



SHOULD YOU WEAR A “CHRISTIAN” CROSS?

Millions wear or have a cross, yet few are aware of its ancient roots.

A DRAMATIC VOICE emanates from the television: “The cross is revered throughout Christianity as a symbol of faith in Jesus. We are pleased to present this beautifully detailed 24-karat gold cross with matching gold chain. It will bring you great joy while you proudly wear it as a symbol of your faith. Let it inspire you in your Christian walk. Place your order now by calling the

number shown on the screen, and we will rush you your very own cross for three easy payments of \$39.95. Quantities are limited, so do not delay!”

Stirred to action by the presenter’s words and images of a sparkling golden cross, a TV viewer picks up the phone and dials the number. Like millions of others, he wants to wear this display of his religion. He wants others to know he is “Christian.”

The cross is venerated and admired across the wide spectrum of traditional Christian churches. It is a cornerstone symbol—supposedly representing the message of Jesus Christ and how He died for the sins of humanity.

Worn around the neck, placed on the dashboard of a car, hung from a wall, neatly lined in cemetery rows, placed on top of church steeples, or found along highways either alone or with two slightly smaller crosses on each side, this icon is made of varied materials and found in different shapes, forms and places.

Most display the simple cross—an upright stake with an intersecting cross-beam located about a third of the way down from the top. Some have two crossbeams; others have an oval shaped circle on top. Still another type, called a crucifix, has an image of “Jesus” affixed to it. The shapes, sizes and configurations are seemingly endless, with “something for everyone.”

While the King James Version of the Bible speaks of the “cross of Christ” (Gal. 6:12), does this mean a Christian should use this symbol as a physical manifestation of his faith?

Since Jesus warned His followers against blindly following the traditions of men (Mark 7:6-7), you must not make assumptions. Do not just accept or assume that the cross is biblical—demand PROOF!

Constant Reminder?

Symbols carry significance and meaning. Often, they are used to invoke feelings or thoughts in the mind of the viewer. Some bring remembrance of events, places or people: national flags, war memorials, monuments to famous persons, or grave markers.

The image of a cross is no different. Yet few people consider what meaning this symbol has for God. Many questions flow from this: Does God want you to wear a cross and display it where you live?

Does God want to see this instrument of cruelty hanging from Christians’ necks, on the wall of their homes, or placed on the dashboard of their cars? Does He want to look upon a symbol that reminds Him of when He had to completely turn from His Son? (Read Matthew 27:46, II Corinthians 5:21, and Isaiah 53:6; 59:2.) And would you wear a constant reminder of how your child was put to death? Think about this!

Consider further. If Christ were put to death with a .38 Special handgun, would you wear this around your neck? If Jesus were put to death in an electric chair, would you place a miniature one on your dashboard as a sign of faith? What if by lethal injection? Would you have its representation prominently placed on the wall of your home?

Why venerate—give honor to—an instrument used in Christ’s death? Are you certain God desires this?

Before Christ

The cross was not widely used in mainstream Christianity until the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine—about 270 years *after* Christ established His Church on Pentecost AD 31. None of the apostles or first-century Christians used it or accepted it as a “Christian” symbol.

The Classic Encyclopedia, based on the famous 11th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, states: “From its simplicity of form, the cross has been used both as a religious symbol and as an ornament, from the dawn of man’s civilization. Various objects, dating from periods long anterior to the Christian era, have been found, marked with crosses of different designs, in almost every part of the old world. India, Syria, Persia and Egypt have all yielded numberless examples, while numerous instances, dating from the later Stone Age to Christian times, have been found in nearly every part of Europe. The use of the cross as a religious symbol in pre-Christian times, and among non-Christian peoples, may probably be regarded as almost universal, and in very many cases it was connected with some form of nature worship.”

According to *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow, “Ages ago in Italy, before the people knew anything of the arts of civilization, they believed in the cross as a religious symbol. It was regarded as a protector and was placed upon tombs.” This symbol is still placed on graves today!

