

**A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 23- Luke 23:32-46
346- The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ- Part 2**

May 7, 2017

Luke 23:32-46

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!"

38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"

41 "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour,

45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

To the Glory of God

Now, at some point after the Flood, God spoke to Noah and his sons and established the death penalty for premeditated murder.

Genesis 9:6 says:

Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

So, even though the Book of **Genesis** was written down by Moses approximately 1,450 years before Jesus was born, the events that are described in **Genesis** occurred many centuries before that. So, the institution of the death penalty after the Flood is the earliest that is on record.

The earliest written legal code concerning a Government carrying out a death penalty against its own citizens that has been found was discovered in the Code of King Hammurabi of Babylon, which about 1,800 years before Jesus was born, expanded the death penalty to include 25 different crimes¹, among them were:

Hanging:

- ✓ Burglary (on the spot)
- ✓ Building on the King's Highway
- ✓ Getting a slave's brand removed
- ✓ Enlisting someone to kill your husband

Burning:

- ✓ Incest with own mother
- ✓ A religious vestal entering or opening a tavern
- ✓ Looting a burning house

Drowning:

- ✓ Adultery
- ✓ Rape of a betrothed maiden
- ✓ Bigamy

¹ <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/part-i-history-death-penalty>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_law#Punishment.

- ✓ Disrespectful conduct of wife
- ✓ Seduction of daughter-in-law

The earliest record that has been discovered of a death sentence that was carried out, occurred about 1,600 years before Jesus was born, was in Egypt (about 150 years before Moses) where the wrongdoer, who was a member of the royal family, was accused of performing un-sanctioned magic and ordered to take his own life. Normally, during this period, the condemned in Egypt were usually killed with an ax.²

So, the death penalty was a part of history from the earliest days after the Fall of Adam in the Garden. And even though the reasons people were put to death varied, almost every nation on earth had some form of capital punishment. And the nations of the world continued to experiment with the death penalty, and as technology evolved, they used various means to carry out the sentence.

As God was revealing to Moses the Old Covenant, probably when he was with God up in Mount Sion, God told Moses to codify the death penalty as a correct and proper response to crimes so heinous and destructive that the intentional taking of a life was warranted. So, in the other four Books of Moses, the death penalty was imposed on those who committed religious sins like:

- ✓ Worshipping false gods (**Exodus 22:20**)
- ✓ Sacrificing children to Molech (**Leviticus 27:29**)
- ✓ Uttering false prophecy (**Deuteronomy 13:1-10**)
- ✓ Divination/Soothsaying (**Deuteronomy 18:10-12**)
- ✓ Breaking the Sabbath (**Exodus 31:14**)

... and for sexual sins like:

- ✓ Adultery (**Leviticus 20:10**)
- ✓ Rape (**Deuteronomy 22:25-27**)
- ✓ Incest (**Leviticus 20:19**)
- ✓ Bestiality (**Leviticus 20:15&16**)
- ✓ Homosexuality (**Leviticus 18:22**)
- ✓ Prostitution (**Leviticus 21:9**)

... and for other crimes such as:

² <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/execution/readings/history.html>.

- ✓ Murder (**Genesis 9:6**)
- ✓ Cursing a Parent (**Exodus 21:17**)
- ✓ Kidnapping (**Deuteronomy 24:7**)
- ✓ Contempt of Court (**Deuteronomy 17:8-13**)
- ✓ Bearing False Witness (**Deuteronomy 19:15-21**)

... and to Moses, God revealed three main methods of carrying out the death penalty:

- ✓ Stoning
- ✓ Burning
- ✓ Hanging

Now at some point after God had revealed the partial and inferior Revelation to Moses, the Egyptians, Babylonians, and the Assyrians developed a very horrific means of carrying out the death penalty that was designed to inflict the most pain while causing the most humiliation in the process.³ And about 600 years before Jesus was born, this rather new means of execution was picked up by the Persians, who carried it out in one of two ways:

1. The condemned was vertically impaled on a single stake that was placed in the ground.
2. The condemned was tied or nailed to a single post or a post with a cross beam over the top.

