

Mark 10:35-45 Interpretation

4.18

With regard to Mark 10:35-45, your assignment entailed answering the following questions:

- 1. ID and define the elements of the misunderstanding of Jesus' identity and/r Jesus' passion prediction.**
- 2. Identify and define the Jesus' correction of that misunderstanding.**

Within this passage, I found two misunderstandings and corrections depicted in separate but related episode following one on another (10:35-40, 10:41-45; these episodes thus become my major Anchor Points for Interpretation). So I dealt with each episode separately. To give you a “heads up” where I am going, here are a few important findings about the relationship of these two episodes and my Interpretation work on them.

- The misunderstandings/corrections involves **two related scenes. These are important components of ID.**
 - one involving James, John and Jesus (**10:35-40**),
 - and the second J, J, J and the rest of the 12 (**10:41-45**).
- Within these scenes, we find important contrasts and comparisons. **These form the second critical components of ID.**
- The misunderstandings are expressed in
 - the statements of James and John (hereafter “JJ”; 10:37, 39) and
 - the response of the remaining 10 to JJ’s action (10:41).
- The corrections are found in
 - J’s words of response to JJ (primarily 10:38-40) and
 - J’s words of response to the JJ and the 10 (10:42-45).
- **These misunderstandings/corrections are mutually defining in two senses.**
 - **First, in each episode the true meaning of the misunderstanding/correction only emerges out of the *interaction* between JJ or the ten and J.**
 - **Second, the two episodes illuminate one another. In other words you need each episode to interpret the other, meaning they cannot be understood in isolation.**
- **In each case the corrections are meant to give true insight into Pred 10 (10:33-34) and the nature of J’s “messiah-ness” (8:29).**

- ORGANIZATION: For these reasons, I will examine each interaction separately – JJ and J (10:35-40) and J with the twelve (10:41-45) – aiming to identify in greater specificity and define each misunderstanding/correction. I will identify these as **Scene One: 10:35-40** and **Scene Two: 10:41-45**. Sounds like Dr. Suess’s Thing One and Thing Two, doesn’t it? ☺

Scene One: 10:35-40

Given the conversational, back and forth nature of this Scene, I will gather my evidence through a step by step analysis of the conversation.

A. Initial Action

1. JJ take the initiative to approach and speak to Jesus. This indicates some deliberation on their part. They *decided* to do it. 35
2. No connection is specified between this action and Pred 10. It simply follows J’s prediction about what will happen in Jerusalem.

B. Initial Q/J’s Response

1. JJ’s first question 35
 - a) *Nature of their Q: respectful* question; J address as “teacher” a term of *respect*; this isn’t a flippant question
 - b) *Nature of their Q: remarkably open-ended* question: “We want you to do *whatever* we ask of you.”
 - c) *Nature of their Q: personal* question: “We want *you* to do whatever we ask *of you*.” Its not whatever we ask. Its whatever we ask *of you*.
 - d) *Nature of their Q: joint* question: they ask together. “*We* want you . . .”
 - e) *Nature of their Q: brotherly/personal benefit* question: “We want you to do *for us*, whatever . . .” **This seems to be the critical factor in their question since this is the outcome the JJ seek**
 - f) this question reminds me of the kinds of questions I get/got from my kids when they were young (sorry, just an aside)
2. J’s response 36
 - a) J does not answer their question. He does not say “yes” or “no”
 - b) Rather, he responds with to their questions with his own question for them.
 - c) He asks them the specifics of their request. In other words, J isn’t buying in yet.
 - d) All in all, this is a fairly generic, non-judgmental response.

