

# A Study of the Crucifixion of Jesus

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## I. HISTORY OF THE USE OF CROSSES

- A. Many Christians have a mythological view of the cross
1. "Jesus was the first person to die on a cross."
  2. "Jesus was the only person to die on a cross."
  3. "Jesus' physical suffering on the cross is unique in human experience."
  4. Much of what Christians think they know about crucifixion came from Roman Catholic tradition developed centuries later (prb)
- B. The cross as a symbol has been used since the earliest days of humankind
1. It was used for both ornamental and religious purposes.
  2. It represented the tools used in kindling fire and was used symbol of fire and for the sun, both of which were worshiped by idolaters.
  3. It was used as the representation of lightning of the god of the tempest, the emblem of the Aryan pantheon, and the primitive Aryan civilization.
  4. The Egyptians used the ansated cross (ankh or crux ansata), often depicted in the hands of the goddess Sekhet, and as a hieroglyphic sign of life or of the living.
  5. Egyptian Coptic Christians later adopted it as their emblem of the cross.
  6. "The cross in the form of the Crux Ansata was carried in the hands of the Egyptian priests and Pontiff kings as the symbol of their authority as priests of the Sun god and was called 'the Sign of Life'." (The Worship of the Dead, Colonel J. Garnier).
  7. Egyptian names for the cross: ndj and ndf, meaning "1) to protect, guard, avenge, and protector, advocate, avenger; 2) homage to thee, (a form of salutation to gods); 3) beauty or perfect"
  8. It has been used since the Bronze Age in various forms on many objects: earthenware fragments, and on the bottom of drinking vessels, as both ornamental and for consecration, especially on burial objects.
  9. In the pre-Roman cemetery of Golasecca, every tomb has a vase with a cross engraved on it. Crosses are found in temples and tombs in Tiryns, at Mycenæ, in Crete, and Vulci, dated 2000 to 500 BC. (De Mortillet)
  10. Vivekananda demonstrated that the cross was used to represent Shivalinga in ancient Indian cultures
  11. W. E. Vine states that the cross was used by worshipers of Tammuz, an Ancient Near East deity of Babylonian origin who had the cross-shaped tau (tau) as his symbol.
  12. The fact that the cross was known by the ancients complements the Old Testament prophets who spoke of the coming crucifixion of the Messiah - Deut. 21:23
- C. Early use as a Christian symbol
1. The cross was not used as a symbol by Christians for about two centuries after the crucifixion. The extensive adoption of the cross as Christian iconographic symbol arose in the 4th century. Its earliest use was to mock Christians in the Alexamenos graffito. (Wikipedia)

D. The Jewish Encyclopedia states: "The cross as a Christian symbol or "seal" came into use at least as early as the second century (Epistle of Barnabas, xi.-xii.; Justin, "Apologia," i. 55-60); and the marking of a cross upon the forehead and the chest was regarded as a talisman against the powers of demons (Tertullian, "De Corona," iii.; Cyprian, "Testimonies," xi. 21-22). Accordingly, the Christian Fathers had to defend themselves, as early as the second century, against the charge of being worshipers of the cross, as may be learned from Tertullian and Minucius Felix. In the third century, Christians began to swear by the power of the cross."

#### E. Developments

1. John Pearson, Bishop of Chester (1660) wrote in his commentary on the Apostles' Creed: "The Greek word *stauros* originally signified a straight standing Stake, Pale, or Palisador, but when other transverse or prominent parts were added in a perfect Cross, it retained still the Original Name. The Form then of the Cross on which our Savior suffered was not a simple, but a compounded figure, according to the custom of the Romans, by whose Procurator he was condemned to die. In which there was not only a straight and erected piece of Wood fixed in the Earth, but also a transverse Beam fastened unto that towards the top thereof."

2. "In contemporary Christianity, the cross is a symbol of the atonement and reminds Christians of God's love in sacrificing his own son for humanity. It represents Jesus' victory over sin and death, since it is through his death and resurrection he conquered death itself." (Col. 2:15; Catholic Encyclopedia)
3. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, members of the major branches of Lutheranism, some Anglicans, and other Christians often make the Sign of the Cross upon themselves. This was already a common Christian practice in the time of Tertullian (Ibid).
4. Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican bishops place a cross before their name when signing a document.
5. Martin Luther wrote: "The cross alone is our theology."
6. Jehovah's Witnesses do not use the symbol of the cross in their worship, which they believe constitutes idolatry.
7. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that Jesus died on a cross; however, their pseudo-prophet Gordon B. Hinckley stated that "for us the cross is the symbol of the dying Christ, while our message is a declaration of the living Christ."

