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Smith's Bible Dictionary

Crucifixion [N] [E]

was in used among the Egyptians, ([Genesis 40:19](#)) the Carthaginians, the Persians, ([Esther 7:10](#)) the Assyrians, Scythians, Indians, Germans, and from the earliest times among the Greeks and Romans. Whether this mode of execution was known to the ancient Jews is a matter of dispute. Probably the Jews borrowed it from the Romans. It was unanimously considered the most horrible form of death. Among the Romans the degradation was also a part of the infliction, and the punishment if applied to freemen was only used in the case of the vilest criminals. The one to be crucified was stripped naked of all his clothes, and then followed the most awful moment of all. He was laid down upon the implement of torture. His arms were stretched along the cross-beams, and at the centre of the open palms the point of a huge iron nail was placed, which, by the blow of a mallet, was driven home into the wood. Then through either foot separately, or possibly through both together, as they were placed one over the other, another huge nail tore its way through the quivering flesh. Whether the sufferer was also bound to the cross we do not know; but, to prevent the hands and feet being torn away by the weight of the body, which could not "rest upon nothing but four great wounds," there was, about the centre of the cross, a wooden projection strong enough to support, at least in part, a human body, which soon became a weight of agony. Then the "accursed tree" with its living human burden was slowly heaved up and the end fixed firmly in a hole in the ground. The feet were but a little raised above the earth. The victim was in full reach of every hand that might choose to strike. A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly, —dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds, all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries, especially of the head and stomach, became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and, while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst. Such was the death to which Christ was doomed. —*Farrar's "Life of Christ."* The crucified was watched, according to custom, by a party of four soldiers, ([John 19:23](#)) with their centurion, ([Matthew 27:66](#)) whose express office was to prevent the stealing of the body. This was necessary from the lingering character of the death, which sometimes did not supervene even for three days, and was at last the result of gradual benumbing and starvation. But for this guard, the persons might have been taken down and recovered, as was actually done in the case of a friend of Josephus. Fracture of the legs was especially adopted by the Jews to hasten death. ([John 19:31](#)) In most cases the body was suffered to rot on the cross by the action of sun and rain, or to be devoured by birds and beasts. Sepulture was generally therefore forbidden; but in consequence of ([21:22,23](#)) an express exception was made in favor of the Jews. ([Matthew 27:58](#)) This accursed and awful mode of punishment was happily abolished by Constantine.



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The New Testament Greek Lexicon

Strong's Number: 4717

stauro/w

Original Word

Word Origin

stauro/w

from (4716)

Transliterated Word

Phonetic Spelling

Stauroo

stow-ro'-o

Parts of Speech

TDNT

Verb

7:581,1071

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Definition

1. to stake, drive down stakes
2. to fortify with driven stakes, to palisade
3. to crucify
 - a. to crucify one
 - b. metaph. to crucify the flesh, destroy its power utterly (the nature of the figure implying that the destruction is attended with intense pain)

Translated Words

KJV (46) - crucify, 46;

NAS (46) - crucified, 29; crucifixion, 1; crucify, 16;

Verse Count

KJV		NAS	
Matthew	10	Matthew	10
Mark	8	Mark	8
Luke	5	Luke	5
John	8	John	8
Acts	2	Acts	2
1 Corinthians	4	1 Corinthians	4
2 Corinthians	1	2 Corinthians	1
Galatians	3	Galatians	3
Revelation	1	Revelation	1

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Abbreviations Legend:

TDNT - Theological Dictionary of the New Testament;

HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE

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Crucifixion of Jesus

Crucifixion: An Excruciating form of Execution

Crucifixion was a practice that originated with the Persians and was later passed on to the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians. The Romans perfected it as a method of capital punishment, which caused maximum pain and suffering over a significant period of time. In fact, the word "excruciate" (meaning, "to cause great agony, torment") comes from the Latin for "from, or out of, the cross."

Crucifixion: Jesus Faced a Horrible Death

Crucifixion typically began with a scourging or flogging of the victim's back. The Romans used a whip called a flagrum, which consisted of small pieces of bone and metal attached to a number of leather strands. The number of blows given to Jesus is not recorded; however, the number of blows in Jewish law was 39 (one less than the 40 called for in the Torah, to prevent a counting error). During the scourging, the skin was ripped from the back, exposing a bloody mass of tissue and bone. Extreme blood loss occurred, often causing death, or at least unconsciousness. In addition to the flogging, Jesus faced severe beating and torment by the Roman soldiers, including the plucking of His beard and the piercing of His scalp with a crown of thorns.

After the flogging, the victim was often forced to carry his own crossbar, or patibulum, to the execution site. The patibulum could easily weigh 100 pounds. In the case of Jesus, the record shows that He may have carried His patibulum the distance of over two football fields. In a weak and tormented state, it's no wonder the record establishes that Jesus needed a great deal of assistance. Once the victim arrived at the execution site, the patibulum was put on the ground and the victim was forced to lie upon it. Spikes about 7 inches long and 3/8 of an inch in diameter were driven into the wrists. The spikes would hit the area of the median nerve, causing shocks of pain up the arms to the shoulders and neck. Already standing at the crucifixion site would be the 7-foot-tall post, called a stipes. In the center of the stipes was a crude seat to "support" for the victim. The patibulum was then lifted on to the stipes, and the victim's body was awkwardly turned on the seat so that the feet could be nailed to the stipes. At this point, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. The position of the nailed body held the victim's rib cage in a fixed position, which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. Having suffered from the scourging, the beatings and the walk with the patibulum, Jesus was described as extremely weak and dehydrated. He was probably losing significant amounts of blood. As time passed, the loss of blood and lack of oxygen would cause severe cramps, spasmodic contractions and probably unconsciousness.

Ultimately, the mechanism of death in crucifixion was suffocation. To breathe, the victim was forced to push up on his feet to allow for inflation of the lungs. As the body weakened and pain in the feet and legs became unbearable, the victim was forced to trade breathing for pain and exhaustion. Eventually, the victim would succumb in this way, becoming utterly exhausted or lapsing into unconsciousness so that he could no longer lift his body off the stipes and inflate his lungs. Due to the shallow breathing, the victim's lungs would begin to collapse in areas, probably causing hypoxia. Due to the loss of blood from the scourging, the victim probably formed a respiratory acidosis, resulting in

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an increased strain on the heart, which beats faster to compensate. Fluid would also build up in the lungs. Under the stress of hypoxia and acidosis, the heart would eventually fail. There are several different theories on the actual cause of death for Jesus. One theory is that there was a filling of the pericardium with fluid, which put a fatal strain on the ability of His heart to pump blood. Another theory states that Jesus died of cardiac rupture. Another theory is that Jesus' death was "multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia and perhaps acute heart failure." Regardless of the actual medical cause of final death, the historical record is very clear -- Jesus suffered numerous hours of horrible and sustained torture on the cross of Calvary.

