

Redemption 304: Crucifixion Study



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Crucifixion Study – Part Six

Jesus Dies Before the Two Thieves Die

In previous sections we examined the Mosaic requirements for capital punishment and we saw that the New Testament indicates that the Jewish authorities (with the permission of the Roman state) executed Jesus in accordance with Jewish law and interests. We have also examined evidence from the New Testament and from early Christian writers that, in accordance with Mosaic requirements and Jewish practice, Jesus was crucified upon a tree rather than a wooden post. However, there is one element of the equation that we have not addressed as we discussed these important biblical questions. In accordance with Mosaic Law, Old Testament and first-century Jewish capital punishment not only involved hanging the condemned on a tree, but it also required stoning them. We have already seen evidence of this practice from both the Old and New Testament.

Yet, the contention that Jesus was hung from a tree in fulfillment of Mosaic requirements (rather than a typical Roman crucifixion) may seem to be undermined if Jesus wasn't also stoned. Put another way, if Jesus wasn't stoned by the Jewish authorities according to the Mosaic requirements, why then should we think they hung him on a tree? If they were willing to forego the stoning (which was the actual cause of death required by the Law of Moses) then what reason do we have to think that they felt it was important to hang him on an actual tree rather than a wooden post? If they were willing to forfeit the mode of death required by Moses and were content instead with the Roman execution method (rather than stoning), why would they then insist on the use of a living tree as Mosaic law required? The answer to these questions comes by asking the preliminary question that is often simply assumed: did Jesus have stones thrown at him as he hung upon the cross?

If stones were thrown at Jesus as he hung upon the cross, then the conclusion that he was hung upon a tree in accordance with Mosaic Law remains unhindered. However, if he was not stoned, then perhaps we have reason to consider that the Jewish authorities ultimately were content not to adhere so closely to the Law of Moses concerning the execution of Jesus. If this is the case, then perhaps we may decide that the New Testament is, at best, inconclusive and open to interpretation regarding the object upon which Christ was crucified. To examine these issues we now turn to the New Testament to see if there is any reason to suspect that the

Jewish authorities (and perhaps others in the crowds passing by) threw stones at Christ as he hung upon the cross.

To be clear, none of the gospel accounts of Jesus' execution mention anyone throwing of stones at him as he hung upon the cross. In spite of this observation, it may be surprising to find out that the bible does provide some reason to conclude that stones were thrown at Christ as he hung upon the cross. As we embark upon the effort to establish additional corroboration, we must not overlook a few preliminary facts that we have already established. The Law of Moses did require stoning for the types of crimes of which Jesus was accused. And the Jewish leaders and some of the crowds had indeed taken up stones with the intent to kill Jesus on previous occasions, thereby showing their intent to carry out Moses' requirements in such matters. Now, we'll see if we can go beyond these foundational facts.

First, let us consider the fact that Jesus dies before the two thieves. In terms of crucifixion itself, death was typically caused by exhaustion or starvation. Death could take between twelve hours to several days. As a result both the New Testament and Cicero report that those subjected to Roman crucifixion would sometimes have their legs broken in order to hasten their death.

John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with (4957) him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

Then there are others too, of tribunitian rank: in the first place, **Titus Plancus; a man who**, if he had had any affection for the senate, would never have **burned the senate-house. Having been condemned for which wickedness, he returned to that city by force of arms from which he was driven by the power of the law.** But, however, **this is a case common to him and to many others** who are very unlike him. But this is quite true which men are in the habit of saying of this. **Plancus in a proverbial way, that it is quite impossible for him to die unless his legs are broken.** 1 Footnote 1: **That is, without being crucified as a slave.** – The Thirteenth Oration of M. T. Cicero Against Marcus Antonius, called also The Thirteenth Philippic, Tufts University, Perseus Digital Library, Gregory F. Crane, Editor-in-Chief, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Cic.+Phil.+13#note1>

Cicero – Marcus Tullius Cicero; **January 3, 106 BC – December 7, 43 BC**; sometimes anglicized as Tully[1]), was a **Roman philosopher, statesman, lawyer, orator, political theorist, and Roman constitutionalist.** He came from a wealthy municipal family of the equestrian order, and is **widely considered one of Rome's greatest orators and prose stylists.**[2][3] – wikipedia.org

In contrast to the exceedingly long timeframe, Jesus died in less than six hours, roughly half of the normal minimum of twelve hours and without the broken legs to speed up the process. Matthew and Luke report that Jesus died at about the ninth hour of the day (Matthew 27:45-46, Luke 23:44.) Similarly, Mark reports that Jesus was crucified at about the third hour and that he likewise died at about the ninth hour (Mark 15:25, 33-37.) For the Jews, the first hour of the day began at sunrise. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are reporting that Jesus hung on the cross from the about 9 am (the third hour) until about 3pm (the ninth hour.)

Mark 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him...33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth (1766) hour. 34 And at the ninth (1799) hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. 36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. 37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

1766 εννατος **ennatos**

ordinal from 1767; ; adj

AV-ninth 10; 10

1) ninth

1a) **the ninth hour corresponds to our 3 o'clock in the afternoon for the sixth hour of the Jews coincides with the twelfth of the day as divided by our method, and the first hour of the day is 6 A.M. to us**

Conversely, John seems to employ an alternate timing system placing Jesus' crucifixion at the sixth hour.

John 19:14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! 15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. 16 **Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.** 17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: 18 **Where they crucified him,** and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

It is sometimes speculated that John was using the Roman timekeeping system. However, this need not be the case. Christian author and apologist Craig Blomberg addresses these questions in his book *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*. As Blomberg explains, the gospels (and Acts) refer to the times of day only with references to the third, sixth, and ninth hours. The ancient world did not have watches or cell phones offering up to the minute references to the standardized time of day. It makes sense that in their ancient system, the times of

the day may not have been divided so precisely or particularly as we do now. Rather, the gospel authors indicate by their usage and time references that the times of the day were likely referenced in quarters that took place from the first to third hour, from the third to sixth hour, from the sixth to ninth hour, and from the ninth hour to the conclusion of the twelfth hour. In this way, both Mark and John are stating that Jesus' crucifixion began in the period of the day between 9 a.m. (after the third hour) and noon (the sixth hour).

