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BIBLICAL STUDIES

DARKNESS OVER THE WHOLE LAND: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MARK 15:33

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"And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour" (Mark 15:33).[1] What is the significance of this three-hour darkening as Jesus suffers on the cross? Many writers have investigated the geo-physical explanation for the darkness; fewer have wrestled with the biblical theological and intracanonical dimensions to it. This article suggests that the darkness from noon to three o'clock p.m. culminates a biblical theological trajectory that begins in Gen 1:2-3 and, more specifically, that this three-hour period represents not only divine judgment but also the inauguration of the latter-day new creation. When scholars do reflect on Mark 15:33 through the lens of biblical theology, they tend to connect the darkness to divine judgment while overlooking any new creation or eschatological aspect to the text. By "eschatology" in this article we refer to the dawning in the middle of history, especially through Christ's death and resurrection, of all that the OT writers hoped for at the end of history.[2] Thus, for the purposes of this article eschatology refers not primarily to an ending but to a new

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[1] All quotations in this article are taken from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated. There are no text-critical issues in Mark 15:33.

[2] See esp. William Manson, "Eschatology and the New Testament," in *Scottish Journal of Occasional Papers* 2 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1953), 6; G. K. Beale, "The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology," in *"The Reader Must Understand": Eschatology in the Bible and Theology* (ed. K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliot; Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 11-52. By "biblical theology" in this article we mean the study of the progressively unfolding redemptive narrative of Scripture that traces theological (i.e., having to do with God and his activity in the world) themes through the canon's narrative, a narrative that culminates supremely in Christ. By "intracanonical" we refer to that which has to do with the 66 books of the Protestant canon, viewed as a diverse group of writings that are nevertheless unified under single divine authorship. Our use of "canonical" and "intracanonical" does not in any way downplay the crucial historical dimension to the biblical text and the overarching narrative it relates.

beginning; it is not so much the doctrine of last things as it is the doctrine of last-things-which-have-become-present.

We begin by considering the current state of scholarship on Mark 15:33. This will include a brief treatment of a handful of relevant OT texts that carry along the biblical trajectory of darkness. Secondly, we consider nine reasons why Mark 15:33 ought to be seen as eschatologically charged, specifically in underscoring the inauguration of the longed-for new creation. We close by raising and answering an objection to our thesis.

I. *Scholarship on Mark 15:33*

Much of the attention devoted to Mark 15:33 is weatherman-like ruminations on what might have caused the darkness. Less attention generally is given to the possible OT background to this text. And even less attention is given to how the OT background might influence the eschatological significance of this darkness.[3]

Many Markan commentators, especially of an older generation, say nothing whatsoever about any possible OT background.[4] Gundry mentions possible parallels but is skeptical that any of them have any intracanonical connection to Mark 15:33.[5] A few cite the Egyptian plague of darkening in Exod 10,[6] while others see Amos 8:9, which speaks of the sun going down at noon and darkening the earth, as relevant to what is happening in Mark 15.[7] Others mention both Exod 10 and Amos 8 as illuminating what is happening in Mark 15:33.[8]

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[3] Patristic interpretation often took this darkness as representing the darkening of the minds of those who were present—the cosmic darkening signifies that Jesus' accusers did not understand what they were doing (see Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, eds., *Mark* [Ancient Christian Commentary; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998], 221-22).

[4] E.g., E. P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1896), 294; Kenneth S. Wuest, *Mark in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 283; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 458; Sherman E. Johnson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (BNTC; London: Black, 1960), 255-56; Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *Matthew, Mark, Luke* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas; *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 782; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (trans. William Pringle; 1845; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 315-19.

[5] Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 2:964.

[6] H. B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: MacMillan, 1898), 384-85; R. Alan Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark* (TNTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1960), 320.

[7] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Richmond: John Knox, 1970), 351-52; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (EKKNT 2; 2 vols.; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 2:321; Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1983), 276; Donald H. Juel, *Mark* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 222; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (BNTC; London: Black, 1991), 375-76; Étienne Trocmé, *L'évangile selon Saint Marc* (CNT 2; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000), 369; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 297-98; Elian Cuvillier, *L'évangile de Marc* (Bible en face; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2002), 303.

[8] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: MacMillan, 1952), 592-93 (adding

Evans wonders if Exod 10 is a possible background but then goes on to focus on Greco-Roman parallels.[9] Several commentators see a smattering of OT texts as relevant to understanding the darkness of Mark 15:33, pointing out the frequent connection in the prophets between darkness and divine judgment.[10]

In all this we should surely not neglect the broader Greco-Roman background, which, as several commentators point out, speaks often of darkness falling after the death of a ruler. Such was the alleged case, for example, with the death of Julius Caesar.[11] Yet the immediate context of Mark 15:33 bristles with OT connections,[12] encouraging us to read v. 33 similarly. Moreover, recent scholarship has rightly been coming to see with fresh depth the pervasive influence of the OT on Mark's Gospel as a whole, despite having fewer explicit OT connections than the other three Gospel accounts.[13] Right from the beginning, the opening words of Mark 1 draw on Isa 40 and Mal 3 to present Jesus as the bringer of eschatological salvation, a new exodus, the true and final liberation.[14]

Our own sense is that it seems wise to bear in mind all of the above OT texts as we read Mark 15:33, though we will conclude ultimately that Exod 10 provides the richest intracanonical resonance. Regardless of which of these texts may have been in Mark's mind as he wrote, there is clearly a biblical theological trajectory of darkness and light throughout the OT. And Mark's own presupposition would have been that one divine author oversaw the writing of all the books of the OT canon, further encouraging us to be sensitive to intracanonical

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Jer 15:9 as a relevant darkness text); William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 571-72; Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark* (NIBCNT; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989), 267 (though Hurtado is tentative about both); Simon Légasse, *L'évangile selon Marc* (LD 5; Paris: Cerf, 1997), 971-72.

[9] Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 506.

[10] Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Marc* (EBib; rev. ed.; Paris: Lecoffre, 1947), 431-32; Douglas R. A. Hare, *Mark* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 215-16; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 475; R. T France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 651; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Eortress, 2007), 751-52; R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 556-57; Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark* (IVPNTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 332; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007), 714.