C. JJ's second request 37

- a) *Nature of their request*: Once again, they ask *together*. This is not an individual request, but a joint one.
- b) *Content of their request*:
 - 1) *Object of their appeal*: *You grant this to us*
 - a. **recognizes J's authority and ability to do such a thing**
 - 2) *Observations/inferences/regarding the nature and content of request*
 - a. **this is a royal/kingly prerogative**
 - 1. sitting at a right and/or left hand is what happens to rulers/kings/queens
 - 2. note how starting in v. 42, this discussion continues in terms of how rulers exercise authority; this confirms my understanding of this request
 - 3. their request will be met when J is in his "*glory*", another term with royal and possibly divine connotations
 - b. the question implies the JJ understand J in royal terms; as readers/hearers of Mark, we already know
 - 1. J is the "Son of God," a royal title 1:1; cf. 1:11 and 9:7 where a voice from heaven ID's J as God's beloved Son, a royal designation
 - 2. the title for J that drives this whole section of Mark is "the Christ"; a designation of a David-like king who would restore Israel
 - 3. in the immediately following framing section for 8:22-10:52 (10:46-52), J will heal a man who cries out to J as the "Son of David", another royal title
 - c. thus, their request implies they recognize J in kingly terms.
 - 1. this would be proper if they understand him as "Christ"
 - 2. IOW, this echoes Peter's description of J as "the Christ"; now we await misunderstanding of what that designation means
 - d. this is a *personal* request
 - 1. the beneficiaries will JJ, their honor and power
 - 2. their concern with J's kingship is their own personal benefit; sort of "What in it for me/us?"
 - e. they understand J's kingdom and rule to be like that of all other earthly kingdoms
 - 1. J can grant their request for status and authority because that is what earthly king's do
- e. **IN SUMMARY, the upshot of the JJ's request =**
 - 1. **Mark is drawing our attention to the key issue driving this entire major section of Mark (= the meaning of J's status as the "Christ")**

2. Mark is doing this *immediately* after the emphatic Pred 10, the third of 3 central statements defining J
3. IOW, Mark is signaling for us what is really the subject of what follows. **DON'T MISS IT!**
4. **JJ appeal for roles of status and authority second only to that of J when he assumes his kingly position**
5. **JJ's question reveals that they perceive J's kingship/kingdom in normal, human, political terms.**

D. J's initial response 38

- a) J does not deny the premise of their request, that J will come into his "glory" and will have someone at his right and left hand (40), IOW he does not deny that he is or will be a king!
- b) Once again, J responds to a question with a question. The interrogators become the interrogated!
- c) J responds with incredulity: They do not comprehend what they are asking.
- d) By way of two metaphors (drink J's cup, being baptized with the baptism J will undergo), J refers to his own coming experience specified in Pred 10
- e) J asks JJ if they can experience this apparently essential SoM-like experience in order that their request be granted
- f) Together, c), d), e) imply that if they did understand what they were asking
 - 1) They would know that for J to grant it (even if J can't do that; see v. 40), for them to sit in their requested positions of authority, they could only get there by means of experiencing what J will experience
 - 2) I take it that what J will experience, metaphorically what J will drink and be baptized with, = Pred 10. Uh oh.
 - 3) **Experiencing what J will experience is the prerequisite for a proper understanding of relating to J's "king-ness"**
 - 4) **J's experiencing these things (Pred 10), gives us *essential insight* into J's kingship.**
- g) JJ ironically believe they can do this baptism/drink (they don't understand what they are saying will happen to them) = they say more than they realize, the essence of irony 39a

E. J's threefold second response 39b-40

- a) J acknowledges that JJ will experience what J will experience, however much they do not understand what that means yet 39b
- b) J acknowledges it is not up to him to grant what they request without specifying whose it is to do so 40a
- c) the ID of those who get to sit where JJ want to sit is determined by the one who prepares it (40b) an opaque statement if there ever was one

F. IN SUMMARY

- a) J does not deny that he is or will be a king
- b) J does deny that he will exercise one traditional role of a king = appoint his vice-regents
- c) J's definition of his kingship/"messiah-ness" includes the experience of Pred 10; J's messiah-ness cannot be understood apart from it; **THIS IS A PRIMARY MATTER DEFINING J'S KINGSHIP**
- d) those who would participate in this messiah's rule/kingship/kingdom must be COMPARED to their king in terms of similar experience

Scene Two: Mark 10:41-45

- These five verses round off the only response to Pred 10, providing J's critical correction to the 12's misunderstanding regarding Pred 10 and what it says about J's messianic ID. After v. 45, the narrative turns to the concluding inclusio frame 10:46-52, closing off the misunderstanding/correction of Pred 10.
- Given the significance of these verses, I am going to conduct a Detailed Observation of them so that I make sure I digest them thoroughly and accurately.
- I will be highly selective in writing questions, aiming to voice only what I see are the most important issues to investigate further.

