

CROSS OF CHRIST

- I. Background of word "cross."
 - A. Greek word *stauros* originally indicated pointed, vertical stake. Used of fence posts.
 - B. Later used to refer to an instrument of torture and execution.
 - 1. Used by Egyptians, Persians, Carthaginians, Greek and Romans.
 - 2. Many varieties.
 - a. Vertical stake on which offender impaled.
 - b. Stake with cantilever on which offender hanged. Esther 7:9
 - c. Crossing of two timbers in form of X, T or t.
 - 3. Romans considered public display of crucifixion as deterrent to crime. Crosses stood outside of most major towns on Roman roads.
- II. The physical, material instrument on which Jesus was executed.
 - A. Jesus bore a cross (cross-member?) - John 19:17
 - B. Assisted by Simon of Cyrene - Matt. 27:32; Mk 15:21; Lk 23:26
 - C. Inscription on cross, "King of Jews" - John 19:19
 - D. By-standers around the cross - Matt. 27:39; John 19:25
 - E. Jesus taunted to come down from cross - Matt. 29:40,42; Mk 15:30,32
- III. Historical action of crucifixion. Greek verb *stauroo* - "to crucify".
 - A. Jesus had prophesied such - Matt. 20:19; 26:2; Lk 24:7
 - B. Jewish mob demanded, "Crucify Him" - Matt. 27:22,23; Mk 15:13,14; Lk 23:21; Jn 19:6,15.
 - C. Roman proconsul delivered to crucifixion - Matt 27:26; Mk 15:14; Jn 19:16
 - D. Roman soldiers
 - 1. Led Jesus to be crucified - Matt. 27:31; Mk 15:20
 - 2. Crucified Him - Mk 15:25; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:18
 - 3. Divided up His belongings - Matt. 27:35; Mk 15:24; Jn 19:23
 - E. Site of crucifixion
 - 1. Near the city of Jerusalem - Jn 19:20
 - 2. Close to garden - Jn 19:41
 - 3. "place of the skull" - Matt. 27:33; Mk 15:22; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:17
 - a. Aramaic word for skull - *Golgotha*
 - b. Latin word for skull - *calvaria* - (KJV - Lk 23:33)
 - F. References to the historical event
 - 1. Angel at empty tomb - Matt. 28:5; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:7
 - 2. Men on road to Emmaus - Lk 24:20
 - 3. Peter at Pentecost - Acts 2:36
 - 4. Peter to Jewish leaders - Acts 4:10
 - 5. Paul to Corinthians - I Cor. 2:8

IV. Theological significance of the Cross.

- A. Jesus gave His life as ransom for many - Matt. 20:28; Mk 10:45; I Tim. 2:6
- B. From the cross Jesus exclaimed, "It is finished" - John 19:30
- C. Paul uses the word "cross" to refer to "finished work" of God in Christ.
 - 1. I Cor. 1:17,18,23; 2:2 - "cross of Christ; word of cross; Christ crucified"
 - 2. Gal. 3:1; 5:11; 6:12,14 - "cross of Christ"
 - 3. Eph. 2:16 - "new humanity through the cross"
 - 4. Phil. 3:18 - "enemies of the cross of Christ"
 - 5. Col. 1:20 - "peace through blood of cross"
- D. Spiritual Identification with the Cross
 - 1. "Crucified with Christ" - Greek word *sustauroo*.
 - a. Rom. 6:6 - "old man crucified with Him"
 - b. Gal. 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ"
 - 2. "Crucified the flesh" - Gal. 5:24
 - 3. "World crucified to me" - Gal. 6:14
 - 4. No on-going process of applying or appropriating cross or crucifixion of Jesus in the life of a Christian.
 - 5. "Taking up a cross" - Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; 14:27
 - a. Prior to Jesus' crucifixion on a cross.
 - b. Generic and figurative reference to termination of selfish tendencies. Not a call to "die to self."

V. Mystical usages of the "cross."

- A. Earliest Christians eschewed symbol of cross. An execution instrument.
- B. Constantine used cross as symbol to merge Roman empire and Christian religion.
- C. Cross became fetish to ward off evil spirits. Idolatry.
- D. Idea of cross invested with deified and personified power.
 - 1. "the cross is divine."
 - 2. "the cross saves you"
 - 3. "submit to the power of the cross"
 - 4. "have faith in the cross"
 - 5. "place yourself on the cross"
 - 6. "allow the cross to put you to death"
- E. Christians must reject the mystical use of the cross.
 - 1. Unscriptural
 - 2. "Works" theology
 - 3. Gnostic concept of spirituality.
 - a. Elitism.
 - b. Perfectionism
 - c. Subjectivism
 - 4. Idolatrous

VI. The gospel is the message of the cross.

- A. Christ took our death consequences in order to give us His life.
- B. The "finished work" of Jesus Christ is operative in Christians today.