[11] Philo speaks of eclipses as "indications either of the impending death of some king, or of the destruction of some city" (*Prov.* 2.50).

[12] See, e.g., Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 254-68.

[13] See Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); Rikk E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (rev. ed.; Biblical Studies Library; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Thomas R. Hatina, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels:* Vol. 1, *The Gospel of Mark* (Library of New Testament Studies 304; London: T&T Clark, 2006); Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, *The Psalms of Lament in Mark's Passion: Jesus' Davidic Suffering* (SNTSMS 142; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[14] See esp. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, passim; also Morna D. Hooker, "Isaiah in Mark's Gospel," in *Isaiah in the New Testament* (ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 36-37.

connections, especially if we are sensitive to the consistency with which God has acted throughout redemptive history.[15]

We suggest, however, that from the broadest perspective, Mark 15:33 culminates a trajectory that is launched not in Amos or even in Exodus but in Gen 1. Peter Bolt has one of the most helpful treatments of the catena of OT texts that may inform the darkness of Mark 15:33, but Bolt does not go back to Gen 1.[16] Yet when Gen 1 is borne in mind as we read Mark 15, numerous exegetical insights open up, as we will see. Most crucially, we begin to see the eschatological significance of Mark 15:33 as this text underscores Jesus' death as inaugurating the latter-day new creation. Thus, when scholars view the Markan darkness as a proleptic anticipation of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, such an interpretation does not view Mark 15:33 with a sufficiently wide lens.[17]

A few scholars do address the eschatological significance of Mark 15:33, if briefly. Moloney, for example, writes:

> The period between the sixth hour (midday) and the ninth hour (three o'clock in the afternoon) is marked by "darkness over the whole land." This detail, introduced as a deliberate allusion to Amos 8:9, focuses upon the eschatological nature of the events reported. . . . The death of Jesus is not just any death. The reader is aware that the moment of God's definitive intervention into the human story has arrived.[18]

Yet even Moloney draws back Mark 15 only as far as Amos 8, and not back to Genesis or Exodus. Nor does Moloney explain specifically how the *darkness* of Mark 15:33 is eschatological. James Edwards draws attention to Exod 10 and also wonders if Gen 1:2 might be at the back of Mark's mind, but does not explore this beyond a passing comment. He does, however, write: "According to Mark, the darkness at the crucifixion is portrayed as an eschatological judgment of God, as in Amos 8:9."[19] Yet this is as far as Edwards goes, despite his otherwise penetrating biblical theological insights into Mark's Gospel.[20] Marcus calls Mark 15:33 "eschatological exegesis" but by this he too has in mind end-time judgment, and not also, as we are suggesting, end-time new creation.[21] Recent

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[15] R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Patterns to Himself and His Mission* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1998), 38-39.

[16] Peter G. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance: Atonement in Mark's Gospel* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 18; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 125-27.

[17] E.g., Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 715.

[18] Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 325.

[19] Edwards, *Mark*, 475.

[20] Cf. Williamson who mentions an eschatological significance to Mark 15:33 but does not draw it out (*Mark*, 276). Witherington sees Mark 15:33 as eschatological in judgment but not in terms of preparation for an inaugurated new creation (*Gospel of Mark*, 397); the same goes for Culpepper (*Mark*, 556-57).

[21] Joel Marcus, "The Old Testament and the Death of Jesus: The Role of Scripture in the Gospel Passion Narratives," in *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (ed. John T. Carroll and Joel. B. Green; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 222; similarly Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel*

monographs that would seem to be promising in relevance to our thesis often do not connect Mark 15:33 to the OT at all, whether in terms of inaugurated new creation or otherwise.[22] Ernest Best raises but then dismisses the possibility that Mark 15:33 is eschatologically significant.[23]

II. *Evidence for Reading Mark 15:33 in Terms of Inaugurated Cosmic Judgment and New Creation*

Our proposal is that the darkness that descends on the land in Mark 15:33 as Jesus hangs on the cross, taken together with the return of light three hours later, is a cosmic, redemptive-historically climactic indication of the inaugurated new creation longed for with snowballing intensity throughout the OT.

Why should we see Mark 15:33 this way? Nine reasons, two broad and generally uncontroversial reminders followed by seven more specific observations, will be given.

First, most broadly, the theme of darkness and light runs right through the Bible from the dawning of primordial light in Gen 1:3-4 (cf. Isa 45:7) to the luminous radiance of God himself and the Lamb in Rev 21:23-24 and 22:5. Before considering the biblical theological significance of Mark 15:33 and what it might contribute specifically to this trajectory, the trajectory itself must be duly acknowledged. Throughout the OT, and Jewish literature drawing on the OT, the motif of light is not restricted to natural illumination. It reflects much more, from the dawning of creation itself (Gen 1:2-4[24]) to Israel's island of light in the midst of the Egyptian plague of darkness (Exod 10:23; cf. *T. Jos.* 20:2; 3 Macc 6:4) to the pillar of cloud and fire to light Israel's way in the wilderness (Exod 13:21; Neh 9:12, 19; Ps 78:14; cf. Wis 18:1-3; 4 Esd 1:14) to the perpetually burning lamp for light in the tabernacle (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2; Num 4:16; cf. *Ant.* 3.199; 1 Macc 4:50) to the correlation between light and Torah (Ps 119:105, 130; Isa 51:4; cf. *T. Levi* 14:4; 19:1; Wis 18:4) to the Jewish association of light and joy (Esth 8:16; Ps 97:11; Jer 25:10) to the prophetic appropriation of light and darkness as moral categories (Isa 5:20; 51:4; 59:9; Hos 6:5; Mic 7:9; cf. Wis 5:6; Sir 32:16[25]) to

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Passion Narratives (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 342-44; Johannes Schreiber, *Der Kreuzigungsbericht des Markusevangeliums Mk 15, 20b-41: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und methodenkritische Untersuchung nach William Wrede (1859–1906)* (BZNW 48; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 174-75.