#### F. Descriptions of the cross (Vine, Bullinger, and Ward)

1. The Koine Greek terms used in the New Testament of the structure on which Jesus died are *stauros* (σταυρός) and *xylon* (ξύλον).
  - a. *Stauros* - "an upright stake, hence a cross; the Roman instrument of crucifixion (Strongs)
  - b. *Xylon* - "anything made of wood, a piece of wood, a club, staff; the trunk of a tree, used to support the cross-bar of a cross in crucifixion" (Strongs)
2. Greek *stauros*, in its original sense was literally an upright pale or stake, had no crossbar, making the traditional picture of a cross with a crossbar seem incorrect by definition.

3. However, the Greek word *stauros* and the Latin word *crux* do not uniquely mean a cross. They take multiple forms:
  - a) *Crux simplex* - simple stake (or *crux acuta* - sharp stake for impaling)
  - b) The X- T- and †-varieties of *crux composita* or *crux compacta* "compound stake" (which in turn they subdivided into *crux decussata*, *crux commissa*, *crux immissa*)
  - c) The oldest scholars and historians state that Jesus nailed not to a *crux simplex*, but to a *crux commissa* (T). [Justus Lipsius *De Cruce* (1594), Jacob Gretser *De Cruce Christi* (1598) and Thomas Godwyn *Moses and Aaron* (1662)]
  - d) Latter day Catholic tradition insists that it was a *crux immissa* (†)
  - e) E. W. Bullinger and John William Burgon stated that no cross occurred on any Christian monument of the first four centuries and wrote: "The invention of it in pre-Christian times, and the invention of its use in later times, are truths of which we need to be reminded in the present day."
5. "The cross member, first carried by Jesus, then by Simon of Cyrene, was only the horizontal crossbar, Latin *patibulum*. When Simon carried the *patibulum* to Golgotha, the Christ was affixed to the crossbar which was then hoisted to the upright stake, already in the earth, to make the crucifix shape." [Schröter (1997), Plautus and Plutarch (*Moralia* 554AB), Andreas J. Köstenberger (2004)]

#### G. Crucifixion

1. Gospel accounts simply report, "They crucified him," adding no further detail.
2. The Romans practiced no standard technique of crucifixion: In describing the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army, for example, Josephus reports that "the soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing prisoners in different positions" (J.W. 5.449–51).
3. Victims of crucifixion might be fixed to the stake in order to die, or impaled after death as a public display. They might be fixed to the cross with nails or with ropes.
4. Jesus was nailed to the cross - John 20:25; Acts 2:23; Col. 2:14
5. It was a frequent practice to affix a *titulus* (superscription, Latin *titulus*)
6. The common manner of execution by crucifixion in the first century tended to follow similar patterns. The condemned man could be fastened by ropes or nails to the crossbeam (*patibulum*) lying on the ground at the place of execution, then lifted up on to the upright post (*stauros*). It was usual to have the stake implanted in the ground before the execution. This was the simpler form, and carrying of the crossbeam (*patibulum*) was likely a form of punishment for slaves, the *crux commissa* may be taken as the normal practice. (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume 7 - Page 572 Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey William Bromiley - 1971).
  - a. In Christian art Jesus is generally depicted as carrying a whole cross - *patibulum* and *stipes* or upright. Christian art and reality are not necessarily the same thing.

7. The form of the cross does not determine the use of ropes or the number of nails used in the crucifixion; some theories suggest 3 to 4 nails. However, throughout history larger numbers of nails have been used, at times as high as 14 nails. The placing of the nails in the hands or the wrists is also uncertain. Another theory suggests that the Greek word for hand also includes the forearm and that the nails were placed near the radius and ulna of the forearm to better support the weight of the victim long term. Ropes may have also been used to fasten the hands in addition to the use of nails. A footrest or hypopodium or suppedaneum is a standing platform to support the feet, given that the hands may not have been able to support the weight. Alternatively, the feet would be crossed and nails driven through the ankles to further support the weight of the victim

8. Deut. 21:23; Joshua 8:29, 10:24

9. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who lived at the time of the birth of Jesus, described how those condemned to crucifixion were led to the place of execution: "A Roman citizen of no obscure station, having ordered one of his slaves to be put to death, delivered him to his fellow-slaves to be led away, and in order that his punishment might be witnessed by all, directed them to drag him through the Forum and every other conspicuous part of the city as they whipped him, and that he should go ahead of the procession which the Romans were at that time conducting in honor of the gods. The men ordered to lead the slave to his punishment, having stretched out both his arms and fastened them to a piece of wood which extended across his breast and shoulders as far as his wrists, followed him, tearing his naked body with whips." (Roman Antiquities, VII, 69:1-2)

10. Artemidorus (200 BC) spoke of crucifixion as something that occurred on a cross that had breadth as well as height: "Since he is a criminal, he will be crucified in his height and in the extension of his hands" (Oneirocritica 1:76).