Crucifixion: Jesus Suffered for You and Me

The crucifixion accounts of Jesus Christ are in entire agreement with the customs and practices of the Romans in that period. The evidence for Christ's horrible and painful death is unquestioned by today's legitimate scholars. The only dispute is the nature and character of the "criminal" Jesus Christ. Look at the record yourself -- Even with all the pain, Jesus thought of others rather than Himself. His first words from the cross were, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He thought of His mother, who stood by the cross weeping, and asked his beloved disciple John to take care of her. On either side of Jesus were two thieves executed at the same time. When one of them accepted Jesus as Lord, Jesus shared with him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Finally, Jesus expressed his complete surrender to the will of God as He said, "It is finished; Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Investigate the historical record, and then examine your heart. Jesus gave Himself willingly for you and me. Jesus suffered a horrible death for you and me. Jesus loved us so much that He willingly died in utter shame and pain for our sins. In fact, the Bible teaches us that He who was without sin was literally "made sin" for us. God, in human form, allowed himself to be made sin to save us. On the cross, he bore all the world's sin because of His love. The only way to complete His story of love is to love Him in return.

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The Jewish Roman World of Jesus

DR. JAMES D. TABOR

Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Crucifixion in Antiquity

by JOE ZIAS

Undoubtedly, one of the cruelest and most humiliating forms of punishment in the ancient world was, according to ancient sources, crucifixion. The Jewish historian Josephus best described it following the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 66-70 as "the most wretched of deaths."¹ Whereas in Seneca's Epistle 101 to Lucilius, he argues that suicide is preferable to the cruel fate of being put on the cross.

¹ Josephus, Jewish War 7.203.

This form of state terror was widespread across the Roman Empire which included Europe, North Africa and Western Asia. It originated several centuries before the Common Era and continued into the fourth century AD when the practice was discontinued by Constantine, the emperor of Rome. While its origins are obscured in antiquity, it is clear that this form of capital punishment lasted for around 800 years and tens if not hundreds of thousands of individuals were subject to this cruel and humiliating death. Mass executions in which hundreds and

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thousands died – such as the well known crucifixion of 6,000 followers of Spartacus as part of a victory celebration along the Appian Way in 71 BCE – appear in the literature.²

² *Belle Civilia* 1.120.

While many people believe that crucifixion was reserved for criminals only as a result of Plutarch's passage that "each criminal condemned to death bears his cross on his back,"³ the literature clearly shows that this class of individuals were not the only ones subjected to this ultimate fate. Alexander the Great had 2,000 survivors from the siege of Tyre crucified on the shores of the Mediterranean.⁴ In addition, during the times of Caligula – AD 37-41 – Jews were tortured and crucified in the amphitheater to entertain the inhabitants of Alexandria. Women are seldom if ever mentioned specifically in the ancient sources aside from two passages in the Mishna, one in *Tractate Mourning* 2.11 which suggests that women may have been sacrificed as well. The second reference is found in *Sanhedrin* 6.5 in which Simeon B. Shetah had 70 or 80 sorceresses hung in the city of Ashkelon. However, as crucifixion was widely employed with slaves, one can assume that, in the ancient world its use was thus not limited by gender but mainly by class.

³ Plutarch (AD 46-120) *Mor.* 554A/B.

⁴ Curtius Rufus, *Hist. Alex.* 4.4.17.

Crucifixion amongst the Jews was rare and except for a few instances, the subject was stoned to death first and then hung on a tree in accordance with the Biblical passage in Deuteronomy 21:22-23:

"When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree;

you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse."

There was one notable exception to this passage in which the victims were first killed via crucifixion rather than being hung on a tree after death. This was the case with the high priest, Alexander Jannaeus in which 800 Pharisees were crucified in Jerusalem in 267 BC before their wives and children. While on the cross, according to Josephus⁵ the women and children were then slaughtered. Despite this plethora of literary evidence for crucifixion over the centuries in the ancient world, the direct anthropological evidence amounts to but one case from Jerusalem discovered in 1968.

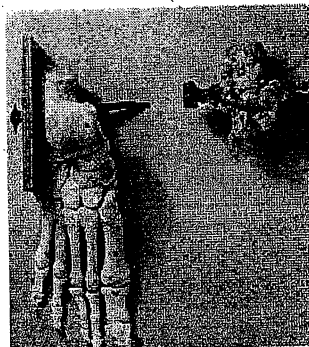
⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.256.

THE CRUCIFIED MAN FROM GIV'AT HA-MIVTAR

In 1968 building contractors working in a suburb north of Jerusalem accidentally uncovered a Jewish tomb dated to the first century after the

⁶ V. Tzaferis, "Jewish Tombs at and Near Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *Israel Exploration Journal* 20:31, 1971.

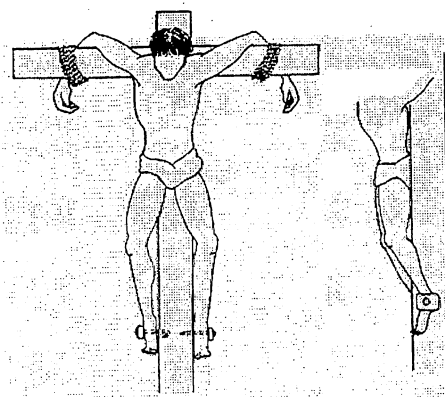
death of Christ.⁶ Lying in a Jewish ossuary bearing the Hebrew inscription 'Jehohanan the son of HGQWL' were the skeletal remains of a man in his twenties, who had been crucified. The evidence for this was based on the right calcaneum (heel bone) of the individual, pierced by



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an iron nail 11.5 cms. in length. The nail penetrated the lateral surface of the bone emerging on the middle of the surface in which the tip of the nail had become bent. The bending of the tip of the nail upon itself suggests that after the nail penetrated the tree or the upright it may have struck a knot in the wood thereby making it difficult to remove from the heel when the victim was taken from the cross.



