

THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

After that they... led Him away to crucify Him (Matt.27:31)

“... And so it fell, that Jew and Gentile making common cause
Against the Sinless One, joined guilty hands, sealing the
World’s rejection of its God”

Lyra Christi

The iniquity of the human race reached fullness and displayed the fact in unmistakable terms when, in unsanctified collaboration, “Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together”- “against the Lord and against His Christ”, on the morning of Friday 1st May A.D. 33, when Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, was led forth out of the Holy City to the place where criminals were publicly executed and which was termed in the Greek “Calvary” – and in the Hebrew – “Golgotha”.

It is painful in the extreme to contemplate our Lord’s Physical state when, with infinite humiliation, He joined the Procession with the two malefactors and the military escort, as it left the Governor’s Palace to wend its way through the narrow and densely populated streets to the Gate of the City through which it must pass on its way to Golgotha.

Our Lord’s body was a human body in every respect. However painful, it is not, therefore difficult to form a correct judgment of His physical state after the inhuman brutalities, which He suffered at the hands of His captors, had taken their toll of His bodily strength. Added to the appalling sufferings consequent upon His being scourged by Pilate’s soldiers- which included being stripped and tied to a post and lashed with a nail-laden scourge- our Saviour was subjected to smiting and buffetings which He received without a murmur because they formed a part of His one redemptive Sacrifice.

May we not fail to remember in referring to our Lord’s sufferings that they were substitutional, like His death. Isaiah declares, “He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed “(Isaiah 53:5).

The above quotation from Isaiah 53:5 reveals how our blessed Saviour met the hopelessness of our position. From it we learn that before dying an atoning death upon the Cross He assumed in His person the massed sins committed by men against their fellows, none of which had ever been requited in accordance with God’s holy and inexorable Law.

WAS OUR LORD CRUCIFIED ON A CROSS OR A TREE?

We must briefly show from the Holy Scriptures that our Lord was not hung upon a cross, that is, a wooden stake with a transverse cross-bar; but upon a single stake to which His hands and feet

were nailed. The Romans called this single stake, which was often used for the crucifixion on the lowest criminal, “crux simplex”.

The facts which we will now give in support of this most solemn statement will appeal only to those who make a sharp distinction between Truth and Tradition- Truth being what is written in the Holy Scriptures and Tradition being additions or, as in this case, contradiction, thereto.

In the current edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, under the article – “The Cross and Crucifixion”, these statements appear: “The Cross has been used both as a religious symbol and as an ornament from the dawn of man’s civilization”. Under a sub-title, “Early Christian Crosses”, this statement appears: “It was, however, not until the time of Constantine (A.D.312) that the Cross was publicly used as the symbol of the Christian religion”.

The cross in one form or another was evidently in constant use as a symbol of the religions of many of the nations of the earth, notably Egypt, Persia and India, before the Christian Era. In the Greek language, from which the existing copies of the New Testament were translated, there is no word which represents our English word “cross”, which is derived solely from the Latin word “crux”. The Greek noun translated “cross” in the English Authorized Version is “STAUROS” which all lexicons including Liddell and Scott, translate as “upright pale, stake or pole”, that is a single piece of wood. There can be no doubt that the translation 28 times of “STAUROS” as “cross” was to make Scripture conform with the traditional view of our Lord’s death, which came into public acceptance through the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century.

A tree is not a cross which is an artificial structure composed of pieces of wood placed crosswise. The Greek word used for “tree” throughout Scriptures is “XULON” and it is to be found in the Septuagint Version of Deuteronomy 21:22,23, which Paul quotes to the Galatians, and also in Joshua 10 in relation to the five kings which he “hanged. . . on five trees”.

As throughout the Greek classics the word “STAUROS” signifies a “stake” or “pole”, it is impossible to translate it “cross” which is a form of structure, an entirely different thing. To translate “XULON” as “tree” is not to depart from its original meaning of “wood”. Both words apply to the stake to which our Lord was nailed when He was put to death.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST DIES AFTER SEVEN HOURS UPON THE TREE

At the death of the Son of God is the most important event in human history, the Bible records the facts related thereto with the utmost precision. The three hours of darkness were just drawing to a close and the hour of 3 o’clock in the afternoon was at hand. Suddenly the Holy Sufferer hanging on the Tree, uttered a loud cry, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** That’s to say, My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me? “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His

mouth”. The Scripture referred here is found in Psalm 59:21, which reads, “And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”.

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, **IT IS FINISHED**” (John 10:30). Our Lord had come into the world to accomplish for God the work of Redemption and that we might be “reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom.5:10). His loud cry, “It is finished”, was therefore the expression of a supreme triumph because His mighty task had been brought to an eternally successful completion. Every foe had been vanquished and now death itself would be wrested out of the hand of Satan and used to his destruction.

From the book *The Restored Vision* by A.E. Ware.