

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

How has the CHURCH been perverted?



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By Paco (Joe) Myers

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1962 and raised in a quaint city near Pittsburgh (PA), Paco (Joe) Myers enjoyed a happy childhood in small town America. In 2004, with his wife and two teen daughters, he relocated to Jacksonville, Florida, in pursuit of year-round sunshine and mild winters. With his children grown, he and his wife now enjoy adventures with 4 grandchildren.

Over the past 25 years God has been prompting Paco as to the distorted Biblical view of what the mainstream calls the "CHURCH" today.

This book is FREE as Paco is committed not to profit from the wisdom of God and His plan and purpose for our lives. We should all freely share the wisdom God has given us.

What you do with what you will read is between you and God.

Paco has received push back for sharing what you will read but he is committed to serving God and not man.

Please pray and ask God to speak to you as you read this short book but most importantly the **Bible** which is the **Word of God**.

Finally, DO NOT listen to Paco, ONLY let the **Holy Spirit** speak to you and guide you!

TRIUNE GOD

Who is God?

God is:

- **Omnipotent**

Means God's all-powerful nature has no limitations. It means that God is in complete control of His Creation. Omnipotent is to recognize that there is nothing outside of His ability to accomplish and no one can exercise power over Him. God created the entire universe and anything we have knowledge of or do not have knowledge of, and He holds the power over it all.

- **Omniscient**

Means God has total knowledge of everything, including the past and future. God is Sovereign over His creation of all things, whether visible or invisible. His omniscience is not restricted by any one person in the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all by nature omniscient.

- **Omnipresent**

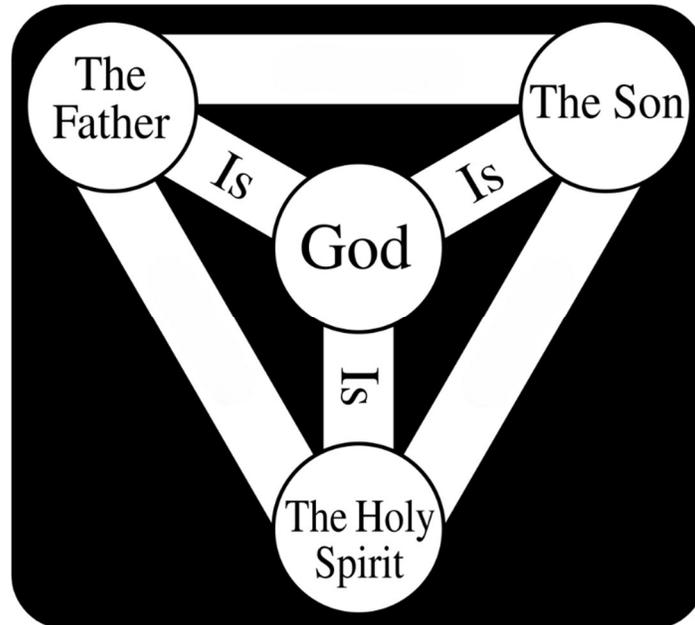
Means God is everywhere at the same time and inhabits the entirety of ALL that He has Created.

Together, these three attributes define God's Lordship, and help to provide a deeper understanding of Creation, Providence, and Salvation.

We must always remember, God never changes as He tells us in **Hebrews 13:8**:

"Jesus Christ yesterday, and today, the same also *is* forever."

We have to understand the **Father**, the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit** are **ONE** as the **TRIUNE GOD**.



While there are many verses from **God's Holy Word** that bear the TRUTH of the **TRIUNE GOD** the following are just a few:

John 14:8-10

⁸ Philip said unto him, Lord, show us thy Father, and it sufficeth us.

*⁹ Jesus said unto him, I have been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me, hath seen my Father**: how then sayest thou, Show us thy Father?*

*¹⁰ Believest thou not, that **I am in the Father**, and the **Father is in me**? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: **but the Father that dwelleth in me**, he doeth the works.*

2 Corinthians 3:17–18

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the **Spirit of the Lord** is, there is liberty.

¹⁸ But we all behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, **as by the Spirit of the Lord**.

1 Corinthians 8:6

Yet unto us there is **but one God, which is that Father**, of whom are all things, and we in him, and **one Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom are all things, and we by him.

What does Matthew 27:51 mean?

And behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the stones were cloven (split).

There were many Heavenly events that take place at the moment of Jesus' death.

Matthew 27:50:

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up the ghost.

Matthew tells us the curtain of the temple is ripped in half "**from the top to the bottom**" which refers to the inner curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place **Exodus 26:33:**

Afterward thou shalt hang the veil on the hooks, that thou mayest bring in thither, that is, within the veil, the Ark of the Testimony: and the veil shall make you a separation between the Holy place and the most holy place.

This separated where only the high priest could enter once every year. That high priest was to make a sacrifice for sin on behalf of the people. At that time if anyone entered God's presence they would die.

