

Paradoxes Of The Cross

Introduction. A paradox is a statement which, though true, seems false and self contradictory. In many ways, the cross appears to be a puzzle or a paradox. This exists perhaps in part because the cross of Christ can be viewed from two perspectives. It can be viewed from the worldly, carnal eye or from the spiritual eye of faith.

The worldly, carnal eye views the cross as meaningless while the spiritual eye sees no meaning to life outside the cross. The cross has different meanings to different viewers (1 Corinthians 1:18). Some will view the cross as foolishness, while others will view it as powerful. The preaching of the cross is quite meaningful. Yet, it is puzzling when viewed by those in the world. We will explore six paradoxes of the cross and what they mean to mankind.

I. ***It Was The Most Tragic And The Most Stupendous Event In History***

- A. In Matthew 17:22, Jesus told His disciples that He would be delivered into the hands of men and killed. This would be a tragic scene for He was the Son of God. The Lord was mocked, ridiculed, beaten and killed without cause (Luke 23:4).
- B. However, this event was stupendous in what it accomplished (Ephesians 1:1-14). This included adoption, redemption, and forgiveness of sins. Because of what was accomplished, it is worthy to glory in the cross (Galatians 6:14).

II. ***It Was The Deepest Sadness And The Greatest Joy Man Ever Saw***

- A. One of the saddest moments in all of history occurred when our Savior hung on the cross. The gospels reveal great sadness when the Lord died (Luke 23:28; John 20:11). An innocent man was put to death (Luke 23:14). As they viewed the Savior in agony, John records that this was the fulfillment of prophecy (John 19:35-37; Zechariah 12:10).
- B. But there was joy (Luke 24:50-53). The disciples' friend and Master was alive and they were able to see Him and be with Him again. In Luke 24:46-47, Jesus announced that remission of sins would be preached with the subsequent joy of salvation which would accompany that message. The disciples must have realized Jesus was victorious over the grave and this event sealed His prominence for all time (Romans 1:4). This is the basis for our hope (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

III. *It Was The Worst Defeat Of Satan And The Greatest Victory Of Christ*

- A. In John 13:2, Satan entered the heart of Judas Iscariot. Later we learn that Judas betrayed the Lord (John 18:5). This was Satan's greatest victory (Genesis 3:15). Think of how great Satan must have felt as he had entered into so many hearts and now had them to crucify his enemy Christ. In human terms, the crucifixion appeared to be the ultimate defeat for Christ.
- B. However, it was Jesus who had the ultimate victory over Satan (Hebrews 2:14). In fighting against the God of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), Jesus had come away victorious. Jesus has preeminence in all things (Ephesians 1:18-23), including the powers of Satan (Ephesians 2:1-7).

IV. *It Was The Greatest Exhibition Of Justice And The Finest Demonstration Of Mercy*

- A. Christ, through His perfect life and sacrifice, condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:19; Isaiah 53:8). God has always demanded a perfect sacrifice. But through Jesus, the demands of justice for sin were satisfied (Ezekiel 18:4). This was something man could not do for himself (Hebrews 9:27-28).
- B. But mercy, God's free gift, was demonstrated as well (Romans 3:23-26). In fact, the cross of Christ displayed love like as never before seen (Romans 5:6-8; John 3:16; Isaiah 53:4-6). Jesus did this with gladness (Hebrews 12:1-2).

V. *It Revealed Human Vengeance And It Revealed Divine Forgiveness*

- A. All four gospels record the hateful cry of the people and the chief priests to crucify Jesus (Matthew 27:22-23; Mark 15:12-13; Luke 23:20-23; John 19:14-15). The crowd was so bloodthirsty that they were willing to have Jesus' blood on their hands and on their children (Matthew 27:23-25).
- B. Despite the hateful cries of the religious leaders and the crowd, Jesus in His final moments said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Through the cross, we are made alive together with Christ because God has forgiven us of our sins (Colossians 2:13; Romans 4:7).

VI. *It Was The Darkest Hour And It Was The Time Of Greatest Light*

- A. Think of the darkness of sin as it put Jesus on the cross. It was literally dark for the sun was not permitted to light the world for three

hours (Matthew 27:45). The darkness represented God turning His back on His only begotten Son (Matthew 27:46).

- B. Yet, Jesus became the "light of the world" by the cross (John 8:12). That is, He became the complete embodiment of the illumination of hearts (Matthew 4:16; Isaiah 9:1-2; John 1:4-5; John 1:9; Acts 26:16-18).

Conclusion. The Gentiles considered a king dying on a cross as foolish. But with a heart of faith the Christian sees it as the power of God (Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 2:20). In the cross we see man's sinfulness and God's holiness, human weakness and divine strength, darkness of sin and the light of Christ, man's rejection and God's love, death in sin and life in Christ, and man's inability to save himself and God's ability, determination, and power to do this for him through faith in Christ Jesus.

If you are here today and have the faith (John 8:24), the desire to repent (Luke 13:3), the determination to confess that belief (Romans 10:9), and are ready to be made alive with Him through a burial in baptism (Colossians 2:12-13), then we ask you to come forward.