

The Significance of the Cross

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The cross is the single most enduring symbol of Christianity. Paul said he would not glory in anything except the cross of his lord (Gal. 6:14). The cross remains an enduring symbol because of the significant things that occurred in connection with it.

It was at the cross of Christ that the Law of Moses was fulfilled and ceased to be an authoritative religious instrument. That Law was never intended to be permanent, for it contained prophecies that God would give a new covenant for His people (Jer. 31:31-34). The Law did not contain God's final solution to the guilt of sin: "For the law made nothing perfect" (Heb. 7:19). It was intended by God as an instrument to reveal what sin is in the eyes of God (Rom. 7:7). It was a means of helping prepare for the coming of Christ who could completely cleanse men of sin (Gal. 3:24). We have been delivered or released from that Law and no man, not even a Jew, is now bound by it (Rom. 7:6). When Christ came, part of His work was to take away the first covenant (the Law of Moses) that He might establish the second (His Gospel) (Heb. 10:8-10). But when did the authority of the Law of Moses cease? Paul answers: "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14).

The cross of Christ also signifies the atoning power of the blood of Christ. Christ was willing to give His life for ours. Since "life is in the blood" (Lev. 17:10-11), it was necessary for Christ's blood to be willingly shed for it to atone for our sins. There was no remission or forgiveness of sins without it (Heb. 9:22-28). There is no redemption from sin without it (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The cross of Christ is the instrument upon which wicked and lawless men shed the blood of Christ. But it is not enough to merely be aware of this pivotal event, nor even to marvel at it. We must come under the cleansing power of that blood for it to do its redeeming work. We reach the death, thus the blood, of Christ in the act of baptism (Rom. :3). This is why baptism is consistently identified as the final act on man's part that brings salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21, etc.).

The cross signifies sacrificial living Those who follow Christ must daily carry whatever cross is necessary to be faithful to their Lord (Luke 9:23). It is symbolic of self-denial, service, and sacrifice on the part of Jesus' disciples.

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