Remains of olive wood found between the head of the nail and the heel bone suggest that

prior to penetrating the heel bone the nail was driven through a wooden plaque so as to increase the head of the nail thus making it difficult for the victim

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to free his legs from the upright. Due to the taphanomic process which occurred over a period of 2,000 years the skeleton was in a poor state of preservation. Being friable and fragmentary, with many postmortem breaks, the right heel bone was not amenable for proper anthropological investigation.

⁷ J. Zias and E. Sekeles, 1985, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal", *Israel Exploration Journal* 35:22-27.

Despite the assertion by Haas in his 1970 article that both legs were affixed by one nail, a subsequent reexamination by Zias and Seketes in 1985,⁷ found that many of the conclusions upon which his attempted reconstruction were made, were flawed. For instance, the nail which he reported to be 17-18 centimeters in length was actually only 11.5cm thus making it anatomically impossible to affix two feet with one nail. Furthermore, there was no evidence of traumatic injury to the forearms, therefore it would appear that the individual was bound and nailed to the cross as shown in the figure above.

This near total absence of any direct anthropological evidence for crucifixion in antiquity bears the question of why, aside from the case described above, is the record silent. There are two possibilities which may account for this silence, one is that

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⁸ E. Brandeburger 1969, "Kreuz," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* II, 1, 1969, 826f and J. Jeremias 1966, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, London and New York, p. 223 - quoted in *Crucifixion* Martin Hengel, pg 31, Fortress Press, Philadelphia.

⁹ Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.11 & 451.

¹⁰ Shabbath 6.6

most victims may have been tied to the cross. In Christian art, the Good and the Bad thieves are depicted as being tied to the cross despite the fact that the Gospels do not go into detail as to how they were affixed to the cross. Scholars have in fact argued that crucifixion was a bloodless form of death because the victims were *tied* to the cross.⁸ Maxtin Mengel, however who wrote what is perhaps the definitive scholarly report of the subject of Crucifixion in antiquity, takes along with Hewitt (1932) an opposing view. He argues that nailing the victim by both hands and feet was the rule and tying the victim to the cross was the exception. During the first revolt of the Jews against the Romans in AD 66-73, Josephus mentions that in the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70), "the soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by *nailing* their prisoners in different postures."⁹ In spite of these differences of opinion, I would take a differing view and suggest that the number of individuals being crucified may in fact determine the manner in which the execution took form. If, as in the case with the account of 6,000 prisoners of war being crucified along the Appian Way as part of a victory celebration it would seem plausible that the most quick and efficient manner was employed. That would be to simply tie the victim to the tree or cross with his hands suspended directly over his head. Death thus would occur within minutes or perhaps an hour if the victims feet were not nailed or tied down. While this would explain the lack of any direct evidence on the human skeleton when tied to the cross, it would not explain the lack of evidence when the victim was nailed. This latter issue is best explained by the fact that nails of a victim crucified were among some of the most powerful medical amulets in antiquity and thus removed from the victim following their death. This is attested to by the Mishriaic passage¹⁰ which states that both

Jews and Amorites (colloquium for non-Jews) may carry a flail or whip from a crucifixion as a means of healing. For the Jews, this was even, according to some Rabbis, permitted on Shabbath when Jews were normally forbidden to carry object. As this Mishnaic passage mentions both Jews and non-Jews carrying these objects, one can infer the power of these amulets.

PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO CRUCIFIXION

The complicated and much debated issue regarding how the individual expired on the cross has generated widespread debate over the years. While many researchers have believed that death occurred as the result of a ruptured heart¹¹ due to the story in John 19:34 of the water and blood flowing out of the wound, pathologists such as Zugibe,¹² have ruled this out as medically untenable. Other scholars¹³ have regarded asphyxiation as being the cause of death, however the latest research findings have shown the issue to be more complicated, depending upon the manner in which the victim was affixed to the cross. A series of experiments carried out by an American medical examiner and pathologist on college students who volunteered to be tied to crosses, showed that if the students were suspended from crosses with their arms outstretched in the traditional manner depicted in Christian art, they experienced no problems breathing.¹⁴ Thus the often quoted theory that death on the cross is the result of asphyxiation is no longer tenable if the arms are outstretched. According to the physiological response of the students, which was closely monitored by Zugibe, death in this manner is the

¹¹ Stroud 1874; J.R. Whitaker 1935 *The Physical Cause of the Death of Our Lord*, Address to the St. Luke's Guild, London England; U. Wedessow 1978 *Considerazioni ipotetiche sulla causa fisica della morte dell' illomo della sindone*.

¹² Zugibe, 1984

¹³ LeBec 1925; Hynek 1936, Barbet 1937, Modder 1949

¹⁴ F.T. Zugibe, 1984 "Death by Crucifixion, *Canadian Society of Forensic Science* 17(1):1-13.6.

¹⁵A condition characterized

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by low blood pressure and reduced blood flow to the cells and tissues which leads to irreversible cell and organ injury and eventually death.

¹⁶ Josephus, *Life of 75*.420-421

result of the victim going into hypovolemic shock.¹⁵ Death is this manner can be in, a manner of hours, or days depending on the manner in which the victim is affixed to the cross. If the victim is crucified with a small seat, a *sedile*, affixed to the upright for minimum support in the region of the buttocks, death can be prolonged for hours and days. In fact, Josephus reports that three friends of his were being crucified in Thecoa by the Romans who, upon intervention by Josephus to Titus were removed from the crosses and with medical care one survived.¹⁶

If, however, the victims are tied with their hands extended over their heads and left hanging, death can occur within an hour or, in minutes if the victims legs are nailed so that he cannot use his arms to elevate the body to exhale. For exhaling to occur in a normal manner two sets of muscles are needed, the diaphragm and the intercostalis muscles between the ribs. With the victims being suspended by their arms directly over their heads, these sets of muscles cannot function properly which results in the victims inability to exhale and results in asphyxiation. Eyewitness accounts by prisoners of war in Dacchu during WWII reported that victims suspended from beams by their wrist, which were tied, expired within ten minutes if their feet were weighted or tied down and within one hour if their feet were unweighted and the victim was able to raise and lower himself to permit respiration. Death in this manner, which is one form of crucifixion, was the result of suffocation.¹⁷

¹⁷ P. Barbet 1953 *Les Cinq Plaies du Christ* 2nd ed. Paris: Procure du Carmel de l' Action de Graces.