Perhaps the most puzzling of all the differences between John and the Synoptics comes with **the simple little variation between Mark 15:25 and John 19:14. Was Jesus crucified at the third or the sixth hour of the day?** The former time has no symbolic significance; the latter has often been taken to point to the noon hour when Passover lambs were slaughtered, counting, as was normally done, from 6 a.m. onward. But if the above solution concerning the day of Jesus' death is correct, then this cannot be the meaning of the hour, even for John, since the Passover sacrifice would have occurred the day before. **There is even less evidence for the view that John was adopting the practice of later Roman civil reckoning whereby hours were counted from midnight on.** This would permit John to end the trial before Pilate at 6 a.m. and to begin the crucifixion (as in Mark) at 9 a.m. But it would also force one to imagine the culmination of the Sanhedrin's deliberations, the audience with Pilate, the subsequent hearing before Herod (found only in Luke 23:6-12), Jesus' return to Pilate and the final dialogue with the Jews all occurring in a space of less than half an hour. For the other gospels assert that all these events occurred after dawn, and dawn at that time of year in Jerusalem could have been no earlier than 5:30 a.m. **A better suggestion equates Mark's references to time with quarters of the day. In his gospel, indeed in every case save one in all the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (Mt. 20:9; in the context of a parable which requires this specificity), the only hours of the day ever mentioned are 'third', 'sixth', and 'ninth' (Mt. 20:3, 5; 27:45, 46; Mk 15:33, 34; Lk. 23:44; Acts 2:15; 3:1; 10:3, 9, 30; 23:23). When one recognizes that the widespread lack of precise time-keeping device in the ancient world led to the practice of dividing the day into fourths so that people often did not worry about speaking any more specifically than this, it becomes plausible to interpret Mark's 'third hour' to mean any time between 9 a.m. and noon. John's 'about the sixth hour' would also then refer to sometime before midday, perhaps within an hour or so. 1 John does refer to the in-between hours elsewhere in his gospel (1:39, 4:52), so that, as generally in a study of his chronology, he seems to be somewhat more precise than the Synoptics. But neither account contradicts the other.** – Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 179-180

As is the case in the other gospels, John reports that Jesus' death occurred with enough time left to be removed from the cross and buried before evening commenced. This means that Jesus died sometime in the middle or late afternoon. This fits with the other gospels which place Jesus' death at around 3pm.

We can see then that Jesus died after being upon the cross for some time less six hours (from sometime between 9 a.m. until sometime around 3 p.m.). Since he

was already dead, Jesus' legs were not broken by the Roman soldiers. However, although crucified at the same time as Jesus, apparently the other two men were not even close to dying after six hours. For this reason their legs had to be broken by the soldiers in order to hasten their deaths.

The important question then is what caused Jesus to die so early if he was merely crucified? Certainly, Jesus had already endured some amount of physical suffering from his beating, flogging, and carrying of the cross. But are these factors enough to explain his comparably early demise? As we consider this question, we must also keep in mind several relevant points regarding the potential effects this pre-crucifixion trauma may have had on Jesus' death.

First, the beating and flogging of criminals in the custody of the Roman state was probably not uncommon. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the two thieves were also beaten and perhaps flogged. Yet Jesus died before these two men and the thousands of other historical victims of Roman crucifixion. And, even if the two thieves weren't beaten in this manner, it is probable that some victims of Roman crucifixion did receive similar treatment and yet typical minimum time to die from crucifixion was twelve hours.

Second, we must keep in mind that it was after his beatings and flogging that Pilate sought to release Christ. Apparently, Pilate felt that Christ would recover from his wounds. In other words, his beatings and flogging were not, in the eyes of a trained Roman governor, enough to kill Jesus.

Third, we have already seen that it was typical for those condemned to crucifixion to carry their own crossbeams. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that the two thieves may also have been forced to carry their crossbeams to the Golgotha. However, Jesus died before these men even though he did not have to carry his crossbeam the entire way. On this point, we must recognize that no explanation is given in the gospels as to why Simon carried Jesus' crossbeam.

Matthew 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross (4716).

Mark 15:21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross (4716).

Luke 23:26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross (4716), that he might bear it after Jesus.

Since the gospel authors do not explain why Simon carried Jesus' crossbeam, we must refrain from assuming that fatigue from physical trauma prevented Jesus from carrying the crossbeam. Other explanations are possible.

It is possible that, having been flogged, Jesus' back was too covered with lacerations to effectively carry the crossbeam. Yet this could have been a matter

of pain rather than exhaustion or closeness to death. After all, a deep cut to any part of the body would seriously undermine the ability to carry a significant weight with or on that injured body part, even without necessitating excessive fatigue or fatality. Since the New Testament openly records that Jesus was flogged yet released by Pilate on the assumption that he would survive the flogging, perhaps the most minimal assumption and natural connection regarding Simon's assistance is that although Jesus was healthy enough to survive his previous mistreatment, his back in particular was simply too injured to adequately transport a crossbeam. This would explain the need for Simon's assistance in a way directly related to adjacent, well-known details of the account without overturning the equally well-known detail that in Pilate's assessment Jesus was in sufficient health to eventually make a full recovery. In this way, Simon's participation and Pilate's assessment are fully accounted for and yet the reason Jesus died so quickly would remain without explanation.

It is also worth mentioning here that Simon's assistance would also have been necessitated if Jesus was being stoned by the crowds as he approached Calvary.

Consequently, while it may be reasonable to assume physical exhaustion was the reason Simon carried Jesus' crossbeam, we cannot rule out other possibilities based on such assumptions. Nor is it reasonable to reject alternate scenarios suggested by other New Testament details on the basis of such assumptions.

