

# The King's Highway

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## THE GREATEST DEATH IN HUMAN HISTORY\*

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"He tasted death for every man." (Heb. 2:9).  
"Christ died for our sins . . . and was buried."  
(I. Cor. 15:3-4)

The death of a suffering Messiah is clearly foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. Atonement through that death is both pre-figured and predicted. It is seen in the coats of skin prepared for our first parents (Gen. 3:4), in the offering of Abel (Gen. 4:4), in the Exodus (ch. 12), in the Levitical sacrificial system, in the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), in the sin offering (Ps. 22), in the substitutional Saviour (Isa. 53), in the cut off Messiah (Daniel 9:26), and in the smitten shepherd (Zech. 13:6). There are about three hundred and thirty-three specific Old Testament pictures of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

This great sacrificial death, which we are commemorating at this time, may be seen in the ancient passover. The Lamb selected for the Passover had to be without blemish (Ex. 12:3-5), and Peter speaks of the Christ "as of a Lamb without blemish" (1 Peter 1:19). The little lamb was slain or killed. Christ is the Lamb slain (Rev. 5:6), "Ye killed the Prince of Life," said the Apostle Peter. The blood was their protection, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13): "We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:19). The blood had to be sprinkled (Ex. 12:7): the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). "A lamb for a house" (Ex. 12:3): "This is my body," "I am the bread." It was a memorial for ever (Ex. 12:14): "Do this," said Jesus, "in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:14). "Ye shall eat unleavened bread" (Ex. 12:18): "The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

How wonderfully the forementioned fit into the event of this glorious day, Good Friday! The day of the greatest death in human history! We are led first of all to the fact of the suffering of the Christ for the human race. Under the shadow of the cross Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled;" in the Garden of Gethsemane He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." His sufferings were spiritual rather than physical even though the physical was terrible. It was a suffering of soul even unto death. The burden was so great that every pore in His weakened body—that body which had not been weakened in any way by sin or disease: every pore became an open wound through which came sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Sorrow even unto death! And that sorrow was chiefly for others. Throughout the terrible ordeal on the cross His concern was for others. First, a

prayer for His enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" consideration for His mother. To her, He said, "Woman behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother," and from that hour John looked after the mother of Jesus; then consideration for the dying thief, to whom He gave the promise of Paradise that day, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." After extended darkness over the land, Christ broke the stillness by the cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" then, "I thirst," then, "It is finished," and then "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." How awful sin must be in its final issue when it caused such infinite anguish to Christ when He tasted death for every man.

Is there infinite merit in the cross of Christ, the dynamic of merit? There are many crosses. At the time of Christ's death, and at the same place, there were two other crosses, but the centre cross is different. It is "the cross;" the Person on it is an unique Person, the Christ; "the death of the cross" is outstanding. Upon crosses have hung criminals, the worst that sin could produce; upon the cross came Christ, the best that heaven could produce; and the whole significance of the cross was changed, from an instrument of death, Rome's substitute for the Jewish method of stoning, to an instrument of redemption of the whole human race.

Is there in the cross infinite power, the dynamic of power? power of crucifixion, power of death, and the power of life? The cross is called "The accursed tree," for through it He died; yet it is the tree of life, for upon its sacrificial Victor we live. In the cross there is power to break the power of cancelled sin and to set the prisoner free. There is cleansing power, and overcoming power. In the cross is infinite love, the dynamic love. "To measure the heart of the Infinite," says one, "we must get the dimensions of the cross." The cross is a proof and an illustration of the love of Christ. It was pure love, yes, infinite love, that caused to stand in the far off past that uplifted cross, on which that crowned sufferer flinging wide His arms, sought to lift the world back to His Father's side. It was infinite love.

If man could be saved by culture, why did Christ die? Why did He not become a mere Galilean teacher, erect an institution of learning, become its founder and president, and leave to the world a code of ethics, as Confucius and similar characters did?

Why go to the cross? If on the other hand, man could be saved by works, why did not Christ encourage this class? "If I yet preach circumcision," says Paul, "why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased." The cross condemns every other way of redemption.

Is the cross the instrument of our salvation? "They shall look upon Him whom they

have . . . in the old hymn:

"I saw one hanging on a tree  
In agony and blood  
Who fixed His languid eyes on me  
As near the cross I stood.

"Sure never till my latest breath  
Can I forget that look;  
It seems to charge me with his death  
Though not a word He spoke.

"My conscience felt and owned the guilt,  
And plunged me in despair:  
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,  
And helped to nail Him there.

"Alas I know not what I did,  
But now my tears were vain:  
Where should my trembling soul be hid?  
For I the Lord have slain.

"A second look He gave, which said,  
I freely all forgive.  
This blood is for thy ransom paid:  
I died that thou mayest live."

Some person may say, "Yes, but is that so? Did He rise again?" True, the death of Jesus Christ brought great wonderment and gloom. In Luke 24:21, it is recorded, "We trusted that it had been he which should redeem Israel: and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done." "We trusted" and "we hoped" but our hope has been dashed to pieces! The one in whom we trusted, the one in whom we hoped, is dead. We thought He would have redeemed Israel but He is dead. A dead leader, a dead redeemer, and a lost cause! A dark day indeed. There could be no darker day. It was the greatest blackout in human history. The tragedy of Calvary terminating in a dead Christianity. Gloom all around. The few followers who had placed their faith and confidence in this leader were caught in the gloom: the hope of Israel gone.

The death of Christ came at a time of great world need, dire need. It was surely in a state of blackout. Human life meant very little. Slavery was practiced. There was no proper conception of womanhood and no protection for little children. The three great world powers at the time of Christ's birth and life upon earth were arrayed against Him. The Romans boasted of their militarism, and power. Might with them was right. The Cross of Christianity to them was weakness. The Greeks boasted of their philosophy, art, culture. The Cross to them was foolishness. The Jews boasted of their religion. The cross of Christianity to them was a stumbling block. With their religious externalism, their traditionalism, and conception of a material kingdom and a great political redeemer and leader, they could have no room for the Christ. Hence the death of this so-called im-

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