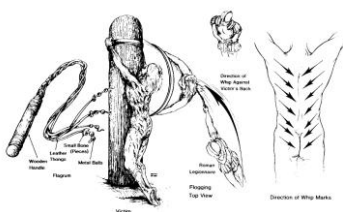




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**Scourging**, which is sometimes referred to as flogging, was a legal and normal preliminary act to Roman executions. It was used as punishment for crimes against the state. The only people who were exempt from such treatment were women and Roman senators. Soldiers were exempt except in the case of desertion. Scourging was apparently done for two reasons. It was used as a deterrent for those who might be contemplating similar crimes. It was also used to weaken the offender so that the execution would be shortened. The usual instrument used in a scourging was a short whip called a flagellum or flagellum. It was comprised of a



short wooden handle with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths attached to the end. The leather strips had small iron balls and sharp pieces of sheep bones tied at alternating intervals. As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck the victim's back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of blood loss, often resulting in hypovolemic shock, may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross. Additionally, it often weakened the victim to the point that carrying the crossbar (part of the execution to be discussed hereafter), or patibulum of the cross was often difficult. There is evidence that plain staves have been used in some floggings; however, they would have been the exception. For scourging, the victim was stripped of his clothing, and his hands were tied to an upright post, with the hands positioned above the head. The back, buttocks, and legs were flogged either by two soldiers called 'lictors' or by one who alternated positions. The whips would strike on the victims side and would be pulled across the back diagonally to the center of the back.

The severity of the scourging depended on the disposition of the 'lictors' and was intended to weaken the victim to a state just short of collapse or death. The phrase 'you're gonna get a lickin' came from the term 'lictors'. When it was determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner was near death, the beating was finally stopped. Roman law did not put any limits on the number of blows given. Jesus suffered this severe physical beating. He was scourged at the Praetorium, a courtyard associated with the Antonia Fortress. The number of strikes he received is not recorded in the gospels. Jewish law set the maximum blows in Deuteronomy 25:3 at forty, but later reduced to 39 to prevent excessive blows by a error. The Roman government respected that portion of Jewish law and did not exceed 39 blows for a Jew. Even so, such few blows often brought death. Thirty-nine blows were believed to bring the criminal "one from death". The severity of Jesus' scourging is not stated in the gospels, but it is discussed in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:24. The Greek text for this verse indicates that the scourging of Jesus was particularly harsh. It is not known whether the number of lashes reached the limit; though, the severity of the beating was probably much worse than we have record. Isaiah prophesied, "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting (Isaiah 50:6)." He also wrote, ".....Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness (Isaiah 52:14)." So severe was the beating that the "People were appalled to look at Him (Isaiah 52:13)."



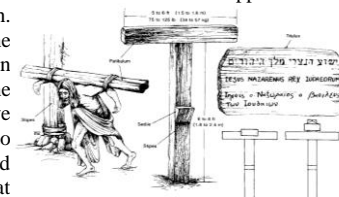
**Mocking** and taunting a victim is the next step to a Roman execution. Publicly, it was performed to offer a display of humiliation as a result of one's crime. The Romans wanted all of the people in the region to see the shame associated with the crime. The mocking of a convicted criminal was not outlined by law. It was dependant on the imagination and mood of the soldiers in charge. In the case of Jesus, the Romans saw a great joke in the provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They cut him free of the flogging post and allowed his half-fainting body to slump to the stone pavement. He must have been wet with his own blood. They took what was probably the cloak of a Roman officer, a dark purple or scarlet fabric, and threw it across his shoulders. They then placed a stick in his hand, calling it his scepter. Finally, they crowned his head. They took the small flexible branches of a native long thorned bush, commonly used for kindling fires in the charcoal braziers in the courtyard, and plaited them into the shape of a crude crown. Unlike the traditional crown, which is depicted by an open ring, the actual crown of thorns may have covered the entire scalp. The thorns would have been approximately 1 to 2 inches long. The crown was pressed into his scalp and again there was copious bleeding as the thorns pierced the very vascular tissue. They then knelt in front of him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews"! While mocking him they spat on him and struck him across the face. Finally, the soldiers took the stick from His hand and struck Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. After tiring from their sadistic sport they tore the robe from his back further aggravating his wounded back. It is not clear whether He wore the crown of thorns on the cross.