The ancient Persian medical doctors found out that by tying or nailing the hands above the head or out to the side, that the condemned would die slowly by suffocation rather than quickly with blood loss, as the longer the condemned hung there, the weaker he would get and

³ After quoting a poem by Maecenas that speaks of preferring life to death even when life is burdened with all the disadvantages of old age or even with acute torture ("vel acuta si sedeam cruce"), Seneca disagrees with the sentiment, saying death would be better for a crucified person hanging from the patibulum: "I should deem him most despicable had he wished to live to the point of crucifixion Is it worth so much to weigh down upon one's own wound, and hang stretched out from a patibulum? ... Is anyone found who, after being fastened to that accursed wood, already weakened, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, with many reasons for dying even before getting to the cross, would wish to prolong a life-breath that is about to experience so many torments?" ("*Contemptissimum putarem, si vivere vellet usque ad crucem ... Est tanti vulnus suum premere et patibulo pendere districtum ... Invenitur, qui velit adactus ad illud infelix lignum, iam debilis, iam pravus et in foedum scapularum ac pectoris tuber elisus, cui multae moriendi causae etiam citra crucem fuerant, trahere animam tot tormenta tracturam?*" - [<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/sen/seneca.ep17-18.shtml>] Letter 101, 12-14)

would eventually become unable to exhale. This horrific manner of killing the very worst criminals became known as "Crucifixion".

So, hanging a human being on a pole, either by bodily impalement or by nailing him to a cross piece, was an execution. It was a means of carrying out the death sentence. Now, today, many states use a form of lethal injection to kill the worst among us. Other states use the gas chamber or the electric chair. I think Utah still uses a firing squad.

But the Cross was originally a symbol of death, the very worst kind of death. So, when an unbeliever wears a cross around his neck, when a man who makes millions of dollars writing and singing songs using filthy language about treating women like dogs and killing police officers, and then goes up to receive the award that some people feel the need to give him, and he is wearing a gold cross around his neck, I wonder what he is thinking.

Would he wear a miniature gas chamber around his neck? Would he wear a gold-covered electric chair or a diamond studded syringe? Would jewelry stores start selling little hangman nooses or images of firing squads if Jesus had died like that?

I ponder things like that because the Cross is not merely an image of horrific death any more. It symbolizes the eternal Hope for sinners, like me, and it reminds me that the only reason I can go to Heaven is because Jesus went to the Cross. And that makes me speak about the Cross with reverence and in hushed tones and with great shame that my sin made Jesus hang there.

Now the ancient Greeks adopted this form of capital punishment at some point after Persians. And ancient Greek used two different verbs for "Crucifixion":

1. *ana-stauro* (ἀνασταυρόω)- "impale on a stake"
2. *apo-tumpanizo* (ἀποτυμπανίζω) "hang on a plank"

Now there is evidence that captured pirates were crucified in the port of Athens by the ancient Greeks around 500 years before Jesus was born. And Alexander the Great crucified 2000 survivors from his siege of the Phoenician city of Tyre about 450 years before Jesus. So, even though the Greeks are officially on record as *condemning* this means of torture and death, history says that they used it often and on a mass scale.

But when the Romans adopted Crucifixion, at some time after the Greeks, they perfected Crucifixion to the most feared and horrific means of death that the world had ever seen.

Roman medical doctors had advanced knowledge of the human anatomy that other cultures lacked, and so, as they studied Crucifixion they developed special techniques that were able to make it the terror that it was. And to give you an idea of the pain associated with Roman Crucifixion, the English word "cross" comes from the Latin "crux". And so, the English word "excruciating", which in Latin means "agony from the Cross", was invented to describe the pain associated with Crucifixion.

Initially, Crucifixion was known in Roman law as:

"The punishment of the slaves"

... later on, it was used to punish foreign captives, rebels and fugitives, *especially* during times of war and rebellion. Captured enemies and rebels were crucified in masses. For example, accounts of the suppression of the revolt of Spartacus, in 71 B.C., tell how the Roman army lined the road from Capua to Rome with 6,000 crucified rebels on 6,000 crosses.⁴

After the Romans quelled the relatively minor rebellion in Judea in 7 A.D. triggered by the death of King Herod, Quintilius Varus, the Roman Legate of Syria, crucified 2,000 Jews in Jerusalem. During Titus Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Roman troops crucified as many as 500 Jews a day for several months.

