

## THE CELTIC CROSS

There are many different crosses representing Christianity. One of the most compelling crosses is the Celtic Cross. This cross originated in Ireland, Scotland and some parts of England. And even throughout America in churches, cemeteries and jewelry you will see that the Celtic Cross has made its way over the ocean. The story of its origin touched my heart many years ago and became one reason we chose to lift the Celtic Cross in front of our church. The story is told that the Gaelic peoples who settled in what is now modern Great Britain and Ireland were barbaric and pagan. Throughout the land these pagans decorated the landscape with standing stones, often marked by carved circles. In the religion of this land these circles represented eternity and more or less marked the territory for their heathen gods. Around the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Century the Celts began to convert to Christianity in a sudden and mighty wave. The new converts began to ask, "What shall we do to the stones that bear the mark of our former heathen religion? Shall we take to removing these circles as best we can?" The missionaries suggested to the converts, "No, take the Cross which represents that Christ has paid for our sins and impress or carve the cross over the top of those circles. For in doing so you will be saying that Christ alone conquers paganism and its wicked superstitions and Christ alone gives eternal life." An ancient prayer among the early Irish Christians seems to use this concept of the cross over the circle in this prayer, "Circle us, Lord, keep love within; keep hatred out. Keep joy within; keep fear out. Keep peace within; keep worry out. Keep light within; keep darkness out. May You stand in the circle with us, today and always."

The early Celtic Christians had a thorough indoctrination to the earliest doctrines of the church, actually long before Catholicism began to populate Europe. It is believed by many that Patrick used the three-leaf clover to illustrate the Trinity--Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They also had a good understanding of the transcendence of God and yet His incarnation that brought Him to earth. And although Christ ascended to the Heavenly Father's right hand, He sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the believers. And from this ancient people, we learn that there are "thin places" and "thin moments" where God is so real, that heaven will overlap the earth; and it becomes difficult in those moments to know where earth ends and heaven begins. History says that the early Celtic Christians were "God-intoxicated people who lived with an intense sense of the presence of God."

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus so that there is a razor thin distance between heaven and earth? Would you like to know one hundred per cent for certain that heaven is your home and also that a wee bit of heaven will be part of the world that you live in today? Here's how:

### **1. Know and admit that you are a sinner in need of the Savior.**

Romans 3:10, 23: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

## **2. Understand that you cannot save yourself.**

Job 9:30, 31: "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

## **3. Realize God loves you and that Christ died for you and was buried, and rose from the dead and is alive forevermore.**

I Corinthians 15:3b, 4: "...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Romans 5:8: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

II Corinthians 5:21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Revelation 1:18: "I AM He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I AM alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

## **4. Repent of yours sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Mark 1:15b: "...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Luke 13:3, 5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

II Corinthians 7:10a: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...".

Acts 16:30b, 31a: "...What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...."

Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is so much more than believing the facts. Even the devils believe the facts. James 2:19 states, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is putting your full trust in Christ alone, recognizing that He died for your sins, was buried and lives. Believing on our Savior is accepting Him as the Lord, and specifically, the Lord of your life.

Today, if you have not accepted Jesus as your own personal Savior, consider praying this prayer (from your heart) or one similar to this:

"Dear Lord, I know that I'm a sinner and I cannot save myself. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God and God, the Son. I believe that You, Lord Jesus love me and died on the cross for my sins. I believe You were buried and You live forevermore. I hereby call upon the name of the Lord and ask You to forgive

me of my sins. I am sorry for the wrong that I have done. And I give myself to You, not just some of my life, but all of my life. Save me, Lord, for Jesus sake. Amen.”

And here is the assurance you can have if you meant that prayer:

Romans 10:9: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Romans 10:13: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

John 11:26a: “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die....”

The next time you drive by our Celtic Cross, please make note that it is empty. Christ died once for our sins and need never and shall never die again. If you have received the gift of salvation, you have entered the circle of God’s never ending love.

Romans 8:38, 39: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is what Christmas is all about. Jesus began His life on earth and was laid in a wooden manger and He died on a rugged wooden cross. This after all was His purpose for coming to the earth. Receiving Christ is the greatest Christmas gift a person could ever receive.

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (II Corinthians 9:15).

Merry Christmas!

-Pastor Pope-