

The Death of Jesus Christ

Flogging Practices

Flogging was so awful that it was forbidden by Roman Law for a Roman citizen to be flogged, no matter the severity of the crime he committed (Acts 22:24-29).

-see also lex Porcia and lex Sempronia

Process:

Step 1 - Strip person Naked

Step 2 - Use the flagellum or cat-o-nine tails (had lead balls, bone, metal attached for ripping) for whipping (Metam. 7.30.154; Codex Tehodos 8.5.2; 9.35.2; Goguel, Jesus 527; Blinzer, Trial 222)

- The balls on the whip would cause vasodilation, increasing the pain sensors in the body
- The metal and bone fragments would sink into the flesh and rip it up.

Step 3 - Jews whipped 39 times. Beat person more times than a Jew would.

Many did not live through a flogging.

A flogged victim was *“taken away for a dead man, shortly thereafter he was dead”*

-Cicero (106BC-43BC in *Verrem*)

“they were flogged...some the moment they were carried out died of their wounds”

-Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (BC 20AD-50AD); *Flaccus 75* (trans by Yong)

Victims were *“lacerated by scourges even to the innermost veins and arteries, so that the hidden inward parts of the body, both their bowels and their members, were exposed to view”*.

-Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260/265-339/340); *His Eccl 4.15.4*

Livy, Seutonius and Josephus (all Roman historians) report people dying while still bound to the post.

Jesus was so deeply flogged that was no longer recognizable, “...marred beyond human likeness” (Is 52:14).

The Crucifixion Process

Background

The Horror

“the very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but from his thoughts, his eyes, and his ears.” He then says *“indeed the very mention of [crucifixion] is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.”* Cicero in his defense of Rabirius On a Charge of Treason, passage 16

I. Did Anyone Survive a Full Roman Crucifixion?

Some people say that Jesus did not die on the cross, he only fainted. There are many reasons why this is faulty logic which we’ll not address here, but it’s important to note that we have NO historical record of anyone surviving a full Roman crucifixion.

A full crucifixion was 1) Flogging, 2) Carrying the Cross and 3) Crucifixion.

Josephus did have a friend that recovered from a crucifixion, but take note that it wasn’t a full crucifixion.

Josephus and his autobiography, section 75. In this section, Josephus describes travelling with the future emperor, Titus, and they entered a city called Thecoa. He writes, *“I saw many captives crucified, and remembered three of them as my former acquaintance. I was very sorry at this in my mind, and went with tears in my eyes to Titus, and told him of them; so he immediately commanded them to be taken down, and to have the greatest care taken of them, in order to their recovery; yet two of them died under the physician's hands, **while the third recovered.**”*

Some say they may have made an exception for Jesus or for Jews. But the hatred between the Romans and the Jews was strong.

“So the soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies.

Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book V, Chapter 11, section 1.

II. Naked on the Cross

- A. **Siculus** - Histories 33.15 - [15] [G #](#) When [Attalus](#) understood that [Diēgylis](#) was hated by all his subjects for his cruelty and greed, he took a quite contrary course; and therefore, after he had taken many [Thracian](#) prisoners captive, and freely released them all, there were many that spread abroad his fame for his generosity and clemency. When many of the Thracian nobility, out of hatred towards Diēgylis, fled to him, they were kindly received; but Diēgylis, when he heard of this, tortured the hostages left by those who had fled with the most grievous torments. Many of these, that were very young and of tender age, he pulled into pieces, limb from limb, and of others he cut off their hands, feet, and heads; some he crucified, and others he hung upon trees; ***2 many women likewise were spread-eagled before they were put to death, and prostituted to the lust of every vile fellow***, as in a most barbarous manner he gave up himself to all manner of filthiness. Just as this clearly evidenced his unparalleled cruelty, so it moved many spectators, who had but the least sense of humanity, with pity and commiseration.
- B. **Seneca the Younger**= “I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground [like St. Peter]; ***some impale their private parts***; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet. (Seneca, Dialogue 6.20.3)
- C. **Dionysius of Halicarnassus**, Roman Antiquities, 7.69.1-2 - A prominent Roman citizen had his slave put to death and says this:
- “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... that he should go ahead of the procession which the Romans were at that time conducting in honour of the god... 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. The culprit, overcome by such cruelty, not only uttered ill-omened cries, forced from him by the pain, but also made **indecent movements** under the blows”*
- D. **Sanhedrin** - The Mishnah indicates that opinions among Jewish authorities were divided as to whether or not people should be stoned and “**hung**” **naked** (which often went together), or with just enough of a covering to provide a minimal amount of modesty (Sanhedrin, 6.4, 5). (puritanboard.com/f44/were-those-crucified-1st-cent-naked-69863/).