The book continues, “In 46 B.C. [Before Christ], Roman coins show Jupiter holding a long scepter *terminating in a cross*. The Vestal Virgins of pagan Rome wore the cross suspended from their necklaces, as the nuns of the Roman Catholic church do now.”

According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the shape of the cross “had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt.

“By the middle of the third century A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines

of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system, pagans were received into the churches...and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence, the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ.”

Who was this Tammuz? Anciently, he has been known by many names: Baal, Molech, Osiris. The Bible identifies him as Nimrod: “He was a mighty hunter before [in place of] the LORD” (Gen. 10:9).

The famous Jewish historian, Josephus, records in *Antiquities of the Jews* important evidence of Nimrod’s role in the post-Flood world. Notice: “He also gradually changed the government into tyranny...He [Nimrod] also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach...Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God.”

Ezekiel 8:13-14 records a picture of the women of Israel “weeping for Tammuz.” This Tammuz (the god of fire) of the Babylonian mystery religion is none other than Nimrod. The etymology of the word Tammuz bears examination: *tam* means “to make perfect” and *muz* “fire.” In other words, to make perfect through burning in fire!

Ancient Israel fell into worshipping Tammuz. Again, he was also known as Baal or Molech: “And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to *pass through the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, *neither came it into My mind*, that they should do this abomination...” (Jer. 32:35).

These practices were so terrible that God says they never entered His mind—they were unimaginable to Him!

If a symbol was first used for a pagan god—one tied to child sacrifices—should you still wear it around your neck?

Also notice what the *Davis Dictionary of the Bible* states about the origin of the cross: “The pre-Christian cross of one form or another was in use as a

sacred symbol among the Chaldeans, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, and many other...nations. The Spaniards in the 16th century found it also among the Indians of Mexico and Peru. But its symbolic teaching was quite different from that which we now associate the cross.”

How was its meaning different? It was used as a symbol of fertility. “Various figures of crosses are found everywhere on Egyptian monuments and tombs, and are considered by many authorities as symbolical either of the phallus [a representation of the male sex organ] or of coition...In Egyptian tombs the crux ansata [cross with a circle or handle on top] is found side by side with the phallus” (*A Short History of Sex-Worship*).

Clearly, the cross symbol in its various forms has pagan origins—and meanings—outside of Christianity. Origins that long predate the birth of Jesus Christ—and the Church He founded. It was “Christianized” and brought into mainstream Christianity.

What Did It Look Like?

What did the instrument of Jesus Christ’s suffering look like? What was its shape? There are differing opinions.

Professing Christianity has traditionally taught that Christ died on a two-beamed cross—His feet nailed together, with arms outstretched. The gospel accounts do say that Christ was nailed to a cross. Yet closer examination is warranted.

The word “cross” is translated from the Greek word *stauros*. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* states that this word “denotes primarily, ‘an upright pale or stake.’ On such [criminals] were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauroo*, ‘to fasten to a stake or pale,’ are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross.”

Interestingly, other scriptures record that Christ was nailed to a “tree” (I Pet. 2:24; Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29). The Greek word used in these verses, *xulon*, means “timber, stick, club, tree or other wooden article or substance.”

Anciently, Roman soldiers would crucify people using wooden structures of *various* shapes. Sometimes they used

upright stakes or poles. Other times they used wooden crosses by attaching beams either at or just below the top.

The Bible does not specify the exact shape of the “*stauros*” or “*xulon*” on which Christ was crucified. But in light of the historical meanings of “*stauros*” and “*xulon*,” it was likely on a stake or upright pole, *not* on a two-beamed cross.

Do not, however, put too much emphasis on the *shape* of the cross. If God thought it were important for us to know *exactly* which, He would have clearly recorded it, leaving us without doubt.

The shape is not important—but Christ’s sacrifice is!

Wrong Focus

Established Christianity often has its adherents focus on a Jesus Christ who is either pictured as a helpless baby in a manger or a long-haired, effeminate weakling hanging dead on a cross.