As we consider the biblical and historical evidence, we find that the exact reason that Jesus died before the two thieves is not readily apparent from the details we might typically look to for an explanation. Undoubtedly, the beatings, the flogging, carrying the crossbeam, and hanging on the cross for six hours all contributed to Christ's death. However, as we have seen, such things were probably not altogether uncommon in Roman crucifixion and yet it usually took twice as long for victims to die.

Because of the need to explain the speed of Jesus' demise, some may be inclined to assume that Jesus simply chose to give up and die at that point. There are several potential problems with such a suggestion. It is true that Luke 23:46 records that Jesus committed his spirit (4151) into the Father's hands. This may be taken by some to convey that the timing of Jesus' death was the result of an intentional decision by Jesus to "give up the ghost." However, Jesus' statement only necessitates that he knew he was about to die combined with an expression of trust that his spirit was now in God's care. It does not require that the timing of his death was a matter of a conscious choice to depart.

Likewise, it might be suggested that the phrase "he gave up the ghost and died" (Matthew 27:50, Mark 15:37, 39, Luke 23:46, and John 19:30) could imply a deliberate choice on Jesus' part to "give up the ghost" and die. However, the phrase "give up the ghost" is a fairly typical New Testament term used to speak of people dying. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts of Jesus' death the phrase "give up the ghost" is translated from the Greek verb "ekpneo" (1606.) This verb is a compound word formed from the Greek preposition "ek" (1537) meaning

“out” and the verb “pneo” (4154) meaning to breathe. So, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are simply stating that Jesus breathed out for the last time. The language does not imply that he consciously chose to depart.

1606 εκπνεω **ekpneo**

from 1537 and 4154; TDNT-6:452,876; v

AV-give up the ghost 3; 3

1) **to breathe out, breathe out one’s life, breathe one’s last, expire**

4154 πνεω **pneo**

a root word; TDNT-6:452,876; v

AV-blow 6, wind 1; 7

1) **to breathe, to blow**

1a) of the wind

1537 εκ ek **ek** or εξ **ex**

a primary preposition denoting origin (the point whence action or motion proceeds), from, out (of place, time, or cause; literal or figurative; ; prep

AV-of 366, from 181, out of 162, by 55, on 34, with 25, misc 98; 921

1) **out of**, from, by, away from

If we further examine this expression, we find that the Greek verb “ekpneo” (1606) only occurs in these three verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s account of Jesus’ death. However, John 19:30 conveys the same idea using the Greek verb “paradidomi” (3860) meaning to deliver or give up with the Greek noun “pneuma” (4151) meaning ghost or spirit. In fact, the term “pneuma” comes from the Greek verb “pneo” (4154) meaning to breathe.

3860 παραδιδωμι **paradidomi**

from 3844 and 1325; TDNT-2:169,166; v

AV-**deliver 53**, betray 40, deliver up 10, **give 4**, **give up 4**, give over 2, commit 2, misc 6; 121

1) to give into the hands (of another)

2) to give over into (one’s) power or use

2a) to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, manage

2b) to deliver up one to custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death

2c) to deliver up treacherously

2c1) by betrayal to cause one to be taken

2c2) to deliver one to be taught, moulded

3) to commit, to commend

4) to deliver verbally

4a) commands, rites

4b) to deliver by narrating, to report

5) to permit allow

5a) when the fruit will allow that is the time when its ripeness permits

5b) gives itself up, presents itself

4151 πνευμα **pneuma****from 4154**; TDNT-6:332,876; n n

AV-Spirit 111, (Holy) Ghost 89, Spirit (of God) 13, Spirit (of the Lord) 5, (My) Spirit 3, Spirit (of truth) 3, Spirit (of Christ) 2, human (spirit) 49, (evil) spirit 47, spirit (general) 26, spirit 8, (Jesus' own) spirit 6, (Jesus' own) ghost 2, misc 21; 385

We can see then that the idea of “giving up the ghost” is conveyed using various Greek phrasings which simply relate breathing out the last breath. In fact, elsewhere in the New Testament we find yet another Greek phrase referring to the idea of “giving up the ghost.” In the passages discussed below, the English phrase “give up the ghost” is translated from the Greek verb “ekpsucho” (1634) which, like “ekpneo” (1606) is formed from the Greek preposition “ek” (1537) joined to a verb meaning to expire or breathe out ones last breathe.

1634 εκψυχω **ekpsucho****from 1537 and 5594**; ; v

AV-give up the ghost 2, yield up the ghost 1, 3

1) **to expire, to breathe out one's life**5594 ψυχω **psucho**

a primary verb; ; v

AV-wax cold 1; 1

1) **to breathe, blow**, cool by blowing

2) to be made or grow cool or cold

3) metaph. of waning love

Perhaps the most relevant fact about “ekpsucho,” which is clearly a synonym for “giving up the ghost,” is that there are New Testament passages where it clearly denotes someone dying without any personal choice to depart. For instance, Acts 5:1-10 report the deaths of Ananias and Siphira who died after lying to God. Verses 5 and 10 both use the identical phrase “gave up the ghost” in reference to their deaths. Clearly, Ananias and his wife Siphira did not willingly choose to depart from this life.

Acts 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? **thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.** 5 **And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost (1634):** and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was **about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.** 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed

together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 **Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost (1634):** and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

Similarly, Acts 12:23 reports that Herod died after being struck with a plague because he received proclamations that he was a god.

Acts 12:21 And upon a set day **Herod**, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. 22 **And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god,** and not of a man. 23 **And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost (1634).**

We can see then that the language of the phrase “gave up the ghost” in no way indicates that Jesus made a conscious choice as to the timing of his death. Besides the language, there are two additional reasons we should refrain from concluding that the timing of Jesus’ death resulted from a conscious decision on Jesus’ part as he hung upon the cross. First, the idea that Jesus chose to end his suffering seems to be at odds with the consistent biblical portrayal of his willingness to endure these things in order to accomplish atonement.

Second, the idea that Jesus’ death occurred prematurely as a result of his own choice rather in some sense undermines the clear New Testament argument that he died because he was slain by the hands of wicked men. How can the New Testament authors unequivocally state that wicked men killed Jesus if, in fact, he expired voluntarily before their actions actually caused him to die?

