

William Rossell  
NT(IBS)511 X1-Miller  
Module 10 Assignment

Notes:

\*All work was done while consulting the following approved translations: NIV, NRSV, ESV

\*\* Any time there is a reference to James and John as a single unit, they will be referred to as Boanerges. (cf. Mark 3:17)

Preliminary Work; 35-36 (setting/contextualization):

- a. Boanerges approaches Christ and states that they have a request (35)
  - i. Mark is introducing the main players of the scene (James and John, sons of Zebedee, and Jesus)
  - ii. “Then (NIV)” / “And (ESV)” indicates a continuation
    - Mark is denoting that this part of the passage occurs at approximately the same place and time as the 3<sup>rd</sup> prediction in 32-34.
    - This also implies to the reader that Boanerges was approaching Christ with others nearby rather than speaking openly amongst the group.
  - iii. By prefacing the request with “...do for us whatever we ask...,” Boanerges indicates that they understood that their request was not appropriate and might cause friction between them and others (Christ included).
    - *This may be an editorial addition by Mark as:*
      - *it does not provide much substance without knowledge of the ill-request to come very soon.*
      - *even with that knowledge, it does not necessarily provide a sense of misunderstanding on the side of Boanerges but does indicate a self-serving nature within the pair.*
- b. Christ responds with a non-affirmative, non-dismissive asking of what Boanerges wants (35)

Summary: Mark uses these first two verses to provide a contextual segue into the “meat” of this section of text, by establishing a continuity between this passage and that of 32-34. Mark also paints the pair, Boanerges, in a negative light from the beginning, potentially for the purpose of drawing the reader’s attention to the folly of the pair’s (and later, all the Disciples’) actions.

**1. Identify and define the elements of the misunderstanding of Jesus' passion prediction (and therefore of the meaning of Jesus' messianic identity).**

**1a. What the key elements of the misunderstanding of Jesus' passion prediction (and therefore of the meaning of Jesus' messianic identity)?**

I see 3 key components of misunderstanding in Mark's description of the events following the 3<sup>rd</sup> Passion Prediction:

1. Boanerges' Request; 37
2. Boanerges' Response to Christ; 39a
3. Disciples' Attitude Toward Boanerges; 41

**1b. What does each of these key elements mean?**

**1. Boanerges' Request; 37**

- a. Boanerges asks that Jesus would allow each of them a position of prominence/authority in his coming reign.
  - i. "Let ... us" shows a belief of Boanerges that Christ is the 'shot-caller' for these coming events.
  - ii. **The pair indicates their belief that Christ's reign will involve a subjugation of others, by desiring the first seats of "[his] right and ... [his] left."**
    - **This implies a belief that there will be a hierarchy within the reign of Christ wherein one may rule over another.**
  - iii. *By use of the succeeding statement, "your glory," while displaying the previously mentioned attitude of Christ being the 'shot-caller,' Boanerges does show an understanding/belief of Christ as ruler or Messiah.*

**2. Boanerges' Response to Christ; 39a**

- a. Boanerges expresses a simple belief that they can partake of Christ's "cup and baptism."
  - i. **In a concise manner, the pair displays that not only had they not understood what Christ's role and purpose really was to begin with, but also now, they had utterly missed the point of Jesus' response.**
  - ii. *The pair believes that Jesus speaks in terms of the physical world, and not in terms of 'kingdom.'*
  - iii. *This reflects the same attitude that Peter displayed in 8:32, as Boanerges' minds are focus on human concerns, i.e. the concerns of this world, instead of that which is to come.*