11. Irenaeus (200 AD) speaks of the cross as having "five extremities, two in length, two in breadth, and one in the middle, on which [last] the person rests who is fixed by the nails." Occasionally, a seat (sedile) was fixed in the middle of a cross on which the victim could sit. This was done, not out of kindness or humanity, but to prolong the life and torment of the victim.

12. The length of time required to reach death could range from hours to days depending on method, the victim's health, and the environment. Doctors Maslen and Mitchell outlined support for several possible causes of death: cardiac rupture, heart failure, hypovolemic shock, acidosis, asphyxia, arrhythmia, and pulmonary embolism. Death resulted from a combination of these factors or from other causes, including sepsis following infection due to the wounds caused by the nails or by the scourging that often preceded crucifixion, eventual dehydration, or animal predation.

## II. THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

- A. 1Cor. 1:17-20 - The message of the cross; the preaching of Christ
- B. A Strange Message - There would be life out of death.

1. The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would throw off their Roman yoke. They ignored the texts declaring that the Messiah would suffer for the sins of the people - Isa. 53:1-11
  2. The message of the cross is still a strange message to those who have never experienced its life changing power - 1Cor. 1:21-29; Rom. 12:1-3
- C. A Shocking Message - Death on a cross was one of absolute torture.
1. Scourged - Matt. 27:26
  2. Beaten - Luke 22:63-64
  3. Spit upon - Matt. 27:30
  4. Beard Plucked from His Face -Isa. 50:6
  5. Mocked - Matt. 27:26-29
  6. Stripped Naked - Matt. 27:35
  7. Nailed to the Cross - Matt. 27:38; John 20:25
    - a. The ancient Assyrians were among the first to crucify their victims. However, they did not nail them to cross; they merely impaled them on sharpened stakes and left them to die a horrible death that often took a few days. The Assyrians were known for their violence an inhumanity.
    - b. The Romans improved the method and actually nailed their victims to a cross. This method of death usually took several days to a week to kill the victim.
  8. The crucifixion portrayed in scripture is mercifully concise and limited in detail. It must be understood that the physical pain was less than the mental, emotional, and spiritual anguish Jesus suffered for us.
    - a. Isa. 52:14; Luke 22:41-42
    - b. Hearing the details of Christ's death on the cross is disquieting. But, it is a necessary truth that must be proclaimed and must be heard before one can be saved.
- C. A Simple Message - Not clouded by demands and details, but delivered in simplicity and clarity - 1Cor. 2:1-2; 2Cor. 11:3; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 3:2-4

### III. THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS

- A. About making a statement
  1. God has always declared His love for us - Deut. 7:7-8; Jer. 31:3
  2. However, by the offering of His Son on the cross for our sins, He proved His love in a vivid, visual manner
    - a. John 3:16; 15:13; Rom. 5:6-8; 1John 4:9-10
- B. About providing salvation
  1. When one sins, he sells himself into sin and no longer has the payment price for his own redemption. The price of redemption is innocent blood, and it must be paid by another on behalf of the sinner
    - a. Heb. 9:22; Lev. 17:11
  2. Animal sacrifices do not have the power to remove sin
    - a. Heb. 10:4, 10:10-14; 9:24-28; Rev. 1:5; 1Peter 1:18-19
    - b. Saved - "to save, deliver or protect (literally or figuratively), heal, preserve, do well, be made whole (Strongs).

C. About defeating Satan

1. The Adversary desires nothing more than to keep souls in bondage and to see them condemned to eternal perdition - Eph. 2:1-3.
2. Jesus destroyed Satan's power by means of His own - Rev. 12:10-11
3. Heb. 2:14-18; 1Peter 3:18-22; 1Cor. 15:55-57

D. About destroying sin

1. The dominion of sin is overcome - Rom. 6:6, 14
2. Human beings are recreated in innocence - 2Cor. 5:17

E. About emptying Hell - John 5:24; Rom. 8:1

F. About putting humankind into Heaven - The blood of Jesus is the key that unlocks the gates of glory - John 14:1-6; 3:1-7

## **Why Man Can Earn A Place In Hell But Not A Home In Heaven**

(These notes are included as a reminder of why we cannot save ourselves)

1. In Eden, man had a heaven-like setting

- a. All the needs of the body were taken care of, the environment was perfect and protected, death was unknown, access was given to the tree of life, there was nothing to fear; man's relationship with God was personal, direct - Gen. 2 - 3
- b. Man scorned the idyllic garden and his relationship with God by choosing to do the one thing he was forbidden; he did so willfully; he knew the consequences
- c. God is both love and righteousness; He wanted man restored to the relationship out of love, but He could not do it without a price because He is righteous; to abandon man, He would have to stop loving him, and He would cease to be God; to save him without a price, He would have to abandon His righteousness and would cease to be God
- d. The unavoidable dilemma is that man had nothing to offer to pay the price, so God offered to pay the price for man's sins ... conditionally - Gen. 3:15