Luke 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, **and be slain**, and be raised the third day.

Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and **by wicked hands have crucified and slain.**

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

Third, other biblical details provide us with some insight into other physical causes that may have contributed to Jesus dying before evening (while the two thieves seemed like they still had hours to live). These details are available from other biblical passages which describe the suffering, appearance, and manner of Christ’s death.

We will begin with Isaiah's description of the death of the suffering servant. As we read Isaiah's prophecy, let us consider this account in light of the physical trauma that would occur to a stoning victim. Of particular interest is the description provided in chapter 53:5.

Isaiah 53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.** 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. **10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;** he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Chapter 53:5 informs us that Christ would be wounded, bruised, and that he would have stripes. The Hebrew words here are “chalal” (02490, “wounded,”) “daka” (01792, “bruised,”) and “chabbuwrah” (02250, “stripes.”)

02490 חָלַל **chalal**

a primitive root [compare 02470]; v; {See TWOT on 660} {See TWOT on 661} AV-begin 52, profane 36, pollute 23, defile 9, break 4, wounded 3, eat 2, slay 2, first 1, gather grapes 1, inheritance 1, began men 1, piped 1, players 1, prostitute 1, sorrow 1, stain 1, eat as common things 1; 141

1) to profane, defile, pollute, desecrate, begin

1a) (Niphal)

1a1) to profane oneself, defile oneself, pollute oneself

1a1a) ritually

1a1b) sexually

1a2) to be polluted, be defiled

1b) (Piel)

- 1b1) to profane, make common, defile, pollute
- 1b2) to violate the honour of, dishonour
- 1b3) to violate (a covenant)
- 1b4) to treat as common
- 1c) (Pual) to profane (name of God)
- 1d) (Hiphil)
 - 1d1) to let be profaned
 - 1d2) to begin
- 1e) (Hophal) to be begun
- 2) to wound (fatally), bore through, pierce, bore**
- 2a) (Qal) to pierce**
- 2b) (Pual) to be slain**
- 2c) (Poel) to wound, pierce**
- 2d) (Poal) to be wounded**
- 3) (Piel) to play the flute or pipe

01792 אכד **daka'**

- a primitive root (compare 01794); v; {See TWOT on 427}
- AV-break 3, break in pieces 3, crush 3, bruise 2, destroy 2, contrite 1, smite 1, oppress 1, beat to pieces 1, humble 1; 18
- 1) **to crush, be crushed**, be contrite, be broken
 - 1a) (Niphal)
 - 1a1) **to be crushed**
 - 1a2) to be contrite (fig.)
 - 1b) (Piel) **to crush**
 - 1c) (Pual)
 - 1c1) **to be crushed, be shattered**
 - 1c2) to be made contrite
 - 1d) (Hithpael) to allow oneself to be crushed

02250 הרובה **chabbuwrah**

- from 02266; n f; {See TWOT on 598 @@ "598g"}
- AV-stripe 3, hurt 1, wounds 1, blueness 1, bruise 1; 7
- 1) **bruise, stripe, wound, blow**

These three Hebrew words together provide a description of the kinds of physical wounds that Christ suffered as he was put to death. They convey everything from the basic fact that he was being put to death as well as the notion that in the process he was pierced through, bruised, crushed, and struck. However, we cannot fail to take into account the fact that Isaiah's discussion of the suffering servant actually begins in chapter 52:13.

Isaiah 52:13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14 As many were astonished (08074) at thee; **his visage (04758) was so marred (04893) more than any man, and his form (08389) more than the sons of men:** 15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and

that which they had not heard shall they consider. **53:1** Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

The Hebrew word for “astonied” is “shamem” (08074.) The word for “visage” is “mar’eh” (04758.) The verb “marred” is translated from the Hebrew word “mishchath” (04893.) The word “form” comes from the Hebrew noun “to’ar” (08389.)

08074 שָׁמֵם **shamem**

a primitive root; v; {See TWOT on 2409}

AV-desolate 49, astonished 20, desolation 7, waste 5, destroy 3, wondered 2, amazed 1, astonishment 1, misc 4; 92

1) to be desolate, be appalled, stun, stupefy

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to be desolated, be deflowered, be deserted, be appalled

1a2) to be appalled, be awestruck

1b) (Niphal)

1b1) to be desolated, be made desolate

1b2) **to be appalled**

1c) (Polel)

1c1) **to be stunned**

1c2) **appalling, causing horror** (participle)

1c2a) horror-causer, appaller (subst)

1d) (Hiphil)

1d1) to devastate, ravage, make desolated

1d2) **to appal, show horror**

1e) (Hophal) to lay desolate, be desolated

1f) (Hithpolel)

1f1) to cause to be desolate

1f2) **to be appalled, be astounded**

1f3) to cause oneself desolation, cause oneself ruin

04758 הָאֵרָם **mar’eh**

from 07200; n m; {See TWOT on 2095 @@ "2095i"}

AV-appearance 35, sight 18, **countenance 11**, vision 11, favoured 7, look upon 4, fair + 02896 2, misc 15; 103

1) sight, appearance, vision

1a) sight, phenomenon, spectacle, **appearance**, vision

1b) what is seen

1c) a vision (supernatural)

1d) sight, vision (power of seeing)

04893 מִשְׁחַח **mishchath**

from 07843; n m; {See TWOT on 2370 @@ "2370c"}

AV-marred 1, corruption 1; 2

1) **disfigurement (of face)**, corruption

08389 תֹּאֵר **to’ar**

from 08388; n m; {See TWOT on 2491 @@ "2491a"}

AV-form 3, goodly 2, beautiful + 03303 2, favoured 2, comely 1, countenance 1, fair + 03303 1, goodly + 02896 1, resembled 1, **visage 1; 15**

1) **shape, form, outline, figure, appearance**

By viewing Isaiah 53:5 in its context we see that we have to interpret Christ's being wounded, pierced, crushed, and struck in accordance with Isaiah 52:14's assertion that Christ's visage was marred more than any man and that his form was marred more than the sons of man. Together Isaiah 52:14 and 53:5 create a picture in which the wounds that Christ suffered left both his face and body so severely disfigured that it was appalling and shocking to those who saw him. According to Isaiah, the cause of Christ's death included physical trauma which severely wounded both Jesus' face and body.