As a deterrent in the ancient world, many of its victims were crucified where the criminal event took place as was the case with thieves or along the cities busiest thoroughfares. The

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situation can perhaps best be summed up by Quintilian who wrote that, "whenever we crucify the guilty, the most, crowded roads are chosen, where most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect."¹⁸

¹⁸ Quintilian (AD 35-95)
Decl 274

As one of the main objectives of this cruel method of execution was its deterrent value, Roman authorities also devised various means whereby the victim could remain on the cross for days in public before eventually expiring. Thus the manner in which the victims were crucified was not fixed by law but appears dependent on the number of individuals involved, the sadistic ingenuity of those carrying out the execution and the time needed for this spectacle to have its maximum deterrent effect.

Giving the victim a proper burial following death on the cross, during the Roman period was rare and in most cases simply not permitted in order to continue the humiliation. Thus the victim was in many cases simply thrown on the garbage dump of the city or left on the cross as food for wild beasts and birds of prey.

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Joe Zias was the Curator of Archaeology/Anthropology for the Israel Antiquities Authority from 1972 to 1997. He is now retired. He is available for public lectures throughout the world.

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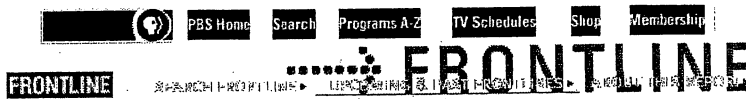
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FROM JESUS TO CHRIST

JESUS' MANY FACES

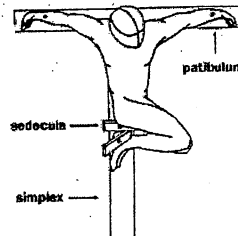
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Jesus and Jehohanan. An Archaeological Note on Crucifixion

Archaeological discoveries offer new information about the Roman practice of crucifixion.

by Reverend Dr. J. H. Charlesworth from Expository Times, February 1973

At the beginning of the summer of 1968 a team of archaeologists under the direction of V. Tzaferis discovered four cave-tombs at Giv'at ha-Mivtar (Ras el-Masaref), which is just north of Jerusalem near Mount Scopus and immediately west of the road to Nablus. The date of the tombs, revealed by the pottery in situ, ranged from the late second century B.C. until A.D. 70. These family tombs-with branching chambers, which had been hewn out of soft limestone, belong to the Jewish cemetery of Jesus' time that extends from Mount Scopus in the east to the Sanhedriya tombs in the north west.



An artist's sketch of Jehohanan's Crucifixion

Within the caves were found fifteen limestone ossuaries which contained the bones of thirty-five individuals. These skeletons reveal under the examination of specialists a startling tale of the turbulence and agony that confronted the Jews during the century in which Jesus lived. Nine of the thirty-five individuals had met violent death. Three

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children, ranging in ages from eight months to eight years, died from starvation. A child of almost four expired after much suffering from an arrow wound that penetrated the left of his skull (the occipital bone). A young man of about seventeen years burned to death cruelly bound upon a rack, as inferred by the grey and white alternate lines on his left fibula. A slightly older female also died from conflagration. An old woman of nearly sixty probably collapsed from the crushing blow of a weapon like a mace; her atlas, axis vertebrae and occipital bone were shattered. A woman in her early thirties died in childbirth, she still retained a fetus in her pelvis. Finally, and most importantly for this note, a man between twenty-four and twenty-eight years of age was crucified.

The name of the man was incised on his ossuary in letters 2 cm high: Jehohanan. He was crucified probably between A.D. 7, the time of the census revolt, and 66, the beginning of the war against Rome....

According to Dr. N. Haas of the Department of Anatomy, Hebrew University--Hadassah Medical School, Jehohanan experienced three traumatic episodes. The cleft palate on the right side and the associated asymmetries of his face likely resulted from the deterioration of his mother's diet during the first few weeks of pregnancy. The disproportion of his cerebral cranium (pladiocephaly) were caused by difficulties during birth. All the marks of violence on the skeleton resulted directly or indirectly from crucifixion.

A description of Jehohanan's death would be helpful toward imaging Jesus' suffering since both were crucified by the Romans in the same century and not far from the walls of Jerusalem. The lower third of his right radial bone contains a groove that was probably caused by the friction between a nail and the bone. Hence, his arms were nailed to the patibulum through the forearms and not through the wrists, the bones of which 'were found undamaged.' It is logical to infer, therefore, that, contrary to the customary portrayal in paintings and biographies, Jesus had his arms pierced and not his hands. We should probably translate the only two passages in the Gospels that mention of the crucified Jesus (Lk 24, Jn 20) not as 'hands', but with Hesiod, Rufus Medicus, and others as 'arms'. Hence, according to Jn 20, Jesus said to Thomas,

'place your finger here and observe my arms...'



Heel bone of crucified man

The legs had been pressed together, bent, and twisted to that the calves were parallel to the patibulum. The feet were secured to the cross by one iron nail driven simultaneously through both heels (tuber calcanei). The iron nail contains after its round head the following: sediment, fragments of wood (Pistacia or Acacia), a limy crust, a portion of the right heel bone, a smaller piece of the left heel bone, and a fragment of olive wood. It is apparent that Jehohanan had been nailed to the olive wood cross with the right foot above the left. Dr. Haas is undoubtedly correct, furthermore, in concluding that the iron nail bent approximately 2 cm because it hit a knot necessitating the amputation of the feet to remove the corpse from the cross.

While Jehohanan was on the cross, presumably after an interval of some time, his legs were fractured. Once forcible blow from a massive weapon delivered the coup de grace, shattering the right shins into slivers, and fracturing the left ones, that were contiguous with the cross (simplex), in a simple, oblique line.

The above discoveries throw some light on the manner in which Jesus died, but the question with which we began has not been adequately answered. How could Jesus have died so soon?

Christian art has continuously portrayed Jesus as attached to the cross with his extremities fully extended. Jehohanan's torso was forced into a twisted position with his calves and thighs bent and unnaturally twisted. Since the bent nail did not secure the legs to the cross, a plank (sedecula) was probably fastened to the simplex, providing sufficient support for the buttocks and prolonging torture. If Jesus had been crucified in a similar fashion, and we cannot be certain of this although it is probable, his contorted muscles probably would have generated spasmodic contractions (tetanizations) and rigid cramps would eventually permeate the diaphragm and lungs so as to prohibit

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/crucifixion.html>

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inhalation and exhalation. Jesus could have died after six hours.

