

THE "CROSS" OF THE CHRISTIAN

Matthew 16:24; Luke 16:27

Introduction: A cross is seen on steeples of churches, in stained glass of church windows, erected somewhere in a sanctuary, worn around the neck, pinned to the lapel or blouse, carried in the pocket, embossed on Bibles, or erected in a church yard. Crosses are seen about everywhere. So, what does the cross represent? In Christian terminology it represents the climax of what Jesus came to earth to do. Make a way for man to be able to be brought back to God. Jesus took the sins of mankind and paid God's penalty and all this was climaxed when the religious leaders of His day had Him crucified, thus bringing to a climax the human life of Jesus and ending His reason for coming. When Jesus said that anybody who comes after Him, musttake up his/her cross and follow Him...what kind of cross was Jesus talking about? Certainly it's not another wooden cross such as He died on. What is the "cross" of the Christian?

I. BEFORE TAKING UP HIS/HER CROSS, THE CHRISTIAN MUST DENY HIM/HERSELF

1. There is a very big difference between denying self and self-denial which some have a problem with.
 - Giving up things that one likes:
 - certain television programs, certain kind types of music, books, magazines, internet sites, playing lottery, etc.
 - Certain seasons with their strong emphasis, amusements, sports, etc.
 - Does giving up these sort of things lead to a person's personal "cross?"
2. What exactly does "deny him/herself" mean?
 - It means to give up trying to be righteous on one's own, to stop depending upon one's own wisdom, to stop insisting on having one's own way, to stop wanting one's own comforts, ease, pleasure, benefits, one's own popularity above all else.
3. It means to live not for one's self, but for Jesus Christ. To obey Christ, to honor Christ, to spend and give one's entire life and self to Jesus Christ.

II. AFTER DENYING ONE'S SELF, THEN THE CHRISTIAN IS TO TAKE UP HIS/HER CROSS

1. Taking up one's own cross is not:
 - any trouble or trial that comes in life.
 - whatever comes up that disturbs one's peace or is unpleasant or irritates one's temper.
 - some disagreeable duty which one hates to perform, not is it some terrible habit that one is constantly wrestling with nor some person that one detests, etc.
2. The "Cross" is the word that represents what is involved in a person trying to live as Jesus Christ wants that person to live.
 - A man came, wanting to follow Jesus, but wanted to first go bury his father. Jesus told him that he would have to leave his father as he was if he was going to follow Him.
 - What would you and the world think about someone who actually did that?

- A young man came to Jesus, wanting to follow Him, but first he want to go home and tell everyone good by. Jesus told him that anybody who wanted to "look back" before before and while following Him was unfit to follow Him.
 - What would you and the world think or say about someone who just walked off from his/her family and friends without even saying "goodby?"
 - Another young man came to Jesus, falling at His feet, worshipping Him and asked what good thing he needed to do. Jesus told him to go give everything away that he had.
 - What would you and the world think or say about someone who did such a thing in order to wander off following some religious leader/belief?
 - The "cross" stands for all the reproach, talk, resentment, even hatred one will received from people when one gives up all to follow Jesus.
2. The "Cross" stands for a life that is deliberately, voluntarily surrendered to the will of God.
 - ***John 10:17; Philippians 2:6-8***
 - Jesus left an example for every believer who would follow Him.
 - His obedience was voluntary, not compelled, was continuous, faithful, without reservation throughout His life through His death on the cross.
 - His life was obedient, consecrated, surrendered, totally at the disposal of God the Father.
 - He lived not to please others, nor to make a reputation, but to go about doing good, to minister to others, and to be totally obedient to God unto His death.
 3. The "Cross" stands for sacrificing and even suffering for others.
 - ***1 John 3:16***
 - The Christian's life is to be lived by the same principles that Jesus lived by: obedience to God and to God alone, and sacrifice one's own life for others. Jesus died that we might live.
 - ***Matthew 16:25***
 - ***"...As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.."***
 4. Finally, the "Cross," the way of Christ must be DELIBERATELY chosen and lived.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are you following Jesus Christ? You are? How closely?
2. How are you doing with the "denying self" thing?
3. How important is the world's (friends, family) opinion of you?
4. Following Jesus Christ His way, ONLY, is not optional, it is His way or not His way.
5. What do you need to do/not do in order to follow Jesus as He asks? Will you do it?
6. So, do you have a "Cross" or not?