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The Ransom (Chapter 12) Pages 138-140

By Timothy Keller

Jesus does not leave any doubt about what he came to do: He came to die. He tells his disciples repeatedly that this is the case. In fact, by the time of the incident that Mark records below, Jesus has already predicted his death twice: first in Mark chapter 8 after Peter had said, "You are the Christ":

[Jesus] then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this... (Mark 8:31-32)

Then again in chapter 9:

Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise." (Mark 9:30-31)

But just in case the disciples (or we) have missed it, Jesus repeats it again in chapter 10:

They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." (Mark 10:32-34)

This time, Jesus gives us more details about his death than he had previously. For the first time, we are told that his death will be in Jerusalem, and that both Jews and Gentiles will reject him. Chapter 8 speaks only of the Jewish religious leaders, and 9 speaks more generally about being delivered into the hands of "men." In chapter 8 he had said he would be "rejected" by the priests and scribes, but now he reveals that they will "condemn him to death." This legal term indicates that he will be tried and executed within the criminal justice system. His

depiction of his final days also becomes more graphic and violent: They will “mock...spit...flog” him.

Jesus predicted his death three times in just three chapters—he knew his death was not incidental to his mission. Rather, it was absolutely central to both his identity and his purpose on earth. But the major advance in Mark 10 is that, for the first time, Jesus tells us not only that he will die but why he will do so:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Jesus Christ came not to be served but to die, to give his life. That sets him apart from the founder of every other major religion. Their purpose was to live and be an example; Jesus’s purpose was to die and be a sacrifice.

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