- E. To crucify naked was strongly established not just by the Romans but even by their predecessors such as the Assyrians, Phoenicians and Persians in the first millennium BC.
- F. Some say because Jesus was Jewish they would want to be nice and cover him up. That is not likely as
 1. The point of crucifixion was maximum shame, humiliation and pain
 2. The Romans hated the Jews and even warred against one another. Joseph's spoke of crucifixion "out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews" (Josephus. Wars. Book V, Chapter XI).
 3. The Jews also hated Jesus and did not claim him as "one of their own"
 4. The Jews also stoned people naked. See this discussion where they are talking about this very issue: - "*When he was four cubits from the place of stoning they stripped off his clothes. A man is kept covered in front and a woman both in front and behind. So Rabbi Judah. But the Sages say: **A man is stoned naked** but a woman is not stoned naked.*" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:3)
 5. There were other Jews crucified with him. Would he have been given special privileges and they not in their humiliation?
- G. Jesus understands sexual abuse. Most certainly they mocked his male genitalia, struck him on numerous occasions and made sure he suffered in this way.

III. The Cross Itself - Eye-Level & Potential Legs Spread Open

A. Was it a standard cross or a stick or something else?

1. The most common form was on an upright pole/stake - This simple form of crucifixion on a stake often used the Greek word *stauros*, which is also what he would have carried through the streets
2. Joseph Zias (curator of Archaeology and Anthropology for the Israel Antiquities Authority from 1972 to 1997) conducted some experiments and came to the conclusion that Jesus was more than likely crucified with his arms over his head. This made breathing very difficult but less so when arms stretched upright. And we know that Jesus died from asphyxiation (<https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2018/08/28/how-was-a-crucifixion-performed/>). We'll talk about that more.

3. But this would also fit the local cultural context where wood was scarce and not used casually. Which is why I have strong reason to believe Jesus was not a carpenter but more on that in another video.
 - a) Josephus records that during the Jewish revolt people were crucified by the hundreds until they ran out of wood.
 - b) The width of their search for wood was 18 kilometers/11 miles from Jerusalem.
4. Seneca the Younger records that crucifixion took place in ***different forms and different positions***. *'I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the [cross-piece]'*... (Seneca the Younger, "Of Consolation to Marcia"/ Seneca, Dialogue 6.20.3)
5. Josephus also affirms that there was not a fixed pattern for crucifying people but depended on the sadistic nature of the one performing the crucifixion. Although he is writing about the Jewish revolt in AD 70 when hundreds were crucified: "...so they were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures, before they died, and were then crucified before the wall of the city. This miserable procedure made Titus greatly to pity them, while they caught every day five hundred Jews; nay, some days they caught more: ... The main reason why he did not forbid that cruelty was this, that he hoped the Jews might perhaps yield at that sight, out of fear lest they might themselves afterwards be liable to the same cruel treatment. So the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest, when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies." (Flavius Josephus, "The Jewish War")

B. How high was the cross? Likely eye-level.

1. In 1968 (Yehohanan) an ankle bone of someone crucified was found in a "bone box" called an "ossuary. This has provided some valuable insight but one interesting thing was that with close examination bits of olive wood were found on the end of the nail.
2. This would mean that a person was crucified on an olive tree or a stake made from olive wood.
3. Olive trees do not grow very high nor are they very straight. It's very possible that Jesus could have been crucified almost at eye level—the torture of being so close yet so far from the ground.

- a) If that's the case, why the stick to give him a drink? - **“Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink”** (Mt 27:48).
 - (1) He didn't want to hold the actual cloth to Jesus' mouth as there was still a little distance
 - (2) He didn't want to get exceedingly close as I'm sure many a crucified persons
- 4. The hyssop plant: ²⁹ **A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.** Hyssop plants do not exceed more than 2-4 feet (60 cm - 120 cm) in height. The soldier would have had something in his hand to extend to Jesus but it was small.

