

PARADOXES OF THE CROSS

Introduction: By Paul R. Blake

A. John 11:45-53

B. The Paradox: Ebenezer of our faith.

1. "Ebenezer" - stone of help; a milestone.
2. Each paradox in the word we reckon with shows us how far we have come in the faith.

C. What is a paradox?

1. G. K. Chesterton said a paradox is "truth standing on its head to get attention."
2. Definition: "An apparently contradictory statement, seemingly against common sense, that is, in fact, true" (Webster's Collegiate Dict., 1956).
3. Greek word 'paradokeow' - 'para', beyond, beside, contrary to; 'dokeow', opinion; therefore "beyond opinion."

D. Biblical paradoxes:

1. Saved by faith, but one must be baptized to be saved.
2. One who would be greatest in the kingdom should seek to be the least.
3. God came in the flesh.
4. All of the beatitudes.

E. Ralph Waldo Emerson - "A man may love a paradox without losing either his wit or sanity."

1. In the case of the Christian, he must not only love them, but also understand and accept them.
 - a. The strength of his faith depends upon his ability to believe what is against popular and accepted opinion.
2. We must see and accept the paradoxes of the cross.
 - a. If we see only the apparent facts, we will lose our faith.
 - b. If we see only the esoteric aspect, we will warp our faith.
 - c. The external facts combined with the spiritual truths make up the whole of understanding of our Lord's crucifixion.

F. Perspectives:

1. A Roman soldier - "In the year of Rome 784, April 7 at nine AM, by order of our supreme emperor's governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, we did execute by crucifixion a minor Hebrew revolutionary of Nazareth. He had been tried and found guilty of treason, having stirred up a small number of our subjects in and around the environs of Jerusalem. Upon the arrest of this criminal, the followers of this insurrectionist were dispersed. It is believed we have heard the last of this matter. Signed: Maximus Corpus, Centurion; report filed, April 8, 784 AUC."

2. "In the fullness of time, God sent His Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, to voluntarily pay the price of our sins by allowing himself to be sacrificed upon a Roman cross. This act of atonement took place by Divine will at a time that Deity determined and decreed."

3. Gal. 4:4-5; John 3:16-17, 10:14-18

G. Which is the proper perspective?

1. Both are correct! This is the essence of the cross, that we understand and accept apparently contradictory information about it.

I. GREATEST ACT OF HATE / GREATEST ACT OF LOVE

A. Immeasurable hate.

1. John 15:18, 25

- a. How much? - vs. 19
- b. Regardless of consequences - vs. 23

2. Why? John 15:22, 24
 3. World-moving, epoch-spanning, history-making hatred!
 4. Crucifixion was a hatred motivated cover-up that makes Watergate look like a kindergarten fib.
 5. The irony is that they had no reason to hate Him.
 - a. He loved them, so He taught them to avoid sin.
 - b. He came to fulfill their beloved law.
 6. They were great haters:
 - a. Risked repercussions from Rome,
 - b. Corrupted finest court in existence (Sanhedrin),
 - c. Brought a curse upon themselves.
- B. Supreme love
1. John 3:16, 10:11-13; Rom. 5:8-10
 2. How could He love us so? Why should He love us?
 3. We might understand the hate, but can we comprehend the love?

II. A PREMEDITATED MURDER / A PREDESTINED SACRIFICE

- A. Premeditated murder
1. Jewish 'mafia' - John 11:49-50, 53, 56-57
- B. Predestined sacrifice for our sins
1. Simultaneous plan - John 11:51-52, 10:17-18
 2. He willingly made the sacrifice – Heb. 9:11-14
 3. He chose! – Matt. 26:52-54
 4. What kind of statement does that make about His concern for us?

III. GREATEST ACT OF SIN / GREATEST CURE FOR SIN

- A. "How do I sin; let me count the ways..." (William Shakespeare)
1. Hatred, lying, conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy against God, perjury, betrayal, extortion, treason, assault and battery, insurrection, corruption of a witness, corruption of a judge, bribery, countless violations of the law of Moses, and murder of an innocent man.
- B. Produced the means whereby all sin can be removed.
1. Rom. 3:23-25

IV. GREATEST ACT OF REBELLION BY MAN / GREATEST CONTROL OF MAN BY GOD

- A. They thought they were in charge
1. Psalm 2:1-3 - Kings and rulers conspired against Him.
 2. Mark 12:1-12
- B. But in reality were puppets.
1. Acts 4:25-28, 2:36

V. PHYSICAL BLOOD SHED / SPIRITUAL BLOOD SAVES

- A. Christ's literal blood did nothing for those who crucified Him.
1. They were probably covered by it.
- B. Christ's blood saves us today - Heb. 10:4-7, 12, 14, 19, 22
1. By being covered by it.

Conclusion:

- A. Are these paradoxical contradictions or harmony of outward facts with spiritual truths?
- B. Your faith and salvation hangs upon accepting the cross and all it implies.