

## **"The Shape of the Cross"**

### **Hebrews 2: 9**

Did you ever wonder about the cross? Why not just take some time to think about what it really stands for? There is a whole lot more to the cross than simply an instrument of torture. Let's think about it together for a while as we consider the words of (Hebrews 2: 9), "But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone".

1. There is Irony in the Cross. Examine its shape. It is vertical, straight up and down. There is evidence that persons were sometimes impaled on poles, but a crossbar became part of its general use. The two-way stretch, vertical and horizontal, made for maximum pain. Could this instrument of death have been tailor-made for the man from Nazareth? No other person ever lived so completely by the shape of the cross.
  - A. Jesus walked among men with his feet on the ground and his mind and heart in the heights. While walking with his feet on the ground, he heard a distant drummer and responded in prayer, "Not my will, but yours be done". Vertically his life was stretched from earth to heaven.
  - B. Life for Jesus would have been more comfortable had he only heard the distant drummer, but for him to hear was to respond. He must walk by the beat he heard. Because he loved God his Father, he listened, and because he listened he heard and walked the path laid out for him. His horizontal reach was all inclusive; Jews, Romans, Greeks and even Samaritans. They accused him of eating with sinners and many other things and his reply was, "Love your enemies". Those who would stone him, he forgave.
  - C. When they lifted this one to the cross he was ready, vertically stretched from earth to heaven and horizontally reaching with arms outstretched toward the least and the last. Hear him, looking up to say, "Father into your hands", and looking to the condemned criminal to say, "You will be with me". The stretch of the horizontal against the vertical was designed for maximum pain. And it was so.
2. The Suffering Became Redemptive. There are many reasons why a person may suffer. All suffering is not healing, however, when one voluntarily chooses to reach out to others to lift them to an awareness of God, no matter the cost to himself, that suffering is based on love and it becomes redemptive. Note two conditions that gave Jesus' life saving power.
  - A. The first is the balance of the upward reach seeking to know God's love, and the outward reach, God's love shared, poured out for all and given to whoever will accept it. God is love and Jesus showed the world what that love looks like when he hung on the cross. When the upward reach becomes an outward reach, there is the shape of the cross and we see redemptive power.
  - B. A second condition was his willingness to confine suffering to himself. He never sent another to die in his stead. He said, "I lay down my life". Giving was his thing. They accused him of healing a man with a withered hand. They

never accused him of injuring a man's hand. Some found fault because he made a blind man see and a lame man walk. He never made someone blind or lame. It is no wonder Jesus said in so many words, "I'll do the dying", and he did it willingly for each of us on the cross.

Can we together, through the eyes of faith see Jesus as he was stretched between earth and heaven with his arms spread wide to receive all who will come to him that he might make us all one in himself.

As I was writing these words there were times when my vision got blurry as I pictured in my mind the reality of what I was writing. Jesus had no thoughts for himself but only that he carry out his Father's will and do for me what I could not do for myself. It is my prayer that you too may catch a glimpse of this great love and sacrifice in your behalf.

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