

The Death That Brings Life

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[0 : 0 0] The Second Sunday The Second Sunday And to Greek people at that time

Stupidity Actually Jews and Greeks represent The totality of mankind So one way Or another the cross is Seen as either stupid Or foolish Not too long after the New Testament times There was a crude Drawing inscribed on a wall In Rome Excuse me, a kind of graffiti It depicted of all things A donkey Crucified And kneeling down before This donkey was a rather Foolish looking youth And the caption read Alexander Worshipping His God A foolish boy Worshipping A foolish God That is how the world of Greece and Rome Saw the message Of the cross

At that time In the Quran Jesus is a prophet And honoured So therefore It could not have been He Who was crucified It surely must have been a case Of mistaken Identity So the Quran says For the Quran The idea of God Being humiliated And defeated Is unthinkable And impossible I want us this morning then To look at these snapshots As we have them In John chapter 19 And then make some comments As we've done so First of all If I refer you back to verses 17 and 18 So they took Jesus And he went out Bearing his own cross To the place of a skull Which is called in Hebrew Golgotha They took Jesus

But he went And he bore his own cross Here we're introduced to a theme That we'll continue right through this narrative That on the one hand Christ is utterly Powerless Vulnerable Frail In the circumstances But yet at the same time In control Jesus Crucified And yet A king Golgotha Was an Aramaic word For A skull And presumably This place of execution Was Somehow Skull Shaped There's no Gut wrenching Detail Given by this or any of the other evangelists John simply says They crucified Him there Other gospels give us details About the two other persons crucified But John's narrative is lean

And his detail minimal All focus All focus is on Christ The second snapshot Verses 19 to 22 The placard It was customary for a crucified person To have attached to the cross of crucifixion A placard A title Bearing the details Of the accusation Of the crime For which this person Was being crucified And clearly There was a rangle A dispute Between the Roman governor Pontius Pilate And the Jewish authorities They said He said I am king of the Jews They knew That wasn't the case He was no king In that sense And Pilate knew He knew They knew He wasn't The king of the Jews So the whole thing Was a sham And Pilate However was manipulated

[5 : 0 4] And controlled By the Jewish authorities To simply go through with it Otherwise he would not be As the text tells us Caesar's friend Here though we see something Of the inspired genius of John Who narrates what happened Namely That Pilate is having Shall we say The last word Or even the last laugh And yet he narrates it In such a way To bring out The more profound truth That Christ is King Of the Jews That Jesus' cross Was his throne You may have noticed In Roman Catholic churches Figure of the crucified Christ And under it The letters I-N-R-I Jesus Nazarenos Rex Eudaorum

Jesus Of Nazareth King Of the Jews He was Indeed The third snapshot We see the soldiers Gambling for his tunic Verse 23 and following When the soldiers Had crucified Jesus They took his garments And made four parts One for each soldier Was apparently A form of payment Clearly there were Four In the execution squad But a fifth garment An undergarment Was seamless And so Unable to divide it They gambled for it But this was to Fulfill prophecy Psalm 22 In particular They parted my garments Among them That is four pieces And for my clothing That is my tunic They gambled They cast not This is the first Of four quotations Of Old Testament Scripture In this passage And it is intended

To indicate to us That what is happening Is not just a tragic Shameful mistake A wicked miscarriage Of justice But that somehow Somehow God's eternal purposes Were actually being Worked out In this moment So on the one hand We have the pitiful sight Of this riding man On a cross Naked With these soldiers Gambling for his Remaining clothing But the citation Of Old Testament texts Is John's way Of saying to us That somehow Somehow Beyond our understanding And our imagination This was the outworking Of the purposes Of God It is so easy To believe That God is in control When everything Is going well In life Is it not?

And that when The tragedy Or the unexpected Happens Understandably We say Where is God In this? Where was God In that?

He was In it And he is with us In it Whenever Whatever it is Comes our way The fourth snapshot Verses 25 to 27 So the soldiers Did this But standing By the cross Of Jesus Were his mother His mother Sister Mary That is Mary wife Of Clopas And Mary Magdalene Three Or four women It could be Depending on Where the comma Should be located Here the horrific Situation for these Women Just a few feet Away From one they Loved Watching him Struggling In terrible agony To capture his breath As he's nailed To the Roman cross We'll say more about Mary of Magdala Mary Magdalene Next week But in this Brief Cameo We see our Lord