The curtain was huge and was made of extremely thick material that could not be easily cut or that anyone could tear. For the curtain to split in half would have been an amazing event but to tear it from top to bottom could have only been done by God.

The religious leaders who saw this all happen knew how Jesus' death on the cross made it possible for anyone to come to God through faith in Him as detailed in **Hebrews 9:11—10:22**.

Anyone can now enter the presence of God through Jesus as their Savior. We no longer need the system of sacrifice God gave to Israel because Jesus was and is the perfect SACRIFICE for evermore. Jesus has become the Mediator between God and man **1 Timothy 2:5**:

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, which is the man Christ Jesus

We have lost sight of **1 Samuel 8:4-22** when God told the Israelites that He was their King, and then He warned the Israelites of the oppression they would encounter if they wanted their own king. Who is your **King** or **king**?

4 Wherefore all the Elders of Israel gathered them together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: make us now a King to judge us like all nations.

6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a King to judge us: and Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

7 And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hear the voice of the people in all that they shall say unto thee: for they have not cast thee away, but they have cast me away, that I should not reign over them.

8 As they have ever done since I brought them out of Egypt even unto this day, (and have forsaken me, and served other gods) even so do they unto thee.

9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit, yet testify unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

10 So Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked a king of him.

11 And he said, This shall be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them to his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariot.

12 Also he will make them his captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make instruments of war, and the things that serve for his chariots.

13 He will also take your daughters and make them Apothecaries, and Cooks, and Bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your best Olive trees, and give them to his servants.

15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give it to his Eunuchs, and to his servants.

16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and the chief of your young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

17 He will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants.

18 And ye shall cry out at that day, because of your king, whom ye have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you at that day.

19 But the people would not hear the voice of Samuel, but did say, Nay, but there shall be a king over us.

20 And we also will be like all other nations, and our king shall judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles.

21 Therefore when Samuel heard all the words of the people, he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord.

22 And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go every man unto his city.

God warns us of destruction when we do not heed **Hosea 4:6:**

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast refused knowledge, I will also refuse thee that thou shalt be no Priest to me: and seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

While this chapter is just scraping the surface, we can see the **AWESOMENESS** of **God the Father**, **God the Son** and **God the Holy Spirit** to lead us into the next chapters.

THE CHURCH?

This chapter will review the **Biblical Church** (*that the Bible teaches*) vs. **un-Biblical Church** that I call the **Religious Organization Profit Centers (ROPC)** that is an agenda to make a profit and pay salaries, benefits, etc. to those controlling or are part of an **ROPC** with **God's money**.

What is God's money? God is very clear in **Haggai 2:9** that He owns ALL the gold and silver, which also means everything that money can purchase or be utilized for:

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."

As we study the question **"The Church?"** I would encourage you to keep in mind the following:

John 8:31-32

"Then said Jesus to the Jews which believed in him, If ye continue in my word, ye are verily my disciples,

And shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

This quote is by Thomas Hardy.

"There is a condition worse than blindness, and that is, seeing something that isn't there."

Has the word **eisegesis** been used to pervert the **Church**?

"Eisegesis is a method of interpreting the Bible by reading one's own ideas, biases, or agendas into the text, rather than interpreting its actual meaning. The word literally means "to lead into". Eisegesis can be intentional or unintentional, and it can be used to "prove" a pre-existing point or to support a particular agenda. For example, a preacher might use a passage from the Gospels about Jesus to make a point that's completely out of context."

Because God has been laying on my heart the issue of the **Church**, He introduced me to **Beresford Job** who wrote a book, **Biblical Church: A Challenge to Unscriptural Traditions and Practice**, in which **Beresford** explains the TRUTH about the **Biblical Church**.

Please visit **HouseChurch.co.uk** for so much FREE material about the **Biblical Church** shared by **Beresford**.

Verses that the Church met in homes:

Acts 28:30-31

And **Paul remained two years full** in an **house** hired for himself, and received all that came in unto him,

Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness of speech, without let.

Romans 16:5

*Likewise **greet the Church that is in their house**. Salute my beloved Epaphroditus, which is the firstfruits of Achaia in Christ.*

1 Corinthians 16:19

*The Churches of Asia salute you: Aquila and Priscilla **with the Church that is in their house**, salute you greatly in the Lord.*

Colossians 4:15

*Salute the brethren which are of Laodicea, and Nymphas, **and the Church which is in his house**.*

Philemon 1:2

*And to our dear sister Apphia, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, **and to the Church that is in thine house**:*

The issue with the modern **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** is the amount of **God's money** that is used for building costs, paying staff salaries (benefits, etc.), paying for the utilities and upkeep, etc. ***that is not Biblical.***

To learn more about what the **Biblical Church** is please go to ***BiblicalChurch.us*** and watch the **3-part video series**, the **Biblical Church Life**, by ***Beresford.***

We will look more into this topic in the next chapter.

