pp. 16–40.

67 Wenham, D. “The Synoptic Problem Revisited: Some New Suggestions About The Composition Of Mark 4:1–34.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 23:1 (NA 1972), pp. 3–38.

68 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 133.

69 Thus Black, ‘nothing is more certain than that Mark wrote and intended’ [the text as it stands]. Black, M. *An Aramaic approach to the Gospel and Acts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 211–216.

70 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 134.

71 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 156.

72 France, *Mark*, p. 199.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

74 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 157.

75 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 240.

76 Watts, “Mark,” in Beale and Carson, *Use of the Old Testament*, p. 166.

of God and hold to the tradition of men⁷⁷. Jesus' acidic use of the term 'hypocrite' serves to accuse the Pharisees of nothing less than idolatry, the 'replacement of the divine by the merely human'⁷⁸. Thus here, as in 4.12, Mark's use of Isaiah is more typological than predictive fulfilment⁷⁹. It is noteworthy that Mark's quotation of Isaiah here differs slightly from the LXX, which in turn differs slightly from the MT⁸⁰.

ISAIAH 6.9–10/MARK 8.18

Here again Mark alludes to Isaiah 6.9–10. Jesus is implying that, at present, his disciples seem to be behaving just like those outside the kingdom; their 'privileged insight into the secret of the kingdom of God seems for now to have deserted them'⁸¹. This effect is heightened by the adjacent pericopes, whereby Jesus' miracles bring about clear perception. We must note that Jesus is distressed not so much that the disciples do not believe, but that they do not understand; for faith is only possible through understanding. As Edwards points out, 'the hardened heart is a particular problem for religious and moral people. An ignorant heart cannot harden itself. Only a knowing heart can harden itself, and that is why those closest to Jesus – the Pharisees (3.5–6) and the disciples (6.52; 8.17) – stand in the gravest danger'⁸². Jesus is not expecting his disciples always to anticipate a miraculous meal, but rather to recognize and trust his authority, instead of

hardening their hearts through dull unbelief⁸³.

ISAIAH 52.13–53.12/MARK 8.31

Isaiah's fourth servant song has a clear structure, beginning (52.13–14) with YHWH's 'testimony to his servant merging into a description of the Servant's suffering and of reactions to it'⁸⁴, and ending (53.10–12) as the explanation of the servant's suffering merges into YHWH's testimony to his servant. Two contrasts, heightened by word repetition⁸⁵, are present; between the servant's humiliation and exaltation, and between what people thought about the servant, and 'what was really the case'⁸⁶. Verses 1–9 breakdown naturally into the servant's suffering observed and misinterpreted (v1–3); his suffering explained (v4–6); and further explanation of the voluntary nature of his suffering (v7–9). Much ink has been spilled over these verses⁸⁷, and although there seems to be an intentional ambiguity in this song⁸⁸, the text is very clear on a number of points when considered in context⁸⁹.

Clines⁹⁰ translates the first phrase, 'See, my servant: his wisdom prospers'. The emphatic exaltation of YHWH's servant expresses 'a dignity beyond what any other...receives and is surely intended as a clue leading to the identity of the servant. It is impossible not be reminded

83 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 262.

84 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 423.

85 Raabe, P. "The Effect of Repetition in the Suffering Servant Song." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984), pp. 77–81.

86 Oswalt, *Isaiah* 40–66, p. 376.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 377.

88 Clines, D. J. A. "I, He, We and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 1* (1976), pp. 11.

89 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 13089.

90 Clines, D. J. A. "I, He, We and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 1* (1976), p. 11.

77 Stein, *Mark*, p. 341.

78 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 209.

79 France, *Mark*, p. 283–285.

80 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 235.

81 France, *Mark*, p. 317.

82 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 240.

of the resurrection, ascension and heavenly exaltedness of the Lord Jesus.⁹¹

Central to the enigma of Isaiah's servant is how he can, on the one hand, evoke a response of revulsion (52.14), and on the other hand evoke a response of overwhelmed submission (52.15). The sense of 'his form' being 'beyond that of the children of mankind' is that of onlookers wondering, 'is this the servant?', and also, 'is this human?'⁹². 'Many' (v14) is a crucially theological term in Isaiah, 'referring to the whole company for whose benefit the servant acts'⁹³. The enigma persists; what is it that silences kings when they learn it? This is an expansion of the servant's promised exaltation (v13).