In times of war and rebellion when hundreds and even thousands of people were crucified within a short period, little, if any, attention was paid to the manner in which the crucifixion was carried out. Crosses were haphazardly constructed, and executioners came from the common ranks of Roman legionaries.

In peacetime, however, crucifixions were carried out according to very strict rules, and only by special persons authorized by the Roman courts. Crucifixions took place at specific locations, for example, in particular, fields outside of the capital city of Rome, and on the Golgotha, outside of Jerusalem. Outside the nation of Italy, only the

⁴ <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/crucifixion/a-tomb-in-jerusalem-reveals-the-history-of-crucifixion-and-roman-crucifixion-methods/>

Roman procurators possessed authority to impose the death penalty. So, any time a local provincial court prescribed the death penalty, the consent of the Roman procurator had to be obtained in order to actually carry out the sentence.

Once a defendant was found guilty and was condemned to be crucified, the execution was supervised by an official known as the *Carnifex Serarum*. From the tribunal hall, the victim was taken outside, stripped, bound to a column and scourged. The scourging was done with either a stick or a *flagellum*, a Roman instrument with a short handle to which several long, thick thongs had been attached. On the ends of the leather thongs were lead or bone tips. Although the number of strokes imposed was not fixed, care was taken not to kill the victim.

Now normally, after this terrible beating, the horizontal beam was placed upon the condemned man's shoulders, and he was forced to march to his own execution site, which was usually outside the city walls. Now, an entire cross would weigh well over 300 lbs., but the crossbeam itself would only weigh around 100 lbs.⁵ And, as I told you earlier, there is reason to suggest that Jesus carried the entire Cross and not just the crossbeam. But we can't be dogmatic about this, because there just isn't enough evidence in the words of Scripture to prove it.

Now, normally, a soldier at the head of the procession carried the *titulus*, which was an inscription written on wood. The *titulus* stated the defendant's name and the crime for which he had been condemned. When the condemned man reached the site of crucifixion, the *titulus* was fastened to the victim's cross. And Dr. Luke tells us, in verse 38, that the *titulus* over Jesus' Cross said:

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS

... which means that Pilate's official and formal cause as to *why* Jesus was condemned and beaten and crucified was that He was the King of the Jews! So, make no mistake about this, Jesus was given the most cruel, and the most violent, and the most severe means of executing the vilest of criminals for one single reason, He was the King of the Jews.

⁵ Ball, DA (1989). "The crucifixion and death of a man called Jesus". *Journal of the Mississippi State Medical Association*. 30 (3): 77-83.

Now when the procession arrived at the execution site, the condemned was somehow fixed to the crossbeam. Sometimes, the condemned was attached only with ropes. But many times, he was nailed, or both nailed and tied with rope.

Now we must remember that crucifixion was carried out to provide a death that was particularly slow and horrifically painful, gruesome, humiliating, and public. And, in some cases, the condemned was forced to carry the crossbeam to the place of execution. Tacitus, the ancient Roman historian, records that by the 1st Century, Crucifixion was so common, that the city of Rome had a specific place for carrying them out, situated just outside the Esquiline Gate.

According to this historian, the Roman soldiers would permanently fix the upright posts in place, and, after nailing or tying the condemned man to the cross beam, would hoist it and him up in the air using several long poles, and attach the cross beam to the fixed upright post. Another method was to attach the condemned to the cross by a rope, though nails and other sharp materials are mentioned in a passage by the Judean historian Josephus, where he states that at the Siege of Jerusalem:

"... the soldiers out of rage and hatred, *nailed* those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest."⁶

Now even though crucifixion was a Government sanctioned execution, it was also a personal humiliation, by making the condemned as vulnerable as possible. Although artists have traditionally depicted the figure on a cross with a loin cloth or a covering of the genitals, the person being crucified was usually stripped naked. Writings by the Roman philosopher, Seneca, record that some victims of Crucifixion suffered a stick forced upwards through their groin.⁷

Now even though the Roman Government and Military thought crucifixion was very needed and very productive, the horrors of this means of execution were condemned by some of the most important people in the Roman Empire. One time, the well- respected lawyer, Cicero, described Crucifixion as:

⁶ Flavius, Josephus. "*Jewish War, Book V Chapter 11*". ccel.org. Retrieved 1 June 2015.