IV. The heel bone - What it tells us, Legs spread wide open or to the side?

- 1. The bone box found in 1968 was a man named Jehohanan (<https://biblereadingarcheology.com/2018/08/28/how-was-a-crucifixion-performed/>)
 - a) The nail was 18 cm/7" long
 - b) It went through the side of the foot (show picture)
 - c) It wasn't long enough to go through both feet
- 2. Two options
 - a) Jesus turned his knee sideways and it was smashed in regardless of size
 - b) Jesus' feet were on either side of the cross, nailed in to the sides of the cross. Which would also perhaps cause his genitalia to scrape on the cross beam
- 3. The 2007 discovery in Gavello, Italy of a crucified man shoes that the nail went from the inside to the outside. Either the man had both his legs spread wide open or his knees were both turned to one side.
 - a) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakilgrove/2019/12/23/heel-bone-from-italy-is-only-second-example-of-crucifixion-ever-found/?sh=6d863710129a;>
 - b) <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/skeleton-evidence-crucifixion-discovered-0010173>
- 4. We also must remember that sometimes as we saw earlier with the naked women that were stoned by the Jews, they were placed in such a way as their legs were spread wide open.

V. The Nail through the wrists or hands?

1. The Romans considered everything from the elbow on down as “the hand” - In the [Homeric Greek](#) of the [Iliad](#) XX, 478–480, a spear-point is said to have pierced the χεῖρ "where the sinews of the elbow join" (ἵνα τε ξενέχουσι τένοντες / ἀγκῶνος, τῆ τόν γε φίλης διὰ χειρὸς ἔπειρεν / αἰχμῆ χακκκείη).
2. Through the palms would not typically be enough to hold the body and the last thing a Roman citizen would want is a body flopping off the cross on top of him
3. The wrist area contains the medial nerve which is very sensitive. A nail through this area would cause maximum pain, fulfilling the goal of the Romans.

VI. The Wine Offered to Jesus - A Numbing Agent (Mt 27:34, 48; Mk 15:23,36; Luke 23:36; Jn 19:29).

1. Appears 2 offers - the first with gall and/or myrrh and the second just sour wine
2. ***“When one is led out to execution, he is given a goblet of wine containing a grain of frankincense, in order to benumb his senses, for it is written, Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul. And it has also been taught; The noble women in Jerusalem used to donate and bring it. If these did not donate it, who provided it? As for that, it is certainly logical that it should be provided out of the public [funds]: Since it is written.”*** - Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 43 (https://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html)
3. Some say the myrrh was not just aromatic but also analgesic to reduce pain
4. The Hebrew word myrrh at its root means “bitterness.” Gall also refers to bitterness so could be a generalized description. Though also my be a specific description for myrrh.
5. One thing that might be a contradiction that this was a numbing agent is Psalm 69:21 - “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.” Was gall a food? KJV says “they gave me gall for my meat.”

VII. Form of Death

1. Typical death
 - a) Death by asphyxiation
 - b) Death blow
 - (1) Break legs

- (2) Spear to the heart
 - (3) Other form
2. Confirmation of Death
 - a) Person could no longer push up to breathe
 - b) Death blow administered
 - c) If the victim did not die, the Roman centurion's life was on the line and he would die
 3. Jesus' death
 - a) from asphyxiation - lack of oxygen
 - b) Proof is that blood and water only separate on the heart with death by asphyxiation (John 19:31-34)

VIII. After Death

1. Honorable person dying - sarcophagus ("flesh eater"). A coffin with a whole in it so the worms could come eat the flesh away. After time had passed, the bones were then gathered and placed in a bone box called an ossuary
2. Dishonorable person that was crucified - thrown in the garbage dump and fed to the dogs
3. *"They [this is referring to the Idumeaens, a group of foreigners that Josephus considers impious and evil] actually went so far in their impiety as to cast out their dead bodies without burial, although the Jews are so careful about burial rites that even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset"* (Josephus - Jewish War, 4.317)