It must be remembered that, in Isaiah, the 'arm of YHWH' is not distinct from YHWH, but rather YHWH in power to save⁹⁴. What is remarkable is that this 'Arm revealed' is so unremarkable (v2). The servant is a 'man of sorrows' (v3) not by temperament or constitution but by virtue of the fact that he bore our sorrows and weaknesses as his own (v4). Motyer's summary of 53.1–3 is deeply perceptive;

...Isaiah completes a diagnosis of our human condition, which he has been unobtrusively pursuing throughout these three verses: to see the servant and find no beauty in him (2cd) reveals the bankruptcy of the human emotions; to be one with those who despise and then reject him (3ac) exposes the misguidedness of the human will; to appraise him and conclude that he is nothing condemns our sinful minds as corrupted by, and participants in, our sinfulness. Thus every aspect of human nature is inadequate; every avenue along which, by nature, we might arrive

at the truth and respond to God is closed. Nothing but divine revelation can make the servant known to us and draw us to him.⁹⁵

Verses 4–6 reveal that the servant suffers alone (v4); vicariously (4ab, 5ab, 5c,5d, 6c) – using language clearly drawn from Leviticus 16 (v6); and so dealt with the manifold nature of our plight – 'infirmities', 'sorrows', and guilt – as God 'laid on him the iniquities of us all.'⁹⁶

Verses 7–9 stress the voluntariness of the servant's death. We glimpse the existential perspective of the servant himself, and we learn that, far from being 'caught in a web of events, [he is instead] masterfully deciding, accepting and submitting'⁹⁷. The picture is one of decided self-submission. We read of his willingness to be lead out to die (v7), and his death at the hand of 'thoughtless contemporaries'⁹⁸ (v8), and of his mysterious burial, which somehow involves wicked people and a rich man (v9). This last fact sustains the enigma of the servant; why is it that the servant, who dies as a criminal – albeit as self-consciously innocent⁹⁹ – should not meet with a criminal's grave? Thus three enigmatic questions remain: How could such suffering lead to such exaltation (52.12–15)? How could the Arm of YHWH be so very unremarkable (53.1–3)? and now, how can a criminal's death be followed by a burial befitting a wealthy man?

Jesus' first passion prediction is met with stupefied bewilderment. We do not have any evidence¹⁰⁰ that Isaiah's suffering servant had ever been identified with the Messiah¹⁰¹; thus Jesus' insistence that the Messiah *must suffer*

91 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 424.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 425.

93 *Ibid.*

94 *Ibid.*, p. 427.

95 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 427.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 429.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 432.

98 *Ibid.*

99 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 13529.

100 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 253.

101 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 13955.

many things meets misunderstanding and dismay¹⁰². It is certainly most likely that Jesus' conviction originates largely from Isaiah's servant¹⁰³. Δεῖ refers to 'a necessity beyond human comprehension, grounded in the will of God'¹⁰⁴, and the title 'Son of Man' is likely used by Jesus since it 'could hold together the ideas of transcendent majesty and vicarious suffering, [making it] peculiarly suitable for Jesus' purpose'¹⁰⁵. Edwards notes that there is an irony in the fact that Jesus' suffering will be at the hands of the 'elders, chief priests and teachers of the law'; as a consequence of 'careful deliberations from respected religious leaders who will justify their actions by the highest standards of law and morality'¹⁰⁶. The rejection of Jesus by Israel's leaders 'raises as acutely as possible the paradox of the unrecognised Messiah'¹⁰⁷.

ISAIAH 53.3/MARK 9.12

Jesus again self-consciously identifies himself with the suffering servant of Isaiah. It appears that in this interchange Jesus challenges the idea that the final restoration 'can be achieved apart from the suffering of the Son of Man'¹⁰⁸; Jesus acknowledges that the scribes are correct to assert that Elijah will precede the restoration, but 'suggests that this "restoring all things" cannot mean just what on the surface it seems to mean, since scripture foretells suffering for the Son of Man'¹⁰⁹. The use of γέγραπται makes

102 France, *Mark*, p. 334.

103 France, R. T. "The Servant Of The Lord In The Teaching Of Jesus." *Tyndale Bulletin* 19:1 (NA 1968), pp. 26–52.

104 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 271.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

106 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 254.

