



The Cross Before Constantine: The Early Life of a Christian Symbol

Bruce W. Longenecker

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This book brings together, for the first time, the relevant material evidence demonstrating Christian use of the cross prior to Constantine. Bruce W. Longenecker upends a longstanding consensus that the cross was not a Christian symbol until Constantine appropriated it to consolidate his power in the fourth century. Longenecker presents a wide variety of artifacts from across the Mediterranean basin that testify to the use of the cross as a visual symbol by some pre-Constantinian Christians. Those artifacts interlock with literary witnesses from the same period to provide a consistent and robust portrait of the cross as a pre-Constantinian symbol of Christian devotion. The material record of the pre-Constantinian period illustrates that Constantine did not invent the cross as a symbol of Christian faith; for an impressive number of Christians before Constantine's reign, the cross served as a visual symbol of commitment to a living deity in a dangerous world.

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