HOW HAS THE CHURCH BEEN PERVERTED?

To answer the question “**How has the Church been perverted?**” we need to pick up where we left off in the previous chapter regarding the church meeting in *homes* versus *buildings*.

We have to look at whether the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** are being good stewards of **God’s money**.

I know of one local **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** that has the following financials for **2022**:

- Total annual revenue **\$48,424,820**
- Total expenses **\$39,691,826**
- Total assets **\$100,153,913**
- Total liabilities **\$55,866,725**
- Net assets **\$44,287,188**

Nowhere does the financial paperwork that I have shares what each salary is for all the staff, *so you have to wonder why?*

Why does an un-Biblical Church (ROPC) not post the salaries, benefits, bonus, etc. of all STAFF?

WHY HIDE any funds going into the un-Biblical Church (ROPC)?

There was an article published in **Baptist News Global** on August 31, 2022 titled “**At nearly 90, Charles Stanley makes half a million a year and his ministry is awash in cash**”.

The article details that not only did **Charles Stanley** make over a half a million dollars a year even after he retired but his organization “**In Touch Ministries**” had *net assets* of over **\$113 million!**

The article goes on to say that the "ministry" had **TRIPLED** its CASH ASSETS from 2015 to 2019 taking in over **\$97 million** in 2019!

NOW you have to ask why is that kind of money needed?

Then ask why so many denominations?

James 1:27 is very clear what pure religion and undefiled before God is:

Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless, and widows in their adversity, and to keep himself unspotted of the world.

If we collected all God's money that is spent on buildings, salaries, upkeep etc. of the un-Biblical Church (ROPC) how many orphans and widows could we take care of?

I personally tried to do as scripture says to confront a brother in sin and for 2 years attempting to get a meeting with the person who was supposed to be the "shepherd" but never was able to meet with him. Those that were supposed to be elders protected him and would never set up the meeting.

Why incorporate?

When an **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** incorporates they are **NOW a business** and not the **Biblical Church**. The IRS has even declared that a **Church** is not required to have anything to do with filing.

Are those that are part of an **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**, whether the organizer or attendees, are you serving a false god just like the Israelites when becoming a 501c3?

I would encourage you to go to **HushMoney.org** to learn WHY you are serving a false god, but I will share a few points below from that website on the **"501c3 Facts"** page.

Churches Are "Automatically Tax-Exempt"

According to IRS Code Section 508(c)(1)(A):

Special rules with respect to section 501(c)(3) organizations.

(a) New organizations must notify secretary that they are applying for recognition of section 501(c)(3) status.

(c) Exceptions.

(1) Mandatory exceptions. Subsections (a) and (b) shall not apply to—

(A) **churches, their integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or associations of churches.**

This is referred to as the "mandatory exception" rule. Thus, we see from the IRS' own publications, and the tax code, that it is completely unnecessary for any church to apply for tax-exempt status. In the IRS' own words, a church "is automatically tax-exempt."

Churches Are "Automatically Tax-Deductible"

And what about tax-deductibility? Doesn't a church still need to become a 501c3 so that contributions to it can be taken as a tax deduction? The answer is no! According to IRS Publication 526:

Organizations That Qualify To Receive Deductible Contributions

You can deduct your contributions only if you make them to a qualified organization. To become a qualified organization, most organizations **other than churches** and governments, as described below, must apply to the IRS.

In the IRS' own words a church "is automatically tax-deductible."

Churches Have a Mandatory Exception To Filing Tax Returns

Not only is it completely unnecessary for any church to seek 501c3 status, to do so becomes a grant of jurisdiction to the IRS by any church that obtains that State favor. **In the words of Steve Nestor, IRS Sr. Revenue Officer (ret.):**

"I am not the only IRS employee who's wondered why churches go to the government and seek permission to be exempted from a tax they didn't owe to begin with, and to seek a tax deductible status that they've always had anyway. Many of us have marveled at how church leaders want to be regulated and controlled by an agency of government that most Americans have prayed would just get out of their lives. Churches are in an amazingly unique position, but they don't seem to know or appreciate the implications of what it would mean to be free of government control." - from the Forward of In Caesar's Grip, by Peter Kershaw

More proof the un-Biblical Church (ROPC) does not obey God!

The most glaring point to me is the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**, *and all involved*, when the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** bowed to **Baul** and everyone stood by and let **public servants** deceive you into not worshiping God by closing the doors during the hoax of Covid which again proves the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** is not the **Church** of the **Bible**!

Are you participating in an un-Biblical Church (ROPC):

- **that does not allow the Holy Spirit to speak through people in the Biblical Church since God has given us all gifts so in affect, we have QUENCHED the SPIRIT**
- **for YOUR comfort and anonymity, in a big setting where there is no accountability, and at least 90% of the same people show up at the main meeting every week in a building that was UN-BIBLICALLY built using God's money?**

How can any of this be of God?