Certainly, such terms may lend themselves quite well to New Testament reports that Jesus was beaten and flogged by his captors as well as pierced with a spear (after his death). However, we must also realize that Isaiah does not specify exactly what this severe physical trauma was caused by. All we have is a description of a man whose face and body are severely disfigured through wounds described as crushing, bruising, and striking. If we take the nature of Isaiah's description by itself without filtering it through New Testament reports about Jesus' being beaten and flogged, it becomes apparent that Isaiah may be describing someone who had been stoned. Indeed, being repeatedly struck with rocks of different sizes thrown at you over a period of hours would have a brutal result on a person's physical appearance. It is not hard to see how that may be exactly what Isaiah was describing. Still these considerations are inconclusive. To make a more certain determination we need further information. For that we turn to the New Testament.

As we proceed, we must keep in mind that crucifixion was not a particularly bloody mode of execution. Those condemned to crucifixion certainly would have experienced some bleeding as they were nailed to the cross as well as from any physical trauma they suffered before the execution itself. However, typically crucifixion was not a bloody death. Rather, the victims usually died of exhaustion or starvation over 12 to 72 hours. They did not die quickly as would be the case from significant blood loss.

Crucifixion – Death was probably caused by starvation or exhaustion, the cramped position of the body causing fearful tortures, and ultimately gradual paralysis. Whether a foot-rest was provided is open to doubt; but usually the body was placed astride a board ("sedile"). **The agony lasted at least twelve hours, in some cases as long as three days.** To hasten death the legs were broken, and this was considered an act of clemency (Cicero, "Phil." xiii. 27). The body remained on the cross, food for birds of prey until it rotted, or was cast before wild beasts. Special permission to remove the body was occasionally granted. – Jewish Encyclopedia

These facts are significant because both Old and New Testament texts place a great deal of importance on the shedding of Christ's blood in order to accomplish atonement and redemption. (For references to the importance of Christ's blood in accordance with Mosaic ritual requirements see: Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, Acts 20:28, Romans 3:25, 5:9, 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:25-27, Eph. 1:7, 2:13, Col. 1:14, 20, Hebrews 9:7-25, 10:4, 19, 29, 11:28, 12:24, 13:11, 20, 1 Peter 1:2, 19, 1 John 1:7, Rev. 1:5, 5:9, 7:14, and 12:11.)

Certainly, Christ bled as a result of his being beaten, flogged, nailed to the cross, and pierced with the sword. But the blood that would have accompanied these injuries doesn't really compare to the kind of bloodshed that occurred with the sacrificed animals which prefigured Christ's atoning work. The sacrificing of an animal was a bloody event. And the bloodshed was not incidental. These animals did not bleed as a result of various injuries, beatings, or stabbing. Rather, their blood was the central feature of the sacrificial ritual. Because the blood of Christ is prefigured by and so strongly connected to these animal sacrifices and the shedding of their blood, we should then expect that his death would also involve significant bloodshed in a manner similar to the kind of bloodshed exhibited in the animal sacrifices. This kind of bloodshed did not accompany crucifixion. Nor is it reasonable to conclude that this kind of bloodshed resulted from the beatings and floggings that Jesus endured and from which Pilate thought he would certainly recover from. Again, these observations are inconclusive, but they point us toward a potentially useful question. If not from crucifixion, beating, or flogging, what kind of physical trauma would have caused Jesus' blood to be shed in a manner paralleling and fulfilling the bloodshed of sacrificial animals?

We have already seen that the Jewish authority had, on previous occasions, sought to stone Jesus for the same crime (blasphemy) for which they condemned him to death during the Passover festival. And we have seen that both Paul and Stephen were stoned in accordance with the will of the Jewish authorities. By comparing the circumstances of Stephen and Paul's stoning with statements about Jesus' death some additional insights may become available.

Accounts of Stephen's death are provided in Acts 6, 7, and 22. In these passages we find that Stephen was stoned outside the city just as Christ was killed outside the city. Likewise, both men met their deaths at the pronouncement of the Jewish authorities on the charge of blasphemy.

Acts 6:11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council (4892), 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us... 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned (3036) him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name

was Saul. 59 **And they stoned (3036) Stephen**, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

More significant is a particular comment Paul makes in Acts 22:20 regarding Stephen's being stoned to death. In this verse Paul remarks about Stephen's blood being shed.

Acts 22:20 And **when the blood (129) of thy martyr Stephen was shed (1632)**, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of **them that slew (337) him**.

Paul's remarks about Stephen's blood being shed are informative for several reasons. First, it confirms that bloodshed was a feature of execution by stoning. Second, the language Paul employs here directly parallels New Testament language about Christ's blood being shed. The Greek word for shed is "ekcheo" (1632.) The Greek word for blood is "haima" (129.)

1632 εκχεω **ekcheo** or (by variation) εκχυνω **ekchuno**

from 1537 and χεω cheo; TDNT-2:467,220; v

AV-pour out 12, shed 4, shed forth 1, spill 1, run out 1, shed 5, run greedily 1, shed abroad 1, gush out 1, spill 1; 28

1) to pour out, shed forth

2) metaph. to bestow or distribute largely

129 αιμα **haima**

of uncertain derivation; TDNT-1:172,26; n m

AV-blood 99; 99

1) blood

1a) of man or animals

1b) refers to the seat of life

1c) of those things that resemble blood, grape juice

2) blood shed, to be shed by violence, slay, murder

These same two Greek words are paired together only 10 times in the New Testament. Romans 3:15 speaks of those who are swift to shed blood. The three occurrences of the phrase in Revelation discuss the shedding of the blood of martyrs and saints by wicked men. These verses in Revelation include persons killed in the end times. In these passages, the context is general as is the timeframe and, consequently, we cannot adequately identify any particular manner of death.