107 France, *Mark*, p. 335.

108 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 274.

109 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 298.

it explicit¹¹⁰ that these things are 'necessary' because of the pattern already established in the OT.

The Son of Man's experience here described by Jesus, whilst a clear allusion to Isaiah's suffering servant's experience, may also allude – in this context – to the rejection experienced by Elijah (1 Kings 17–19). Thus, Jesus is 'linking the suffering and rejection of the returning Elijah with his own'¹¹¹.

ISAIAH 52.13–53.12/MARK 9.31

All three passion predictions share the components of a statement of the necessity of the Christ's suffering, a statement of his death, and a statement of his resurrection. This second prediction is the briefest, and identifies Christ's suffering with being betrayed into, simply, the hands of men; 'the one who gives himself for others will die at their hands'¹¹². The sequence of future tenses following the present tense communicates the sense of a process being initiated as they journey to Jerusalem¹¹³. Mark's use of παραδίδοται is significant; Judas is going to 'hand over' Jesus; yet, within the broader context of Isaiah's suffering servant figure, this may be a 'divine passive'¹¹⁴, an allusion to God handing over his servant (Isaiah 53.6,8,10)¹¹⁵.

ISAIAH 66.24/MARK 9.48

It seems likely that Isaiah has picked up on imagery from the destruction of the 185,000

110 Marcus, J. *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the OT in the Gospel of Mark*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993, p. 94–97.

111 France, *Mark*, p. 360.

112 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 283.

113 France, *Mark*, p. 372.

114 Stein, *Mark*, p. 439.

115 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 306.

Assyrian corpses (Isaiah 37.36) to speak of the future consequences of those who have not ‘trembled’ at the word of YHWH. The redeemed look here not to gloat, but ‘to be repelled’¹¹⁶; not to mock, but to remember. Thus Isaiah sharply focuses the minds of the hearers of his message on the reality of God’s judgement as his prophecy comes to a close¹¹⁷.

Jesus has clearly picked up the ‘worm’ from Isaiah’s imagery. The ‘fire’ almost certainly has γέενναν¹¹⁸ in mind¹¹⁹. It may be that Mark records this comment in this way so as to provide a brief comment for Gentile readers¹²⁰ on the nature of ‘hell’. In this context of leading little ones to sin, Jesus is highlighting how great the stakes are. Whilst Jesus does not intend to be taken literally in his preceding words, he is being superlatively emphatic in saying that nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of eternal life. Verse 48 is appended to the depiction of *gehenna* and serves a similar function in Mark as it did in Isaiah; a warning in the strongest possible terms. Particularly, Jesus is warning against disregard or complacency in discipleship¹²¹.

ISAIAH 50.6/MARK 10.33–34

At this point in Isaiah’s prophecy, his servant can be clearly identified as an individual, who undergoes this threefold suffering¹²². We learn that he voluntarily allows this to be imposed upon himself, although no guilt is admitted.

Furthermore, we do not learn who is opposing him, nor why¹²³. Oswald observes that, in Israel, true prophets stood at the periphery and received opposition and humiliation, unlike false institutional prophets who enjoyed social acceptance and influence¹²⁴.

Mark’s third passion prediction, the most detailed of the three, builds upon his two earlier ones. Now there is specific mention of Jerusalem, a further repetition of being ‘handed over’, and clarity about who he will be handed over to. The subject of the string of plural verbs in verse 34 is the gentiles; this is not paralleled in either of the earlier passion predictions¹²⁵. The wording very clearly alludes to Isaiah 50.6 and 53.3; specifying mockery, spitting, scourging, and death. This represents not mere Markan hindsight, but Jesus’ own self-awareness. If this text were the product solely and merely of Mark’s hindsight, we might expect crucifixion to be mentioned here¹²⁶. Moreover, the facts that the second passion prediction is less detailed than the first or third, and that the third prediction does not correspond exactly sequentially with the passion events recorded later in Mark’s Gospel, implicate against an artificial harmonisation¹²⁷; originality lies with Jesus’ words expressing his self-awareness as the suffering servant. Thus Chisholm,

Jesus identified Himself as Isaiah’s royal servant, offering the kingdom with the full realization that He must first suffer rejection. But His suffering qualifies Him to be king, a fact that Paul wrote about in Philippians 2:8–10.¹²⁸

116 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 544.