God will not be mocked!

Galatians 6 (*read the whole chapter*)

⁷ Be not deceived: ***God is not mocked***: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

CONCLUSION

Jesus said in **John 14:15**

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Are we listening to God or man?

We are fractured as a nation because we have wondered from God and He warned us of destruction when we do not heed **Hosea 4:6:**

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast refused knowledge, I will also refuse thee that thou shalt be no Priest to me: and seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

How we could heal our land is by having the **Body of Christ** the **Biblical Church** meet in small groups in homes where we would hold each other accountable daily and if we grow the **Biblical Church** it would spread across the nation and we would not be deceived like we are today.

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?

³⁷ Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

³⁸ This is the first and the great commandment.

³⁹ And the second is like unto this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hangeth the whole Law and the Prophets.

Mark 16:15 and 16

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Are you going to be obedient to God and love those organizing or attending the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** by sharing the Truth of God's Word to them?

Jesus never was paid a salary, had benefits or had a retirement planned for Him. Now I know there are those who will say – well He knew He was going to be crucified as the **Savior of the World** so he had no need for monetary gain.

The REALITY was **Jesus** was about **His Fathers** business and knew the **Father** would supply all his needs.

Do those organizing the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** really love their neighbor as themselves when the staff makes more in salary, benefits and retirement plans than most that attend the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**?

Are fruits of those organizing the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** that of **false prophets** or those of spreading the TRUE **Gospel of Christ** of doing the Father's will?

Will those organizing the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** enter the kingdom of heaven or not?

Matthew 7:15-21

¹⁵ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns? or figs of thistles?

¹⁷ So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

²⁰ Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

²¹ Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth my Father's will which is in heaven.

If you attend a **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** does the OPEN financials detail the salary, benefits, retirement plan etc.?

If not, why do you attend an **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**?

It is very easy to find out what the average income is in any geographic region and compare it to the income of the staff of an **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**, if the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)** will be transparent and if not then WHY ATTEND THE **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**?

Financial records should be provided to everyone that attends an **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**! Jesus was NEVER secretive in these matters so why are those organizing the **un-Biblical Church (ROPC)**?

To truly understand **Biblical Truth** I would again recommend visiting **HouseChurch.co.uk** for a massive amount of FREE material and videos about the **Biblical Church** shared by ***Beresford***.

Also, again to learn more about what the **Biblical Church** is please go **BiblicalChurch.us** and watch the **3-part video series**, the **Biblical Church Life**, presented by ***Beresford***.

Whoever will ...

*"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst, come: and let **whosoever will**, take of the water of life freely."
- **Revelation 22:17***

The Bible is very clear that we are all sinners in need of Jesus as our Savior Romans 3:23-25.

*"**23** For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and are deprived of the glory of God,*

***24** And are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

***25** Whom God hath set forth to be a reconciliation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness, by the forgiveness of the sins that are passed"*

Romans 6:23 tells us our penalty for our sins is death but God provided His gift of eternal life thru His Son Jesus Christ.

"For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 5:8 is clear Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins. The final chapter provides the article from JAMA 1986 On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ and the price Jesus Christ paid for our sins. The article can also be downloaded on the BiblicalChurch.us website.

"But God setteth out his love towards us, seeing that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 10:9-13 explains we must confess with our mouth to be saved from our sin. With our heart we believe unto the righteousness of Jesus and with our mouth we confess our sins for salvation. We are not to be ashamed of Jesus. We only need to call upon the Name of the Lord to be saved.

"9 For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God raised him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved:

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth man confesseth to salvation.

11 For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth in him, shall not be ashamed.

12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Grecian: for he that is Lord over all, is rich unto all that call on him.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord, shall be saved."

1 John 5:1 and 13 says we can have total confidence that Jesus has saved us from our sin and we have eternal life when we believe in the Son of God.

"1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is that Christ, is born of God: and everyone that loveth him, which begat, loveth him also which is begotten of him."

"13 These things have I written unto you, that believe in the name of that Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the Name of that Son of God."

On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ - JAMA 1986

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/19648788>

On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ

Article in JAMA · April 1986

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Source: PubMed

Special Communication

On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ

William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, AMI

· **Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion his wrists were nailed to the patibulum, and after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post, (stipes) his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus' death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.**

(JAMA 1986; 255:1455-1463)

THE LIFE and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth have formed the basis for a major world religion, (Christianity) have appreciably influenced the course of human history, and, by virtue of a compassionate attitude toward the sick, also have contributed to the development of modern medicine. The eminence of Jesus as a historical figure and the suffering, and controversy associated with his death has stimulated us to investigate, in an interdisciplinary manner, the circumstances surrounding his crucifixion. Accordingly it is our intent to present not a theological treatise but rather a medically, and historically accurate account of the physical death of the one called Jesus Christ.