2. Man earns perdition because he pays the price for entry.

- a. The price for entrance into heaven or hell is a righteous life
- b. All men begin life without sin; if one remains in that condition, he is destined to go to heaven
- c. When a man chooses to sin, he willfully and knowingly exchanges his sinless life for a place in perdition - Matt. 16:26
- d. He later regrets his decision and wishes to go to heaven, but he no longer has the price of entry, he traded it for a place in hell - Rom. 7
- e. In order to recover his former righteous condition, he must have another pay the price for him, a form of propitiation

3. Man cannot earn a home in heaven because after he sins, he no longer has the means of entry, a righteous life.

- a. If he is to become righteous in order to enter heaven, the state of righteousness must be imputed (ascribed, credited, attributed) to him - Rom. 4
- b. God sent Jesus to pay for man's sins so that he might be reckoned to be righteous and have a home in heaven; he must never forget that he squandered his condition of righteousness when he sinned, and had nothing to offer to God to obtain a home in heaven; God paid his way through Jesus
  - 1) Rom. 3:19-28; Heb. 2:14-17; 1John 2:1-2

## Supplement to the Study of the Cross

- 11 - Psalm 22: The Cross and Crucified Christ in Prophecy
- 14 - Cries from the Cross
- 16 - Paradoxes of the Cross
- 18 - Miracles of the Cross
- 21 - A Physician Analyzes the Crucifixion

### Psalm 22: The Cross and Crucified Christ in Prophecy

Introduction:

#### A. Purpose

1. The Messianic Psalm fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus
2. Insight into how Jesus must have felt as He hung on the cross
3. Learn what gave the psalmist confidence God would hear his cry

#### B. Called "The Psalm of the Cross"

1. Gospel writers provide a description of the passion as witnesses; somewhat impersonal and limited
2. Psalmist writes from the viewpoint of the crucified Jesus Himself; descriptive and moving

### I. THE CRUCIFIED IS FORSAKEN BY GOD - Psalm 22:1-21

#### A. His heart rending cry - Psalm 22:1-2

1. Why has God forsaken him? Why does God not help?
2. Day and night his cry is made... why does God not hear?
3. "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?" - Mark 15:34
  - a. When suffering, the righteous often feel forsaken, especially when suffering for another's wrongdoing.
  - b. The deeper the love in a relationship, the deeper the sense of loss when that relationship appears to end.
    - 1) The Father that Jesus adored beyond human comprehension turned away from His Son on the cross.
      - a) And it broke Jesus' heart.
    - 2) Jesus knew why. He was carrying the guilt burden of all sin from all time.
      - a) The ultimate scapegoat. The vast, ugly, nauseating, oppressive mass of every sin ever committed in all of history.
      - b. 2Cor. 5:21
    - 3) He who was God in the flesh became sin while on the cross that we might be free from sin.
      - a. Forsaken by God, deserted by His disciples, persecuted by government, rejected by the people He was trying to save.
      - b. "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"
      - c. Would He ask that question of you or me?

- B. His cry for deliverance - Psalm 22:3-5
  - 1. God is holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel
  - 2. The fathers trusted in God, and He delivered them
  - 3. They cried to Him, and God did not disappoint them
  - 4. And many of them were less deserving than Jesus
- C. His torment imposed by others - Psalm 22:6-8
  - 1. Reduced to be like a worm, not a man
  - 2. The object of derision, despised by others
  - 3. Ridiculed, he is taunted by those who mock his trust in God
- D. His faith in God - Psalm 22:9-11
  - 1. He acknowledges that God has been with him since birth
  - 2. He looks to God as his only helper
- E. His suffering from his perspective - Psalm 22:12-15
  - 1. His enemies
    - a. They surround him like strong bulls of Bashan
      - 1) Fat and fed to the full, haughty and surly, such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ.
    - b. Their mouths opened like a raging and roaring lion
      - 2) To show me that they would swallow me up; and this with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey.
  - 2. His suffering
    - a. Poured out like water - weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the vitals of his human nature.
    - b. Bones out of joint - unbroken, they were all out of joint by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross and suspending his weight unnaturally as upon a rack.
    - c. Heart like wax, melted within him - His will to go on is dissipating fast, sensing that death is near.
    - d. Strength dried up, tongue clings to his jaws
    - e. Brought to the dust of death - He became flesh, and all flesh is dust. "For from dust thou art, and unto the dust thou shalt return."
  - 3. The only spoken indicator of his physical suffering - John 19:28-29
    - a. Psalm 69:18-21 - Prophesied.
      - 1) Vinegar mingled with gall.
      - 2) Not an added torture; Roman custom for dying prisoners.
        - a) Posca - cheap, strong, sour wine.
        - b) Gall - a resin mixed in to deaden pain.
      - 3) Jesus knew that it was His Father's will that He suffer, so He rejected it.
    - b. Great thirst brought on by the dehydration of crucifixion.
      - 1) At the same time, His lungs were filling with fluid causing Him to slowly suffocate.
    - c. A very human statement indicating the intensity of His agony.
  - 4. His view from the cross - Psalm 22:16-18

