

Do You Glory In The Cross Of Jesus Christ?

The apostle Paul wrote about the “*foolishness of the cross*” – “*enemies of the cross*” – “*the offence of the cross*” – and “*the shame of the cross*” of Jesus Christ.

What is the right Christian attitude towards the cross of Jesus Christ?

Originally the cross did **not** inspire religious awe or thoughts of the Messiah’s atoning sacrifice.

Instead, the cross inspired sheer terror.

A crucifixion is a gruesome, torturous and shameful way of dying, the very lowest form of execution, reserved in the past for traitors and hardened criminals.

The Romans adopted this gruesome form of death from the Phoenicians, who actually impaled their victims on a straight, upright post.

However, the Romans used a cross with a cross beam.

Either way it is a slow and agonising means of death.

The process of crucifixion involved scourging with spiked whips, beating with rods and all manner of verbal abuse.

The victim had to carry their cross to the sight of crucifixion.

After this came the painful process of hammering nails through hands and feet, followed by the upright of the cross being dropped into a prepared hole that resulted with the tearing of the flesh.

Finally, this slow, agonising death was aggravated by taunts, threats and buffeting from the crowd, add to this the plague of flies sucking blood from all the wounds on the body.

Jesus Christ’s forebodings of the crucifixion

The terror of the anticipation of the crucifixion heightened the victim’s fear of the event.

Most criminals were crucified immediately after their trial because the forebodings of pain were more than most humans could handle and they could expire.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was typical in this respect, He was crucified on the same day He was convicted.

But this death sentence was no sudden surprise to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ anticipated His death by the cross throughout His three-and-one-half year ministry.

As a young man growing up in Galilee, Jesus Christ must have been reminded of His own death as He heard of and may even have witnessed a number of Roman crucifixions.

Jesus Christ was most likely aware of His coming death for an even longer period of His human life, as He read or heard read the scriptures prophesying the nature of His death.

Even before His physical life Jesus Christ the Son of God had committed Himself to be crucified to become the Saviour of humanity from their deserved death, due to their rebellion against their Creator God, [2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:18-20].

Philippians 2:5-8 [New King James] *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*

The apostle Paul referred to the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ in this letter.

Early in His ministry, Jesus Christ began to prepare His disciples for the shameful death He was to suffer, [Matthew 16:21] yet the disciples did not understand this until the very end of Jesus Christ’s ministry, the thought of such a shameful death was abhorrent to them.

Finally Jesus Christ gave the twelve disciples the complete step-by-step advance details of His upcoming brutal murder.

Matthew 20:17-19 [New King James] *“Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.’”*

Yet this did not sink into their minds as the next few verses show, positions of authority in the Kingdom of God was all they could think about, how must this have pained Jesus Christ their about to be Saviour through this horrific sacrifice.

The shame of the cross

If you had been a Jewish disciple of Jesus Christ would you consider the value of a dead man hanging and dying on a cross like a common criminal?

How could you think of him as a great man, a Saviour or the Son of God?

Would He only represent a criminal, failure or a loser?

The Jewish tradition of the day said, “*cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.*” The very idea of publically displaying a dead or dying man on a tree was the worst sort of degradation they could suffer, [**Deuteronomy 21:22-23**].

In this way, Jesus became “*accursed*” for us, [Galatians 3:13].

Jesus Christ was crucified outside the city, again in the Jewish tradition of putting to death the lowest form of criminal prosecution was done outside the city gates, [Numbers 15:35-36].

The Roman occupational army complied with this Jewish custom.

In fact, Jesus had to carry His cross so far from the “*city centre*” that a visitor from Cyrene, named Simon, was compelled to bear Jesus Christ’s cross, [**Matthew 27:32**].

Many of the disciples of Jesus Christ, even some among the “*mob*” at His crucifixion, believed in Jesus Christ until the end.

But the unexpected end was so degrading that even His Messiahship was doubted when Jesus remained hanging on His cross until death.

How could they believe in a Messiah, perhaps stark naked, on a cross between two obviously guilty criminals?