SOURCES

The source material concerning Christ's death comprises a body of literature and not a physical body or its skeletal remains. Accordingly, the credibility of any discussion of Jesus' death will be determined primarily by the credibility of one's sources. For this review, the source material includes the writings of ancient Christian and non-Christian authors, the writings of modern authors, and the Shroud of Turin.¹⁻⁴⁰ Using the legal-historical method of scientific investigation,²⁷ scholars have established the reliability and accuracy of the ancient manuscripts.^{26,27,29,31}

The most extensive and detailed descriptions of the life and death of Jesus are to be found in the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.¹ The other 23 books of the New Testament support but do not expand on the details recorded in the gospels. Contemporary Christian, Jewish, and Roman authors provide additional insight concerning the first-century Jewish and Roman legal systems and the details of scourging and crucifixion.⁵ Seneca, Livy, Plutarch, and others refer to crucifixion practices in their works.^{8,28} Specifically, Jesus (or his crucifixion) is mentioned by the Roman historians Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius, by non-Roman historians Thallus and Phlegon, by the satirist Lucian of Samosata, by the Jewish Talmud, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, although the authenticity of portions of the latter is problematic.²⁶

The Shroud of Turin is considered by many to represent the actual burial cloth of Jesus,²² and several publications concerning the medical aspects of his death draw conclusions from this assumption.^{5,11} The Shroud of Turin and recent archaeological findings provide valuable information concerning Roman crucifixion practices.²²⁻²⁴ The interpretations of modern writers, based on a knowledge of science and medicine not available in the first century, may offer additional insight concerning the possible mechanisms of Jesus' death.²⁻¹⁷

When taken in concert certain facts—the extensive and early testimony of both Christian proponents and opponents, and their universal acceptance of Jesus as a true historical figure; the ethic of the gospel writers, and the shortness of the time interval between the events and the extant manuscripts; and the confirmation of the gospel accounts by historians and archaeological findings²⁶⁻²⁷—ensure a reliable testimony from which a modern medical interpretation of Jesus’ death may be made.

GETHSEMANE

After Jesus and his disciples had observed the Passover meal in an upper room in a home in southwest Jerusalem, they traveled to the Mount of Olives, northeast of the city. (Owing to various adjustments in the calendar, the years of Jesus’ birth and death remain controversial.²⁹ However, it is likely that Jesus was born in either 4 or 6 BC and died in 30 AD.^{11,29} During the Passover observance in 30 AD, the Last Supper would have been observed on Thursday, April 6 [Nisan 13], and Jesus would have been crucified on Friday, April 7 [Nisan 14].²⁹) At nearby Gethsemane, Jesus, apparently knowing that the time of his death was near, suffered great mental anguish, and, as described by the physician Luke, his sweat became like blood.¹

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Although this is a very rare phenomenon, bloody sweat (hematidrosis or hemohidrosis) may occur in highly emotional states or in persons with bleeding disorders.¹⁸⁻²⁰ As a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands, the skin becomes fragile and tender.^{2,11} Luke’s description supports the diagnosis of hematidrosis rather than eccrine chromidrosis (brown or yellow-green sweat) or stigmatization (blood oozing from the palms or elsewhere).¹⁸⁻²¹ Although some authors have suggested that hematidrosis produced hypovolemia, we agree with Bucklin⁵ that Jesus’ actual blood loss probably was minimal. However, in the cold night air,¹ it may have produced chills.

TRIALS

Jewish Trials

Soon after midnight, Jesus was arrested at Gethsemane by the temple officials and was taken first to Annas and then to Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest for that year.¹ Between 1 AM and daybreak, Jesus was tried before Caiaphas and the political Sanhedrin and was found guilty of blasphemy.¹ The guards then blindfolded Jesus, spat on him, and struck him in the face with their fists.¹ Soon after daybreak, presumably at the temple, Jesus was tried before the religious Sanhedrin (with the Pharisees and the Sadducees) and again was found guilty of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death.^{1,5}

Roman Trials

Since permission for an execution had to come from the governing Romans,¹ Jesus was taken early in the morning by the temple officials to the Praetorium of the Fortress of Antonia, the residence and governmental seat of Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea. However, Jesus was presented to Pilate not as a blasphemer but rather as a self-appointed king who would undermine the Roman authority.¹ Pilate made no charges against Jesus and sent him to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Judea.¹ Herod likewise made no official charges and then returned Jesus to Pilate.¹ Again, Pilate could find no basis for a legal charge against Jesus, but the people persistently demanded crucifixion. Pilate finally granted their demand and handed over Jesus to be flogged (scourged) and crucified. (McDowell²⁵ has reviewed the prevailing political, religious, and economic climates in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death, and Bucklin⁵ has described the various illegalities of the Jewish and Roman trials.)