- a. Like dogs, they surround him; like evildoers they encircle him to intend him harm. Imagine being pursued at night by a murder.
- b. They have pierced his hands and feet - most nerve endings
- c. He can count all his bones, while they feast their eyes on him; His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labor, grief, fasting, beating, dehydration, and torment.
- d. They divide his garments, and cast lots for his clothing. How troubling for the Lord who requires modesty of His children!  
1) Matt. 27:35-36

F. His final cry - Psalm 22:19-21

- 1. For God not to be far off
  - a. For He who is his strength to hasten and help him
  - b. For Him to deliver his life from the sword, his precious life from the power of the dog
  - c. For Him to save him from the lion's mouth and horns of wild oxen

**II. THE CRUCIFIED IS DELIVERED BY GOD - Psalm 22:22-31**

A. God will be praised - Psalm 22:22-25

- 1. The sufferer will praise God
  - a. Proclaiming His name to his brethren
  - b. Praising Him in the middle of the assembly
- 2. Let those who fear God praise Him
- 3. Reasons for such praise
  - a. God has not despised or abhorred his affliction
  - b. God has not hidden His face from him, but hearkened to his cry

B. God will be worshipped - Psalm 22:26-31

- 1. By the meek, and those that seek the Lord
  - a. They shall be eat and be satisfied
- 2. By those from the ends of the earth
  - a. Who shall bear these things in mind and return to the Lord
  - b. All families of the nations will bow down before Him
  - c. The kingdom is the Lord's, and He is Ruler among the nations
- 3. By the prosperous and the dying
  - a. The prosperous will eat, and worship Him
  - b. The dying shall bow before Him, and not rage at Him for death  
1Cor. 15 - "O death, where is thy sting?!"
- 4. By generations to come
  - a. Posterity shall serve him
  - b. Men shall tell of what God has done
  - c. People yet born shall hear of God's justice

Conclusion: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save" - Mark 15:31

- A. Christ came into the world that we might enter heaven.
- B. Christ was born in the flesh that we may be born of the spirit.
- C. Christ accepted poverty that we might be rich.
- D. Christ was rejected by men that we may be accepted by God.

- E. Christ was put to death that we might be made alive.
- F. Because he loved us so much! - 2Cor. 5:14-15
- G. Do you love the Son of God enough this day to give your life back to Him?

## **Cries from the Cross**

### Introduction:

- A. We place a great deal of importance on the last words of a dying person.
- B. What did Jesus say as he hung bathed in agony on the cross?
  - 1. Examine seven statements of Jesus while He hung dying of crucifixion.

### **I. "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO"**

(Luke 23:34)

- A. While suffering at their hands, He was objective about their part.
  - 1. Acts 2:37 - Majority of those present were deceived.
  - 2. The leaders were blinded by their own anger and hatred; could not think objectively; incited the ignorant multitude to follow.
- B. While suffering at their hands, He made intercession for them.
  - 1. Isaiah 53:12 - "He made intercession for the transgressors."
  - 2. Matt. 5:44 - certainly was consistent with His teaching.
- C. Apostolic testimony.
  - 1. Acts 3:17; 1Cor. 2:7-8
  - 2. Acts 7:59-60 - Stephen echoes these words.
- D. Ignorance only explains; it does not justify.

### **II. "VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, TODAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE"**

(Luke 23:43)

- A. The thief confessed Christ when no one else in the world was willing to.
  - 1. Recognized Him as the Messiah.
  - 2. Recognized that His kingdom was not of this world.
  - 3. What do you think that meant to Jesus at that moment?
    - a. Well, how did He respond?
- B. The thief received salvation; but, not the way the second thief expected.
  - 1. Luke 23:39
- C. Jesus is God, the Son. He has the authority to save this one as He chooses.
  - 1. Matt. 9:2 - Precedent... palsied man.
  - 2. Still under the Law of Moses.
  - 3. Cite difficulties encountered by those who want to be saved "like the thief on the cross."
    - a. No longer under the law of Moses.
    - b. To make an exception to the Gospel would make God a respecter of persons.
    - c. Requires the Lord's physical presence.
    - d. Requires that the same conditions be reproduced.