### 3. Disciples' Attitude Toward Boanerges; 41

- a. "heard (NRSV)" v. "heard about (NIV)"
  - i. There is a potential discrepancy in translation here.
    - NRSV implies that Boanerges may have actually been speaking aloud for the group to hear
    - NIV coincides with earlier presumption in 'Preliminary Work' that Boanerges had gone directly to Christ to avoid interacting with the others.
- b. Use of "the Ten" indicates that only the Disciples are involved in this scene, and the usual associated "large crowd" is still absent.
- c. Anger = emotional response to slight or injustice
  - i. This could indicate that the Ten were generally peeved by Boanerges' blatant selfishness, further indicating that even the other disciples can see the pair's lack of understanding, or
  - ii. This could indicate that the Ten were angry because they would also like to have such a position of prominence, further indicating the misunderstanding of the group as a whole

**SUMMARY: Mark has shown that Boanerges' understanding of Christ's coming reign resulting from the predicted Passion to be one of militaristic rule, much like the earthly kings with which the pair would be familiar. Moreover, Mark has given vague evidence so as to indicate the level of understanding in the other Ten, allowing the text to serve two purposes: (1.) further indicating that Boanerges clearly misunderstands Christ's prediction, and also (2.) implying that there is a high chance that the rest of the Twelve do as well.**

## 2. Identify and define the elements of Jesus' correction of that misunderstanding.

### 2a. What the key elements of Jesus' correction of that misunderstanding?

I see 3 key components of correction in Mark's description of the events following the 3<sup>rd</sup> Passion Prediction:

1. Christ's Rhetorical Response; 38
2. Christ's More Direct Response; 39b-40
3. Earthly Greatness vs. Heavenly Greatness; 42-45

### 2b. What does each of these key elements mean?

#### 1. Christ's Rhetorical Response; 38

- a. The immediate response from Jesus is "you don't know..."

- i. While not delivering a reorientation of understanding, Jesus is quick to state that Boanerges' beliefs/understandings are flawed.
- b. Jesus asks Boanerges if any two people can serve one another's purpose (*analogy with the cup*)
  - i. In sculpting Jesus' immediate response to the pair's ill-conceived request, Mark points toward the idea of purpose.
  - ii. This implies that two people will be rewarded in kind for the merits of their own work for the Father, but that no one besides the Father can prescribe due reward for missional work.
    - Different cups = different purpose
    - Different purpose yield different rewards
  - iii. In other words, *Jesus seems to mean "I cannot give you my purpose, therefore I cannot give you my reward. Seek the purpose of the Father for your life."*
- c. Jesus further asks if the pair can be gifted with his gifts, "baptized with the baptism [he] is baptized with..."
  - i. **This reinforces the aforementioned ideas of individuals being purported for different missional work.**
  - ii. Christ implies that no two people can have one another's baptism, or in other words, no two people will gain one another's spiritual gifts.
    - Different baptisms = different equipment
- d. **Mark seems to paint the picture that throughout Christ's rhetorical questions and metaphorical response, he is explaining to Boanerges that he is not, in fact, the 'shot-caller,' but that the Father, who is the One to purpose and equip individuals for missional work, is the One who prescribes rewards in the coming "glory."**

## 2. Christ's More Direct Response; 39b-40

- a. Christ changes his approach to explanation; 39b
  - i. Christ seemingly concedes that the pair will share these aspects of missional service with him (*the cup and baptism*).
    - **Mark uses the repeated verbiage to indicate that Christ is no longer speaking rhetorically, but more directly to the current understanding of the pair.**
      - This indicates a likely change of meaning.
      - **Christ is being more literal in saying that Boanerges will be baptized by the Holy Spirit and will serve a heavenly purpose, but maintains that it will be separate, in a sense, from his own.**