[22] E.g., Eve-Marie Becker, *Das Markus-Evangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie* (WUNT 194; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); note esp. 325-28; Nicole Wilkinson Duran, *The Power of Disorder: Ritual Elements in Mark's Passion Narrative* (Library of New Testament Studies 378; London: T&T Clark, 2009); Holly J. Carey, *Jesus' Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark's Gospel* (Library of New Testament Studies 398; London: T&T Clark, 2009).

[23] Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (SNTSMS 2; 2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), l-li.

[24] Josephus makes the light/darkness motif even more significant to Gen 1:2-4 than it is in the MT (*Ant.* 1.27-28).

[25] Common esp. in Philo (e.g., *Opif.* 1.168; *Leg.* 1.18; *Her.* 1:163).

the Isaianic hope of restored world order in terms of light (Isa 9:2; 30:26; 58:8; 60:1, 19-20). This motif of light, moreover, is not abstract brightness but deeply Personal—its true source is the radiant luminosity of the face of God himself (Num 6:25-26; Ps 4:6; 34:5; 80:3, 7, 19; 89:15; cf. Ps 27:1; Mic 7:8), reflected on the face of his servants (Exod 34:29-35; Dan 10:8; cf. Prov 4:18; Isa 60:5; Jer 31:12; cf. 4 Esd 7:97) and ultimately of his Son (Mark 9:3; 2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:3; Rev 1:16), the light of the world (John 8:12; cf. *T. Levi* 18:4). Since the Son's coming, therefore, "the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining" (1 John 2:8). Light is a whole-Bible motif, popping up at one crucial moment in redemptive history after another. Philo goes so far as to say that "in the universe the nature of light is the most pre-eminent thing" (*Deus* 1.45).

Second, Jesus is the second Adam.[26] Both Adam and Jesus are referred to as God's son (Luke 3:38; Mark 1:1, respectively), acting representatively on behalf of those who are "in" each. Yet Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. What Adam did, Jesus undid, and the two have come to represent "antithetical orders of existence."[27] The NT teaches this not only implicitly but also explicitly (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:20-22, 42-49; cf. Luke 3:23, 38; Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18). The point here is simply that in describing Jesus as the second Adam, the NT casts Jesus (among other connotations) *in a new-creational light.* With the first Adam, son of God, creation dawned, and all those in him share in the results of his covenant failure. With the second Adam, Son of God, new creation dawned, and all those in him share in the benefits of his covenant faithfulness.[28]

These two broad reminders render it *prima facie* plausible to see the darkness-to-light pattern of Mark 15:33 as underscoring Jesus as the bringer of the longed-for new creation. If Jesus is the second Adam, and darkness/light is a rich whole-Bible theme that crops up when the second Adam dies, then hermeneutical good sense prompts us to see greater significance to the darkening as the second Adam hangs on the cross than merely an eerie natural phenomenon. Rather, the Eden lost by Adam is being restored by Christ. In both Gen 1 (with the first Adam) and Mark 15 (with the last Adam), cosmic darkness gives way to the dawning of light. If the first account is one of creation, might we read the second account as one of new creation? The remaining points drill into Mark 15 itself to answer this question in the affirmative.

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[26] For a helpful recent overview of this point, see Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 463-99. Still illuminating is Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 53-57.

[27] Richard B. Gaffin, "'Life-Giving Spirit': Probing the Center of Paul's Pneumatology," *JETS* 41 (1998): 576.

[28] See Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 97-99, who connects Edenic "theophanic Light" with Jesus as the second Adam and bringer of a re-creation. See also G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 381-437, who discusses Jesus in the Synoptics as a last Adam, who is introducing a new creation and restoring the image of God for a new humanity.

Third, as discussed above, several scholars see Exod 10 and the penultimate plague that afflicted the Egyptians as providing hermeneutical background material for what is happening in Mark 15:33. In both cases there is uniquely a darkness that descends as an act of divine judgment immediately before the shed blood of a Passover sacrifice.[29] There are also striking similarities in wording between Exod 10:21-22 LXX and Mark 15:33.[30]

Exodus 10:21-22	Mark 15:33
Exod 10:21 εἶπεν δὲ κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν ἔκτεινον τὴν χεῖρά σου εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν καὶ γενηθήτω σκότος ἐπὶ γῆν Αἰγύπτου ψηλαφητὸν σκότος **Exod 10:22** ἐξέτεινεν δὲ Μωυσῆς τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν καὶ ἐγένετο σκότος γνόφος θύελλα ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν Αἰγύπτου τρεῖς ἡμέρας	Καὶ γενομένης ὥρας ἕκτης σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης
Exod 10:21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt." **Exod 10:22** So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was darkness, blackness, windstorm in all the land of Egypt three days.	And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Exodus 10:21-22 is the only place in all of the Greek OT where the verb γίνομαι occurs with σκότος and is then followed by a reference to "over all the land" (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν)—all of which is true also of Mark 15:33. This unique parallelism suggests that Mark 15:33 alludes to Exod 10:21-22 (though Mark uses ὅλος in place of πᾶς). In addition, only the Exodus passage notes that there is a temporary duration of the darkness in comparison to all the other uses of darkness in the LXX. Significantly, the darkness lasts three days in Exodus and three hours in Mark.

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[29] Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 230.

[30] See France, *Mark*, 651; Kelli S. O'Brien, *The Use of Scripture in the Markan Passion Narrative* (Library of New Testament Studies 384; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 110-11, 141-44.

Yet what is particularly to be noted here is that the Egyptian plagues are themselves a series of de-creative acts, by which the original created order is undone and a portion of the earth (Egypt, except where the Israelites reside) returns to primordial chaos.[31] Psalm 105 retells the Egyptian plagues by describing God as "speaking" them into existence—precisely the means by which God created in Gen 1 (Ps 105:31, 34; cf. Wis 11:5-19).[32] Josephus even records the darkness of the Egyptian plague as restricting the breathing of the Egyptians (*Ant.* 2.308), perhaps indicating a reversal of God placing the breath of life in man in Gen 2:7 (cf. 1 Cor 15:45).[33]

The likelihood that the Egyptian plagues are acts of de-creation is strengthened when it is considered that elsewhere in the OT the pagan nations are judged in terms of de-creation—for example, Babylon's judgment in Isa 13, which includes a reference to the darkening of the sun (Isa 13:10), or Edom's judgment in Isa 34 (see also Isa 24:23; Ezek 32:6-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15-16). In Jer 4, God's own people are judged in terms of de-creation (Jer 4:23-28; cf. 12:4; 14:1-6; and note the re-creative language of 31:5, 12), again with reference to cosmic darkness (4:23, 28).