Health of Jesus

The rigors of Jesus' ministry (that is, traveling by foot throughout Palestine) would have precluded any major physical illness or a weak general constitution. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that Jesus was in good physical condition before his walk to Gethsemane. However, during the 12 hours between 9 PM Thursday and 9 AM Friday, he had suffered great emotional stress (as evidenced by hematidrosis), abandonment by his closest friends (the disciples), and a physical beating (after the first Jewish trial). Also, in the setting of a traumatic and sleepless night, he had been forced to walk more than 2.5 miles (4.0 km) to and from the sites of the various trials.

These physical and emotional factors may have rendered Jesus particularly vulnerable to the adverse hemodynamic effects of the scourging.

SCOURGING

Scourging Practices

Flogging was a legal preliminary to every Roman execution,²⁸ and only women and Roman senators or soldiers (except in cases of desertion) were exempt.¹¹ The usual instrument was a short whip (flagellum or flagellum) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals.^{5,7,11} Occasionally, staves also were used.^{8,12} For scourging, the man was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post.¹¹ The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers (lictors) or by one who alternated positions.^{5,7,11,28} The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the lictors and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death.⁸ After the scourging, the soldiers often taunted their victim.¹¹

Medical Aspects of Scourging

As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues.⁷ Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh.^{2,7,25} Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock.¹² The extent of blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross.⁸

Scourging of Jesus

At the Praetorium, Jesus was severely whipped. (Although the severity of the scourging is not discussed in the four gospel accounts, it is implied in one of the epistles [1 Peter 2:24]. A detailed word study of the ancient Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh.³³) It is not known whether the number of lashes was limited to 39, in accordance with Jewish law.⁵

The Roman soldiers, amused that this weakened man had claimed to be a king, began to mock him by placing a robe on his shoulders, a crown of thorns on his head, and a wooden staff as a scepter in his right hand.¹ Next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with the wooden staff.¹ Moreover, when the soldiers tore the robe from Jesus' back, they probably reopened the scourging wounds.⁷

The severe scourging, with its intense pain and appreciable blood loss, most probably left Jesus in a preshock state. Moreover, hematidrosis had rendered his skin particularly tender. The physical and mental abuse meted out by the Jews and the Romans, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, also contributed to his generally weakened state. Therefore, even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical.

CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion Practices

Crucifixion probably first began among the Persians.³⁴ Alexander the Great introduced the practice to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans appear to have learned of it from the Carthaginians.¹¹ Although the Romans did not invent crucifixions they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.^{10,17} It was one of the most disgraceful and cruel methods of execution and usually was reserved only for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and the vilest of criminals.^{3,25,28} Roman law usually protected Roman citizens from crucifixion.⁵ except perhaps in the case of desertion by soldiers.

In its earliest form in Persia, the victim was either tied to a tree or was tied to or impaled on an upright post, usually to keep the guilty victim's feet from touching holy ground.^{8,11,30,34,38} Only later was a true cross used; it was characterized by an upright post (stipes) and a horizontal crossbar (patibulum), and it had several variations.¹¹ Although archaeological and historical evidence strongly indicates that the low Tau cross was preferred by the Romans in Palestine at the time of Christ,^{2,7,11} crucifixion practices often varied in a given geographic region and in accordance with the imagination of the executioners, and the Latin cross and other forms also may have been used.²⁸

It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross from the flogging post to the site of crucifixion outside the city walls.^{8,11,30} He was usually naked, unless this was prohibited by local customs.¹¹ Since the weight of the entire cross was probably well over 300 lb (136 kg), only the crossbar was carried.¹¹ The patibulum, weighing 75 to 125 lb. (34 to 57 kg),^{11,30} was placed across the nape of the victim's neck and balanced along both shoulders. Usually, the outstretched arms then were tied to the crossbar.^{7,11} The procession to the site of crucifixion was led by a complete Roman military guard, headed by a centurion.^{3,11} One of the soldiers carried a sign (titulus) on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed.^{3,11} Later, the titulus would be attached to the top of the cross.¹¹ The Roman guard would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death.^{9,11}

Outside the city walls was permanently located the heavy upright wooden stipes, on which the patibulum would be secured. In the case of the Tau cross, this was accomplished by means of a mortise and tenon joint, with or without reinforcement by ropes.^{10,11,30} To prolong the crucifixion process, a horizontal wooden block or plank, serving as a crude seat (sedile or sedulum), often was attached midway down the stipes.^{3,11,16} Only very rarely, and probably later than the time of Christ, was an additional block (suppedaneum) employed for transfixion of the feet.^{9,11}