117 Oswald, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 692; Smith, *Isaiah*, location 22820.

118 Scharen, H. “Gehenna in the Synoptics.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (Jan–Mar 1998): 324–37.

119 France, *Mark*, p. 382.

120 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 314.

121 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 293–295.

122 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 400.

123 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 11951.

124 Oswald, *Isaiah 40–66*, p. 325.

125 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 336.

126 France, *Mark*, p. 412–413.

127 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 320.

128 Chisholm, R. B. Jr. “The Christological Fulfillment of Isaiah’s Servant Songs.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163:652 (October 2006), pp. 387–404.

ISAIAH 53.10–12/MARK 10.45

We note that Jesus was served by many others in practical ways in this gospel, and indeed there is a fascinating link between hospitality and discipleship in Mark¹²⁹. However, his words here are intended to make a specific point regarding his mission. This verse is unlikely to allude directly to Isaiah's servant figure. Moreover, the service Jesus speaks of here is general service to fellow men and women, rather than the specific mission of the servant of YHWH. At the same time, however, Jesus is clearly and emphatically – the *καί* having the sense of, 'even the Son of Man *himself* did not...' – talking about the 'paradoxical subordinate status of the one who should have enjoyed the service of others'^{130, 131}. Thus, in a more general, paradigmatic way, Jesus is saying the 'the Son of Man came to fulfil the task of the servant of YHWH'¹³².

In Semitic thought the 'many' has the sense of 'totality', rather than a particular subset¹³³, and its use in Isaiah 52–53 is certainly consistent with this. Jesus' self-awareness as the servant of YHWH is pronounced here, with a clear allusion to Isaiah 53.10–12¹³⁴; 'Jesus is supremely conscious of offering a payment to God that can be offered by no one else'¹³⁵; *λύτρον* here likely has the sense of 'guilt offering', an echo of Isaiah 53.10¹³⁶.

129 Asumang, A. "And The Angels Waited On Him' (Mark 1:13): Hospitality And Discipleship In Mark's Gospel." *Conspectus* 08:1 (September 2009), pp. 1–22.

130 France, *Mark*, p. 419.

131 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 342.

132 France, *Mark*, p. 419.

133 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 327.

134 France, R. T. "The Servant Of The Lord In The Teaching Of Jesus?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 19:1 (NA 1968), pp. 26–52.

135 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 328.

136 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 342.

ISAIAH 56.7/MARK 11.17

The conclusion of this section of Isaiah 56 is one of fulfilment rather than concession¹³⁷; YHWH's temple had always – the language is emphatic¹³⁸ – been intended for the nations (1 Kings 8.41ff). That Isaiah describes it as a house of *prayer* highlights the foundation of true worship as the enjoyment of personal communion with YHWH. It is a significant nuance that YHWH will *bring* the nations; just as he will *bring* Israel back from exile. The burnt offerings and sacrifice reflect the privilege of sins atoned for, and the centrality of prayer reflect the privilege of immediate access to YHWH¹³⁹. Thus Oswalt,

All of Israel's separation from the world was in order to keep Israel from being absorbed into the world...but should Israel ever come to believe that its separation was so that Israel could keep her God and his blessings to herself, then all was lost. It is precisely this attitude...that Isaiah is countering.¹⁴⁰

In Jesus' day, we have reason to believe that the Court of the Gentiles had been prevented from use for worship, due to the commercial use of the space¹⁴¹. Mark records Jesus' quotation sandwiched in the context of the cursed fig tree, thus intending readers 'to see in the fate of the unfruitful fig tree the judgment of God on the unfruitful temple'¹⁴². Mark is careful to include *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* and thus refer explicitly to Isaiah's promise of the future ingathering of the nations¹⁴³.

137 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 467.

138 Smith, *Isaiah*, location 17471.

139 Oswalt, *Isaiah* 40–66, p. 460.

140 *Ibid.*, p. 461.

141 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 358.

142 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 339.

