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## The Mystery of The Cross: The Cross is an Idol

### ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

- A Biblical evidence-based explanation of idolatry.
- An explanation of how the common cross is an idol.
- How to acknowledge the Lord's Sacrifice without worshipping or using the cross.

### ARTICLE SUMMARY

The use of the cross (crucifix) in Christian worship has been unnecessarily debated for centuries, as the Bible has always provided a clear answer to this controversy. According to Biblical doctrine, the use of the cross in the worship of the Lord, the Most High God, is a form of idolatry because it fits within the Biblical description and definition of an idol. However, it does not mean that the cross holds no significant meaning in Christianity, it's the contrary, as the Lord's sacrifice on the cross is always to be remembered in praise and thanksgiving.

### A BIBLICAL EVIDENCE-BASED EXPLANATION OF IDOLATRY

The "Christian" cross or crucifix is an idol, and therefore, its use is a form of idolatry. This fact is confirmed through the Biblical descriptions of what encompasses an idol. A description of an idol is provided in the book of Exodus, where God gives His Servant, Moses, the Ten Commandments. Moses was the leader of God's people at the time they were led out of Egypt, because of the long-term affliction, oppression, and persecution they suffered at the hand of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. The Ten Commandments are a God-given code of conduct that were part

of the Law of Moses (Old Covenant), which God’s people were to keep and do for a blessing, or disregard for a curse; a curse that not only affected that generation, but the subsequent generations that followed.

- *Exodus 20:4-6—<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: <sup>5</sup>you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

The verse Exodus 20:4 makes it clear that idols are items of any description that are created by people for the use in the worship of God (or other gods or spirits). Notably, God does not approve of idolatrous items being used in the worship of Him, a fact which is once again made noticeably clear in Exodus 32:1-8; where God becomes angry at His people for wanting, creating, and using an idol to worship Him. Exodus chapter 32:1-8 provides a clear example of what is considered as idolatry. In the case of Exodus 32:1-8, the idol in question was a calf made from gold:

- *Exodus 32:1-8- <sup>1</sup>When the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don’t know what has become of him.”<sup>2</sup> Aaron said to them, “Take off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me.”*

*<sup>3</sup>All the people took off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. <sup>4</sup>He received what they handed him, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it a molded calf. Then they said, “These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”<sup>5</sup> When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to Yahweh.”<sup>6</sup> They rose up early on the next day, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*

*<sup>7</sup> Yahweh spoke to Moses, “Go, get down; for your people, who you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves! <sup>8</sup> They have turned away quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and have*

*worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.'*"

### AN EXPLANATION OF HOW THE COMMON CROSS IS AN IDOL

Based on the description and example of idolatry provided by Exodus 20:4 and Exodus 32:1-8, the cross fits the description of an idol, as it is an item fashioned for the purpose of worshipping God (or other gods). This is not a new discovery, in fact, research shows that the description of the cross as an idol was noted over a century ago. According to publications by (Carus, 1899b): Minuicus Felix, a Christian Apologist, an individual who believes that the Bible is the Christian authoritative document, maintained that, *"We (Christians) neither worship crosses nor desire them" (for dying thereon), but Tertullian seems to acquiesce in the charge, claiming that the Pagans are herein the coreligionists (con-sacranei) of the Christians in that the former worship wooden statues. He challenges the Pagans to tell him what difference there is between the material of a statue and a cross, "when each is represented by a rough stock without form."* (Carus, 1899b). The relevance of this quote is that the use of a cross for worship purposes is not of Christian origin, but rather, the cross was introduced into Christian worship by European Pagan converts who maintained its use in religious practice (Bruun, Zilliacus, & Henriksson, 1954; Carus, 1899b). Whether the use of a cross by Pagan converts was actually "secret" homage or worship to their indigenous and traditional gods; or a mere oversight of faith based on the projection of familiar symbols and practice: it stands that whether a cross is gold, silver or wooden, it is a man-made item used for the purpose of worshipping God (or other gods), which is an act that God repeatedly condemns throughout the Bible. With the mention of the words "man-made", in the Bible, the Lord forewarns people about following man-made "Christian" traditions or practices that are propagated by popular religion, and instead He encourages people to hold fast to the truth of His Word, The Holy Bible:

