



The Cross in Prophecy

The Drawing Power of the Cross

“Jesus answered and said, ‘This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die” (John 12:30–33).

Jesus had come to the great city of Jerusalem a short time before the Passover (John 12:1). On this Sunday that preceded the Passover, He made His way into Jerusalem and was received jubilantly by the people. They met Him with palm branches and shouts of “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel” (John 12:13b).

In the city, the people came to Him and He taught them. John wrote, “So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign” (John 12:17, 18). A group of Greeks told Philip that they wanted to see and talk to Jesus (John 12:20, 21). After this, Jesus told His apostles that it was time for Him, as the Son of Man, to be glorified (John 12:23). He knew that His hour had come. He had spoken of this hour before, but in John 12:27 He asserted that the hour had come. Before it was viewed as coming, but at this point it was viewed as being present.

While in a discussion with the apostles and other people who had gathered around Him, perhaps in the outer court of the temple, He spoke of His soul being greatly troubled: “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour” (John 12:27). After this revelation of His innermost feelings, Jesus broke into an audible prayer, saying to the Father, “Father, glorify Your name” (John 12:28a).

At that moment, a voice from heaven said, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” (John 12:28b). The people heard the voice, but they did not know what to make of it. Some of them said that it had thundered, while others said, “An angel has spoken to Him” (John 12:29). Blinded by their unbelief, they could not acknowledge to themselves that God was confirming who Jesus was and what He was going to do.

Jesus told the crowd near Him that the voice had not spoken for His benefit, but for theirs. If they were actually listening and were in tune with God’s will, they would have heard this divine testimony concerning what was going to happen. Jesus further said that His death was going to bring a judgment to the earth: “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out” (John 12:31). The cross would divide the world as an act of judgment, placing all people on either the side of its salvation or the side of its condemnation. Jesus further said that what was going to happen would defeat Satan, the prince of this world. The cross would cast Satan out. Then, Jesus uttered one of the great prophecies concerning His death: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 12:32).

Jesus would be “lifted up” in three senses. First, He would be lifted up in the crucifixion itself. John said that this was the first meaning of His statement: “But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die” (John 12:33). He would be put above the people on a Roman cross, even as the replica

of the snake was lifted up on a pole before the people of Israel (John 3:14). Second, He would be lifted up in exaltation. God would take that hour of Jesus' death and glorify Him. Third, He would be lifted up as Savior. His death would be a spiritual magnet that would draw men to Him as the One who was providing salvation for them.

The word "draw" appears in Jesus' prediction. This lifting up would have a pulling power to it. His death would compel, persuade, and attract. This attraction of the cross would reach out and affect "all men." Greeks had come to Him and Jews also were around Him as He made this forecast. In this way His cross would have universality to it. "All men" would be drawn to stand under its shadow.

Although all three characteristics—lifted up in crucifixion, in exaltation, and in Saviorhood—are included in Jesus' prophecy, let us especially look at the third sense in which He would be lifted up.

Jesus would draw all men to Himself, but how would He do it?

First, the cross would have the drawing power of love. Almost every human being is touched and encouraged when he realizes that someone loves him. Who can spurn his mother's love, his wife's love, or his children's love? On the highest level, who can reject the Father's love and the sacrificial love of Jesus? His great love for us, as it was exhibited on the cross, pursues us, remakes us, and never lets us go.

Second, the cross would have the drawing power of forgiveness. As one draws near the heart of Jesus, he hears it say, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). As we look at our sinfulness, we can find nothing more attractive to us than the thought that we can be forgiven of every sin, for all time. The cross offers to anyone who will receive it a clean conscience and a new slate. How compelling this attraction of the cross is!

Third, the cross would have the drawing power of the truth. There is an appeal to the truth that stands out in this world of make-believe, puppets, and deception. We are bound up in the tentacles of falsehood, and only the truth can set us free (John 8:32). Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Deep within

us is the supreme aspiration to live in the truth. The cross conveys the truth about life, sin, God, and the church!

Fourth, the cross would have the drawing power of righteousness. Jesus' death vindicates the Father's faithfulness. He promised every worshipper in the Old Testament that He would provide full and complete forgiveness in the fullness of time. He said that He would complete their sacrifices in the great sacrifice of Jesus. The dying Savior became a public demonstration of that vindication (Romans 3:25).

Jesus predicated that He would draw all men to Himself. He said that drawing power would radiate out from the cross. Has this been true? Who could doubt it? This is a prophecy that all of history confirms!

Eddie Cloer



Willard Collins had a sermon entitled "The Drawing Power of the Cross" that he would preach in his gospel meetings. In that message, he would often say, "Sometimes I try to think [of] what it would mean if a strong man should take my arm and pull it and drive a spike into my palm. Then he would take my other hand, and I would feel him stretch it and place it against the piece of wood. I would feel somebody drive a spike through that palm and feel the intense pain as a human being. . . . Then I would feel that man place my feet one on top of the other and drive something through them. Then he would suspend me between heaven and earth. I would look up and see the sky and the white clouds. I would look down and see the dirt. I would see the people as they came by to ridicule. I would be in great pain; I would be thirsty. Finally, I would suffer so much that I would drop my head and life would ebb from my body, and I would no longer be alive. Can you imagine Jesus on the cross and you sitting there watching His agony? Matthew chapter 27 says, 'And setting down they watched him there' Think about the central part of the gospel: the fact that Jesus Christ suffered, shed His blood and died upon the cross that you might live. As members of the church, we have hope because Jesus died. . . . I am a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ because He purchased it."¹

¹Willard Collins, *Collins-Craig Auditorium Meeting* (Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate, 1962), 15.