Observations/Inferences	Questions
<p>1. Cause of J's correction</p> <p>a. the "10" either overhear JJ's request or conversation, or somehow hear about it 41</p> <p>1) they are designated the "10" (with JJ making 12) indicating this group is the same group that heard Pred 10; IOW, Mark deliberately links this group with that Pred 41</p> <p>2) this marker of number indicates we have the same group</p>	<p><i>Note that I have deleted all questions except those I will answer once I complete my Detailed Observation</i></p> <p>1a1)/2) What is full significance of the fact that this correction is delivered to the 12?</p>

<p>addressed that heard Pred 10 32b</p> <p>b. The “10” react to JJ’s request/conversation with anger 41</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Nature</i> of their reaction: the ten “began” to be indignant; likely indicating the indignation began and continued 2) <i>Cause</i> of reaction: no reason is specified for their anger though it would seem to be aimed at one or more of the following (no firm conclusion is possible): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) JJ’s shady manner in trying to get above them in J’s kingdom; thus the anger is directed at JJ’s selfish <i>character</i> b) JJ’s request itself; thus the anger is directed at JJ’s improper <i>ambition</i> c) with either a) or b) the problem could be the 10’s <i>jealousy</i> of JJ getting or trying to get ahead with J and J’s kingdom; in other words, it wasn’t JJ’s character or ambition (since the ten had the same), just the fact that they exercised those traits more effectively <p>c. Apparently in response the thinking/attitudes behind JJ’s request (rather than the 12’s anger or JJ’s sneakiness; my assessment is based on the nature of J’s discourse in 42b-45) 42a</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) J takes the initiative brings the 12 together 2) speak to the nature of and exercise of authority <p>2. J’s correction 42b-45 involves contrast involving the character and exercise of ruling power</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Non-Jewish rulers 42b-d <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The nature of these ruling actions are not disputed 42b the 12 <i>all</i> know this 2) The exercise of their ruling power is done in complete mastery over those ruled 42c 	
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<p>3) These rulers exercise great authority over those ruled 42d</p> <p>b. The 12 will not exercise ruling authority in the manner of the non-Jewish ruler 43a involves COMPARISON and CONTRAST</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) both non-Jewish rulers and the 12 exercise/will exercise ruling power COMPARISON 2) J CONTRASTS the (negative) <i>manner of ruling</i> with a rule to the (positive) rule to be exercised by the 12 3) this statement implies the 12 will exercise ruling power in some manner 4) this is a GENERAL statement of their <i>manner of rule</i> <p>c. PARTICULAR statements of their manner of rule expressed in two concisely stated contrasts 43b-44</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) anyone wanting to be great among them must be a slave 43b 2) anyone wanting to be first among them must of necessity be a slave to everyone 44 3) Observations on the contrasts taken together <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a¹ J explicitly applies both <i>to the 12 themselves</i> 43a b¹ both claims are <i>universal</i> = apply to all without qualification c¹ the status contrasts are stark: between the highest ruler and the lowest of the low, a slave owned by another human d¹ these statements strike me as an example of Hebrew parallelism = stating the same thing in two similar but slightly different lines e¹ as with so much CONTRAST, there is comparison here as well = these are contrasting modes of exercising rule and reckoning status <p>d. SUBSTANTIATION of CONTRASTS of manner of exercising authority through COMPARISON 45 “for”</p>	<p>2b Why would the 12 be thought of exercising power in some way that drew parallels to non-Jewish rulers? What are the implications of this comparison and contrasts?</p> <p>2c3)e¹ What are the full points of comparison and contrast involved here and what do they mean?</p> <p>2d What are the full implications of the comparison between the SoM’s manner of rule and the 12? In</p>
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<p>1) the manner of rule of the “12” is to be compared to the manner of life of the SoM</p> <p>2) implied presupposition of contrast = SoM could have purposed to be served</p> <p>3) BUT SoM <i>chose</i> to exercise rule/status by regarding others more important than himself; “serving” others (διδάσκοντες)</p> <p>4) SoM purposed to serve in the form of giving his life for the release of many enslaved or held captive</p> <p>5) the placement of this saying seems emphatic; <i>THIS</i>, J’s role as defining model for the 12, is <i>the</i> clincher</p>	<p>particular, does this apply to people besides the 12?</p>
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Answers to Detailed Observations questions

1a1)/2) What is full significance of the fact that this correction is delivered to the 12?