The two crucified with Jesus, however, did not die so quickly--could this have been because they had not been previously tortured, or because they had been crucified in another manner? Perhaps it is logical to assume that because Jesus had been the centre of attention for at least the preceding week he might have received more of the executioners' attention prior to the final acts of crucifixion. Especially would this be the situation if the other two were crucified because they had been judged to be robbers or criminals (cf. Km 15, Mt 27, and Lk 23) but Jesus condemned for insurrection against Rome. These speculations are not wild but they do extend beyond all the available data: we can only wonder why Jehohanan was crucified, why his legs were broken, and if there were a particularly torturous crucifixion for one charged with insurrection. As we search for these answers we must remember Jesus' particular circumstance: the torture could not last more than seven hours because the approaching Sabbath must not be violated, especially near conservative Jerusalem.

In conclusion, we now have empirical evidence of a crucifixion. Death on a cross could be prolonged or swift. The crucifixion of Josephus' acquaintance who survived should not be projected to the crucifixion of Jesus. The major extrabiblical paradigm for crucifixion is no longer Josephus; it is the archaeological data summarized above. The crucifixion of Jesus, who did not possess a gladiator's physique and stamina, did not commence but culminated when he was nailed to the cross. After the brutal, all night scourging by Roman soldiers, who would have relished an opportunity to vent their hatred of the Jews and disgust for Palestinian life, Jesus was practically dead. I see not reason why the Synoptic account does not contain one of the few bruta facta from his life when it reports that, as he began to stagger from Herod's palace to Golgotha, he was too weak to carry the cross; Simon of Cyrene carried it for him. Metaphors should not be confused with actualities nor faith with history. It is not a confession of faith to affirm that Jesus died on Golgotha that Friday afternoon; it is a probability obtained by the highest canons of scientific historical research. The humanists' and rationalists' facile answer to the question why Jesus

died so quickly is no longer acceptable in critical circles; note, for example, the concluding remark in the most recent 'biography' of Jesus by a Jewish scholar: 'Others thought that he called out in despair, "My God, my God (Eli, Eli), why hast thou forsaken me?" And Jesus died.'

Read scholars' commentary on [Jesus' crucifixion](#).

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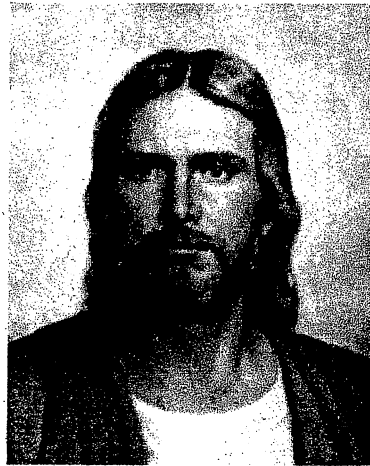
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Pilate ordered Jesus brutally beaten, probably believing that such punishment would satisfy the ugly mob, but it demanded more and Jesus was delivered up to be crucified.



A Physician Testifies About the Crucifixion

by Dr. C. Truman Davis

About a decade ago, reading Jim Bishop's *The Day Christ Died*, I realized that I had for years taken the Crucifixion more or less for granted -- that I had grown callous to its horror by a too easy familiarity with the grim details and a too distant friendship with our Lord. It finally occurred to me that, though a physician, I didn't even know the actual immediate cause of death. The Gospel writers don't help us much on this point, because crucifixion and scourging were so common during their lifetime that they apparently considered a detailed description unnecessary. So we have only the concise words of the Evangelists: "Pilate, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to them to be crucified -- and they crucified Him."

I have no competence to discuss the infinite psychic and spiritual suffering of the Incarnate God atoning for the sins of fallen man. But it seemed to me that as a physician I might pursue the physiological and anatomical aspects of our Lord's passionate some detail. What did the body of Jesus of Nazareth actually endure during those hours of torture?

This led me first to a study of the practice of crucifixion itself; that is, torture and execution by fixation to a cross. I am indebted to many who have studied this subject in the past, and especially to a contemporary colleague, Dr. Pierre Barbet, a French surgeon who has done exhaustive historical and experimental research and has written extensively on the subject.

Apparently, the first known practice of crucifixion was by the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world -- to Egypt and to Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice from the Carthaginians and (as with almost everything the Romans did) rapidly developed a very high degree of efficiency and skill at it. A number of Roman authors (Livy, Cicer, Tacitus) comment on crucifixion, and several innovations, modifications, and variations are described in the ancient literature.

For instance, the upright portion of the cross (or stipes) could have the cross-arm (or patibulum) attached two or three feet below its top in what we commonly think of as the Latin cross. The most common form used in our Lord's day, however, was the Tau cross, shaped like our T. In this cross the patibulum was placed in a notch at the top of the stipes. There is archeological evidence that it was on this type of cross that Jesus was crucified.

Without any historical or biblical proof, Medieval and Renaissance painters have given us our picture of Christ carrying the entire cross. But the upright post, or stipes, was generally fixed permanently in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the patibulum, weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution.

Many of the painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixion, also show the nails through the palms. Historical Roman accounts and experimental work have established that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists (*radial and ulna*) and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when made to support the weight of the human body. The misconception may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas, "Observe my hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrist as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually placed on a staff, carried at the front of the procession from the prison, and later nailed to the cross so that it extended above the head. This sign with its staff nailed to the top of the cross would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

But, of course, the physical passion of the Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, the one of greatest physiological interest is the bloody sweat. It is interesting that St. Luke, the physician, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in Agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground."

Every ruse (trick) imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this description, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just doesn't happen. A great deal of effort could have been saved had the doubters consulted the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress of the kind our Lord suffered, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process might well have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was next brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiphus, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiphus. The palace guards then blind-folded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat upon Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, Jesus is taken across the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate. It was in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Bar-Abbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion.

There is much disagreement among authorities about the unusual scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate

originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who allegedly claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging were carried out when the Prisoner was stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful the Romans would have made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter, but the Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes.

The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs. At first the thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.

The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. Flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used in bundles for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding, the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body.

After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. Already having adhered to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, its removal causes excruciating pain just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, and almost as though He were again being whipped the wounds once more begin to bleed.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance.

The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock, until the 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed.

Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement.

The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes and the titulus reading "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" is nailed in place.

The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The Victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain -- the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The second, to the penitent thief, "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief-stricken adolescent John -- the beloved Apostle -- he said, "Behold thy mother." Then, looking to His mother Mary, "Woman behold thy son."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"

Hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins...A terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

One remembers again the 22nd Psalm, the 14th verse: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry, "I thirst."

One remembers another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death."

A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionaries, is lifted to His lips. He apparently doesn't take any of the liquid. The body of Jesus is now in extremes, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words,

possibly little more than a tortured whisper, "It is finished."