143 France, *Mark*, p. 445.

Jesus' words here reveal that he is a very different Messiah to the one expected. In contrast to the Messiah of, for instance, the *Psalms of Solomon*, Jesus is explicitly stating that access to God is available to those whom it had previously been inaccessible, to 'all nations'¹⁴⁴.

ISAIAH 5.1–2/MARK 12.1

Isaiah's song for the vineyard Israel highlights the bleak conclusion, 'what more can be done for a tended vine that does not bear fruit?'¹⁴⁵ The 'wild grapes' are literally, 'stink-fruit'.

When Jesus speaks to them ἐν παραβολαῖς, Mark refers to the manner of his speaking¹⁴⁶. Although Jesus is very clearly alluding to Isaiah's vineyard-song, he makes a clear diversion from it – thus commanding his listeners' interest¹⁴⁷ – by talking about its being leased to tenants, and in speaking of a new beginning with new tenants (v9)¹⁴⁸. Furthermore, Jesus has embellished the story to develop the theme of the υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν.

ISAIAH 19.2/MARK 13.8

In context, Isaiah is clearly predicting the self-destruction of Egypt¹⁴⁹. France¹⁵⁰ highlights that the descriptor 'birth pains' often depicts the suffering of a nation or city in crisis, as in Isaiah 13.8.

We must be careful not to overstate what Jesus is saying in these verses; he is not saying

that these things mean the end has come, but 'they do point to it and are a pledge of it'¹⁵¹. The pains of childbirth are also necessarily the promise of what is longed for. Edwards sees particular correlation to the subsequent experience of first century Christians in these verses, but notes that 'the purpose of the litany of woes in 13:8 is *not* to lure believers into speculations about the end, but to anchor them to watchfulness and faithfulness in the present'¹⁵². There is some textual evidence to suggest that 'famines and troubles' may be the original rendering of v. 8¹⁵³.

ISAIAH 13.10/MARK 13.24–25

Although this passage lies within the broader context of YHWH's judgement to Babylon, the immediate context – concerning the day of YHWH – contains no overt reference to Babylon¹⁵⁴.

Scholars are divided over the interpretation of this Markan text. Cranfield¹⁵⁵ argues that this is not apocalyptic, but a use of prophetic imagery against Jerusalem; in other words, Mark is communicating the imminent judgement and establishment of a new order. In contrast Edwards¹⁵⁶ views this more apocalyptically; darkness spells the defeat, not the victory, of the 'dark side'. Others including France¹⁵⁷ suggest that the Hebraic imagery is connoting pagan deities, and their defeat, and that ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις is explicitly not talking about an eschatological time period, but

144 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 343.

145 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 68.

146 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 364.

147 Stein, *Mark*, p. 534.

148 France, *Mark*, p. 456.

149 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 164.

150 France, *Mark*, p. 512.

151 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 396.

152 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 392.

153 *Ibid.*, p. 392.

154 Motyer, *Isaiah*, p. 138.

155 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 531–534.

156 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 402–404.

157 France, R.T. *Jesus and the Old Testament*. London: Tyndale Press, 1971, pp. 231–233.

about impending ‘drastic events on the world scene, interpreted in the light of judgment and purpose’¹⁵⁸. Cranfield¹⁵⁹ notes the similarities to Isaiah 34.4 and 24.23, arguing that Mark’s purpose here is to use picture–language that should not be pushed for a literal interpretation. Certainly it would seem that the predominant genre here is plainly eschatological; this is particularly apparent in vv. 17, 18, 20, 24, and 32. Furthermore, we can validly question what interest Mark would have had – writing in this context – with the downfall of Greco–Roman deities.

ISAIAH 53.11–12/MARK 14.24

At this New Covenant meal¹⁶⁰, Jesus’ use of πολλῶν is a significant allusion to his vicarious death¹⁶¹, ¹⁶², further echoing Isaiah 53.12¹⁶³, and Mark 10.45¹⁶⁴; ‘without Isa. 53 the eucharistic words remain incomprehensible’¹⁶⁵, ¹⁶⁶. This is a particularly clear allusions made by Jesus to his identity as the Isaianic suffering servant¹⁶⁷.

ISAIAH 53.7/MARK 14.60–61; 15.4–5

‘The Blessed One’¹⁶⁸ is a semitic periphrasis

158 France, *Mark*, p. 533.

159 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 405.