**Parading** to the cross was another important element of Roman executions. In line with Rome's attempt to deter further crimes, the beaten victim was paraded through the town for all to see on the way to the predetermined location for execution. Roman executions were generally by crucifixion,

involving the fastening of a victim to a large wooden cross. By this point the victim would have been a horrifying sight. In Jesus' case, his head would have been drenched with blood, the beard hairs ripped from his face, bruises and contusions covering his head and face, and or course the results of his brutal scourging very evident. Hematidrosis would have rendered his skin particularly tender, causing extreme pain especially since Rome required that the victim carry the crossbar on his back and shoulders. Prior to leaving the location of the scourging the crossbar or patibulum was fastened to the victim. It was unfeasible for the entire cross to be carried. The entire cross would have weighted over 300 pounds. The patibulum would have weighted a heavy yet manageable weight, between 75 to 125 pounds. Generally, the victim would have been stripped naked for his processional march.

With arms outstretched the patibulum would have been placed across the nape of the neck and ropes would have been used to fasten the arms to the bar. Since the Jews viewed public nudity as a great abomination, it would appear that the Romans made a concession to the Jews and allowed the victims in Jewish lands to remain clothed. The procession to the site of crucifixion was led by a complete Roman military guard, headed by a centurion. One of the soldiers carried a sign called a titulus, hence the word title, on which the condemned man's name and crime were displayed. The Roman guards would not leave the victim until they were sure of his death. It is estimated that Jesus' scourging and mocking were finished by 9 am, at which time he was taken to be crucified. Together with two thieves they were led on a one third of a mile walk to a location outside the city walls. The crucifixion site was purposely chosen to be outside the city walls because the Law forbade such within the city walls for sanitary reasons. The crucified bodies were sometimes left to rot on the cross and serve as a disgrace and deterrent to passers by. The theorized path is known today as the 'Via Delorosa', translated 'the way of suffering'. The Via Delorosa led to a place where the Romans had permanently located large wooden stripes or poles where all local crucifixions took place. This location in Jerusalem was called Golgotha in Hebrew and Calvary in Greek. Translated freely, 'the place of the skull'. The most likely location for Calvary is Gordon's Calvary, located just outside the old city walls at the Damascus Gate. Gordon's Calvary is the highest point of Jerusalem, 777 meters above sea level. Today, at Gordon's Calvary, caves in the rock are situated which give the site the appearance of a skull. In Jesus' case, the physical and mental abuse meted out, as well as the lack of food, water, and sleep, contributed to an extremely weakened state. Even before the actual crucifixion, Jesus' physical condition was at least serious and possibly critical. The gospels say that in spite of Jesus' efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy beam, together with his physical condition, caused him to stumble and fall. The rough wood of the beam would have gouged into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. Attempts to rise were restricted by human muscles pushed beyond their endurance. As was customary, the centurion overseeing Jesus' execution selected an onlooker to assist in carrying the cross, a man named Simon of Cyrene. Upon arriving at the place of execution Jesus was stripped of all his clothing except for a loin cloth which was allowed by the Jews. At this point, the words of the gospel writer comes to fruition, "Pilate, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to them to be crucified ... and they crucified Him."