His own mother and His own twelve disciples saw Jesus in His shame, and perhaps even they were disillusioned.

Even those who saw His miracles, heard His teachings and benefitted by His healings, [**Matthew 27:42-44**], allowed the shame of the cross to wipe out any thoughts of Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah.

Even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, many disciples did not easily recover from the shock of the shame of the crucifixion.

Thomas doubted, [**John 20:24-25**].

Peter went back to his job of a fisherman, [**John 21:3**].

Not until the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost did the shame of the cross become the glory of the cross, to those who eventually preached it around the world.

Disciples crucified

When the disciples perceived the glory of Jesus Christ's resurrection, they finally understood why the abject shame of the cross was necessary, and became willing even to be physically crucified themselves!

When the disciples remembered their Master's prophecies, they saw them in a new light.

Jesus Christ had not only said He would die on the cross, but that also all His true disciples would drink of His cup and be baptised with His baptism, [**Matthew 20:22-23**].

Matthew 23:34 [New King James] *“Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,”*

To the Pharisees, Jesus was even more pointed in what they would do to His disciples.

James was the first apostle to be martyred, [**Acts 12:1-2**] and tradition tells us that Peter was crucified, [perhaps upside down]. Most of the apostles, including Paul, were martyred and all the disciples were persecuted continually for the cross of Jesus Christ, [**Galatians 6:12**].

A symbol of shame or glory?

The cross has become a foremost physical symbol of Christianity.

Yet orthodox Christianity has overdone this reverence for the cross, even to the point of making it a “graven image.”

Today, many people “cross themselves” before doing anything important.

Many wear crosses continually, or kiss the bishop's cross at each mass.

The physical cross is not holy of itself.

The crucifixion on the cross is what is important, the reality of what took place on the cross is important.

This symbolic meaning is something in which we ought to glory.

How can we bring glory to our Saviour and Creator God by taking up our cross and dying on it? [Matthew 10:38-39; Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23-24].

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Just as Jesus Christ is now a *“living sacrifice,”* having resurrected from the dead after His death on the cross, so we also must as His disciples, to show our gratitude for what He has done for all humanity, become *“living sacrifices.”*

The Greek word translated *“bodies”* is *“sōma”* meaning the complete life force, physical body, mind and human spirit, [Job 32:8].

Only then will the Holy Spirit begin the task of re-educating our minds and to develop the very character of God.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

Note we have *“crucified the flesh,”* human nature.

Romans 6:1-13 [New King James] *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, **knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.** For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”*

This is the only way we can take up our cross to follow our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Luke 14:25-30, 33 [New King James] *“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it, lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.”’” ... **“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”***

This is why Paul told us to become a “*living sacrifice*” for this is the **only** way we can glorify our Creator God and God the Father.

This was the final prayer to God the Father that Jesus Christ made, that the lives of all His disciples may bring glory to the Father, [**John 17:6-26**].

Paul constantly preached the cross, [**1 Corinthians 2:2**].

Of course Paul spoke on other subjects, but he wanted us to realise that the simplicity of Jesus Christ crucified on the cross was the foundation of all Christianity.

Galatians 2:20 [New King James] *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

This verse describes the relationship that a Christian must have with their Saviour, the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ.

Do not be afraid to be different in your community by standing up for what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ means.

This may bring persecution.

We must be willing to come out of this world’s deception about the cross, instead offer our lives for Jesus Christ to use as vehicles of Holy Spirit to reach this blinded world with the glorious truth about the cross of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:12-15 [Amplified Bible] *“Therefore Jesus also suffered and died outside the city’s gate in order that He might purify the people through the shedding of His own blood, and set them apart as holy for God. Let us then go forth, from all that would prevent us to Him outside the camp, at Calvary, bearing the contempt, abuse and shame with Him. For we have no permanent city, but are looking for one which is to come. Through Him therefore constantly at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confer and glorify His name.”*

Now you know the glory of the cross of Jesus Christ and how we can take up our cross with Him on a daily basis.