[9 : 22] Concerned for his Mother Who was probably As yet still A youngish woman Handing her over To the care Of his closest Friend The fifth Snapshot In verses 28 29 And 30 After this Jesus knowing That all was now Finished Said to fulfil The scripture I thirst A bowl full of Vinegar stood there So they put a Sponge full of Vinegar on Hyssop And held it To his mouth When Jesus had Received the Vinegar he said It is finished He bowed his Head Gave up the Spirit Again we see Jesus in control He knew It was all Now finished He said I thirst He said It is finished He bowed His head And at the Time of His choosing He handed

Over his Spirit He released His life He was not Killed Christ Released His life For he Remained In control Though so Apparently Powerless And a Victim So here we See Christ In his death Ruling From his Cross Once again We see the Inspired Genius Of John The Evangelist On the one Hand Jesus said I thirst Because he Was indeed Hydrated Dehydrated Which he Would have Been But on the Other hand There is Something deeper Being said Here And our Minds go Back to Jesus' Conversation With the Woman at the Well in Samaria He was Thirsting For water And yet More profoundly He was Thirsting For that Woman To drink From him The living Waters Of salvation So as he Is saying I thirst Fulfilling Psalm 63

He is at The same Time Indicating His thirst For folks Like you And me Millions Of us From that Time Until now Who have Found their Thirst For God And for Salvation Fulfilled In coming To the Lord Jesus Christ As I said Last week From John Chapter 7 Quoting Jesus He says If anyone Thirst Let him Come to Me Let him Drink He who Believes In me And John Adds for As the Scripture says Out of his Inmost being Shall flow Rivers Of living Water And so As Christ Hands over His Spirit His Holy Spirit The presence Of God Himself Into hearts Of folks Like you And me Here we See Jesus Rivers of Living water As it were Coming out Of him As it were Symbolised By this Profoundly Spiritual Description By which John Narrates His Narrative

There is Yet another Layered Meaning In his Words It is Finished On the One hand He is Saying It's All over I'm About to Die And yet These words Catch up Words of Jesus Earlier on In the Gospel In chapter 4 Where he Said My Food Is to Do The Will Of Him Who Sent Me And To Finish His Course Same Words Used In the Original Language And so When he Says It is Finished He said I have Finished What I Came To do And so Theologically We Understand That the Work of Christ Upon the Cross Is Finished We Cannot Add To It It Is a Complete And Finished Work By which We Enter Into The Salvation Of God Which We Cannot Add To In Terms Of Our Own As it Were Adding A Value Or Contribution To Our Own Salvation Jesus Himself Said To Nicodemus

The Son Of Man Must Be Lifted Up That Whoever Believes In Him May Have Eternal Life So My Dear Friends We Need To Ask Ourselves Have I Believed In Him Lifted Up Have I Put My Confidence Not In Myself And My Own Activities And Deeds Which May Be Very Good Indeed But Have I Transferred My Trust To Him Who Has Lifted Up For Me In Crucifixion And In Death Do I Know That I Have Eternal Life Life With God Forever In His Kingdom Not On Account Of Anything That I Might Do But Only On Account Of The Finished Work Of The Lord Jesus Christ For Me Have I Received Within My Own Life The Reality Of The Holy Spirit The Presence Of God Himself Within My Own Life So That I Now Know And Trust In God As My Father And Put My Trust In Jesus As Lord Which Is Spirit

[14 : 25] When I Read The Bible Does It Really Now Begin To Make Sense To Me Which Can Only Do Because Of The Holy Spirit And Not Because Of Any Native Intellect Or Intelligent Ability That I Might Have The Sixth And Final Snapshot Verses 31 To 36 It Is A Day Of Preparation In Order To Prevent The Bodies From Remaining On The Cross On The Sabbath Etc It Is Just An Hour Or Two Before The Onset Of Sabbath Which Begins At Sunset The Jews Have A Very Strict Rule Based On The Old Testament That Bodies Must Not Lie Exposed On Something Like A Cross Overnight So So The Three Men Must Be Killed And Their Bodies Removed Before The Sabbath When No Work Can Be Done Happens

So They Break The Legs Of The First Of The Two Men On Either Side Of Christ That Means That They Can No Longer Lever Themselves Up So As To Breathe So Dragged Down By The Weight Of Their Own Bodies With Broken Legs They Choke They Suffocate They Do It Quickly When They Come To Do The Same To Jesus However He Is Already Dead And That Says John Once Again Quoting Old Testament Scripture Is To Fulfill The Words From Exodus Chapter 12 Not A Bone Of Him Shall Be Broken So You See When John The Baptist Earlier On Said Behold The Lamb Of God The Passover Lamb Of God That Bears The Sin Of The World Here It Is Here Is The Will Of God Being Outworked The Will Of God Revealed In Old Testament Scripture The Word Of God Being Outworked In The Actual Circumstances Of The Death Of