160 Watts, “Mark,” in Beale and Carson, *Use of the Old Testament*, p. 232.

161 Edwards, *Mark*, pp. 426–427.

162 France, *Mark*, pp. 570–571.

163 Stein, *Mark*, p.652.

164 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 427.

165 Jeremias, J. *New Testament Theology, Vol. 1: The Proclamation of Jesus*. London: SCM, 1971, p. 291.

166 Watts, R.E. *Isaiah’s New Exodus and Mark*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997, pp. 354–362.

167 France, R. T. “The Servant of The Lord in the Teaching Of Jesus.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19:1 (NA 1968): p. 26–52.

168 It is interesting to note in passing that, in the majority of manuscripts and text traditions, the high priest’s question –

for the divine name¹⁶⁹. The spitting at, and blindfolding of Jesus develops further the Isaianic link (Isaiah 50.6). Jesus’ silence is not merely strategic, but represents his innocence, and his total surrender to God¹⁷⁰. We note that,

...until the question of the high priest...Jesus has steadfastly silenced all proclamations of his divine Sonship. In order truly to understand the meaning of his person something has been missing. The missing element has been the necessity of his suffering. Only in the light of suffering can Jesus openly divulge his identity as God’s Son.¹⁷¹

15.5 is not a direct quote of Isaiah 53.7, but a clear reinforcement¹⁷² of the sustained identification of Jesus with YHWH’s servant. We note indeed that Jesus’ silence¹⁷³ ‘in the face of hatred, abuse, and cruelty dominates Mark’s portrayal of the passion from here onward’¹⁷⁴.

SYNTHESIS: CONCLUSION

There are three broad ways in which Mark has used Isaiah in his gospel:

1) *The ‘way’ of YHWH’s coming to save is the ‘way’ of Jesus to the Cross.*

The very opening quotation is significant: Jesus’ gospel ‘is good news precisely because it is the fulfilment of Scripture. Thereafter, Jesus’ words and activities constantly echo OT scenes

as conveyed by the NIV – demands Jesus’ response to the accusations. There is another set of manuscript evidence (B W ψ) which has the high priest demanding Jesus’ response to the very fact of his accusations.

169 Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 443.

170 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 445.

171 *Ibid.*, p. 447.

172 France, *Mark*, p. 608.

173 To v. 3 some late uncial manuscripts add, no doubt intending to heighten this feature, ‘[Jesus] said not a word to [Pilate].’

174 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 459.

and language until what is ‘written’ of the Son of Man is finally fulfilled.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the very shape of the gospel finds its climax in the cross; thus the ‘way’ of YHWH, announced cryptically at the start, is seen ultimately to be the ‘way’ of Jesus to the cross, a way prepared by the suffering and rejection of John. Thus Caneday,

Paradoxically, Jesus’ baptism with darkness is his glory, his enthronement. Jesus, who receives the exalted investiture of “Son” from his Heavenly Father as he is anointed for his mission at his baptism and again at his transfiguration, endures another baptism that brings his earthly mission to its God-appointed goal. Crucified upon the cross he is overwhelmed with anguish and suffering as he gives his life as a ransom for many. The heavenly voice is silent. The cloud of God’s presence and glory that overshadowed those on the mountain signified heavenly approbation. Now the cloud descends as the darkness of God to enshroud Jesus...this darkness departs only with Jesus’ passage from this life, ripping the temple veil, an apocalyptic sign of the temple’s destruction and the opening of “the way of the Lord” for Gentiles.¹⁷⁶

The ‘way’ of the Lord to save relates integrally to the ‘secrecy’ motif in Mark, which in turn relates integrally to Jesus’ self-conscious identification with Isaiah’s servant, a point to which we now turn¹⁷⁷.

2) *Jesus is the Spirit-filled, divinely commissioned servant of YHWH.*

In Mark, Jesus personifies Isaiah’s Spirit-filled, divinely commissioned servant of YHWH,

175 Hooker, M. D. *It is Written: Scripture citing Scripture*. Edited by D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

176 Caneday, A. B. “Christ’s Baptism and Crucifixion: The Anointing and Enthronement of God’s Son.” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 08:3 (Fall 2004), pp. 70–81.