His mission of atonement has completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, he once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, "Father! Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crurifracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; thus the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. The 34th verse of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John reports: "And immediately there came out blood and water." That is, there was an escape of water fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, giving postmortem evidence that Our Lord died not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure (a broken heart) due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

Thus we have had our glimpse -- including the medical evidence -- of that epitome of evil which man has exhibited toward Man and toward God. It has been a terrible sight, and more than enough to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have the great sequel in the infinite mercy of God toward man -- at once the miracle of the atonement (at one ment) and the expectation of the triumphant Easter morning.

Dr. C. Truman Davis is a nationally respected Ophthalmologist, vice president of the American Association of Ophthalmology, and an active figure in the Christian schools movement. He is founder and president of the excellent Trinity Christian School in Mesa Arizona, and a trustee of Grove City College.

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A Physician Analyzes the Crucifixion

A medical explanation of what Jesus endured
on the day He died by Dr. C. Truman Davis

Dr. C. Truman Davis is a graduate of the University of Tennessee College of Medicine. He is a practicing ophthalmologist, a pastor, and author of a book about medicine and the Bible.

Several years ago I became interested in the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ when I read an account of the crucifixion in Jim Bishop's book, *The Day Christ Died*. I suddenly realized that I had taken the crucifixion more or less for granted all these years -- that I had grown callous to its horror by a too-easy familiarity with the grim details. It finally occurred to me that, as a physician, I did not even know the actual immediate cause of Christ's death. The gospel writers do not help much on this point. Since crucifixion and scourging were so common during their lifetimes, they undoubtedly considered a detailed description superfluous. For that reason we have only the concise words of the evangelists: "Pilate, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to them to be crucified ... and they crucified Him."

Despite the gospel accounts' silence on the details of Christ's crucifixion, many have looked into this subject in the past. In my personal study of the event from a medical viewpoint, I am indebted especially to Dr. Pierre Barbet, a French surgeon who did exhaustive historical and experimental research and wrote extensively on the topic.

An attempt to examine the infinite psychic and spiritual suffering of the Incarnate God in atonement for the sins of fallen man is beyond the scope of this article. However, the physiological and anatomical aspects of our Lord's passion we can examine in some detail. What did the body of Jesus of Nazareth actually endure during those hours of torture?

Gethsemane

The physical passion of Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of His initial suffering, the one which is of particular physiological interest is the bloody sweat. Interestingly enough, the physician, St. Luke, is the only evangelist to mention this occurrence. He says, "And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood,

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A Physician Analyzes The Crucifixion

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trickling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44 KJV).

Every attempt imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away the phenomenon of bloody sweat, apparently under the mistaken impression that it simply does not occur. A great deal of effort could be saved by consulting the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

Although Jesus' betrayal and arrest are important portions of the passion story, the next event in the account which is significant from a medical perspective is His trial before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest. Here the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him, mockingly taunted Him to identify them as each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

Before Pilate

In the early morning, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and worn out from a sleepless night, Jesus was taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. We are familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to shift responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate. It was then, in response to the outcry of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion.

Preparations for Jesus' scourging were carried out at Caesar's orders. The prisoner was stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. The Roman legionnaire stepped forward with the flagrum, or flagellum, in his hand. This was a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip was brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs. At first the weighted thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continued, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.

The small balls of lead first produced large deep bruises that were broken open by subsequent blows. Finally, the skin of the back was hanging in long ribbons, and the entire area was an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it was determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner was near death, the beating was finally stopped.

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Mockery

The half-fainting Jesus was then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with his own blood. The Roman soldiers saw a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They threw a robe across His shoulders and placed a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still needed a crown to make their travesty complete. Small flexible branches covered with long thorns, commonly used for kindling fires in the charcoal braziers in the courtyard, were plaited into the shape of a crude crown. The crown was pressed into his scalp and again there was copious bleeding as the thorns pierced the very vascular tissue. After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers took the stick from His hand and struck Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tired of their sadistic sport and tore the robe from His back. The robe had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, caused excruciating pain. The wounds again began to bleed.

Golgotha

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans apparently returned His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross was tied across His shoulders. The procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion began its slow journey along the route which we know today as the Via Dolorosa.

In spite of Jesus' efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious loss of blood, was too much. He stumbled and fell. The rough wood of the beam gouged into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tried to rise, but human muscles had been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to proceed with the crucifixion, selected a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus followed, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock. The 650-yard journey from the Fortress Antonia to Golgotha was finally completed. The prisoner was again stripped of His clothing except for a loin cloth which was allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion began. Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic, pain-relieving mixture. He refused the drink. Simon was ordered to place the patibulum on the ground, and Jesus was quickly thrown backward, with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire felt for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drove a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moved to the other side and repeated the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum was then lifted into place at the top of the stipes, and the titulus reading "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" was nailed into place.

The left foot was pressed backward against the right foot. With both feet extended, toes down, a nail was driven through the

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arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim was now crucified.

On the Cross

As Jesus slowly sagged down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shot along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain. The nails in the wrists were putting pressure on the median nerve, large nerve trunks which traverse the mid-wrist and hand. As He pushed himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He placed His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there was searing agony as the nail tore through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of this feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurred. As the arms fatigued, great waves of cramps swept over the muscles, knotting them in deep relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps came the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by the arm, the pectoral muscles, the large muscles of the chest, were paralyzed and the intercostal muscles, the small muscles between the ribs, were unable to act. Air could be drawn into the lungs, but could not be exhaled. Jesus fought to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, the carbon dioxide level increased in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subsided.

The Last Words

Spasmodically, He was able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences that are recorded.

The first - looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do."

The second - to the penitent thief: "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

The third - looking down at Mary His mother, He said: "Woman, behold your son." Then turning to the terrified, grief-stricken adolescent John, the beloved apostle, He said: "Behold your mother."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of Psalm 22: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

He suffered hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, and searing

pain as tissue was torn from His lacerated back from His movement up and down against the rough timbers of the cross. Then another agony began: a deep crushing pain in the chest as the pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart, slowly filled with serum and began to compress the heart.

The prophecy in Psalm 22:14 was being fulfilled: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

The end was rapidly approaching. The loss of tissue fluids had reached a critical level; the compressed heart was struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood to the tissues, and the tortured lungs were making a frantic effort to inhale small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues sent their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasped His fifth cry: "I thirst." Again we read in the prophetic psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death" (Psalm 22:15 KJV).