1. By specifying the “10” (41) in addition to JJ, it becomes clear that J is addressing the 12 here, the same audience addressed by Pred 10 and the same group so central to J’s discipling/ministry multiplication throughout the gospel so far (3:13-15; 6:7, 12-13).
2. Therefore, I see this episode (10:32-45) as an extension of earlier episodes where J focuses particularly on this group.

2b Why would the 12 be thought of exercising power in some way that drew parallels to non-Jewish rulers? What are the implications of this comparison and contrasts?

2c3)e¹ What are the full points of comparison and contrast involved here and what do they mean?

I will respond to these questions together since they overlap to a significant degree.

1. I can only assume that a group designated “12” means these people are to *rule* over a restored Israel. The number has no other significance in Scripture than as a designation for the 12 tribes of Israel. Therefore, J associates ruling over political entities because the 12 will exercise leadership over/ruling power over God’s restored people.

2. If the specified manner of rule is true of restored Israel's rulers, their kingdom would take on a different character than that of non-Jewish kingdoms.
3. In terms of the context of Pred 10 in its context within 8:22-10:52, following J on the way of the Lord entails inhabiting a different world, of defining status and power.
4. The cues for what status and the exercise of power consist of must be found outside the normal human realm for the exercise of status and authority.
5. In summary,
 - a. In terms of comparison, the exercise of leadership/rulership is a given and in itself is neither positive or negative. The 12 will exercise a ruling authority (similar to sitting on the rulers right or left hand). No judgment is made here
 - b. In terms of contrasts, the key distinction lies in the *manner* of exercising *leadership* and *marking true status*.
 - i. The manner is not *self*-directed, *self*-beneficial as with all human rulers.
 - ii. The manner is *other* directed and beneficial.
 - iii. J provides *the* starting point for measuring God's leadership of God's people, *the* example of other directed rulership in contrast to other human rulers.
 - iv. The status of a ruler lies not in the ruler himself/herself. Status lies in beneficence to others.

2d What are the full implications of the comparison between the SoM's manner of rule and the 12? In particular, does this apply to people besides the 12?

1. J will *always* be the model to be emulated. How to exercise responsibility in following J starts with J's example and nowhere else.
2. The issue isn't difficulty or lack of difficulty in doing this. The issue is discerning how to do this in any one set of circumstances.
3. J addresses these instructions not to isolated, autonomous individuals, but to a group of 12. The 12 can discern how to do this among themselves.
4. If the 12 exercise rule in this manner, their kingdom will benefit. Blessing will accrue to the "ruled."
5. If J trains the 12 to do his ministry in the manner he does his ministry (3:13-15; 6:7, 12-13), the 12 will train others to exercise authority and reckon status in the same manner J taught them. In other words, the comparison between J and the 12 carries beyond the 12.
6. This mode of life and leadership become characteristic of those who follow J on the way of the Lord.

SUMMARY ANSWERS

1. ID and define the elements of the misunderstanding of Jesus' identity and/r Jesus' passion prediction.

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

1. What are the key components of the misunderstanding and what does each mean?
 - a. The 12 recognize (correctly) J as the messiah-king like David.
 - b. The 12 misunderstand
 - a. *The nature of J's kingdom* =
 - i. it will be just like all other kingdoms on earth = exercising controlling authority over its subjects
 - ii. its rulers will exercise ruling authority like all other kingdoms on earth = for the benefit of the ruler
 - b. *The nature of their role within that kingdom*. As J's specially selected sub-rulers
 - i. They will enjoy high status through
 - ii. exercising the normal manner of rule characteristic of the vice-regents in all human kingdoms
2. What are the key components of J's correction and what does each mean?
 - a. J's messianic kingdom/rule will be starkly unlike known kingdoms
 - b. The essence of J's rule/kingdom is displayed in J's manner of ruling. In other words, the character of the kingdom is determined by the character/manner of ruling of its king/leaders.
 - c. J's rule is *other-beneficial* at its defining core, not *ruler-beneficial*.
 - d. Following J entails embodying J's example of exercising authority and achieving (or ascribing) status. **In other words, acknowledging J as "the Christ" entails a full life, wholistic character response. Confession of this truth goes far beyond a verbal act.**
 - e. Attempting to exercise leadership/ruling power in a manner consistent with self-beneficial patterns of ruling disqualifies one from following in J in the way of the Lord.