The OT's repeated portrayal of divine judgment as a breaking up of the cosmos signifies the undoing of creation. The picture of the end of the cosmos is applied to these "ends" of such nations as Babylon and Edom to indicate that their destruction on a small scale is like the coming worldwide devastation of the whole cosmos, very similar to the portrayal of Egypt's microcosmic judgment discussed above.[34]

In light of its pervasiveness and significance to Jewish tradition (note also *Test. Mos.* 10:3-6; 4 *Ezra* 5:4-8), the cosmic disintegration and de-creation through darkening likely also informs the solar darkening of Mark 15:33, in which case we have another reason to see Mark 15:33 in terms of de-creation and new creation.

When darkness falls on the land in Mark 15:33, then, in a Gospel that is dominated by a new exodus motif[35] and has already seen echoes of events from Exodus such as miraculous provision of food (Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-10; cf. Exod 16:1-36) and theophanic "passing by" (Mark 6:48; cf. Exod 33:19, 22; 34:6),[36] the reader familiar with the OT is sensitized to the plausibility that this is an act

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[31] See John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 113-17; Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 59-61, 169-72. Cf. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 30.

[32] See Archie C. C. Lee, "Genesis 1 and the Plagues Tradition in Psalm CV," *VT* 40 (1990): 257-63.

[33] *Testament of Simeon*, moreover, seems to highlight the unique significance of the penultimate plague of darkness by saying that according to Egyptian sorcerers, when the bones of Joseph would be removed from Egypt, darkness would once more cover the land of Egypt (*T. Sim.* 8:3-4).

[34] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 396-99.

[35] So Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, passim.

[36] See Dane Ortlund, "The Old Testament Background and Eschatological Significance of Jesus Walking on the Sea (Mark 6:45-52)," *Neot* 46 (2013): 319-37.

of de-creation—and, when the three hours are up, of re-creation, as light dawns once more.[37] We note further that after the de-creative plagues, God divided the waters of the Red Sea and brought his people through on dry land in an event that echoes the dividing of land and sea in Gen 1 (cf. Ps 136:5-6, 13). Just as the plagues represent a chaos of de-creation, the exodus event of the first half of Exodus is thus nothing less than a recapitulation of creation, complete with a new Adam (Moses, representing Israel as a corporate Adam), a new Eden (the promised land), a revitalization of the mandate of Gen 1:28 to multiply (in the wake of Pharaoh's de-multiplication in destroying Hebrew infants [Exod 1:7, 20, 22]), a new time of testing (in the wilderness), a renewed divine command (the Ten Commandments),[38] a renewed mediation of the presence of God (the tabernacle), and a new disastrous failure (the golden calf).

This creation/de-creation/re-creation motif reaches its canonical climax, however, in the death and resurrection of Jesus. One way we see this underscored in Mark is the use of σχίζω, used twice in the Gospel.[39] At the beginning of Mark, at Jesus' baptism, the heavens are "divided" (1:10), and at the end, at the crucifixion, the temple curtain is "divided" (15:38)—featuring the same Greek word used to describe the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea (Exod 14:21 LXX; cf. Isa 64:1; *T. Levi* 18:6-8; *T. Jud.* 24:1-3), which itself, as we have mentioned, is drawing on the dividing of heaven and earth in the creation account of Gen 1.[40] In Exodus, Israel, God's first-born son, is re-created as land and sea divide, just as Adam, God's first son, was created upon the dividing of land and sea.[41] In both Markan "dividing" passages (1:10 and 15:38), similarly, Jesus is immediately pronounced to be God's son (1:11; 15:39). These two texts thus likely provide bookends to Mark's Gospel.[42] Perhaps Isa 50:2-3 also contributes to the intracanonical thought-world informing how one should interpret Mark 15:33, for there God says "I clothe the heavens with blackness" (50:3; cf. v. 10) in the context of de-creation (50:2).[43] If so, we have another

[37] Note here the relevant comments of Edwards, *Mark*, 14. Gundry's comment that Mark says nothing about it becoming light again at the ninth hour introduces a tortured literalism into interpreting the text, which says that there was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, clearly implying that the darkness ended and light resumed at three o'clock (Gundry, *Mark*, 964).

[38] VanGemeren calls the various divine utterances in Gen 1 "the ten commands" of creation, an observation that points further to the notion that the Ten Commandments of Exodus are to be seen as a recapitulation of creation (Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988], 42).

[39] Matthew (3:16) and Luke (3:21) use ἀνοίγω, not σχίζω, to speak of the heavens being "opened."

[40] James D. Newsome, *Exodus* (Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 54.

[41] Further corroboration of various ideas in this paragraph can be found in Warren A. Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter, 1984), passim; and, in explicit reliance upon Gage, Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 292-301.

[42] Further support that Mark 15:33 should thus be read in new creation terms might be seen in Jeremias, who reads the descent of the Spirit in the parallel of Mark 1:9-11 as an event signifying new creation (Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus als Weltvollender* [Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1930], 17).

[43] Cf. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, 22n13.

connection between the light/darkness motif and that of de-creation, in one of the most heavily plundered extended passages of the OT by NT writers.

Fourth, we must clarify the specifically Markan significance of Amos 8:9. Bauckham rightly pinpoints this as a key text for understanding the three-hour Markan darkness, since it is the only OT darkness text that specifically speaks of a darkness beginning at noon,[44] and it occurs "on the earth" (or land). Amos 8:9 reads: καὶ ἔσται ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός καὶ δύσεται ὁ ἥλιος μεσημβρίας καὶ συσκοτάσει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τὸ φῶς ("'And on that day,' declares the Lord God, 'I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight'"). What can be added to this, however, is recognition that Amos 8:9 *is itself located in a broader eschatological context of new creation.* The second half of Amos is filled with eschatologically loaded references to "the coming days" or "on that day" (4:2; 5:18, 20; 8:9, 11; 9:11, 13), culminating in the prophecy's conclusion in Amos 9 that includes a promise of restoration for Israel in terms fraught with the language and categories of new creation (Amos 9:11-15).[45] This includes a reference to enjoying the fruit of the garden, as in Eden (9:14). Also, both Amos 8:9-10 and Mark's passion narrative take place in the context of a Jewish feast (cf. Tob 2:6).[46] We conclude that reading Amos 8:9 with contextual sensitivity renders all the more probable that Mark 15:33 itself is eschatologically charged.