177 Edwards, *Mark*, p62–64.

as he ‘does justice’ (1.40ff, 2.28); proclaims forgiveness (2.5, 15); makes warfare against spiritual opposition (1.24); rebukes sin, idolatry, unbelief, and opposition to YHWH’s rule (7.1ff, 11.12ff, 14.61ff); grants enlightenment to the kingdom of God, the way of YHWH’s rule (4.1–34, 12.1–12); and insists on true worship of YHWH (7.1–23; 12.13–44). It must, of course, be noted that Mark highlights this allusively – rather than literally – for the most part; there are ‘as many allusions to the Servant of God in the first half of the Gospel with reference to the ministry of Jesus as there are in the passion narratives in the second half of Mark.’¹⁷⁸ In other words, Mark sees YHWH’s mission and forgiveness as *exactly* transferred on the person of Jesus: he did not simply proclaim the good news, he was the good news; if the parable of the sower reflects the mission and experience of Isaiah’s servant, then ‘it seems justified to assume that Jesus found within the profile of Isaiah’s Servant a paradigm for his own ministry’¹⁷⁹.

Jesus’ baptism – the point of his identification both as Son and servant – is of huge importance to Mark’s gospel;

The baptism is the keystone in the life and ministry of Jesus. The empowerment by God’s Spirit to be God’s servant, and the declaration from heaven, “You are my Son,” enable Jesus not only to speak and act *for* God but *as* God.¹⁸⁰

One could argue that, broadly speaking, the first half of Mark’s gospel portrays Jesus in fulfilment of the first servant song, while the

178 Edwards, J. R. “The Servant of the Lord and the Gospel of Mark.” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 08:3 (Fall 2004), pp. 36–47.

179 Edwards, “The Servant of the Lord and the Gospel of Mark.”

180 Edwards, *Mark*, p. 38.

second half increasingly reveals Jesus as the enigmatic suffering servant:

The anonymous servant of Isaiah 42:1–9 can be neither Israel nor Cyrus nor any person other than the royal Davidic Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This first servant song introduces the servant and highlights the successful completion of the task to which He is divinely called. Only a hint is given of the pathway of suffering that the servant must tread to arrive at the glory of a completed mission when He will have caused a righteous order to prevail on the earth.¹⁸¹

3) *Jesus is the enigmatic, suffering servant of YHWH.*

The Isaianic servant songs are the 'link' between the idealised Davidic king and the suffering servant¹⁸², and Jesus' self-conscious self-identification as the suffering servant who dies 'for many' escalates from 8.31 onwards, clustering particularly around the three passion predictions and the passion narratives themselves. Like Isaiah's servant, Jesus is misunderstood, and we remember from the second servant song (Isaiah 49. 1–13) that,

Yahweh's called and gifted Servant is rejected at first by His own people Israel, but in a future day of grace He will ultimately succeed not only in fulfilling an expanded mission to bring salvation to the Gentiles, but also in restoring Israel both to the land (physically and politically) and to Yahweh (spiritually), thus eliciting universal praise to Yahweh, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel.¹⁸³

181 Lindsey, "Isaiah's Songs of the Servant Part 1".

182 Chisholm, R.B. Jr. "The Christological Fulfillment of Isaiah's Servant Songs." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163:652 (October 2006), pp. 387–404.

183 Lindsey, F. D. "Isaiah's Songs of the Servant Part 2: The Commission of the Servant in Isaiah 49:1–13." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:554 (April 1982), pp. 129–143.

The hidden 'way' of the Lord, the divinely appointed servant, and the suffering servant; many years ago Cranfield summarised masterfully:

Throughout [Jesus'] ministry we can see these two motives (revealing and veiling) at work. On the one hand, Jesus gathers the crowds about him and teaches them, sends out the twelve to preach, and reveals the power and compassion of God by his miracles. God's self-revelation is not to be accomplished in a corner. On the other hand, Jesus teaches the crowds indirectly by means of parables, seeks to conceal his miracles, and forbids the demoniacs to declare his identity. The two motives, both of which are necessary to the divine purpose, are constantly in tension – a fact which explains some apparent inconsistencies...his ultimate purpose is salvation...God's self-revelation is veiled, in order that men may be left sufficient turning room in which to make a personal decision.¹⁸⁴

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184 Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. 157–158

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