

The Cross of Christ

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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 of which he would ever boast (Gal. 6:14). The cross marks several matters of great significance:

- **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**—The law of Moses was given only to Israel, rather than to all mankind (Deu. 5:1). Its purpose was to preserve Abraham's lineage through Jacob until God would fulfill His promise to him (Gal. 3: 16–19). The law of the Old Testament 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). The law was "abolished...through the cross" and "nailed 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 (sins). We could not provide the required atonement (payment) for sin, earn our reconciliation (restoration of fellowship) with God, or redeem (purchase freedom from sin) ourselves. 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 (Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:18–19), shed on the cross.
- **Sacrificial living**—As Jesus bore (and died on) His cross, so must his disciples be willing to bear their "crosses" daily (Luke 9:23). Our "crosses" are the things we must suffer rather than forsake or abandon Him. If we are faithful, whatever we have borne for Him will be worth it all.

Only the blood of Christ cleanses us of sin (Heb. 9:14; Rev. 1:5b). 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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