# Crucifixion

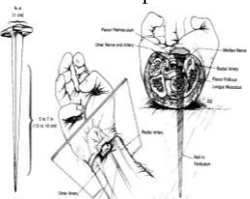
was a truly ancient method of execution. It is thought to have first began among the Persians. Alexander the Great is given credit for introducing the practice in Egypt and Carthage. The Romans appear to have learned of it from the Carthaginians. Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering. It was one of the most disgraceful and cruel methods of execution. In its earliest form in Persia, the victim was either tied to a tree or was tied to or impaled on an upright post, usually to keep the guilty victim's feet from touching holy ground. Only later was a true cross used; it was characterized by an upright post (stipes) and a horizontal crossbar (patibulum), and it had several variations. Although archaeological and historical evidence strongly indicates that the low Tau cross was preferred by the Romans in Palestine at the time of Christ crucifixion practices often varied in a given geographic region and in accordance with the imagination of the executioners, and the Latin cross and other forms also may have been used.

## Variations in Crosses Used for Crucifixion

Latin Term	Characteristics	Latin Term	Characteristics
Inflex lignum	Tree	Crux sublimis	Tall cross
Crux simplex	Upright post	Crux commissa	T-shaped (Tau)
Crux composita	Stipes & Patibulum	Crux immissa	V-shaped
Crux humilis	Low cross	Crux decussata	X-shaped

So painful was this form of execution that it became a symbol for pain itself. Our English word *excruciate*, meaning: 'to cause great agony, torment', comes from Latin. In Latin the term 'ex' mean: 'out of', while 'cruciate' means: 'from the cross'.

**Nailing** the victim to the cross was the next step in the execution. The patibulum was thrown on the ground with the victim tied to it. This would have resulted in scourge wounds tearing open again and becoming contaminated with dirt. According to the law, the victim was given a bitter drink of wine mixed with myrrh or gall as a mild analgesic. This was a form of mercy, if you can call it that. When it was put to Jesus' mouth he refused to drink. Then, Nails, about 7 inches long and roughly 3/8 of an inch in diameter, were driven through the wrists and into the wood being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. Other nations, such as the Greeks would merely tie the victim to the cross; however, the Romans preferred nailing. The points of the Roman nails would go into the hand in the vicinity of the median nerve and impaling the flexor pollicis longus, causing shocks of pain to radiate through the arms. It was possible to place the nails between the bones so that no fractures (or broken bones) occurred. Additionally, there was no damage to the major arterial trunks. Studies have shown that nails were also driven through the small bones of the wrist, since nails in the palms of the hand would not support the weight of a body. In ancient terminology, the wrist was considered to be part of the hand. The nails in the hands and wrists would have stimulated nerves producing excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms. Although the severed median nerve would result in paralysis of a portion of the hand, isehemic contraetures and impalement of various ligaments by the iron spike would have produced a claw-like grasp. The grasping of the heads of the nails by the hands was necessary to pull oneself up in order to breath. This meant that each breath was accompanied by excruciating pain. At the crucifixion sites would be upright posts or stipes standing about 7



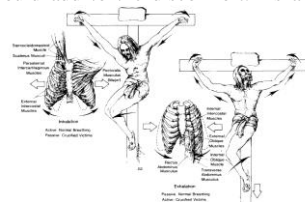
feet high. After both arms were fixed to the crossbar, the patibulum and the victim, were lifted onto the stipes. On the low cross, four soldiers could accomplish this relatively easily. However, on the tall cross, the soldiers used either wooden forks or ladders. The crossbar was generally tied to the stipes. In the case of the Tau cross, this was accomplished by means of a mortise and tenon joint, with or without reinforcing ropes. It is not stated which type of cross the Savior was crucified on; however, the fact that Jesus was later offered a drink of wine vinegar from a sponge placed on the stalk of the hyssop plant (approximately 20 inches in length) strongly supports the belief that Jesus was crucified on the short tau cross. In the center of the stipes was a crude seat, called a sedile or sedulum, which served a support for the victim. Only very rarely, and probably later than the time of Christ, was an additional block (suppedaneum) employed for transfixion of the feet. Once the patibulum was secured, the feet were then nailed to the stipes. Although the feet could be fixed to the sides of the stipes or to a wooden footrest (suppedaneum), they usually were nailed directly to the front of the stipes. To allow for this, the knees had to be bent and rotated laterally, being left in a very uncomfortable position. 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 nail would have been driven through the first or second intermetatarsal space, just distal to the tarsometatarsal joint. It is likely that the deep peroneal nerve and branches of the medial and lateral plantar nerves would have been injured by the nails. Although scourging may have resulted in considerable blood loss, crucifixion per se was a relatively bloodless procedure, since no major arteries, other than perhaps the deep plantar arch, pass through the favored anatomic sites of transfixion. The victim was now crucified.



