

The Cross

(May 23, 2006)

We have a number of people write or call asking how they can know if they are truly born-again?

Our first three shows, which you can watch for free online, detail a number of ways. One of the biggest outward ways is your praise of the Lord.

- Do you praise and worship Him?
- Do you pray continually?

Tonight, I'd like to share another attitude that occurs in the life of regenerated believers that cannot be faked or forced:

HOW THEY VIEW THE CROSS

- Interestingly enough, when most Latter-day Saints are asked if they are really Christian, most ardently confirm that they are.
- (I remind the audience that I believe there is a great difference between the doctrines of Mormonism and the heart-felt beliefs of many Mormons.)
- But still a number of crucial differences exist between what Mormonism proposes, and what the Bible supports as Christian.
- Perhaps one of the most obvious and seemingly unimportant differences – the absence or presence of the cross – may turn out to be one of the most telling differences after all.
- We live in a world of symbols. Some of them are internationally recognized, others are locally important.
- Institutionally generated symbols help remind people of their allegiance to a cause or group and are typically pregnant with meaning and purpose.
- The American Flag, The Star of David, The Golden Arches, and a Peace Sign all speak to a specific group, agenda, and philosophy of life.
- To Christians, the cross is symbolically central to most of the important thing in their spiritual lives. To some it says suffering, but it also shouts freedom from sin, liberty, wonderment, and awe.
- It represents the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God's love.

- It invokes gratitude, homage, assurance, and peace.
- To Latter-day Saints, the cross is, well, recognized as the place of Jesus physical death, but it is rarely seen in any LDS buildings.
- Why?
- On my full time mission when people would ask, “How come you don’t have crosses in or on your churches?” I was taught in the MTC to say something to the effect of : “Well, suppose someone you loved very much was murdered by a buck knife. How would you like it if people stuck replicas of bloody buck knives all over the place in memoriam of him?”
- As an unregenerate believer, and therefore not capable of understanding the Bible, I thought this response was so wise.
- It made sense to me logically because I had an intellectual understanding of His death and sacrifice but no personal, biblical understanding of what that time on the cross REALLY meant.
- When I was born-again, I almost immediately developed a new understanding and love for the symbol of the cross. I wasn’t taught about it, I didn’t have to think about it or choose to love it, I just did.
- Why? What changed for me? How could I go from holding an object that was “logically repulsive under the religious auspices of normal reverence and respect” to viewing it as an object of love and gratitude which causes me to ponder and praise Jesus whenever I see it today?
- Maybe, like I was, you are unaware of what the Bible says about the cross. Maybe you are unaware of its full and significant meaning.

The cross of Christ is taken three ways in scripture, materially, metaphorically, and metonymically.

The material cross of Christ is the object he died upon.

- It is believed that the LORD was crucified on a TAU (from the Greek letter for T), which is also known as the St. Anthony’s Cross. This cross no top to it (like the Latin cross) but instead looks like a capital T.
- The Latin Cross is the lower case “t” often depicted in art.
- The material cross is very important to the Church of Rome. It is not so important to most Protestant believers around the world.

The metaphorical cross of Christ, is afflictions,

Luke 9:28 “Let him take up the cross” means to submit to any afflictions God allows us to face. God oft-times sanctifies this cross, for the crucifying the hearts of his people to the world.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is **crucified** with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

But the cross of Christ is taken metonymically for the gospel, the doctrine of the gospel, or of him that died upon the cross. In my opinion, all references to the cross are important, but this association really touches on its present-day significance.

Listen very carefully to these verses.

1st Corinthians 1:17-18 “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest **the cross of Christ** should be made of none effect. For the **preaching of the cross** is to them that perish foolishness; **but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.**

What is “the preaching of the cross, Latter-day Saints?”

In Galatians (5:11) Paul refers to “**the offence of the cross.**”

How can the cross be “an offence?”

Is the cross an offence to you or is it a symbol of joy, peace, and God’s great love. How you view the cross is very dependent on whether you have been spiritually reborn or not and whether you truly understand Jesus.

In Galatians 6:12-14 Paul writes

“ . . . only lest they should **suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.**

Paul states here that he has nothing to glory in than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn’t say he glories in the Garden? He doesn’t say He glories in ordinances. He glories **ONLY** in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:16

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body **by the cross**, having slain the enmity thereby:

By the cross; by his bloody death on the cross as an expiation for sin. By slaying the enmity between all peoples on the cross, Jesus annulled the Jewish ceremonial law.

How about a few more.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, **even the death of the cross.**

Unto death (mechri thanatou). "Until death." Yea, the death of the cross (thanatou de staurou). The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross.

This is important stuff, my friends, because Jesus didn't suffer for the sickness and sins of the world in private. God the Father had Him out in the public eye, suffering for the sins of the world for all to see.

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured the cross, despising the shame**, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He was shamed.

He was brought to the lowest of low.

Hung on a tree with criminals.

Spit on, mistreated, shamed, and ridiculed publicly for what?

For you and I. Here is where all of God's wrath was focused.

What greater ploy than to get people – well meaning people – to take their eyes off the very place where they were reconciled to God!

Those of you who aren't aware of this, Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus atoned for the sins of the world in the Garden of Gethsemane. All biblical passages point to the CROSS, the CROSS!

Once again, LDS doctrine subtly tosses in a tiny twist, a little variance, a slight alteration – which amounts to nothing more than counterfeit theology and a distancing of people from who Jesus was and what He did.

Listen!

Colossians 1:20 And, having made peace through the **blood of his cross**, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross! He made peace through the cross! He endured shame on the cross! He reconciled us by the cross! He fulfilled the Law on the cross! He killed enmity on the cross! We are one with God by the cross.

Now listen to this. Listen.

Colossians 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

When Christ was nailed to the cross, our obligation to fulfill these ordinances was done away.

Are you getting the picture here?

What happened on that cross altered, fulfilled, completed, atoned, connected, made one all of what God had intended from the beginning!

May the Latter-day Saints add a cross-bar to those chapel spires out of respect, adoration, and worship of Jesus Christ.

May they remove Moroni and rent every temple veil in the name of Him who already did the job . . . with His life.