However, the remaining six occurrences of this phrase all occur in the immediate context of stoning. The first two instances occur in Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:50 where Jesus speaks of the shedding of blood in reference to the prophets who were killed under the Law of Moses.

Luke 11:47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of **the prophets, and your fathers killed them**. 48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your

fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, **I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:** 50 **That the blood (129) of all the prophets, which was shed (1632)** from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

Matthew 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 **That upon you may come all the righteous blood (129) shed (1632) upon the earth,** from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. 37 **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee,** how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

As we examined Matthew 23 earlier we noted the use of the Greek word “stauroo” (4717) translated as “crucify” in verse 34 coupled with the reference to stoning in verse 37. In the context of the Law of Moses, we concluded that these are most likely references to the Mosaic requirements for those condemned for capital offenses to be stoned and hung on a tree. With those observations in mind, it becomes reasonable to understand that both Luke 11 and Matthew 23 are identifying the shedding of blood through the act of stoning.

The remaining four instances of this phrase occur in Acts 22:20’s descriptions of Stephen’s death by stoning and in the record in Matthew, Mark, and Luke of Jesus’ statement that his blood would be shed for the forgiveness of sins and to establish the new covenant.

Matthew 26:28 For this is my blood (129) of the new testament, which is shed (1632) for many for the remission of sins.

Mark 14:24 And he said unto them, **This is my blood (129) of the new testament, which is shed (1632) for many.**

Luke 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood (129), which is shed (1632) for you.**

Acts 22:20 And **when the blood (129) of thy martyr Stephen was shed (1632),** I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of **them that slew (337) him.**

The use of the same Greek phrasing concerning Jesus’ shed blood and Stephen’s shed blood in these four verses draws a conceptual parallel between the two events. Consider the information when viewed collectively. The Law of Moses

required stoning for those condemned for blasphemy (and for false prophets). Steven was taken outside the city and stoned for blasphemy. The Jewish authorities sought to stone Jesus for blasphemy more than once on previous occasions. Pilate gave the Jewish leaders permission to kill Jesus according to Jewish law. Jesus was then taken outside the city and hung on a tree. Hanging on a tree was directly associated with Mosaic requirements for stoning blasphemers and false prophets. Although Pilate expected Jesus to make a full recovery after being scourged and beaten, Jesus died in about half the minimum time it normally takes for a crucifixion victim to expire. And the same Greek phrase for “shedding blood” is used to describe the shedding of Jesus’ blood, Stephen’s blood, and the stoning of previous prophets and righteous men in general.

While the comparison between the shedding of Jesus and Stephen’s blood seems compelling, it is also admittedly inconclusive especially when viewed on its own. However, as we can see, if we weigh this New Testament language within the ancient Jewish understanding of terminology related to capital punishment, the conclusion becomes even more compelling.

In their article on capital punishment Jewish Encyclopedia discusses the relationship of the terms employed in the Law of Moses regarding instructions for capital punishment.

First, as the article notes, of the total number of passages which discuss capital punishment, only a few actually specify the mode of execution. Particular serious crimes (including blasphemy) are specifically said to require stoning. However, other passages discussing capital offenses often simply state that the condemned must die a violent death without stating the mode of execution. Likewise, as Jewish Encyclopedia explains in the Law of Moses the prescription of death is commonly attached to some rendering of the phrase “their blood shall be upon them.” As the article below explains, though the particular mode of execution is not stipulated in such passages, ancient Jews understood these requirements to put someone to death as well as the expression “blood be upon” someone as references to stoning.

Capital Punishment – Modes of Punishment – Only in comparatively few instances is the particular mode of death incurred by the commission of a crime prescribed. Blasphemy, idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, witchcraft, prostitution by a betrothed virgin, or deceiving her husband at marriage as to her chastity (Deut. xxii. 21), and the rebellious son are, according to the Pentateuchal laws, to be punished with death by stoning;... With reference to all other capital offenses, the law ordains that the perpetrator shall die a violent death, occasionally adding the expression, "His (their) blood shall be upon him (them)." This expression, as we shall see presently, post-Biblical legislation applies to death by stoning...Rabbinic Developments. —In Rabbinic Law: Similarly in cases where the Pentateuch imposes the death penalty, without specifying the mode of death, Talmudic jurisprudence discovers the particular mode intended by means of the principle of Gezerah shawah. Thus: In reference to the man or the woman who makes use of "a familiar spirit"—

i.e., "a wizard"—the law says (Lev. xx. 27), "They shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them" (). Here the expression "Demehem bam" is plainly used in connection with death by stoning; hence it is argued that, wherever the same expression occurs in the Pentateuch in connection with the death penalty, it means death by stoning, and consequently the punishment of the crimes mentioned in Lev. xx. 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, is the same: death by stoning (Mek., Mishpatim, 17; Sifra, Kedoshim, ix.; Sanh. 53b, 66a). Again, with reference to the perpetrator of bestiality the law reads (Lev. xx. 15), "He shall surely be put to death; and ye shall slay the beast." Here the particular mode of death is not stated, but rabbinic law again infers it by means of a Gezerah shawah. Since, with reference to the enticer to idolatry, the Bible (Deut. xiii 10 [A. V. 9]) employs the term Harag = "to slay" ("Thou shalt surely slay him"), and this is immediately explained by the addition (ib. 11 [A. V. 10]), "Thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die," it follows that the term "harag" used in reference to the beast likewise means to slay by stoning. – Jewish Encyclopedia

Jewish Encyclopedia cites several passages in the Old Testament to illustrate the Jewish understanding that references to "blood being upon" someone and "slaying" someone were taken to refer to the practice of execution by stoning. These passages include Leviticus 20:27.