Perhaps we could even say that the three-hour darkness during which Jesus suffered on the cross is the eschatological judgment anticipated time and again in the prophets (e.g., Ezek 9–11; Joel 2:1, 11;[47] Zeph 1:14; cf. Rev 1:10). Not only does darkness mark judgment generally, it also more specifically indicates the final day of judgment (Isa 5:30; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:15; *1 En.* 94:9). This is especially conspicuous in Amos 5, which connects the day of the Lord to the darkness/light motif particularly clearly: "Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light. . . . Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?" (Amos 5:18, 20).[48] Earlier in Amos 5 occurs a similar ascription to Yahweh of his ability to turn light into darkness in a context of judgment: "He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night . . ." (5:8; cf. 4:13).[49]

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[44] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 259n26. We might note a connection between darkness and noontime in Jer 15:8-9, though the actual word "darkness" does not occur there but only the setting of the sun at noon.

[45] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2012), 137.

[46] Noted by O'Brien, *Markan Passion Narrative*, 111.

[47] Note also the reference to the garden of Eden in Joel 2:3. Marcus identifies Joel 2 (along with Amos 8) as a possible text for understanding Mark 15:33 (Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16* [AB 27A; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999], 1054).

[48] Perkins cites only Amos 5 (not Amos 8) in her commentary on Mark 15:33 (Pheme Perkins, *The Gospel of Mark* [*NIB* 8; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 723).

[49] Throughout Amos 5, moreover, it is clear that it is God's own people, Israel, who are bringing this judgment upon themselves, which is compatible with Jesus as the second Adam who bears the

We should note further the intriguing immediate context of Amos 8:9, for the next verse speaks of this coming day of judgment being "like the mourning for an only son [ἀγαπητός]" (Amos 8:10). This is not insignificant when we remember that the bookends to Mark are the threefold statement, likely forming the macro-structure of Mark as a whole, that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 1:10; 9:7; 15:39[50]—the last of which occurs at the conclusion to the three hours of darkness). Even more significantly, Jesus (and only Jesus) is called God's ἀγαπητός in Mark (1:11; 9:7; 12:6). Most Markan commentators ignore Amos 8:10, despite the rich intracanonical evocations it draws forth when combined with Amos 8:9 in Mark 15:33.[51] One of the few to mention the mourning for an only son in Amos in connection with Mark 15:33 is Schweizer, whose de-historicized reading of Mark makes his otherwise salutary comments generally unsatisfying (e.g., the temple curtain splitting of 15:38 "is a theological statement and not a historical one"[52]). All this suggests that Jesus' cross was the eschatological judgment, borne by Jesus, the ultimate beloved Son, for all those who are in him.

Fifth, we note the reference to *land* in Mark 15:33. Mark tells us not only the timing of the darkness (noon to three o'clock) but its sphere: "there was darkness over the whole land [ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν]."[53] Reflection on this phrase tends to focus on whether this was a regional darkness or a whole-earth darkness, yet this is to miss the biblical theological significance of what Mark is saying.

Whatever portion of the earth or land was in fact darkened, the significance of the sphere of this darkness is that it is one more indicator that Mark 15:33 is new-creational. This is likely the case for two reasons. First, the wording is similar to that of the darkness over the whole land of Egypt in Exod 10:22, which we have already argued is itself part of the broader creation/de-creation/re-creation backbone of Scripture, drawing on the creation account itself, with the destruction of Egypt as a microcosmic model pointing to the destruction of the macrocosm. Second, the OT only speaks of darkness over the earth together with emerging light in two other places (besides Exod 10): Gen 1:2-3 ("darkness was over the face of the deep. . . . And God said, 'Let there be light'") and Isa 60:1-2, the latter an allusion to Gen 1:1-2 ("your light has come. . . . For behold, darkness shall cover the earth").[54] This is striking because, as already discussed above, Gen 1:2-3 in its depiction of primordial darkness is a possible background to the darkness

judgment for God's people vicariously. See Bas M. F. van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (JSNTSup 164; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 474.

[50] See Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 265-66.

[51] Mourning is again connected with cosmic darkening in an exegetical midrash on Lam 1:1 (*Midrash Rabbah Lamentations*; see Collins, *Mark*, 752n194).

[52] Schweizer, *Good News According to Mark*, 352.

[53] The word γῆ appears 250 times in the NT and 19 times in Mark, usually in generic terms to refer to the soil or the ground (e.g., throughout the parable of the sower in 4:1-9) and sometimes to refer to the whole earth (e.g., 13:27, 31).

[54] Cf. Ps 82:5; Isa 8:22; Amos 4:13; 5:8, where darkness and the earth are found together, but the darkness is not said explicitly to stretch over the earth/land.

of Mark 15:33, and Isa 60:1-2 is one of the key OT eschatological texts, occurring in a broader context of prophesied new creation.

