



"Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions."

—G.K. Chesterton

**07-Jul-17**

## **Is the Symbol of the Cross Idolatry? (Part One)**

Most of us have watched a baseball game. Chances are we have all seen a batter about to enter the batter's box make the sign of the cross. Or perhaps we are basketball fans. We have seen it there too: As certain players prepare to shoot a free throw, they will also make the sign of the cross. It is common to see little silver crosses hanging on a chain around a person's neck or dangling from the rearview mirrors of cars. Is this merely the affirmation of one's [faith](#) or something much more serious, such as idolatry?

A website selling religious jewelry had this to say about the cross:

The cross is the most important Christian symbol and is looked upon as the grand charm, as the great refuge in every season of danger, in every hour of temptation as the infallible preservation from all the powers of darkness.

Is this true? Will wearing a small silver cross around one's neck keep a person from harm? Will it stay the hand of [Satan](#)? Will it allow a baseball player to hit home runs and a basketball player to sink free throws with ease? Of course not!

So why do so many believe otherwise? Where did the use of the symbol of the cross originate? Did it start with the sacrifice of [Jesus Christ](#)? Are we honoring His tremendous gift to us by displaying the cross on the bumpers of our cars? Did Jesus even die on a cross, and if He did, should we worship Him through the instrument of His death?

The quotation from the religious jewelry website looked vaguely familiar, and a bit of research quickly showed that it was lifted, out of context and uncredited, from Alexander Hislop's book, *The Two Babylons*. Here is the entire section containing this quote from Hislop's book:

In the Papal system, as is well known, the sign of the cross and the image of the cross are all in all. No prayer can be said, no worship engaged in, no step almost can be taken, without the frequent use of the sign of the cross. The cross is looked upon as the grand charm, as the great refuge in every season of danger, in every hour of temptation as the infallible preservative from all the powers of darkness. The cross is adored with all the homage due only the Most High; and for any one to call it, in the hearing of a genuine Romanist, by the scriptural term, "the accursed tree [[Galatians 3:13](#)]," is a mortal [offense](#). To say that such superstitious feeling for the sign of the cross . . . ever grew out of the saying of Paul, "[God](#) forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" [[Galatians 6:14](#)]*—*that is, in the doctrine of Christ crucified*—*is a mere absurdity, a shallow subterfuge and pretence [*sic*]. The magic virtues attributed to the so-called sign of the cross, the worship bestowed on it, never came from such a source. The same sign of the cross that Rome now worships was used in the Babylonian Mysteries, was applied by Paganism to the same magic purposes, was honoured with the same honours. That which is now called the Christian cross was originally no Christian emblem at all, but was the mystic Tau of the Chaldeans and Egyptians . . .

The *tau* is the original form of the letter T, the initial of the name of Tammuz, the sun god, which is another name for Nimrod. The tau, or the cross, was a revered symbol in ancient times, at least 1,500 years before Christ. Variations of the cross, used as a religious symbol, can be found in

almost every ancient religion except Judaism and Islam. It is yet another example of pagan beliefs brought into the Catholic Church to add numbers. It is not even syncretism, which is the merging of differing beliefs, but more along the lines of a wholesale addition of pagan beliefs to the teaching of the so-called Christian church.

Assume for a moment that Christ died on a tau cross. Are we to worship or venerate the instrument of His death? If Christ had died by electrocution, would we have symbolic electric chairs hanging from our necks? If He had been hanged, would we have charms made of tiny nooses? The point is clear. The more important significance for us is not *the instrument* on which He died, but the fact that He died to pay the penalty for the sins of His creatures.

The New Testament uses two Greek words to describe the instrument of Jesus' death. One is *xulon*, which means "tree." An example of this appears in [Acts 5:30](#), where the apostle Peter says, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree." Other examples of this translation are [Acts 10:39](#); [13:29](#); [Galatians 3:13](#); and [I Peter 2:24](#).

The other Greek word is *stauros*, meaning "a stake." Used 28 times in the New Testament, it is almost always translated as "cross." Robert Young, in his *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, gives the meaning of *stauros* as "a stake," yet he shows that it is rendered as "cross" in each of its 28 appearances in Scripture.

Note the "cross, crucify" entry in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*:

*Stauros* . . . denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. On such malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauro?*, to fasten to a stake or pale, are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the 3rd cent. AD the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of

the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ.

It is already clear that the cross has origins deep in paganism, and its connection to anything biblical is tenuous at best. We will look further into this question in Part Two.

- Mike Ford

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Was God's Law Nailed to the Cross?](#)**

by Earl L. Henn

Many point to Colossians 2:14 to "prove" that it is no longer necessary to keep God's law, but is this really what the apostle Paul means? Was the law nailed to Christ's cross? What is the "handwriting of requirements" he writes of? Using the immediate context and supporting scriptures, Earl Henn untangles the apostle's intent in this verse.

---

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).