Leviticus 20:2 Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death (04191): the people of the land shall stone (07275) him with stones...9 For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death (04191): he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him...11 And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death (04191); their blood shall be upon them. 12 And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death (04191): they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. 13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death (04191); their blood shall be upon them...15 And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death (04191): and ye shall slay (02026, LXX 2289) the beast. 16 And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill (02026, LXX 615) the woman, and (LXX 2288, 2289) the beast: they shall surely be put to death (04191); their blood shall be upon them...27 A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death (04191): they shall stone (07275) them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

As we look at Leviticus 20, we should draw attention to several factors. First, we find the phrase "surely be put to death" which is translated from the Hebrew verb "muwth" (04191.) Earlier we saw that like Leviticus 20:2 and 27, Deuteronomy 21:21-22 and 22:24 (and several other passages) also employed the Hebrew verb "muwth" (04191) to refer to death by stoning. Deuteronomy 21 is significant

because it is the passage that the New Testament quotes to refer to Jesus being put to death by the Jewish authorities. Below Deuteronomy 21 and 22 are several other passages in which the Law of Moses intertwines the phrases “put to death” or “they shall die” (04191) with stoning.

Deuteronomy 21:21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, **that he die (04191)**: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. 22 **And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death (04191), and he be to be put to death (04191), and thou hang him on a tree:**

Deuteronomy 22:21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father’s house, **and the men of her city shall stone (05619) her with stones that she die (04191)**: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father’s house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you...24 Then ye shall **bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone (05619) them with stones that they die (041491)**; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour’s wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

Exodus 19:12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount **shall be surely put to death (04191)**: 13 **There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned (05619)**, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

Exodus 21:28 If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall **be surely (05619) stoned (05619)**, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. 29 But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, **and his owner also shall be put to death (04191)**.

Leviticus 24:11 And the Israelitish woman’s son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother’s name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:) 12 And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them. 13 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 14 **Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.** 15 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. 16 **And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death (04191), and all the congregation shall certainly (07275) stone (07275) him:** as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, **when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death (04191)**...23 And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should **bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone (07275) him with stones.** And the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Numbers 15:35 And the LORD said unto Moses, **The man shall be surely put to death (04191): all the congregation shall stone (07275) him with stones without the camp.** **36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned (07275) him with stones, and he died (04191);** as the LORD commanded Moses.

Deuteronomy 13:1 **If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,** **2** And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; **3** Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4** Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. **5** **And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death (04191);** because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. **6** If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; **7** Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; **8** Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: **9** **But thou shalt surely kill (02026, LXX 615) him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death (04191), and afterwards the hand of all the people.** **10** **And thou shalt stone (05619) him with stones, that he die (04191);** because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. **11** And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

1 Kings 12:18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; **and all Israel stoned (07275) him with stones, that he died (04191).** Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 10:18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that was over the tribute; **and the children of Israel stoned (07275) him with stones, that he died (04191).** But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

Second, as we have seen, Jewish Encyclopedia stipulates that ancient Jews understood passages like these to invoke the concept of blood being upon someone as a reference to execution by stoning.

Capital Punishment – Modes of Punishment – Only in comparatively few instances is the particular mode of death incurred by the commission of a crime prescribed. Blasphemy, idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, witchcraft, prostitution by a betrothed virgin, or deceiving her husband at marriage as to her chastity (Deut. xxii. 21), and the rebellious son are, according to the Pentateuchal laws, to be punished with death by **stoning**;... With reference to all other capital offenses, the law ordains that the perpetrator shall die a violent death, occasionally adding **the expression, "His (their) blood shall be upon him (them)."** This expression, as we shall see presently, post-Biblical legislation applies to death by stoning...**Rabbinic Developments.** —**In Rabbinic Law:** Similarly in cases where the Pentateuch imposes the death penalty, without specifying the mode of death, Talmudic jurisprudence discovers the particular mode intended by means of the principle of Gezerah shawah. Thus: **In reference to the man or the woman who makes use of "a familiar spirit"—i.e., "a wizard"—the law says (Lev. xx. 27), "They shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them" (). Here the expression "Demehem bam" is plainly used in connection with death by stoning; hence it is argued that, wherever the same expression occurs in the Pentateuch in connection with the death penalty, it means death by stoning, and consequently the punishment of the crimes mentioned in Lev. xx. 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, is the same: death by stoning** (Mek., Mishpatim, 17; Sifra, Kēdoshim, ix.; Sanh. 53b, 66a). **Again, with reference to the perpetrator of bestiality the law reads (Lev. xx. 15), "He shall surely be put to death; and ye shall slay the beast."** Here the particular mode of death is not stated, but rabbinic law again infers it by means of a Gezerah shawah. Since, with reference to the enticer to idolatry, the Bible (Deut. xiii 10 [A. V. 9]) employs the term Harag = "to slay" ("Thou shalt surely slay him"), and this is immediately explained by the addition (ib. 11 [A. V. 10]), "Thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die," it follows that the term "harag" used in reference to the beast likewise means to slay by stoning. – Jewish Encyclopedia

Knowing that ancient Jews understood the Mosaic expression “blood being upon them” as a reference to death by stoning, we should not be surprised to find this phrase is also applied to the Jewish authorities in the New Testament in reference to Christ’s death. In fact, we find this phrase in the very same passage in which the apostles plainly state that Jesus was killed by the Jewish leadership in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:21-23, a passage which not only prescribed hanging on a tree but specifically in conjunction with stoning.

Acts 5:27 And when they had brought them, they set them before **the council (4892, sunedrion): and the high priest asked them,** 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, **and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.** 29 **Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said,** We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up **Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.**

In this passage then we have two references that were known and used by first-century Jews to refer to death by stoning. And these references to stoning are

applied to Jesus by two different groups of first-century Jews. The Jewish leadership and High Priest use the expression “his blood be upon” in reference to Jesus’ death. And the apostles use the expression “slew and hanged on a tree” from Deuteronomy 21 in reference to Jesus’ death. Given that the gospels record that the Jewish leadership sought to stone Jesus on several occasions and that they sought to put him to death in accordance with the Mosaic requirements for blasphemy (which required stoning) we can only conclude that this exchange in Acts 5 is, in fact, two Jewish groups using Mosaic references to death by stoning. The implication is that stones were thrown at Jesus as he hung upon the cross.

