

The Fairy Tale Of Jesus

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 28th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

~ 1st Corinthians 1:18 (NASB)

1) The Shock Of The Cross

A) In ancient times, the image of the cross brought revulsion and shock.* The cross was a Roman instrument of torture and shame, reserved for those who were the most insidious criminals.

B) The Jews were also repulsed by the horror of crucifixion, and also rightly believed that anyone hung on a tree was “accursed of God” (Deuteronomy 21:23).

* There is a large amount of material describing the horror and torturous nature of the supreme Roman capital punishment (ahead of burning at the stake & decapitation) through the use of crucifixion. Roman citizens themselves were exempt from crucifixion, since it was too torturous of a penalty for the populace (except by special permission of Caesar). Crucifixion was for the enemies of Rome, and not brought up in polite conversation. The cross was associated with evil, corruption, and total rejection. While crucifixion varied greatly in its gruesome forms (the executioners were given full reign in both their variety and sadism), the crucified were usually flogged beforehand, carried their crossbeam to the place of execution (usually a high place where all could see the spectacle), and then were nailed with outstretched arms and extended legs to the beam, raised up on the cross and dropped jarringly into a hole which held the cross upright for all to see. Further adding to the stigma of crucifixion was that the executed were seldom buried, but were rather left for scavenging wild animals and carrion birds. Emperor Nero is noted particularly for his torture of the early church, where Christians were crucified and then lit on fire to provide light for the pathways (roads) into Rome. Summarized from *Crucifixion*, Martin Hengel & *The Cross & Christian Ministry*, D.A. Carson.

The Fairy Tale Of Jesus

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 28th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

~ 1st Corinthians 1:18 (NASB)

1) The Shock Of The Cross

A) In ancient times, the image of the cross brought revulsion and shock.* The cross was a Roman instrument of torture and shame, reserved for those who were the most insidious criminals.

B) The Jews were also repulsed by the horror of crucifixion, and also rightly believed that anyone hung on a tree was “accursed of God” (Deuteronomy 21:23).

* There is a large amount of material describing the horror and torturous nature of the supreme Roman capital punishment (ahead of burning at the stake & decapitation) through the use of crucifixion. Roman citizens themselves were exempt from crucifixion, since it was too torturous of a penalty for the populace (except by special permission of Caesar). Crucifixion was for the enemies of Rome, and not brought up in polite conversation. The cross was associated with evil, corruption, and total rejection. While crucifixion varied greatly in its gruesome forms (the executioners were given full reign in both their variety and sadism), the crucified were usually flogged beforehand, carried their crossbeam to the place of execution (usually a high place where all could see the spectacle), and then were nailed with outstretched arms and extended legs to the beam, raised up on the cross and dropped jarringly into a hole which held the cross upright for all to see. Further adding to the stigma of crucifixion was that the executed were seldom buried, but were rather left for scavenging wild animals and carrion birds. Emperor Nero is noted particularly for his torture of the early church, where Christians were crucified and then lit on fire to provide light for the pathways (roads) into Rome. Summarized from *Crucifixion*, Martin Hengel & *The Cross & Christian Ministry*, D.A. Carson.

C) The ancient heresy of “docetism” (that since Jesus Christ is God, he didn’t really have a physical body, and as such, it only seemed like he was tortured and died), was popularized because of the barbarity & scandal of crucifixion.

D) In numerous accounts from the early church, followers of Jesus Christ were labeled as followers of a “perverse and extravagant superstition,” and of “worshipping a ‘dead God’ who was justly crucified as a criminal.”

2) It Is The Power Of God

A) In a world that believed that the Gospel (the story of Jesus Christ) was a fairy tale, Paul observed that “the word of the cross is foolishness” to an unbelieving world (1st Corinthians 1:18).

B) This “word of foolishness” was in direct contrast to the “cleverness of speech” (1:17) from those who were wise. Rather, Paul says, God is using foolishness to reveal His power (1:18).

C) While the Corinthians wanted to find power in people (Paul, Apollos, Cephas -- 1:12), Paul makes the point that the power is in the message of the cross of Jesus Christ -- it is unavoidable!

D) Where worldly wisdom can never lead to dealing with our sin and “fellowship” (1:9) with God, the crucified Christ does.

E) The folly of “Christ crucified” is, despite worldly wisdom, salvation to those who believe (1:21).

C) The ancient heresy of “docetism” (that since Jesus Christ is God, he didn’t really have a physical body, and as such, it only seemed like he was tortured and died), was popularized because of the barbarity & scandal of crucifixion.

D) In numerous accounts from the early church, followers of Jesus Christ were labeled as followers of a “perverse and extravagant superstition,” and of “worshipping a ‘dead God’ who was justly crucified as a criminal.”

2) It Is The Power Of God

A) In a world that believed that the Gospel (the story of Jesus Christ) was a fairy tale, Paul observed that “the word of the cross is foolishness” to an unbelieving world (1st Corinthians 1:18).

B) This “word of foolishness” was in direct contrast to the “cleverness of speech” (1:17) from those who were wise. Rather, Paul says, God is using foolishness to reveal His power (1:18).

C) While the Corinthians wanted to find power in people (Paul, Apollos, Cephas -- 1:12), Paul makes the point that the power is in the message of the cross of Jesus Christ -- it is unavoidable!

D) Where worldly wisdom can never lead to dealing with our sin and “fellowship” (1:9) with God, the crucified Christ does.

E) The folly of “Christ crucified” is, despite worldly wisdom, salvation to those who believe (1:21).