⁷ Seneca, Dialogue "To Marcia on Consolation", in *Moral Essays*, 6.20.3, trans. John W. Basore, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946) 2:69

"... a most cruel and disgusting punishment. The very mention of the Cross should be far removed not only from a Roman citizen's body, but from his mind, his eyes, his ears."⁸

Another time he said:

"It is a crime for a Roman citizen to be bound; it is a worse crime for him to be beaten; it is well-nigh parricide for him to be killed; what am I to say if he be killed on a cross? A nefarious action such as that is incapable of description by any word, for there is none fit to describe it."⁹

Now, normally, the vertical pole was permanently fixed into the ground. And after the condemned was attached to the cross beam, either by ropes or nails, or both, the crossbeam was then hoisted up into the air and set onto the vertical pole. But there are records where the condemned was thrown down on top of the entire cross and attached, and then the entire cross was hoisted into the air and set into the hole.

Normally, the arms of the condemned was tied or nailed (or both) to the crossbeam with his arms outstretched. The cross beam with the condemned person attached was then hoisted into the air and attached to the fixed, vertical pole. The finished product would then resemble a capital "T".

Now here is where we need to be careful, because there are a lot of legends about Jesus' Crucifixion that simply cannot be proven from Scripture. For example, here is what the Bible actually says:

Matthew 27:35

... And when they had crucified Him ...

Mark 15:24

... And they crucified Him ...

Luke 23:33

... they crucified Him ...

⁸ Conway, Colleen M. (2008). *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*. Oxford University Press. p. 67. ISBN 978-0-19-532532-4. (citing Cicero, *pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo* [5.16](#)).

⁹ (from Boice Expository Commentaries, Copyright © by James Montgomery Boice, Baker Books. All rights reserved.

John 19:18

There they crucified Him ...

Now, the word crucified means "fixed to a cross". So, the means of execution in a crucifixion was that the condemned was "fixed to a cross". So, we know that Jesus was executed by Crucifixion, which meant that Jesus was "fixed to a Cross". And questions come up like, "*Was Jesus nailed or tied to the Cross?*" And, "*What about His Feet?*" And, "*How could a nail in His Hands hold His Body weight?*" And on and on...

But the biblical Record tells us that Jesus was nailed in His Hands. Because, after His Resurrection, Jesus said:

Luke 24:38-40

38 ... "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?

39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

... and the fact that Jesus drew attention to His Hands and Feet indicate that there was something visible about both of them that would prove that it was Him. But perhaps the most descriptive statement about this is found in **John 20:25b**, where Thomas said:

... Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.

So, Thomas was aware that there were "**imprints of nails**" in Jesus' Hands, and that he could put his finger into the "place" where the nails were. And John goes on to say that eight days later:

26 ... His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

28 Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

So, Jesus said that Thomas was able to reach with his finger to “see” Jesus’ Hands, meaning that there was a nail hole in Jesus’ Hands that a person could stick his finger into. And, back in **Psalm 22**, about 1,000 years before Jesus was born, King David prophesied that they would “pierce” Jesus’ Hands.

So, from this we know that Jesus was nailed through His Hands. Now, the common argument that people bring up here is that if Jesus was nailed through the *palms* of His Hands, like Hollywood portrays, that His Body weight would have just caused the nail to rip through the soft tissue of the Hand. And in response to this problem, many scholars say that back in the 1st Century, the Greek word “hand” referred to both the wrist and the hand. I have read others that said that the “hand” included the entire arm all the way from the elbow to the tips of the fingers. And so, these people say that, contrary to many of the paintings and statues and movies, Jesus was actually nailed through the *forearm*, near the wrist, which contains enough bones and tendons to support the weight of a human body.

Now, this may be true. It makes a lot of sense. But a few of the people who say this, are also the same people that have been so wrong about other issues. Let me say that in my own personal study of the Greek word used for “hand”, I didn’t find that. I found that the word for “hand” in the Greek is *cheir*, which literally means “hands.” There is no Greek word for “wrists” in the New Testament, even though some versions translate **The Acts 12:7** to say that the chains fell off Peter’s “wrists”. But, even then, the Greek word in this verse is also *cheir*.

It's also possible that the nails may have been angled to enter through the hand and exit through the wrist, but it's just as likely that the nails were driven straight through the hand somewhere near the base of the thumb. Experiments have shown that both ways work, and either way could have been used in the Crucifixion of Jesus.