What we find, then, is that darkness is explicitly said to cover the *entire* earth in two crucial places in the OT—in creation (Gen 1), and in the prophetic hope of eschatological new creation (Isa 60). Putting these two texts together with the partial-earth darknesses of Exod 10 and Amos 8, both of which we have seen to hold eschatological significance, we are encouraged to read Mark 15 as underscoring the inauguration of the eschatological new creation.[55] Even if Mark's statement that darkness covered "the whole earth" refers to a partial-earth darkness, this need not mitigate its eschatological/new-creational significance, since a similar eschatological significance holds in the other two partial-earth darknesses, Exod 10 and Amos 8. We should note here too the intertestamental reference to darkness covering the earth in *Sib. Or.* 5.346-349, which says that "in the last time" the sun will go out, the moon will be extinguished, and "everything will be blackened, there will be darkness throughout the earth."[56]

Sixth, the only other reference to "darkening" in Mark reinforces the eschatological significance of the darkening of Mark 15:33. In Mark 13, in the midst of his extended response to the disciples' question about the timing and signs of the destruction of the temple (13:1-4), Jesus says: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened [σκοτισθήσεται], and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory" (13:24-26). We cannot pursue here all the interpretive questions bound up with this difficult text. What we suggest, in brief, is that, however catastrophic the collapse of Jerusalem and the temple would have been in A.D. 70 as a beginning fulfillment of Jesus' prediction, these verses (13:24-27) signal something far more cosmic and disastrous and far-reaching. The cosmic conflagration language in Mark 13:24-25 comes from Isa 13:10 and 34:4, respectively referring to the historical end of sinful Babylon's and Edom's existence through divine judgment, in which God conducts holy war by employing one nation to defeat another. As noted earlier, the imagery of the end of the cosmos is applied to these "ends" of Babylon and Edom to indicate that their judgment on a small scale is like the future universal judgment of the entire world, much like the depiction of Egypt's microcosmic judgment also discussed earlier. In a paragraph bristling with OT language and categories,[57] Jesus is speaking of an event in terms of the disintegration of the

[55] The use of the phrase "the whole earth" throughout the Noah account (8:9; 9:19) may strengthen the new creation overtones to "the whole earth" in Mark 15:33 in light of the way in which Noah functions as a second Adam figure and the emerging land from water as a new creation (Gage, *Gospel of Genesis*, passim; Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 292-301; Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 45-47, 622-24).

[56] Translation by J. J. Collins in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. I: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1983), 401.

[57] Schlatter writes: "Die Beschreibung der Parusie besteht fast ausschließlich aus Schriftworten. Jesus schuf nicht eigene Bilder für den Moment, in dem er sich in der Herrlichkeit Gottes der

created order and return to primordial chaos.[58] Surely Jesus is at least partially referring here to Jerusalem's demise and the temple-destruction of A.D. 70—an event the catastrophic nature of which, to the Jew, should not be understated. Yet that microcosmic temple-destruction (as well as that of Jerusalem) could itself be taken as representative of the macrocosmic destruction of the world order, since the world as a whole was itself intended to be a temple and the temple was designed as a small model of the cosmos.[59]

However we might connect the dots between Jesus' words in Mark 13:24-26, his own death and resurrection, the events of A.D. 70, and Jesus' second coming, it should be clear that when Jesus speaks of the sun being darkened in Mark 13:24 he is employing categories that his Jewish hearers would have heard in terms of pre-creational chaos (cf. Isa 13:10; 34:4; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:14-16). It is therefore reasonable that the only other mention of darkness in Mark, in 15:33, holds similar connotations. Indeed, we probably ought to see the darkness of Mark 15:33 as at least partially fulfilling Jesus' prediction in 13:24 of the darkening of the sun.[60]

Seventh, stepping back and viewing Mark's Gospel as a whole, the entire tenor of this Gospel is eschatologically charged. Recent scholarship is recognizing this in fresh ways. Watts's work on Isaiah's new exodus theme in Mark is especially noteworthy here.[61] Kernaghan instructively explains Mark's pervasive yet perplexing repetitive use of *euthus* and other conjunctions thus: "From the opening prophecy until the crucifixion the words *at once, as soon as, suddenly* and *immediately* have all signaled the fullness of time and the approach of the kingdom of God."[62] A study in Markan eschatology such as ours must therefore bear in mind all sixteen chapters of the Gospel, not only ch. 13 and Jesus' words there about the signs of the end of the age.[63] In short, when Mark places as Jesus' first words in his Gospel, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (1:15), we must understand that declaration as Jesus' Jewish hearers would have understood it: as the announcement that the long-awaited Messianic kingdom had arrived.[64] The throne of David was being brought to fulfillment. The Second Adam—note that in Mark

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Welt zeigen wird. Er gründete die Hoffnung der Jünger einzig auf die prophetischen Worte" (Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1982], 710). Watts suggests Isa 34:4; Joel 2:10; Isa 13:10 (= Ezek 32:7f.); Dan 7:13-14 as OT background texts to Matt 24:29-31 (= Mark 13:24-27) (Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, 85n170).

[58] So Edwards, *Mark*, 403, citing Gen 1:2. See also France, *Mark*, 530-35.

[59] See G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 17; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 31-50, 188-90.

[60] As suggested by O'Brien, *Markan Passion Narrative*, 197.

[61] Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*.

[62] Kernaghan, *Mark*, 329.

[63] Contra Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda* (WUNT 2/245; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 150.

[64] Geerhardus Vos, "The Kingdom of God," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.; Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 304-5, 309-10.

1:13 Jesus is with the wild animals (cf. Gen 2:19-20)—was ushering in creation restored.[65] And the rest of Mark's Gospel explains how. It is therefore reasonable to read Mark 15:33 eschatologically. Such an interpretation fits with how the Gospel itself demands to be read.[66]

Eighth, the connection between the temple and what is happening in and around Mark 15:33 encourages us to read v. 33 in terms of the beginning end of the old creation and the ongoing beginning new creation. Many scholars note that there are two miraculous events in Mark 15—the cosmic darkening, and the tearing of the temple veil. The two events naturally clump together; in Luke's account, the two events are deliberately paired in a single verse (Luke 23:45). Is there any connection between the darkness and the curtain-tearing beyond the fact that both are supernatural events? The answer is "yes," if we remember that Gen 1–2, in which the darkness/light motif is so prominent, also portray Eden as the first temple, a temple which was to be expanded by Adam and Eve and their seed around the whole world.[67] The tearing of the temple curtain in Mark 15:38 (cf. 14:58; 15:29) not only signifies open access to a holy God but also restoration of Eden, the inauguration of restored fellowship with God as enjoyed in Gen 1–2. Josephus helps us here. He tells us that the veil of the temple (probably the innermost veil, though it is difficult to tell for certain) was embroidered with a picture of the universe, including the stars of the sky (*J.W.* 5.212-215), which is one of the many evidences that the temple was symbolic of the cosmos.[68] Thus with the rending (σχίζω) of the temple veil in Mark 15:38, a well-versed Jew would understand that symbolically the universe itself was being torn.[69] We also remember the rending of the heavens in Mark 1:10 at Jesus' baptism (again using σχίζω), another echo of the creation account of Genesis.[70] The point then is that just as God rent the heavens in

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[65] Ma'afu Palu, *Jesus and Time: An Interpretation of Mark 1:15* (Library of New Testament Studies 468; London: T&T Clark, forthcoming) argues that "the time" that is fulfilled in Mark 1:14 draws on an OT trajectory of God's covenant with day and night beginning in Eden.