Jesus So Here On The One Hand Is The King Of The Jews The Messiah Of The World Here On The Other Hand Is The Lamb Of God Who Takes Away The Sin Of The World It's Very Very Profound In The Way John Writes So Why Is The Death Of Jesus Important Let Me Make Three Final Comments First The Trial And Crucifixion Of Jesus Was A Sham A Wicked Injustice And Yet Mysteriously We See The Purposes Of God Being Worked Out Through It The Four Quotations From The Old Testament Make That Clear To Use The Words Of Genesis In Another Context They Made It For Evil But God Meant It For Good I Remind Us Again That

There Is Something For Us Here For We Easily See God In Control When Things Are Working Out Well In Life But When That Phone Call Comes With Bad News Or That Letter Comes With Bad News Or Something Overtakes Us Which Is Surprising And Awful And Dreadful We Cannot Believe That God Is In It And It Is An Evil And It Is A Bad Thing And It Is Not Shall We Say According To The Will Of God From One Point Of View And Yet God Is Working His Purposes Out In A Broken And Fallen And Divided World Our World And We Need To Understand That When The Evil Does Overtake Us And Please God It May Not Be Severe But God Is Somehow Not In It If We Need To Understand A Paradox At The Heart Of God Christ Is Indeed King He

Is Lord He Is Ruler But At The Same Time He Is A Crucified Passover Lamb Later On In His Book Of Revelation John Would Look To The Lion Of The Tribe Of Judah The Messiah But When He Looks Again He Doesn't See A Lion He Sees A Lamb As If Slain And In The Book Of Revelation We Never Meet The Lion Again We Only Ever Meet The Lamb Who Was Crucified Thereafter We Are Meant To Understand That The Crucifixion Of Jesus Christ Stands At The Heart Of The Being Of God And The Revelation Of The Mystery Of The Universe Which Human Understanding Can Never Grasp And Which The Other Monotheisms Judaism And Islam For Example Cannot Understand For Them God Being God Means God Being A Winner And

[19 : 29] God Is Indeed A Winner But He's A Winner Through Suffering The Sufferings Of Our Lord Jesus Christ Upon The Cross And He's A Winner In Us As We Deal With And Cope With Our Sufferings As It Were With Faith And Courage And Determination To Keep On Following The Lamb Wherever He Goes That Is Why We Christians Are Not Just To Be Identified With The Strong And The Powerful In This World But To Be Identified With The Weak And The Marginalized And The Children And The Elderly And The People Who Cannot Speak For Themselves For That Is The Matter Of God Who Is There Revealed In Christ Who Is Crucified And Third And Last Comment John Brilliantly Writes Facts Of A Sustained And Historical Kind But He Writes Them

In Such A Way And This Is His Holy Spirit Inspired Genius That Those Truths Are Put In Such A Way That They Have A Profound Underlying Meaning So So From One Point Of You Pilate Was Indeed Having The Last Laugh In Putting Up The Words The King Of The Jews He Didn't Know That He Was Being Used By God In The Way That John Describes It To Describe The More Profound Truth That He Is Indeed The Messiah He Is Indeed The King Of The Jews When John Says Jesus Said It Is Finished He Is Indeed Describing Something Factual Christ Doubtless Did Say It Is Finished But John Describes It In Such A Way As To Understand That The Work Of Salvation Is Now Finished The Work Upon The Cross Is Complete That

We Can Add Nothing To It So That As We Look To Him We Have Eternal Life When John Narrates Jesus As Saying I Thirst He Is Doubtless Describing Something That Jesus Did Indeed Say But He Narrates It In Such A Way I Thirst To Understand That He Is Thirsty For People Like You And Me To Come And Take From Him The Waters The Living Waters Of Eternal Life And Salvation This Is Scripture That Runs Very Deep So The Challenge For You Is To Believe That These Facts Are Indeed True But To See These Facts Through The Eyes Of John The Inspired Gospel Writer And Through Those Eyes Myself To Look At Jesus Who Is My King God And To God To See

That Through The Eyes Of John And To Cast Myself Upon Him As My Saviour And My King And To Submit My Life To His Rule One Last Word That Sums It All Up God So Loved The World That He Gave His Only Son That Whoever Believes In Him Should Not Perish But Have Eternal Life Amen My Hand Half Who In Half Gut For Them Is Multi That Home And Yours Than Loved To Hands By vo Champions Else■■■■■

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