

Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Cross

The Cross - posted by Nasher (), on: 2004/7/21 9:39

Question - Did Jesus have to die on a cross?

Could he have died in another way?

Re: The Cross - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/7/21 11:34

Hi Nasher

The normal sentence for blasphemy would have been stoning, but at least from the time that God allowed David to 'hear' the events of Psalm 22, the means of death had become bordered by these necessary details; My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. (Psa 22:15-16 KJV)

'Dogs' is often a term used of Gentiles. This seems to narrow the possibilities to a Gentile execution, and the piercing of hands and feet clearly narrow the possibilities yet again.

Crucifixion is one of the most disabling methods of execution, with hands no longer able to do what they wanted and feet no able to go where they chose. The tongue no longer able to justify, explain or dispute. This absolute placing of the victim into the will of another is vivid picture of Christ's embracing of Another's will, and I can't think of another means of execution which would have done this nearly so clearly.

The image of Christ, hanging between earth and heaven, rejected by earth and abandoned by heaven, is again vividly portrayed in crucifixion.

Perhaps other forms of execution would have illustrated other truths but I can't imagine any that are as expressive as crucifixion.

I have done a quick mental scan and can't think of any indication earlier than David of the nature of Christ's death.

Just my thoughts...

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/10/4 6:20

Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament (free with e-sword)

Quote:
 -----Num 25:3-4 - And the anger of the Lord burned against the people, so that Jehovah commanded Moses to fetch the heads of the people, i.e., to assemble them together, and to "hang up" the men who had joined themselves to Baal-Peor "before the Lord against the sun," that the anger of God might turn away from Israel. The burning of the wrath of God, which was to be turned away from the people by the punishment of the guilty, as enjoined upon Moses, consisted, as we may see from Num_25:8, Num_25:9, in a plague inflicted upon the nation, which carried off a great number of the people, a sudden death, as in Num_14:37; Num_17:11. הוקיע, from יקע, to be torn apart or torn away (Ges., Winer), refers to the punishment of crucifixion, a mode of capital punishment which was adopted by most of the nations of antiquity (see Winer, bibl. R. W. i. p. 680), and was carried out sometimes by driving a stake into the body, and so impaling them (ἀνασκολοπίζειν), the mode practised by the Assyrians and Persians (Herod. iii. 159, and Layard's Nineveh and its Remains, vol. ii. p. 374, and plate on p. 369), at other times by fastening them to a stake or nailing them to a cross (ἀνασταυροῦν). In the instance before us, however, the idolaters were not impaled or crucified alive, but, as we may see from the word הרגּוּ in Num_25:5, and in accordance with the custom frequently adopted by other nations (see Herzog's Encyclopaedia), they were first of all put to death, and then impaled upon a stake or fastened upon a cross, so that the impaling or crucifixion was only an aggravation of the capital punishment, like the burning in Lev_20:14, and the hanging (תּלה) in Deu_21:22. The rendering adopted by the lxx and Vulgate is παραδειγματίζειν, suspendere, in this passage, and in 2Sa_21:6, 2Sa_21:9, ἐξηλιάζειν (to expose to the sun), and crucifigere. ליהוה, for Jehovah, as satisfaction for Him, i.e., to appease His wrath. אותם (them) does not refer to the heads of the nation, but to the guilty persons, upon whom the heads of the nation were to pronounce sentence.

There are several occasions in the OT where there seems to be a definite implication of impaling and hence crucifixion. I mention this because I think in another unfindable thread I said that crucifixion was a uniquely Roman form of execution. However, the impalings of the ancient world seem to have been a sign of public humiliation rather than execution. ie th

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e execution was by some other means but the bodies were exhibited impaled to a stake or tree as a public disgrace and a warning. The final humiliation of a victim eaten away by crows was a powerful comment. (2 Sam 21:9,10)

I still think the Romans were the first to use crucifixion as a form of execution with hand and feet piercing, but I will keep searching and return with any results.