Yet the Bible reveals that Christ now looks completely different. Inspired by God, the apostle John described Jesus’ present appearance: “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in [its] strength” (Rev. 1:14-16).

God would not have inspired this description unless He wanted us to know Christ’s glorified appearance. Instead of focusing on how He may have looked in the past, we should think about Christ’s appearance in terms of how He looks *today*—as a soon-coming KING who will rule all nations!

This is a very different picture from the one invoked by traditional Christianity!—which has its emphasis on “feelings,” “emotions” and “physical” things. The Bible calls this approach a false “form of godliness” (II Tim. 3:5). This is especially true of a cross.

People own crosses and other religious items to “feel religious.” But the Second Commandment clearly prohibits *any* rendering of Christ’s or the Father’s appearance or any other religious image: “You shall not make unto yourself any

graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them...” (Ex. 20:4-5).

Crosses are made—“graven”—by man’s hand. They are of “the earth beneath.” Supposed pictures or images of Jesus Christ or God the Father (who are in heaven above) are also rendered by the hands of men. Both are used as objects of worship—they are adored and venerated.

Any picture, image or statue of Jesus Christ or God is in *clear violation* of the Second Commandment, and this includes all crosses and crucifixes. All such icons become the object of worship, which breaks the First Commandment as well: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3).

Ancient Israel constantly fell into worshipping physical objects, such as the golden calf in Exodus 32. It is no different today.

Physically minded human beings desire physical representations of God, as well as physical symbols to which they can attach meaning. They find it hard (in fact impossible) to worship a God they cannot see. Yet Hebrews 11, verses 1 and 6, states that we must believe God exists even though we cannot see Him.

God is composed of spirit. He does not consist of anything made by human hands, of wood, stone, gold, silver, ivory or otherwise. God seeks those who will worship Him in *spirit* and *truth* (John 4:23-24)—not with physical objects.

See the cross symbol for what it is—pagan! Its meanings and symbolism do not honor God or Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly teaches that God’s people must not practice or tolerate *any* pagan ways, customs, traditions or practices (Deut. 7:1-6; Jer. 10:1-5; Rev. 18:1-4).

The Right Focus

How then should a person honor Jesus Christ? What kind of worship does He approve? Allow God’s Word to answer: “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an *example*, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled,

reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him [God] that judges righteously” (I Pet. 2:21-23).

Worshipping God in “spirit and truth” means following the example set for us by Jesus Christ. It means patterning your life after Him. Your focus should be on how He lived—in complete submission to the Father—faithfully obeying all of the Commandments, including the Second Commandment.

He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Also, “If

you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

Simply put, love for—worship of—God can only truly be expressed by *active* Commandment-keeping. Our faith must be accompanied by actions (Jms. 2:20). Jesus Christ never wore or had a cross, and neither should His followers. True Christianity is a way of life you LIVE—the exact same way Jesus Christ lived while on Earth—it is not demonstrated by any religious symbol.

While you can be “justified by His blood” (Rom. 5:9), forgiven of past sins by His death, the next verse clarifies that you are “saved by His *life*” (vs. 10).

Rather than focusing primarily on Christ’s death, which is the central purpose for displaying the cross, you should emulate His life! If you will allow, He will live that very same Commandment-keeping life in you.

For a thorough examination of the life of Jesus, as well as how He kept the Commandments, read *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity*. □

R071

110508

Copyright © 2011 The Restored Church of God

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the USA

THIS ARTICLE IS PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE AND IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST BY THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD.

It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of the Church and others who have elected to support the work of the Church. Contributions are welcomed and gratefully accepted. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support this WORK OF GOD around the world are gladly welcomed as co-workers in this major effort to preach the gospel to all nations.



HOW TO CONTACT US

The Restored Church of God
P.O. Box 23295
Wadsworth, OH 44282
USA

The Restored Church of God
P.O. Box 4064
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7S3
CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266
Fax: (330) 334-6513

www.thercg.org
e-mail: info@thercg.org