A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour wine that was the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, was lifted to Jesus' lips. His body was now in extremis, and He could feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brought forth His sixth word, possibly little more than a tortured whisper: "It is finished." His mission of atonement had been completed. Finally, He could allow His body to die. With one last surge of strength, He once again pressed His torn feet against the nail, straightened His legs, took a deeper breath, and uttered His seventh and last cry: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Death

The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crurifraction, the breaking of the bones of the leg. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers approached Jesus, they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. John 19:34 states, "And immediately there came out blood and water." Thus there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and the blood of the interior of the heart. This is rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Jesus died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

<http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/crucifix.htm>

8/15/2002

Resurrection

In these events, we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil that man can exhibit toward his fellowman and toward God. This is an ugly sight and is likely to leave us despondent and depressed.

But the crucifixion was not the end of the story. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: a glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man -- the gift of atonement, the miracle of the resurrection, and the expectation of Easter morning.

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The judicial custom by which the condemned person carried his stake to the place of execution, was applied by the Lord to those sufferings by which His faithful followers were to express their fellowship with Him, e. g., Matt 10:38.

B. Verbs.

1. stauroo NT:4717 signifies (a) "the act of crucifixion," e. g., Matt 20:19; (b) metaphorically, "the putting off of the flesh with its passions and lusts," a condition fulfilled in the case of those who are "of Christ Jesus," Gal 5:24, RV; so of the relationship between the believer and the world, 6:14.
2. sustauroo NT:4957, "to crucify with" (sufor, "sun, "with"), is used (a) of actual "crucifixion" in company with another, Matt 27:44; Mark 15:32; John 19:32; (b) metaphorically, of spiritual identification with Christ in His death, Rom 6:6, and Gal 2:20.
3. anastauroo NT:388 (ana, again) is used in Heb 6:6 of Hebrew apostates, who as merely nominal Christians, in turning back to Judaism, were thereby virtually guilty of "crucifying" Christ again.
4. propegnumi NT:4362, "to fix or fasten to anything" (pros, "to," pegnumi, "to fix"), is used of the "crucifixion" of Christ, Acts 2:23.

ZODHIATES

1. 4716. Stauros; cross; from *histami* (2476) or *staō*, to stand. A stake for execution, an instrument of torture for punishment: most dreadful and agonizing. It was not abolished until the time of Constantine who put an end to it out of regard to Christianity. Crucifixion was at one and the same time an execution, a pillory; and an instrument of torture. In biblical Gr. occurs only in the N.T. and means: (1) A Roman cross consisting of a straight and erected piece of wood fixed in the earth with a transverse beam fastened across its top and another piece of wood projecting from the upright piece nearer the bottom on which the crucified person's feet were nailed as the cross on which the Lord Jesus suffered (Mt.:27:32, 40,42, etc.). (2) It refers to the whole passion of Christ and the merit of His sufferings and death (Gal.:6:14; Eph.:2:16) and also to the doctrine concerning these (1 Cor.:1:17; Gal.:6:12). (3) It denotes that portion of affliction which is endured by pious and good men as a trial of their faith and to conform them to the example of their crucified Master (Mt.:10:38; 16:24; Mk.:8:34; 10:21; Lk.:9:23; 14:27). The expressions of taking up or carrying the cross allude to the Roman custom of making the criminal carry the cross on which he was to suffer (Jn.:19:17): When we read of the antagonism to the cross of Christ we must understand it as antagonism to a redemption which was accomplished by the deepest humiliation, not by the display of power and glory (Phil.:2:5-8; Gal.:6:14). The Pauline way of speaking of Christ's death differs from the Johannine and Petrine writings and the Epistle to the Hebrews. These predicate the blood or the sacrifice of Christ (as Paul himself does elsewhere) what is here proclaimed of the cross. In the cross it is not the idea of sacrifice as such which is emphasized, but the blood of Christ (Col.:1:20) and what Christ experienced from the world as the full measure of His rejection which, however, has become the means of redemption. The cross shows this peculiarity of His death which also was a sacrifice. It makes the manner of His death prominent. Therefore, the blood refers to the sacrifice but the cross refers also to the shame. Deriv.: *stauroō* (4717), to crucify.
5. 4717. Stauroō; from *stauros* (4716), cross. To crucify. It is spoken of the punishment of crucifixion. N.T. meanings: to crucify or fix or nail to a cross (Mt.:20:19; 23:34; 26:2, etc.); to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts is to mortify them through the faith and love of Christ crucified (Gal.:5:24; 6:14). When Paul says, "The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world," he means that so great was his regard for his crucified Saviour that the world had no longer any more charms for him than the corpse of a crucified malefactor would have, nor did he take any more delight in worldly things than a person expiring on the cross would do in the objects around him. Deriv.: *stauros* (4716), cross; *anastauroō* (388), to crucify again; *sustauroō* (4957), to crucify with.

4716 stauros - 1) an upright stake, especially a pointed one 2) a cross: a) a well-known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians; to it were affixed among the Romans, down to the time of Constantine the Great, the guiltiest criminals, particularly the basest slaves, robbers, the authors and abettors of insurrections, and occasionally in the provinces, at the arbitrary pleasure of the governors, upright and peaceable men also, and even Roman citizens themselves.

b) the crucifixion which Christ underwent ★

4717

stauroo-1) to stake, to drive down stakes
2) to fortify with driven stakes, to palisade
3) to crucify: a) to crucify one b) metaphorically, to crucify the flesh, destroy its power utterly (the nature of the figure implying that the destruction is attended with intense pain)

VINE'S

CROSS, CRUCIFY

A. Noun.

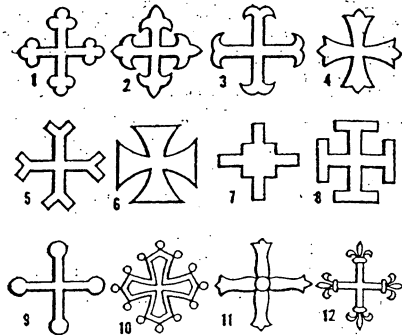
stauros 4716 denotes, primarily, "an upright pale or stake." On such malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb stauroo, "to fasten to a stake or pale," are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed "cross." The shape of the latter had its origin 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 in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the 3rd cent. A. D. 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.

As for the Chi, or X, which Constantine declared he had seen in a vision leading him to champion the Christian faith, that letter was the initial of the word "Christ" and had nothing to do with "the Cross" (for xulon, "a timber beam, a tree," as used for the stauros, see under TREE).