[66] Luke's Gospel may corroborate the Eden-restoring nature of "the kingdom" as preached by Jesus. In Luke 23 one of the criminals asks Jesus, "Remember me when you come *into your kingdom*" (23:42), to which Jesus responds, "Today you will be with me *in Paradise*" (23:43). The very next verse then goes on to describe the three-hour darkness as Jesus hangs on the cross (23:44). Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 97-98.

[67] See here esp. Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66-80; also Seung Kang, "Creation, Eden, Temple and Mountain: Textual Presentations of Sacred Space in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2008).

[68] Whichever veil Josephus may have had in mind, Daniel Gurtner follows most interpreters and argues that Matthew refers to the innermost veil when describing the rending of the veil (Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus* [SNTSMS 139; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007]).

[69] Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 261-62. Cf. Margaret Barker, "Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypse," *SJT* 51 (1998): 1.

[70] Lamarche relates the rending of the heavens in Mark 1:10 to the rending of the temple curtain in Mark 15:33 (Paul Lamarche, "La mort du Christ et le voile du temple selon Marc," *NRTh* 106 [1974]: 588). Here we recall also that Mark appears to have had Gen 1:2 in mind at the

Gen 1 to inaugurate with his "templing" presence the created order, bringing light out of darkness, so he rent the heavens at Jesus' death to inaugurate with his "templing" presence the decisive beginning of the new-creational order, once more bringing light out of darkness.[71] The darkness of Mark 15:33 and the curtain-tearing of Mark 15:38 together communicate this. Thus the two supernatural events of Mark 15 are closely related, but not simply in that Mark juxtaposes the two to divert the attention of readers "away from the shame and humiliation of the cross and [focus] their attention on the awesomeness of the event."[72] Though not less than this, Mark is doing more. He is underscoring the inaugurated new creation that Jesus is bringing.[73]

Ninth, and finally, noncanonical Jewish literature of the Second Temple period encourages us to understand the darkness of Mark 15:33 in terms of eschatological new creation. The Latin version of *Life of Adam and Eve* speaks of the sun, moon, and stars being darkened for seven days when Adam died (46:1: *Obtenebratus est sol et luna et stellae per dies VII*)—intriguing in light of Jesus' role as a second Adam figure, discussed above. We also see the eschatological nature of the light/darkness motif in the words of Ezra in 4 Esdras: "I say to you, O nations that hear and understand, 'Await your shepherd; he will give you everlasting rest, because he who will come at the end of the age is close at hand. Be ready for the rewards of the kingdom, because the eternal light will shine upon you for evermore. Flee from the shadow of this age, receive the joy of your glory'" (4 Esd 2:34-36 RSV). In *1 En.* 80, darkness is again given eschatological significance as the angel Uriel explains to Enoch what will happen at the end of

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beginning of his Gospel (Mark 1:9-11) when he speaks of the Spirit descending like a dove, which echoes the Spirit hovering like a dove over the dark void of primordial chaos. (Perhaps included too is the "dove" sent out by Noah that hovered over the chaos waters of the flood, which launched the second new creation [see Gen 8:8-11], in recapitulation of the first creation.) See the good discussion of Lane, *Mark*, 56-58, on the connection between Mark 1:9-11 and Gen 1:2.

[71] See Beale, *Temple and the Church's Mission*, 189-90. Gurtner, writing on the tearing of the veil in Matthew, argues for an apocalyptic understanding of this event (Gurtner, *Torn Veil*, passim); this is more demonstrable from Matthew than from Mark, since Matthew speaks of the earth shaking and rocks splitting in addition to the temple veil tearing. Heil explores the eschatological dimension to the tearing of the temple veil, but sees Jesus' followers as being the new temple (the new "house of prayer," drawing on 11:17). While we agree with Heil, we prefer to read the rending of the temple veil in terms not only of an eschatologically restored people but as also, more broadly, an eschatologically restored cosmos (John Paul Heil, "The Narrative Strategy and Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark," *CBQ* 59 [1997]: 76-100, esp. 98-99).

[72] Winn, *Purpose of Mark's Gospel*, 133.

[73] Ridderbos, commenting on Matt 27:51, reads the tearing of the temple veil in new creational terms (Herman N. Ridderbos, *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ: The King and the Kingdom* [New York: Association, 1958], 87). Perhaps a further connection between the darkness and the tearing of the temple curtain is found in the fact that the evening sacrifice was offered at the temple at three o'clock p.m.—the very time, according to Mark, when the darkness ends, Jesus breathes his last, and the temple curtain tears (*m. Pesaḥim* 5:1; cf. Joseph Tabory, "*Ma'amadot*: A Second Temple Non-Temple Liturgy," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls; Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium of the Orion Center, 19-23 January 2000* [ed. Esther G. Chazon; *STDJ* 48; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 251n41).

time, including the darkening of the heavenly light (*1 En.* 80:1, 4), and giving this explanation in terms of de-creation: "And in those times the fruits of the earth shall be backward, and shall not grow in their time, and the fruits of the trees shall be withheld in their time" (*1 En.* 80:3).

We conclude that the darkness of Mark 15:33 is not only signifying eschatological judgment; it is also signifying eschatological new creation. Just as creation began in darkness and yielded to light, so new creation began in darkness as Jesus hung on the cross and then yielded to light. While some of the above nine points carry greater weight than others—some are more supporting than establishing—taken cumulatively these nine points compel us to read Mark 15:33 in terms of the transition from the darkness of the old creation to the light of the new creation. To the objection that we are identifying too many OT passages to be standing behind a NT passage, one may reply that the notion of "thick description" would seem to be present here. To try to reduce the influential passages down to only one might run the risk of an overly "thin description."[74] Nevertheless, we will conclude below that only a few OT passages are uppermost in Mark's mind, and above all one.