So, what do we do with this? Well, we say that Jesus was nailed in His Hands, just like the Bible says. And if that means the wrists, then fine. But, if it meant the palms of the Hands, then Jesus’ Body weight was held up by the ropes that He was also tied with.

Now what we do know is that by the time Jesus was Crucified, the Roman physicians had discovered the “median nerve” that runs from the spinal column through the arm and down to the hand. The Romans

found that by placing pressure on that nerve with a single spike, they could cause great pain without loss of life.

But, then there is the problem with Jesus' Feet. Were His Feet nailed too? And all I could find was two things:

1. It was common for the Romans to either let the feet of the condemned dangle or to fix them to the vertical pole with either ropes or nails.
2. In **Psalm 22:16**, King David prophesied, "**They pierced my hands and my feet.**"

... and, with the reference in **Luke 24:39**, it seems that we can definitively say that Jesus' Feet were nailed as well as His Hands.

Now, without any supplementary body support for the feet, the victim would die from muscular spasms and asphyxia very quickly. So, after being raised on the cross, breathing would become very difficult. And when left with his feet dangling, the victim would attempt to draw himself up only from the strength in his arms.

Many people who were crucified whose feet were left dangling would be able to hold themselves up for 30 to 60 seconds. But this would quickly become difficult. And as he became weaker, the victim would be unable to pull himself up from just his arm strength and death would come very rapidly.

So, in order to prolong the agony, Roman executioners devised two instruments that would keep the victim alive on the cross for extended periods of time. Now, they didn't do this to be merciful by any means; they did this to *increase* the pain and to *lengthen* the time the condemned man could suffer.

One of these instruments was called a *sedile*, and was a small wooden seat that was attached to the front of the cross, about halfway down. This device provided some support for the victim's body and may explain the phrase used by the Romans, "*to sit on the cross.*" Two early Church Fathers, Irenaeus and Justin Martyr, both describe the Cross of Jesus as having "five extremities" rather than four and several scholars think the fifth one was probably a *sedile*. But, even though this seat was normally provided, the Romans made it out of very hard wood that was very sharp and pointed so it would inflict horrible pain, if it was used.

The second device added to the cross was a “foot support”. This was far less painful than the *sedile*, but it was also designed to prolong the victim’s agony. Ancient historians record many cases in which the victim stayed alive on the cross for two or three or more days with the use of this foot support. The Church Father, Origen, wrote of personally seeing a crucified man who survived the whole night and the following day. The ancient Jewish historian, Josephus, refers to a case in which he saw three crucified Jews survived on a cross for three days.

During the mass crucifixions following the repression of the revolt of Spartacus in Rome, some of the crucified rebels actually talked to the soldiers for three days.¹⁰

But, when the Romans did nail the feet, it was a very deliberate action. This single nail had to be driven through both feet, which were normally turned outward so that the nail could be hammered inside the Achilles tendon. Other methods were that the legs were turned to one side and the feet nailed together, while still others had the single nail in the feet hammered on the top of the feet near the toes- so that the crucified person’s feet resembled a ballerina standing on her toes.

So, as the condemned man would inhale, he found it almost impossible to exhale unless he would push his body weight up the vertical pole using the single nail in both feet as the point at which his entire weight would rest. The pain from this action had to be unbearable, and so, he could only do this for a few seconds and would allow his body to sink back down and all his weight would be on his outstretched arms.

So, the entire time a person was being crucified, he was pushing himself up on the nail in his feet to breath out and allowing himself to sink back down on his arms to breath in. And this process would continue as long as the executioners wanted.

Now there are a couple of important distinctions about Jesus’ Crucifixion that made what He went through unique from others. For example, the legs of the person crucified were frequently broken or shattered with an iron club. And this brought about the death of the person faster, as he could no longer push himself up to breathe, and it was also meant to discourage those who observed the crucifixion from committing similar crimes. That didn’t happen with Jesus because the Apostle John tells us in **John 19:32-33:**

¹⁰ Appian, B. Civ. I, 120.