### III. "WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON! BEHOLD THY MOTHER!" (John 19:26-27)

- A. He called her "woman" and not "mother."
  1. Removed her from parental authority and responsibility.
  2. John 2:4 - wedding feast at Capernaum.
    - a. Both at the beginning and end of His ministry.
  3. Protects her somewhat from the crowds.
- B. Even while in agony, His love and for His mother and for John was evident.

### IV. "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" (Mark 15:34)

- A. When suffering, the righteous often feel forsaken, especially when suffering for another's wrongdoing.
- B. The deeper the love in a relationship, the deeper the sense of loss when that relationship ends.
  1. The Father that Jesus adored beyond human comprehension turned away from His Son on the cross. And it broke Jesus' heart.
  2. Jesus knew why. He was carrying the guilt burden of all sin for all time.
    - a. The ultimate scapegoat. The vast, ugly, nauseating, oppressive mass of every sin ever committed in all of history - 2Cor. 5:21
  3. He who was God in the flesh became sin incarnate while on the cross.
    - a. Forsaken by God, deserted by His disciples, persecuted by government, rejected by the people he was trying to save.
    - b. "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"
    - c. Will He ask that question of you or I?

### V. "I THIRST" (John 19:28)

- A. Psalm 69:18-21 - Prophesied.
  1. Vinegar mingled with gall.
  2. Not an added torture; Roman custom for dying prisoners.
    - a. Posca - cheap, strong, sour wine.
    - b. Gall - a resin mixed in to deaden pain.
  3. Jesus knew that it was His Father's will that He suffer, so He rejected it.
- B. Great thirst brought on by the dehydration of crucifixion.
  1. His lungs were filling with fluid, causing Him to slowly suffocate.
- C. A very human statement; indicates the level of His agony.

### VI. "IT IS FINISHED" (John 19:30)

- A. Other accounts record that He cried it with a loud voice.
  1. Wasn't "I quit," or "I'm dying."
  2. Was a shout of triumph.
  3. His great work of salvation was complete.
- B. He had accomplished the humanly impossible task of saving us from our sins.

### VII. "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT" (Luke 23:46)

- A. Both the first and last recorded words of Jesus Christ, Son of God.
  1. Luke 2:49 - "...I must be about My Father's business."
- B. Our example of trust in God and faithfulness to His will until death.

Conclusion:

- A. Every word Jesus said has great meaning, wisdom, and instruction for us.
  - 1. But, the cries from the cross are especially rich and powerful toward us.
  - 2. Know them, and grow from them.

## Paradoxes of the Cross

Introduction:

- A. John 11:45-53
- B. The Paradox: Ebenezer of our faith.
  - 1. "Ebenezer" - stone of help; a milestone.
  - 2. Each paradox in the word we reckon with shows us how far we have come in the faith.
- C. What is a paradox?
  - 1. G. K. Chesterton - "...truth standing on its head to get attention."
  - 2. Definition: "An apparently contradictory statement, seemingly against common sense, that is, in fact, true" (Webster's Collegiate Dict., 1956).
  - 3. Greek word 'paradokeow' - 'para', beyond, beside, contrary to; 'dokeow', opinion; therefore "beyond opinion."
- D. Biblical paradoxes:
  - 1. Saved by faith, but one must be baptized to be saved.
  - 2. One who would be greatest in the kingdom should seek to be the least.
  - 3. God came in the flesh.
  - 4. All of the beatitudes.
- E. Ralph Waldo Emerson - "A man may love a paradox without losing either his wit or sanity."
  - 1. In the case of the Christian, he must not only love them, but also understand and accept them.
    - a. The strength of his faith depends upon his ability to believe what is against popular and accepted opinion.
  - 2. We must see and accept the paradoxes of the cross.
    - a. If we see only the apparent facts, we will lose our faith.
    - b. If we see only the esoteric aspect, we will warp our faith.
    - c. The external facts combined with the spiritual truths make up the whole of understanding of our Lord's crucifixion.
- F. Perspectives:
  - 1. A Roman soldier - "In the year of Rome 784, April 7 at nine AM, by order of our supreme emperor's governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, we did execute by crucifixion a minor Hebrew revolutionary of Nazareth. He had been tried and found guilty of treason, having stirred up a small number of our subjects in and around the environs of Jerusalem. Upon the arrest of this criminal, the followers of this insurrectionist were dispersed. It is believed we have heard the last of this matter. Signed: Maximus Corpus, Centurion; report filed, April 8, 784 AUC."
  - 2. "In the fullness of time, God sent His Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Redeemer, to voluntarily pay the price of our sins by allowing himself to be sacrificed upon a Roman cross. This act of atonement took place by Divine will at a time that

Deity determined and decreed.”