At the site of execution, by law, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) as a mild analgesic.^{7,17} The criminal was then thrown to the ground on his back, with his arms outstretched along the patibulum.¹¹ The hands could be nailed or tied to the crossbar, but nailing apparently was preferred by the Romans.^{8,11} The archaeological remains of a crucified body, found in an ossuary near Jerusalem and dating from the time of Christ, indicate that the nails were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 in (13 to 18 cm) long with a square shaft 3/8 in (1 cm) across.^{23,24,30} Furthermore, ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin have documented that the nails commonly were driven through the wrists rather than the palms.^{22-24,30}

After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the patibulum and the victim, together, were lifted onto the stipes.¹¹ On the low cross, four soldiers could accomplish this relatively easily. However, on the tall cross, the soldiers used either wooden forks or ladders.¹¹

Next, the feet were fixed to the cross, either by nails or ropes. Ossuary findings and the Shroud of Turin suggest that nailing was the preferred Roman practice.^{23,24,30}

Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the stipes or to a wooden footrest (suppedaneum), they usually were nailed directly to the front of the stipes.¹¹ To accomplish this, flexion of the knees may have been quite prominent, and the bent legs may have been rotated laterally.^{23-25,30}

When the nailing was completed, the titulus was attached to the cross, by nails or cords, just above the victim's head.¹¹ The soldiers and the civilian crowd often taunted and jeered the condemned man, and the soldiers customarily divided up his clothes among themselves.^{11,25} The length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging.^{8,11} However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees (crurifragium or skelokopia).^{8,11}

Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites.¹⁶ Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.^{8,11,12,28} However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge.¹¹

Since no one was intended to survive crucifixion, the body was not released to the family until the soldiers were sure that the victim was dead. By custom, one of the Roman guards would pierce the body with a sword or lance.^{8,11} Traditionally, this had been considered a spear wound to the heart through the right side of the chest—a fatal wound probably taught to most Roman soldiers.¹¹ The Shroud of Turin documents this form of injury.^{5,11,22} Moreover, the standard infantry spear, which was 5 to 6 ft (1.5 to 1.8 m) long,³⁰ could easily have reached the chest of a man crucified on the customary low cross.¹¹

Medical Aspects of Crucifixion

With knowledge of both anatomy and ancient crucifixion practices, one may reconstruct the probable medical aspects of this form of slow execution. Each wound apparently was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous.

The scourging prior to crucifixion served to weaken the condemned man and, if blood loss was considerable, to produce orthostatic hypotension and even hypovolemic shock.^{8,12}

When the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, in preparation for transfixion of the hands, his scourging wounds most likely would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt.^{2,16} Furthermore, with each respiration, the painful scourging wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the stipes.⁷ As a result, blood loss from the back probably would continue throughout the crucifixion ordeal.

With arms outstretched but not taut, the wrists were nailed to the patibulum.^{7,11} It has been shown that the ligaments and bones of the wrist can support the weight of a body hanging from them, but the palms cannot.¹¹ Accordingly, the iron spikes probably were driven between the radius and the carpals or between the two rows of carpal bones,^{2,10,11,30} either proximal to or through the strong bandlike flexor retinaculum and the various intercarpal ligaments. Although a nail in either location in the wrist might pass between the bony elements and thereby produce no fractures, the likelihood of painful periosteal injury would seem great. Furthermore, the driven nail would crush or sever the rather large sensorimotor median nerve.^{2,7,11} The stimulated nerve would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms.^{7,9} Although the severed median nerve would result in paralysis of a portion of the hand, ischemic contractures and impalement of various ligaments by the iron spike might produce a clawlike grasp.

Most commonly, the feet were fixed to the front of the stipes by means of an iron spike driven through the first or second intermetatarsal space, just distal to the tarsometatarsal joint.^{2,5,8,11,30} It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve and branches of the medial and lateral plantar nerves would have been injured by the nails. Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure, since no major arteries, other than perhaps the deep plantar arch, pass through the favored anatomic sites of transfixion.^{2,10,11}

The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the out-stretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation.^{2,10,11} Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia would soon result. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further.¹¹

Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders.² However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals and would produce searing pain.⁷

Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves.⁷ Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stipes.^{2,7} Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort.⁷ As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia.^{2,3,7,10}

The actual cause of death by crucifixion was multifactorial and varied somewhat with each case, but the two most prominent causes probably were hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia.^{2,3,7,10} Other possible contributing factors included dehydration,^{7,16} stress-induced arrhythmias.³ and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perpleural effusions.^{2,7,11} Crucifracture (breaking the legs below the knees), if performed, led to an asphyxic death within minutes.¹¹ Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, excruciating (Latin, *excruciatu*s, or "out of the cross").

Crucifixion of Jesus

After the scourging and the mocking, at about 9 AM, the Roman soldiers put Jesus' clothes back on him and then led him and two thieves to be crucified.¹ Jesus apparently was so weakened by the severe flogging that he could not carry the patibulum from the Praetorium to the site of crucifixion one third of a mile (600 to 650 m) away.^{1,3,5,7} Simon of Cyrene was summoned to carry Christ's cross, and the processional then made its way to Golgotha (or Calvary), an established crucifixion site.

