

Ask the Pastor

I. Questions

1. Is it wrong for people to portray Jesus in a movie/play?
 - A. Yes.
 - B. The second of the ten commandments forbids making graven images or *any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath (Exo 20:4)*.
 - i. An actor acting the part of Jesus is making himself look and act like Jesus (or at least what he thinks Jesus looked like).
 - a. He is therefore making himself a *likeness* of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Likeness - 1. The quality or fact of being like; resemblance, similarity; an instance of this.
 - ii. Pictures can be idols too (**Num 33:52**).
 - iii. Another name for a movie is a *motion picture*.
 - iv. Jesus is the express image of God's person (**Heb 1:3; Col 1:15**).
 - a. A man who impersonates Jesus is impersonating God.
 - b. God will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images (**Isa 42:8**).
 - C. The name of Jesus is above every name (**Php 2:9-10**).
 - i. Calling a man Jesus Christ (even when acting) is taking God's name in vain (**Exo 20:7**).
 - ii. Vain - 6. *to take...in vain*: †a. To disregard, to treat with contempt. b. With name as object. To use or utter (the name of God) lightly, needlessly, or profanely; transf. to mention or speak of casually or idly. A literal rendering of *assumere* (nomen Dei) in vanum in the Vulgate text of Exod. xx. 7.
 - D. I strongly recommend not watching movies which portray Jesus because those images of the actor will stick in your head and you will conceive of Jesus looking like those actors.
2. Can you explain why we shouldn't wear crosses on jewelry?
 - A. Jesus said that we are to take up our cross and follow Him (**Mat 16:24**).
 - i. He was obviously not exhorting Christians to lug around trees or beams of wood.
 - ii. Nor was Jesus telling them to wear little crosses around their necks.
 - iii. He was speaking figuratively of what the cross represented.
 - iv. Cross - 10. a. A trial or affliction viewed in its Christian aspect, to be borne for Christ's sake with Christian patience; often in phr. to bear, take one's cross, with reference to Matt. x. 38, xvi. 24, etc.
 - B. Paul said that he gloried in the cross of Christ (**Gal 6:14**).
 - i. Was Paul encouraging Christians to wear crosses and glory in them?
 - ii. Of course not; Paul was not glorying in a piece of Jesus' cross that he carried around with him, nor in a necklace with a cross hanging from it, but in the work of salvation and redemption that was secured for God's elect by Christ when He hung on the cross for their sins (**Eph 2:16; Col 1:20**).
 - C. We are not commanded to wear crosses in the Bible, nor do we have an example of any of the apostles doing so in the Bible.

- i. If wearing or displaying crosses doesn't come from the Bible, then where does it come from?
 - ii. "Cross forms were used as symbols, religious or otherwise, long before the Christian era in almost every part of the world" (*Cross*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 6, p.812).
 - iii. So Christians borrowed the symbol of the cross from the ancient religions.
 - iv. This is what the whole Catholic religion is based on: "christianized" paganism.
 - v. Borrowing religious symbols from pagan religions and incorporating them into God's religion is forbidden by God (**Deu 12:29-32**).
- D. The Bible forbids the making of graven images for religious use.
- i. The second of the ten commandments forbids making graven images or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath (**Exo 20:4**).
 - ii. Therefore, making an image of a cross and using it for religious reasons is idolatry.
- E. What about wearing a cross for non-religious reasons?
- i. What if a Christian understands that the cross was used in ancient pagan religions, and that it is wrong to use one as a Christian symbol, but he simply thinks a gold or silver "t" looks appealing and he wants to wear it as a piece of jewelry with no religious connotation whatsoever?
 - ii. Can he wear one in that case?
 - iii. No.
 - iv. As Christians, we know that an idol is nothing, whether it be a cross, or a statue of Jupiter (**1Co 8:4**).
 - v. All things are lawful for a Christian, including wearing a "t" on a necklace, but all things are not edifying to others (**1Co 10:23**), and we have to be aware of the construction others will put on our actions.
 - vi. A Christian can eat whatever is sold in the shambles (meat market), asking no questions (**1Co 10:25-26**).
 - a. If a man invites him to a feast, he can go and ask no questions (**1Co 10:27**).
 - b. But, if the man that invited him says that the meat was sacrificed to idols, then the Christian must decline for the sake of the conscience of the person who invited him (**1Co 10:28-29**).
 - c. He must also not eat it for the sake of another's conscience who might see him eating food sacrificed to idols and be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols, *as food sacrificed to idols*, and not just as food, and thereby wound and defile his weak conscience (**1Co 8:7-13**).
 - d. In Paul's example, *for a Christian with knowledge*, eating meat sacrificed to idols would be no different than eating any other meat, but for the sake of the construction that others would put on his actions, he must abstain from such so that others would not think that he is eating it *as food sacrificed to idols*, and thereby be emboldened to do likewise.

- vii. Likewise, to a Christian with knowledge, a cross is nothing but a piece of jewelry in the shape of a "t", and to wear one would be fine.
 - a. But, in a society where nearly everyone who sees him wearing a cross would assume that he is wearing it as a religious symbol which represents God, Jesus, or Christianity (a forbidden religious graven image), he must abstain from wearing it for their sakes because of the construction they put on it.
 - b. A young Christian, without the mature Christian's knowledge, who thinks that the cross is a Christian symbol which represents Jesus and Christianity could see the mature Christian wearing a cross and assume that since he is doing it, then it must be okay for him to do it also.
 - c. By wearing it as a Christian symbol he would wound his weak conscience by doing something that he knows that God forbids (using a graven image in worship).
 - F. It is for these reasons that all Christians, both mature and young in the faith, should abstain from wearing crosses or displaying them in their homes.
3. Is your last breath on earth followed by your first breath in heaven? Or are they the same breath, happening at the same time?
- A. Spirits can breath.
 - i. God, who is a spirit (**Joh 4:24**), breaths (**Gen 2:7; 2Sa 22:16; Job 4:9**).
 - ii. Though we will not have physical bodies in heaven until the resurrection, we will have spiritual bodies that do physical things like talking and breathing (**Luk 16:22-25; Rev 6:9-10**).
 - B. When man dies, his spirit and his breath leaves him (**Job 34:14; Psa 146:4**).
 - i. The same thing happens to the animals (**Psa 104:29; Ecc 3:19-20**).
 - ii. When this happens, the spirit and soul (of men, not animals) go to be with the Lord in heaven (**Ecc 3:21; Ecc 12:7; Gen 35:18**), or to hell in the case of the wicked.
 - iii. The moment our spirit and soul leaves the body it is with the Lord in heaven (**2Co 5:8**).
 - iv. Therefore, since the last breath on earth is followed by the spirit and soul departing the body to immediately be with God in heaven, the next breath taken would be in heaven.