
LANDMARK MESSENGER

He Had Done No Violence – End Notes

Both Mark and Luke quote from Isaiah 53. Mark's usage is probably most well-known:

With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors" (Mark 15:27-28).

The vast majority of the older manuscripts of Mark do not have Mark 15:28. What is the origin of verse 28? Is it authentic? It is possible that someone, possibly a monk or scribe, added the words of Mark 15:28 as 'commentary' in a marginal note. Many conservative voices well attest to this position:

Ellicott: The verse, if genuine, would be noticeable as one of the few instances in which St. Mark dwells on the fulfillment of prophecy; but it is omitted by nearly all the better MSS., and probably originated in a marginal note...

Pulpit Commentary: Verse 28. - This verse is omitted in the oldest manuscripts. It is supposed to have been taken from St. Luke.

Bruce Metzger on page 119 of his Textual Commentary: "The earliest and best witnesses of the Alexandrian and the Western types of text lack verse 28. It is understandable that copyists could have added the sentence in the margin from Luke 22:37, whence it came into the text itself."

Because of these issues, many modern Bible translations omit the verse (such as the ESV). Even the very conservative Burton Coffman does not comment on Mark 15:28 in his commentary.

Summation: Although it is uncertain whether Mark 15:28 is authentic to the autograph, it seems very inadvisable to base any interpretative theology on Mark 15:28. Instead, a more robust approach is to ascertain the context of the prophecy that Jesus is quoting, which is Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53, the 'suffering servant' passage, consists of twelve verses which describe the coming Messiah as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised, stricken, smitten, afflicted, bruised, and chastised by God. Why was He treated so tragically? Not for His sin but for the transgressions and lawlessness of men.

The root word for transgressions is used four times in this chapter:

But He was wounded for our transgressions
 For the transgressions of My people, He was stricken
 And He was numbered with the transgressors
 And He bore the sin of many
 And made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 53:5; 8; 12).

One of the reasons that Mark 15:28 may be additive is that it does not fit the context that Isaiah describes: Isaiah specifies that the He was wounded for 'our' transgressions. The Suffering Servant bore the sin of 'many,' and interceded for the 'many'; not just one crucified criminal. In this context, to be 'numbered' or 'reckoned with' the transgressors points to Jesus being counted by God as a sinner:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He was stricken not just for the one criminal who went to be in paradise, but the many transgressors who would obey him throughout all time and be added to His church.

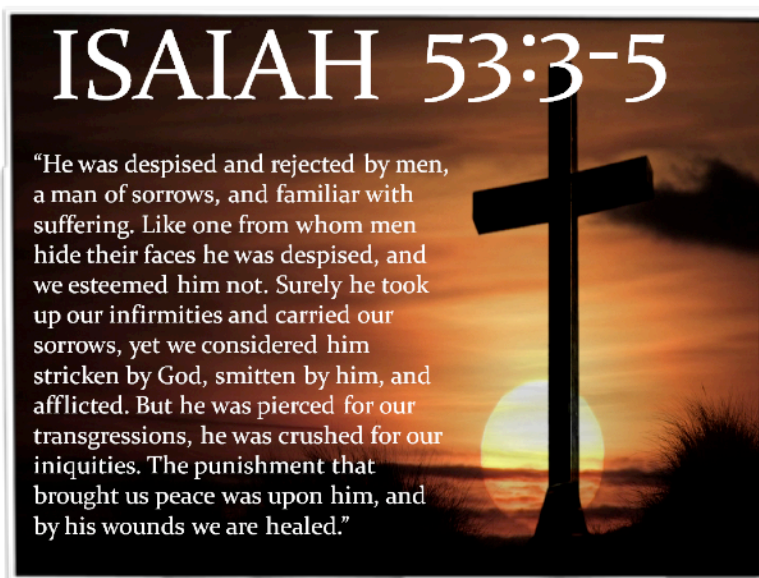
The rest of the scripture upholds this interpretation:

Who are the transgressors?

...but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors (James 2:9).

... you have become a transgressor of the law (James 2:11)

Who does Jesus make intercession for? The saints!



...He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:27).

It is Christ who died... who also makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

The context of Isaiah 53, then, and the supporting framework of the New Testament affirms the interpretation not that Jesus was numbered with the criminals on the crosses to either side of Him, but rather that Jesus was numbered with all sinful humanity.