III. *An Objection*

At this point it may be asked whether we are not identifying the inauguration of the new creation too early in Mark's Gospel. Was not the latter-day new creation begun in Jesus' *resurrection*, rather than in his death, as we are suggesting in this article? Four brief considerations are clarifying at this point.

First, we must be careful not to introduce an unbiblical disjunction between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Christ's death and resurrection are certainly distinct events, but each presupposes the other: his death anticipates his resurrection, and his resurrection is meaningful only if he has truly died. Calvin rightly reminds us of the synecdochal nature of biblical references to the death or resurrection of Christ.[75] When one is mentioned, the other is necessarily implied. The work of Christ as Second Adam was a united whole—indeed, not only his death and resurrection but also his incarnation, life, ministry, ascension, and intercession must be held together.[76]

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[74] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 284-86, 291-92, 326-32. Vanhoozer is drawing on Gilbert Ryle in his description of "thick" and "thin" interpretation of texts. Cf. Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 117-20.

[75] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2.16.13.

[76] As Calvin himself does in the broader context of the passage of the *Institutes* mentioned in the previous footnote; see *Inst.* 2.16.5-17. See also Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Contours of Christian Theology; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 18-19. Peterson rightly points out, however, that according to NT teaching the death and resurrection of Christ stand out with unique soteriological significance vis-à-vis the other events of Christ's incarnate ministry (*Salvation Accomplished by the Son*, 23, 26).

A second consideration helps fill out our argument that Mark 15:33, despite being a crucifixion and not a resurrection text, signifies inaugurated new creation: the broader context of Mark 15–16. Just as Jesus' death leads to his resurrection, so the darkness that hides the sun in Mark 15:33 is followed narratively by the light of the early morning risen sun in Mark 16:2: "And very early on the first day of the week, *when the sun had risen,* they went to the tomb." This early morning resurrection dawning was anticipated by the lifting of the darkness at three o'clock p.m. during Jesus' crucifixion. The de-creative darkness-followed-by-light of Friday afternoon anticipates the re-creative darkness-followed-by-light of Sunday morning.

Third, we have already noted earlier in this article that the Synoptic Gospels portray Christ as the last Adam who progressively inaugurates throughout his earthly ministry the new end-time creation.

Fourth, while Christ's resurrection is rightly seen as the crucial event inaugurating the latter-day new creation, other NT texts explicitly connect Christ's death with new creation. In Gal 6:14-15, for example, Paul says: "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (cf. 1:4). Here Paul refuses to boast in anything except Jesus' cruciform death, aligning this exclusive boasting with "a new creation" over against the boasting in circumcision that was taking place in Galatia. In the very next verse, moreover, Paul speaks of those who "walk" or "keep in line with" (στοιχέω) this rule (κανών, the guiding principle that circumscribes new creational living), which is the same verb Paul had used in the previous chapter[77] to speak of those who "walk by" (στοιχέω) the Spirit (5:25), the definitive gift of the latter-day new creation (cf., e.g., Isa 32:15-18; Ezek 37:14; Joel 2:28-32; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; 2:16-21; Rom 8:9-25; Gal 3:14; 4Q418).[78] Another relevant text here is the reference to new creation in 2 Cor 5:17. While this verse connects new creation most explicitly with resurrection, not death, both death and resurrection are clearly bound up together in the immediate context of that passage (see esp. vv. 14-15).[79]

For these reasons Jesus' death with its attendant darkness, and not only his resurrection, ought to be viewed as inaugurating the end-time new creation.

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[77] The only other places Paul uses στοιχέω are Rom 4:12; Phil 3:16.

[78] See Geerhardus Vos, "The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation,* 91-125; Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology,* 559-648. Cf. John W. Yates, *The Spirit and Creation in Paul* (WUNT 2/251; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 172-76; T. Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul's Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting* (WUNT 2/272; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 92-93, 131-32; Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 27; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 126-29.

[79] For more developed interaction with the Galatians and 2 Corinthians texts and their connection with new creation, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology,* 298-316, 525-26.

IV. *Conclusion*

This article has sought to clarify the OT background and eschatological significance of Mark 15:33. In his study *Images of the Spirit*, Meredith Kline writes that "redemptive restoration as depicted in Old Testament typology and actualized in New Testament messianic reality is restoration (and consummation) of the creation order." Kline then speaks of "the pervasive centrality of this foundation theme throughout the rest of the Scriptures."[80] It is in agreement with Kline at this point that this article has considered Mark 15:33.

In the beginning, darkness covered the earth (Gen 1:2). God created light (Gen 1:3-5), and later called his people, the children of Abraham, to be "a light to the nations," bringing blessing and peace to the world (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:3). Darkness, on the other hand, represented divine judgment (Exod 10:21-23) and lament (Amos 8:9-10). When Jesus died on the cross, once more, as in Gen 1:2, "there was darkness over the whole land" (Mark 15:33). In this way God was judging the sin and unrighteousness of those whom Jesus represented.

God was doing more, though. He was re-creating. He was restoring Eden. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Isaianic prophecy of divine light dawning over God's people amid worldwide darkness was coming true (Isa 60:1-3). More specifically, the darkness that descends over the whole land in Mark 15:33 shoots back not only to Amos 8:9-10, with the darkness of mourning for a beloved son, and Isa 60:1-3, but also to Exod 10 and the penultimate plague of de-creative darkness over the whole land of Egypt, and thus back even further to the primeval darkness over the whole earth of Gen 1:2. When we consider this de-creative nature of the plague of darkness together with the unique wording in common between the Exodus and Markan texts as well as the thematic parallel of a darkness that comes as divine judgment preceding the shed blood of a Passover sacrifice, we are compelled to conclude that Exod 10 provides the richest intracanonical resonance.

The three-hour darkness in Mark 15:33 represents not only divine judgment (as often expressed in the prophets, which scholars have pointed out) but also de-creation and, with the re-emergence of light at three o'clock p.m., new creation (which scholars have neglected).

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[80] Meredith Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 89.

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