32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him;

33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

Also, when it came time for the dead victim to be removed from the cross, it was not uncommon that the executioners could not pull out the nail from the feet, as it had bent while the victim was struggling. And in that case, the only way to remove the body was to take an ax or hatchet and amputate both feet. Neither one of those two things happened with Jesus. In **Psalm 22:17**, King David said,

I can count all my bones...

... meaning that no bones of Jesus were broken. When God was giving Moses the pattern for Jesus' Crucifixion in the Passover Lamb in **Exodus 12:46**, He instructed:

It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.

... and in **Numbers 9:12**:

They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.

... and David prophesied about Jesus in **Psalm 34:20** and said:

He keeps all his bones, Not one of them is broken.

... and this is what the Apostle John was referring to when he quoted the Old Testament in **John 19:36-37**:

36 For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN."

37 And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

So, we know from Scripture that not only were none of Jesus' bones broken, but when He rose from the dead He rose in the very *same* body in which He died, the Body that had all of the horrific marks of His beating and Crucifixion.

Now, in **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**, the inspired Word of the living God says:

22 "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,

23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.

Now at the time this was given to Moses by God, Crucifixion had not even been invented. So, God was talking here about a literal execution by hanging. But this Passage developed several Divine Principles that played a major role in Jesus' Crucifixion:

- ✓ Whoever is hanged on a tree is cursed by God.
- ✓ Leaving a condemned man hanging all night will bring God's Wrath on the nation.

So, first of all, among the Jews of Jesus' day, crucifixion was an anathema. They considered it ungodly, but a fitting death for the people who were the most ungodly. And so, the Sanhedrin thought it was fitting that the pagan Romans, whom they despised, would be the instrument to crucify such a terrible blasphemer as Jesus of Nazareth, because He had made Himself equal with God.

But, as good, hypocritical Jews, they were free to falsely accuse Jesus and beat Him and have Him killed, but they couldn't allow Jesus to hang on the Cross all night, because that would be against the rules. I mean, after all, they wouldn't want to do anything that might displease the Lord.

And so, they compelled the Romans to break the legs of the two thieves and that itinerate from Galilee. And so, the Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves on either side of Jesus, but when they came to the Man in the middle, He was already dead.

But secondly, the Principle that whoever hangs on a tree is cursed by God shows us the single most important aspect of Jesus' Crucifixion. In order to please the Lord, in order to fulfill His Father's Will, in order to purchase the Salvation for every single human being that has been chosen by God to save, and in order that Salvation would be only "by" God's amazing Grace and "through" God's sovereign gift of Faith and *not* by any human works, Jesus not only had to die, He had to die by hanging on a tree.

Because, for God's Righteousness to be fully vindicated because of our sins, and for us to be forgiven and granted eternal life, Jesus had to actually become a Curse. In his letter to the churches in the region of Galatia, the Apostle Paul referenced that very Passage in **Deuteronomy 21** when he said this in **Galatians 3:13-14**:

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "*CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE*"

14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

As Jesus hung screaming in agony between earth and heaven, suspended by three nails, God took every single one of our wicked, dark, and unspeakable sins and put them on the only sinless Man Who ever lived. And, at that moment, Jesus Christ became a Curse. And *that* is why 600 years earlier, Isaiah said:

Isaiah 53:4b

... we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

So, as the witnesses stood there beholding this spectacle, as they looked at a beaten and bloodied human being struggling to breathe, pushing Himself up the Cross by the single nail in His Feet, and then watching Him sag back down, too weak to hold Himself up, as they heard Him scream out, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*", there was only one conclusion they could come to: "*God has abandoned this Man! God Himself has cursed this Man! This Man is truly been stricken by none other than God Himself! God has smitten this Man! God has afflicted Him!*"

And that is what it took to save my soul. And so, I confess to you this morning, dear friends, that I did that to Jesus. *My sin* caused Him to be falsely accused. *My transgressions* allowed Jesus to be beaten and mocked and spit on. *My wickedness* caused them to rip His Flesh and slap His Face. *My evil* put those nails in His Hands. *My rebellion* put that nail in His Feet. And *my sin* caused God the Father to make God the Son a Curse and to pour out the full Fury of His Righteous Wrath on the Lamb of God.

And so, this bloody and horrific scene, this violent and frightening moment, is what it took for the breathtaking Glory of God's pristine Grace to be seen and celebrated and treasured and marveled at forever!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.