- b. Christ clarifies the point that he is not the ‘shot-caller,’ and does not have the authority to grant Boanerges’ request; (40)
  - i. “Not for me to grant” = Literal, direct assertion that they misunderstand what Christ’s ‘position’ as Messiah is.
    - Also indicates that the hierarchy of Heaven will not reflect the same type of rule as those of earth
      - Christ indicates there will be a right and left seat to him in glory, implying that he will rule/reign.
      - Christ shows that his rule is given to him, not taken by him, as he does not have the authority to assign certain roles within the heavenly hierarchy.
  - ii. **Jesus indicates here that he is, for lack of better terminology, subservient to God the Father, and that there is a structure to these events that even he cannot change.**
  - iii. **“for whom they have been prepared” = past tense; Christ implies that the plan of future events, and the results of these events, has already been established.**
- c. Mark is indicating the desire by Christ to bring the pair to true understanding by elaborating on the multiple teaching approaches taken.
  - i. *Those without understanding have previously often been left to ponder a subject, but here Jesus’ change to an overtly direct approach indicates an urgency to help these ones understand.*

### 3. Earthly Greatness vs. Heavenly Greatness; 42-45

- a. Action statements: “called” and “said” (42)
  - i. “called” indicates that Jesus brought the group of Twelve together, usually preceding his giving of instruction or teachings
  - ii. “said” = began to teach them/began to correct their views
- b. Jesus speaks of earthly rulers (42)
  - i. Mark uses pointed words: “lord it” and “tyrant”
    - The wording presented to recount Jesus’ speaking is meant to evoke a negative response
    - *Insinuates that the position of an earthly ruler should be undesirable*
  - ii. Repeated use of the phrase: “over them”
    - The phrase elicits further negative response, as to be “over” in this way implies to oppress or put down
    - **Mark’s writing here paints earthly rulers as self-serving and self-important, contrasting the features of Jesus ministerial teachings**

- c. “Not so with(among) you” (43)
  - i. Jesus again chooses a direct approach to the correction, making it readily apparent that the Twelve have got the wrong idea.
  - ii. See point 2b.2.c.i above for further implication of this approach
- d. Jesus begins to speak on the idea of discipleship and heavenly greatness (43-44)
  - i. “must be your servant” (43)
  - ii. Christ reorients the Disciples’ understanding of what ‘greatness’ is and should be
  - iii. Mark presents this take on what defines greatness as a direct contrast to the attitude of an earthly ruler.
  - iv. Christ reinforces this teaching with repetition in the succeeding explaining that in order to achieve heavenly greatness, one must be willing to lower oneself to serve all other others (44)
- e. Jesus clarifies what his position in the world is and explains that his mission is not hold others captive but to free them (45)
  - i. Mark chooses to usual very straightforward language here (i.e. nothing fancy, colorful, metaphorical)
  - ii. Jesus proclaims that even in coming to establish his kingdom, he has come to serve others and not so that others may serve him
  - iii. Jesus explains once again, very matter-of-factly, that he literally intends for his life to be given up as a payment for the freedom of others.
    - Mark chooses not to include what this ‘freedom’ is from necessarily
      - Perhaps Christ also let that bit of information remain ambiguous in nature, or
      - Perhaps Mark believes that there is plenty of other evidence for readers/listeners to reckon what this means
  - iv. in the NIV, NRSV, and ESV, each includes Jesus’ use of the word “many”
    - Mark’s use of “many” implies that Christ is explaining to the Twelve that the giving of his life is for more than the purpose of bolstering himself
    - Jesus implies that the effects of this action will reach a multitude (group)
    - Nothing is presented by Mark to say that Jesus restricted the outreach of the word ‘many’
    - Jesus likely uses this unrestrained, yet somewhat arbitrary measure of ‘many,’ not only to say that this will go beyond the Disciples, or the extended group of followers.
      - A further implication from the ambiguous nature of ‘many’ is that it was unknown to what extent this might reach
      - In other words, Jesus may have been saying that even he (in his earthly form) could not predict the magnitude of effect this single action would have on the world.

**SUMMARY:** Christ begins by responding to Boanerges' request with a more typical, indirect approach, but seeing that the pair is not "getting the picture" becomes immediately much more direct in his correction. The implied sense of urgency here is further evidenced when speaking to the others as well, as Mark recounts Christ speaking in very pointed and straightforward terms, explaining that the reign to come would be like no earthly reign, as he had come to serve and calls his followers to do the same.