- **Matthew 15:7-9** - *<sup>7</sup>You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, <sup>8</sup>'These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. <sup>9</sup>And in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine rules made by men.'*"

Hence, within the context of Matthew 15:7-9, the use of the cross in Christian worship is nothing more than a man-made tradition, as it does not come from God, nor is it endorsed by His commandments that are outlined in the Holy Bible, nor do any of His prophets or Apostles ever use them. The idea of crosses, in whatever material, having no place in Christian worship is further supported by the fact that the cross has various forms such as the rod (simple pole), four-armed

cross, tau (T-cross), and the common cross, which has been the most popular representation of the crucifix since the age of Emperor Constantine I of Rome (Carus, 1899a, 1899b). Therefore, as a symbol, the cross holds little meaning in terms of worship because the form of the crucifix that the Lord was sacrificed on, isn't even known, and so, as an object for use in worship it becomes foreign and unconnected (Carus, 1899a, 1899b). To reiterate, the actual style and structure of the Lord's crucifix has been long debated, and even in the Bible, the crucifix has been translated in different words i.e. a tree in Galatians 3:13 (Carus, 1899a, 1899b):

- **Galatians 3:13** - <sup>13</sup> *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree,"*

Overall, the Bible conveys that the Lord Jesus Christ was sacrificed on a wooden apparatus, which is most widely associated with the cross/crucifix. However, the most important aspect of the Lord's sacrifice isn't the cross, but His sacrifice and what He died for, which is outlined in the Scripture Galatians 3:13. Galatians 3:13 explains that the reason for the Lord's sacrifice on the cross was to fulfill the Law of Moses to completion, so that the New Covenant could be introduced and established through His death and resurrection. Hence, the consensus is that the cross should not be used in Christian worship, instead the Lord's sacrifice on the cross should be acknowledged and remembered in the right way.

## HOW TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE LORD'S SACRIFICE WITHOUT WORSHIPPING OR USING THE CROSS

The right way to acknowledge the Lord's sacrifice on the cross is through praise and thanksgiving for His sacrifice in prayer and truth; and this truth is that Christian's are expected to keep God's commandments in honor of His sacrifice that upholds the New Covenant. The key to doing God's commandments is summarised by the two most important commandments: Matthew 22:37-38—<sup>37</sup> *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."*<sup>38</sup> *This is the first and great commandment and the second is* Matthew 22:39-40—<sup>39</sup> *A second likewise is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*<sup>40</sup> *The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.* Therefore, God expects and asks that you love Him and other people according to God's ways as outlined by the Bible. Afterall, it is written in 1 John 5:3—<sup>3</sup> *For this is loving God, that we keep his commandments. His commandments are not grievous* and in Romans 13:10 — <sup>10</sup> *Love doesn't harm a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.* Therefore, love can be briefly summarized as treating all people with

consideration and respect; and doing no intentional harm or evil to another person. Hence, it is through such behaviour and actions that the Lord's sacrifice on the cross is honored, because He died to save those who believe in Him, His Word, and His ways.

### ARTICLE PINPOINT

The use of the cross in Christian worship is problematic because God strictly forbids the use of idols under the Law of Moses, and it remains forbidden under the New Covenant, as stated in numerous Scriptures from the New Testament:

- **Acts 17:29—<sup>29</sup>** *Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold, or silver, or stone, engraved by art and design of man.*
- **1 Corinthians 10:14—<sup>14</sup>** *Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

Furthermore, it is reiterated that to love and to truly know God is to keep His commandments, which is a personal testament to one's own faith in the Lord:

- **1 John 2:3-5 —<sup>3</sup>** *This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments.*  
<sup>4</sup> *One who says, "I know him," and doesn't keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him.* <sup>5</sup> *But God's love has most certainly been perfected in whoever keeps his word.*  
*This is how we know that we are in him:*

Overall, Matthew 15:7-9 highlights the necessity for a Biblical evidence-based practice approach for all that pertains to Christianity, otherwise it becomes something that is not Christian at all. The next article of this series expands of the traditions of men that are used in popular Christian religions: the use of images and saint worship, which God forbid in Exodus 20:4-6.

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Scripture quotations are derived from the ‘Holy Bible: World English Bible Version’, published by Bible Domain Publishing in 2016 (Public Domain Work)–ISBN-13:978-1530857654, and ISBN-10 1530857651 (BDP, 2016).



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