3. Gal. 4:4-5; John 3:16-17, 10:14-18

G. Which is the proper perspective?

1. Both are correct! This is the essence of the cross, that we understand and accept apparently contradictory information about it.

## **I. GREATEST ACT OF HATE / GREATEST ACT OF LOVE**

A. Immeasurable hate - John 15:18, 25

1. How much? - vs. 19; Regardless of consequences - vs. 23

2. Why? John 15:22, 24

3. World-moving, epoch-spanning, history-making hatred!

4. Crucifixion was a hatred motivated cover-up that makes Watergate look like a kindergarten fib.

5. The irony is that they had no reason to hate Him.

a. He loved them, so He taught them to avoid sin.

b. He came to fulfill their beloved law.

6. They were great haters:

a. Risked repercussions from Rome,

b. Corrupted finest court in existence (Sanhedrin),

c. Brought a curse upon themselves.

B. Supreme love - John 3:16, 10:11-13; Rom. 5:8-10

1. How could He love us so? Why should He love us?

2. We might understand the hate, but can we comprehend the love?

## **II. A PREMEDITATED MURDER / A PREDESTINED SACRIFICE**

A. Premeditated murder

1. Jewish 'mafia' - John 11:49-50, 53, 56-57

B. Predestined sacrifice for our sins

1. Simultaneous plan - John 11:51-52, 10:17-18

2. He willingly made the sacrifice – Heb. 9:11-14

3. He chose! – Matt. 26:52-54

4. What kind of statement does that make about His concern for us?

## **III. GREATEST ACT OF SIN / GREATEST CURE FOR SIN**

A. “How do I sin; let me count the ways...” (William Shakespeares)

1. Hatred, lying, conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy against God, perjury, betrayal, extortion, treason, assault and battery, insurrection, corruption of a witness, corruption of a judge, bribery, countless violations of the law of Moses, and murder of an innocent man.

B. Produced the means whereby all sin can be removed - Rom. 3:23-25

## **IV. GREATEST REBELLION BY MAN / GREATEST CONTROL BY GOD**

A. They thought they were in charge

1. Psalm 2:1-3 - Kings and rulers conspired against Him.

2. Mark 12:1-12

B. But in reality were puppets - Acts 4:25-28, 2:36

## V. PHYSICAL BLOOD SHED / SPIRITUAL BLOOD SAVES

- A. Christ's literal blood did nothing for those who crucified Him.
  1. They were probably covered by it.
- B. Christ's blood saves us today - Heb. 10:4-7, 12, 14, 19, 22
  1. By being covered by it.

Conclusion:

- A. Are these paradoxical contradictions or a harmony of outward material facts with inward spiritual truths?
- B. Your faith and salvation hangs upon accepting the cross and all it implies.

## Miracles of the Cross

Introduction:

- A. Thousands of Jews were crucified during the Roman occupation of Palestine. Why do we remember only one of them? Perhaps we can find out if we look at the miracles of Calvary.
- B. Miracles of the Cross:
  1. Confounded the enemies of Christ
  2. Confirmed the Deity of Jesus
  3. Affirms our salvation
- C. There were 12 Miracles connected with the Death of our Savior. We will only consider the six that happened on the cross. Not considered:
  1. He fulfilled every prophecy
  2. God the Son died
  3. Prophesied - Mark 14:62; Thief; Peter's denial
  4. Malchus' ear
  5. Dream of Pilate's wife
  6. Forgave the thief and pardoned all of our sins
- D. Matt. 27:45, 50-54

## I. THE SUN DARKENED

- A. Jesus was put on the Cross at 9 o'clock in the morning. At noon an utter darkness settled in. This was not a sandstorm or an eclipse. This darkness lasted for 3 hours.
  1. Tertulian wrote to the heathen readers of his day; "this wonder is related in your own annals and is preserved in your archives to this day."
  2. Darkness throughout Scripture has been associated with judgment. The Light of this world was going out.
  3. John introduces Christ in his gospel as the "light of men" - John 1:4-5, 9
  4. The Light of the world had been snuffed out. God's appropriate response was to remove all sun light as a symbol of the removal of the Light of His Son.
  5. At 3 in the afternoon the sun reappears. Almost at the same time, Jesus cries out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

## II. HE GAVE UP THE GHOST (Departed)

- A. Crucifixions normally took days, not hours, before the victim died. But Jesus was in complete control even in His weakened condition.
1. Our Lord didn't go with death rattle of struggling lungs or thrashing violently against impending death.
  2. He dismissed His spirit with an act of His will - John 10:18, 19:30
  3. The work of redemption was finished, so He laid down His own life.