**Titulus** were then attached to the cross, by nails or cords, just above the victim's head. The soldiers and the civilian crowd often taunted and jeered the condemned man, and the soldiers customarily divided up his clothes among themselves as a form of payment for the extra duty of standing watch until the condemned were declared dead. The length of survival generally ranged from three or four hours to three or four days and appears to have been inversely related to the severity of the scourging. However, even if the scourging had been relatively mild, the Roman soldiers could hasten death by breaking the legs below the knees.

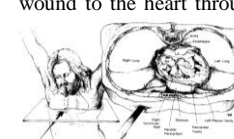
**Death** was a slow and agonizing process. Crucifixion brought about several effects all contributing to some degree to the final death of the victim. Aside from excruciating pain, the victim struggled with normal respiration, particularly exhalation. The weight of the body, pulling down on the outstretched arms and shoulders, would tend to fix the intercostal muscles in an inhalation state and thereby hinder passive exhalation. Accordingly, exhalation was primarily diaphragmatic, and breathing was shallow. Small areas of the lung would begin to collapse. It is likely that this form of respiration would not suffice and that hypercarbia would soon result. The lungs would begin to fill with fluid. Decreased oxygen and increased carbon dioxide would result in acid conditions in the tissues. The onset of muscle cramps or tetanic contractions, due to fatigue and hypercarbia, would hinder respiration even further. Adequate exhalation required lifting the body by pushing up on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders. However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the nails producing searing pain. Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrists about the iron nails and

cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves. Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stipes. Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia. The entire process also brought about extreme dehydration, blood loss, stress-induced arrhythmias, and congestive heart failure with the rapid accumulation of pericardial and perhaps pleural effusions. Crucifraction (breaking the legs below the knees), if performed, led to an asphyxic death within minutes. Death by crucifixion was, in every sense of the word, excruciating. It was common for insects to light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. It was amazing that Jesus could speak at all, yet we have 7 recorded utterances by the Savior.



- First** – Jesus looking down at the Roman soldiers casting lots said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do."
- Second** – Jesus said to the penitent thief, "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise."
- Third** – Jesus looking at his mother said, "Woman, behold your son." Then turning to John the beloved said, "Behold your mother."
- Fourth** – Jesus quoted Psalm 22, when he said, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me (Matthew 27:46)?"
- Fifth** – Jesus said, "I thirst" fulfilling the words, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws...(Psalm 22:15)."
- Sixth** – After receiving vinegar wine on a hyssop branch Jesus uttered a final whisper saying, "It is finished."
- Seventh** – Jesus finally cried "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit."

At about 3 PM, Jesus cried out, bowed his head, and died. The Roman soldiers and onlookers recognized his moment of death. It was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by animals. However, by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge. Since the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses after sunset, the beginning of the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to order 'erueifraction', the breaking of the legs, to hasten the deaths of the three men. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves, but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Rather, one of the soldiers pierced his side, probably with an infantry spear, and produced a sudden flow of blood and water. Traditionally, this has been considered a wound to the heart through the right side of the chest between the



ribs -- a fatal wound taught to most Roman soldiers. There was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart or the pleural fluid (fluid built up in the lungs) and the blood of the interior of the heart. One should be aware that there are other less likely theories surrounding the flow of water and blood. Even so, this fact is considered 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. It is an interesting closing note to ponder, that Jesus died of a broken heart rather than of crucifixion.