The method of execution was borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians. The stauros denotes (a) "the cross, or stake itself," e. g., Matt 27:32; (b) "the crucifixion suffered," e. g., 1 Cor 1:17-18, where "the word of the cross," RV, stands for the gospel; Gal 5:11, where crucifixion is metaphorically used of the renunciation of the world, that characterizes the true Christian life; 6:12,14; 2:16; 3:18.

Matt 27:35

And they crucified 4716 him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.



crosses 5a: 1 botonée, 2 fleury, 3 moline, 4 patonce, 5 fourchée, 6 formée, 7 quadrate, 8 potent, 9 pommée, 10 clechée, 11 avellan, 12 fleuretée

CRUCIFIXION

STRONG'S

4716 stauros (stow-ros'); from the base of 2476; a stake or post (as set upright), i.e. (specifically) a pole or cross (as an instrument of capital punishment); figuratively, exposure to death, i.e. self-denial; by implication, the atonement of Christ: -cross.

4717 stauroo (stow-ro'-o); from 4716; to impale on the cross; figuratively, to extinguish (subdue) passion or selfishness: -crucify.

im-paij \əm-pai, esp before pause or consonant -ə-si\ *im-paij* \əm-pai-w (MF & ML; MF *empaler*, fr. ML *impalare*, fr. L *in-palare* = *palus* stake, pole — more at *ROLE*) 1 *archaic* a : to enclose with poles, stakes, or a palisade b : to hem in : ENCLOSE, SURROUND, CONFINE, ENCIRCLE 2 a : to pierce or pierce through with a pole or with something pointed : esp : to torture or kill by fixing on a sharp stake b : to fix in a position by piercing or piercing through with something pointed or to cause to be so fixed (the head . . . *impaled* upon the bowsprit of his sloop — Nike Anderson) (having some man rush at you so that he *impaled* his chest upon the ice pick — Erle Stanley Gardner) (a butterfly *impaled* by a pin — Louis Bromfield) c : to fix in a position as if by piercing or piercing through in such a manner : fix in a position of defeat or helplessness of one from which there is no escape or retreat (*impaled* itself on a dilemma — S.W. Chapman) (a question on which . . . he had always been insecurely *impaled* — Marcia Davenport) (*impaled* his victim neatly with his logic — V.L. Parrington) d : to deflate by telling logic or biting wit 3 : to join or conjoin in heraldry by impalement

CRUCIFY, *v. t.* [L. *crucifigo*; *crux*, cross, and *figo*, to fix; Fr. *crucifier*; It. *crocifiggere*; Sp. *crucificar*.]

1. To nail to a cross; to put to death by nailing the hands and feet to a cross or gibbet, sometimes anciently, by fastening a criminal to a tree, with cords. *Encyc.*
But they cried, crucify him, crucify him. *Luke xiii.*

2. In scriptural language, to subdue; to mortify; to destroy the power or ruling influence of.

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. *Gal. v.*

3. To reject and despise.
They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh. *Heb., vi.*

To be crucified with Christ, is to become dead to the law and to sin, and to have indwelling corruption subdued. *Gal. ii.* and *vi.*

4. To vex or torment. [Not used.]

cross, widespread symbol. In various forms, it can be found in such diverse cultures as those of ancient India, Egypt, and the American Indians. It is found in the megalithic monuments of Western Europe. The most important use is among Christians, to whom it recalls the crucifixion of Jesus and man's redemption. The Christian form of blessing by tracing a cross over oneself or another person or thing originated before A.D. 200. The oldest Christian remains contain drawings of crosses and cruciform artifacts, and the fact that the cross was the Christian emblem before the toleration of Christianity is shown by the vision of CONSTANTINE I. His mother, St. HELENA, is supposed to have found the True Cross at Calvary in 327, and the event is commemorated on May 3 as the Finding of the Cross. Splinters of the relic are widely distributed and honored by Roman Catholics and Orthodox. In 614, to the scandal of Christendom, Khosru II of Persia took the largest piece of the relic from Jerusalem. It was restored by Heraclius I in 627; the anniversary is Sept. 14, the Exaltation of the Cross. The relic was lost in the Moslem occupation of Jerusalem. Use of the cross was one of the popular practices attacked by Byzantine iconoclasm and vindicated (787) by the Second Council of Nicaea. The crucifix—the cross with the figure of Jesus upon it—had already been established in use; at first, the figure was painted or in bas-relief, a style surviving in the Christian East. Older Western crucifixes often presented the Savior reigning, in robe and crown; the realistic dying figure, dating from the Renaissance, is now universal in Roman Catholicism. Devotion to the cross as a symbol of the Passion is an outstanding development (from the 11th cent.) in the history of Christian thought; it has ever since been an essential part of the public and private religious life of Roman Catholics. Protestants have been generally sparing in using the cross, even in blessings, and have abandoned the crucifix, but the symbolism has been retained in their literature (e.g., in the hymn, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*). The cross was the badge of the Crusades taken at Clermont in 1095. Thence it became the emblem of the Templars, of the Knights Hospitalers (Knights of Malta), and of the Teutonic Knights. From knighthood it passed into heraldry, into the flag, and into decorations. There are many shapes of crosses. The Latin cross, the commonest, has upright longer than transom. With two transoms it is called an archiepiscopal or patriarchal cross; with three it is a papal cross. A cross widely used by Slavs and by others of Eastern rites has two transoms and a slanting crosspiece below. The Greek cross has equal arms. St. Andrew's cross is like an X, and the tau cross is like a T. The Celtic, or Iona, cross bears a circle, the center of which is the crossing. The Maltese cross and the swastika are still more elaborate. An example of artistic effort spent on crosses is seen in the monumental crosses of market, town, and wayside in Europe (e.g., at Cheddar, Malmesbury, and Winchester, England) and in the wayside calvaries of Austria and Brit-

Mark 15:21

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Mark 15:30

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

Mark 15:32

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

Luke 23:26

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

John 19:17

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

John 19:19

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

John 19:25

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 19:31

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Col 2:14

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;

Heb 12:2

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.

Phil 2:8

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

Col 1:20

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.

Gal 5:11

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Eph 2:16

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

1 Cor 1:17

17 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.

Phil 3:18

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Gal 6:14

14 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.

Matt 26:2

2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Matt 27:22-23

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

Mark 15:15

15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Mark 15:25

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Luke 23:33

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Acts 2:23

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Gal 2:20

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Rom 6:6

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.

Gal 5:24

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.