Here, Jesus' clothes, except for a linen loincloth, again were removed, thereby probably reopening the scourging wounds. He then was offered a drink of wine mixed with myrrh (gall) but, after tasting it, refused the drink.¹ Finally, Jesus and the two thieves were crucified. Although scriptural references are made to nails in the hands,¹ these are not at odds with the archaeological evidence of wrist wounds, since the ancients customarily considered the wrist to be a part of the hand.^{7,11} The titulus was attached above Jesus' head. It is unclear whether Jesus was crucified on the Tau cross or the Latin cross; archaeological findings favor the former¹¹ and early tradition the latter.³⁸ The fact that Jesus later was offered a drink of wine vinegar from a sponge placed on the stalk of the hyssop plant¹ (approximately 20 in, or 50 cm, long) strongly supports the belief that Jesus was crucified on the short cross.⁶

The soldiers and the civilian crowd taunted Jesus throughout the crucifixion ordeal, and the soldiers cast lots for his clothing.¹ Christ spoke seven times from the cross.¹ Since speech occurs during exhalation, these short, terse utterances must have been particularly difficult and painful. At about 3 PM that Friday, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, bowed his head, and died.¹ The Roman soldiers and onlookers recognized his moment of death.¹

Since the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses after sunset, the beginning of the Sabbath, they asked Pontius Pilate to order crucifraction to hasten the deaths of the three crucified men.¹ The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.¹ Rather, one of the soldiers pierced his side, probably with an infantry spear, and produced a sudden flow of blood and water.¹ Later that day, Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb.¹

DEATH OF JESUS

Two aspects of Jesus' death have been the source of great controversy, namely, the nature of the wound in his side^{4,6} and the cause of his death after only several hours on the cross.¹³⁻¹⁷

The gospel of John describes the piercing of Jesus' side and emphasizes the sudden flow of blood and water.¹ Some authors have interpreted the flow of water to be ascites¹² or urine, from an abdominal midline perforation of the bladder.¹⁵ However, the Greek word (πλευρα, or pleura)^{32,35,36} used by John clearly denoted laterality and often implied the ribs.^{6,32,36} Therefore, it seems probable that the wound was in the thorax and well away from the abdominal midline.

Although the side of the wound was not designated by John, it traditionally has been depicted on the right side.⁴ Supporting this tradition is the fact that a large flow of blood would be more likely with a perforation of the distended and thin-walled right atrium or ventricle than the thick-walled and contracted left ventricle. Although the side of the wound may never be established with certainty, the right seems more probable than the left.

Some of the skepticism in accepting John's description has arisen from the difficulty in explaining, with medical accuracy, the flow of both blood and water. Part of this difficulty has been based on the assumption that the blood appeared first, then the water.

However, in the ancient Greek, the order of words generally denoted prominence and not necessarily a time sequence.³⁷ Therefore, it seems likely that John was emphasizing the prominence of blood rather than its appearance preceding the water.

Therefore, the water probably represented serous pleural and pericardial fluid,^{5-7,11} and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps in the setting of hypovolemia and impending acute heart failure, pleural and pericardial effusions may have developed and would have added to the volume of apparent water.^{5,11} The blood, in contrast, may have originated from the right atrium or the right ventricle or perhaps from a hemopericardium.^{5,7,11}

Jesus' death after only three to six hours on the cross surprised even Pontius Pilate.¹ The fact that Jesus cried out in a loud voice and then bowed his head and died suggests the possibility of a catastrophic terminal event. One popular explanation has been that Jesus died of cardiac rupture. In the setting of the scourging and crucifixions with associated hypovolemia, hypoxemia, and perhaps an altered coagulable state, friable non-infective thrombotic vegetations could have formed on the aortic or mitral valve. These then could have dislodged and embolized into the coronary circulation and thereby produced an acute transmural myocardial infarction. Thrombotic valvular vegetations have been reported to develop under analogous acute traumatic conditions.³⁹ Rupture of the left ventricular free wall may occur, though uncommonly, in the first few hours following infarction.⁴⁰

However, another explanation may be more likely. Jesus' death may have been hastened simply by his state of exhaustion and by the severity of the scourging, with its resultant blood loss and preshock state.⁷ The fact that he could not carry his patibulum supports this interpretation. The actual cause of Jesus' death, like that of other crucified victims, may have been multifactorial and related primarily to hypovolemic shock, exhaustion asphyxia, and perhaps acute heart failure.^{2,3,5-7,10,11} A fatal cardiac arrhythmia may have accounted for the apparent catastrophic terminal event.

Thus, it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not *how* he died but rather *whether* he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.

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This article was printed per the original article so there are a few typos.