## III. VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS TORN IN TWO FROM TOP TO BOTTOM (Denuded)

- A. Not a little, sheer kitchen curtain. More like a very heavy theatre curtain, 60' long and 20' wide.
1. The veil separated the people from the Holy of Holies, the symbolic dwelling place of God. Only the High Priest could enter in and then only once a year.
  2. God tore the veil from top to bottom. He, alone, made the way to come directly to Him. No more need for priests to mediate between God and man. A believer can now go directly to the throne of God through Christ.
  3. This was done at the beginning of the evening sacrifice when the temple would have been filled with priests.
  4. Historically, what did they do? They made no connection to the death of Jesus. Rather they picked it up, sewed it up and continued on with the sacrificial system that had lost all meaning. And they did so until God destroyed the temple in A. D. 70.
- B. 2Cor. 3:13-18

## IV. EARTHQUAKE MESSAGE (Disaster)

- A. It was supernatural because it was not the result of any of the natural or normal causes of earthquakes. Because of the significance of the death of Jesus Christ, it was independent of nature: it was the sole act of God.
1. It opened graves, yet not all graves, only the graves of the saints. It worked selectively and intelligently as a miraculous act of God announcing the death of Christ.
  2. There was one other time when God caused the earth to quake miraculously: at Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law - Ex. 19:16
    - a. There it stood for the absolute holiness of God and warned the people that they could not touch the mount or even approach God apart from the sacrifices of the Law - 2Cor. 3:7
  3. But at the death of Christ, the quaking of Golgotha, God was giving His answer to Sinai and the Old Testament Law.
    - a. Quaking of Sinai stood for the barrier between God and man: God's holiness vs man's sin that keeps him separated from God
    - b. The quaking of Golgotha stood for God's love and grace which, through the sacrifice of Christ, satisfied the demands of a holy God and makes God approachable through the new covenant.

## **V. THE STONES DEMOLISHED**

- A. Rocks are still seen at Mount Calvary thus rent asunder, which are said to be the ones that were convulsed when the Savior died.
- B. Quake and rending of rocks recorded by the following early historians:
  - 1. Phlegon in Logios
  - 2. Julius Africanus in Chronographia
  - 3. Eusebius in Chronicon
  - 4. Cyril of Jerusalem in Cateches
- C. A crack on Golgotha six inches wide and running from the top to near the bottom begins and ends with silver markers and is trimmed in brass.
  - 1. Answers the arrogant might of the Romans who used Skull Rock as a symbol of their death's head hold on life and death in Palestine.

## **VI. THE GRAVES OPENED AND THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD RAISED (Delivered)**

A. The earthquake, the rending of the rocks, and the consequent opening of the graves occurred at the moment Jesus died, while the resurrection and visible appearance in the city of the bodies of the saints occurred "after his resurrection," for Jesus himself was the "first-born from the dead" (Col. 1:18). Matthew mentions the last event here because of its association with the rending of the rocks, which opened the rock-hewn sepulchres in which the saints had slept. There has been much speculation as to what became of these risen saints. We have no positive information, but the natural presumption is that they ascended to heaven. (McGarvey)

B. There is nothing said of the reason why they were raised. It is not improbable to suppose that it was, amidst the other wonders attending the death of Jesus, to convince the Jews that he was the Messiah. Perhaps some who had been his open friends were raised up now as an attestation, that he in whom they had believed was the Christ. What became of them after they had entered into the city--whether they again died, or ascended to heaven--is not revealed, and conjecture is vain. (Barnes)

- 1. These resurrections made a statement of the promise of resurrection for all - 1Cor. 15:22.
- 2. Only the saints rose, persons that would be known and recognized in Jerusalem.

## **VII. THE INTENDED EFFECT OF THE MIRACLES (Desired)**

- A. "They feared greatly." They regarded these things as proof God was angry, and they were terrified at the prospect that vengeance was coming on them.
- B. "Truly this was the Son of God." They had heard he had professed to be the Son of God. Seeing these wonders, they believed that it was true, and that God was now attesting the truth of his professions.
  - 1. Mark 15:39 - "This man was the Son of God."
  - 2. Luke 23:47 - "Certainly this was a righteous man."
- C. Remember, this man is a pagan with polytheistic notions of deity. Yet the miracles of Calvary made this death distinctive enough to convince him of the true Deity of Jesus.

Conclusion:

- A. The miracles of Calvary are a matter of historical record.
  1. The opponents of the Lord knew it happened and tried to cover it up - Matt. 28:11-15
  2. The pagan military officer knew it happened and was honest enough to admit it.
  3. Are you? - 1Cor. 15:19-23

## **A Physician Analyzes the Crucifixion**

**By Dr. C. Truman Davis**

(A medical explanation of what Jesus endured on the day He died. 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)

**The Medical Reason Why Jesus Died On The Cross** - 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, 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.

**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 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 his 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 Jesus' 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 crurifracture, 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.

**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. (Arizona Medicine, March 1965, Arizona Medical Association)