

Matters Demonstrated by the Cross

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By far, the most enduring symbol of the religion of Jesus Christ is the cross. It so represented Jesus' life, work, and death that the apostle Paul said it was the only thing he would preach (1Cor. 2:2) and of which he would ever boast (Gal. 6:14). The cross demonstrates several matters of great significance, among them, the following:

- **God's love**—God loved us so that He gave His Son to make our eternal life possible (John 3:16). The cross is God's ultimate demonstration of that saving love (Rom. 5:8).
- **End of the law**—God gave the Law of Moses only to Israel, rather than to all mankind (Deu. 5:1). Its purpose was to preserve Abraham's lineage through Jacob/Israel until God would fulfill His promise to him (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16–19). The Old Testament Mosaic Law was thus never intended to be permanent, but a "shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). The Lord took away the first Law that He might establish the second (v. 9). The point at which He did so was when He died on the cross, His Will thereupon voiding the authority of all previous Divine Wills (Heb. 9:15–17). That Law was "abolished...through the cross," "nailing it to the cross" (Eph. 2:14–16; Col. 2:14). The Old Testament is God's inspired Word and we must study it for our spiritual profit (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6–11), but since the cross, the New Testament has been the **sole source of authority** for worship, the plan of salvation, the church, human behavior, and all other matters that pertain to our relationship to God.
- **Atonement for sin**—*Atonement, redemption, and reconciliation* all relate to remedies for our offenses against God (i.e., our sins). No mere man or group of them could provide the required atonement (payment) for sin, earn our reconciliation (restoration of fellowship) with God, or redeem mankind (purchase our freedom from sin and Satan). Since we could not/cannot save ourselves (Eph. 2:8–9), we must have a Savior—the very purpose for Jesus' coming: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). He is the "propitiation" (i.e., atonement) for our sins (1 John 2:2). He reconciles and redeems us with His blood, shed on the cross (Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).
- **Sacrificial living**—As Jesus bore (and died on) His cross, so must His disciples be willing to bear their individual "crosses" daily (Luke 9:23). Our "crosses" are the things we must endure rather than forsake or abandon Him. If we are faithful, whatever we have borne for Him will be forgotten in a moment in our eternal inheritance: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward (Rom. 8:17–18; cf. 2 Cor. 4:17–18).

Only the blood of Christ cleanses us of sin (Heb. 9:14; Rev. 1:5b; 7:14). This cleansing occurs only when (not before) one is baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 2 Pet. 3:21; et.al.).

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