Similarly, we know from Acts that Paul himself was stoned on one of his early missionary journeys.

Acts 14:6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about (4066): **7** And there they preached the gospel. **8** And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: **9** The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed... **19** And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned (3034) Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. **20** Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. **21** And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, **22** Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. **23** And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. **24** And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. **25** And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: **26** And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

Paul makes mention of his stoning in his second letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned (3034), thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

However, once we understand the timing and geography surrounding Paul’s stoning it is possible to find a few other references to it in his epistles. According to Acts 14, Paul’s stoning occurred in Lystra. Lystra was a city in Lycaonia.

3082 λυστρα **Lustra**

of uncertain origin; ; n pr loc

AV-Lystra 6; 6

Lystra =" ransoming"

1) a city in the eastern part of the great plain of Lycaonia

As Acts 14:6-7 explains Paul and Barnabas were, at that time, preaching the gospel in the region around Lystra. That region included several Roman provinces and cities around the area known as Lycaonia. Lycaonia bordered the Roman province of Galatia.

4066 περιχωρος **perichoros**

from 4012 and 5561; ; adj

AV-region round about 5, country round about 3, country about 1, region that lieth around about 1; 10

1) **lying round about, neighbouring**

1a) **the region round about**

1b) the region of Jordan

3071 λυκαονια **Lukaonia**

perhaps remotely from 3074; ; n pr loc

AV-Lycaonia 1; 1

Lycaonia =" wolf land"

1) **a region in Asia Minor, situated between Pisidia, Cilicia, Cappadocia, Galatia and Phrygia, whose chief towns were Derbe, Lystra and Iconium**

1053 γαλατια **Galatia**

of foreign origin; ; n pr loc

AV-Galatia 4; 4

Galatia =" land of the Galli, Gauls"

1) **the Roman province of Galatia may be roughly described as the central region of the peninsula of Asia Minor, bounded on the north by Bithynia and Paphlagonia; on the east by Pontus; on the south by Cappadocia and Lycaonia; on the west by Phrygia**

The first mention of Paul visiting Galatia specifically occurs in Acts 16:6. This is not a great deal of time after Paul's stoning took place in Lystra. However, we must keep in mind that Galatia is a province, not a city. And Paul's letter to the Galatians is written to churches in the area of that Roman province. Therefore, we know that in this letter Paul is writing to Christians in churches that were also near to the area of Lystra in Lycaonia.

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, **unto the churches of Galatia (1053):**

The potential significance of these facts can be seen in relation to remarks Paul makes in regard to a particular physical infirmity that he had when they first encountered him. Paul first references this infirmity in chapter 4 of this epistle. It apparently involved difficulties with his eyes.

Galatians 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. 12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me

at all. 13 **Ye know how through infirmity (769) of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.** 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but **received me** as an angel of God, **even as Christ Jesus.** 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for **I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.**

However, in Galatians 6:17, we find Paul make the curious claim that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Galatians 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for **I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.**

What marks is Paul referring to here? Certainly, whatever he had in mind was something that the Galatians would have understood. We know that Paul was stoned so severely that his attackers thought him to be death. Undoubtedly the wounds from that event would have taken a long time to fully heal. And we know that this event took place not long before he first visited Christians in the region of Galatia. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that in Galatians 4, Paul is referring to ongoing physical trauma which the Galatians themselves had very probably seen first-hand that he suffered from as a result of having been stoned not long before he first visited them. The fact that Galatians 6:17 is also discussing enduring physical trauma from stoning is therefore not at all unreasonable.

The only issue that potentially makes identifying Paul's physical trauma with stoning difficult to accept is Paul's direct attachment of this to something Christ himself endured. Here we must ask what physical marks did Jesus himself have which Paul also had? Perhaps, Paul was simply speaking generally and thereby indicating that he had received physical injuries from persecution indicating that he was Christ's servant. But many of the apostles and early Christians suffered physical persecution for the faith. Paul's statements seem uniquely applied to himself. These observations lead toward the reasonable conclusion that Paul is here referring to physical trauma that was exclusively shared by himself and Christ. (Perhaps a few others, such as Stephen, could be said to share these marks also, but not the vast majority of Christians.)

Furthermore, the phrase "bear in my body" seems to invoke a very specific and physical focus suggesting that Christ and Paul had similar physical injuries. Certainly, Jesus had scars from on his hands and feet where he was nailed to the cross. And he had the wound from being pierced by the sword. But at this point in his life, Paul had never been crucified, nor was he stabbed. So, it seems unlikely that Paul is declaring that he had the nail scars or stab-wound that Jesus received. At the least, we must ask which is less likely: that for an unknown reason Paul had somehow acquired the wounds that Christ suffered from crucifixion or that both Paul and Christ both endured physical trauma resulting from stoning? When we place these two options side-by-side in competition with one another, it becomes quite reasonable to conclude that Paul is making another reference to

Christ having been stoned as he hung upon the cross. When we consider this along with the rest of the evidence we've collected, this interpretation of Paul's comments to the Galatians is hardly far fetched.

In addition to these New Testament indications that Jesus may have been stoned as he hung upon the cross, we can also consider the Talmudic record of rabbinic perspectives on Jesus' death. Several ancient Jewish sources report on the death of Jesus (Yeshu.) These Jewish texts evidence Jewish rabbinic traditions that Jesus was killed during Passover and that he was hung from a tree. But, the critical point is that they also exhibit rabbinic traditions that he was stoned in accordance the Jewish application of Mosaic Law.

Yeshu – Sanhedrin 43a relates the trial and execution of Yeshu and his five disciples. Here, Yeshu is a sorcerer who has enticed other Jews to apostasy. A herald is sent to call for witnesses in his favour for forty days before his execution. No one comes forth and in the end he is stoned and hanged on the Eve of Passover. – wikipedia.org

Jesus in the Talmud – Sanhedrin 43a relates the trial and execution of Jesus and his five disciples.[77] Here, Jesus is a sorcerer who has enticed other Jews to apostasy. A herald is sent to call for witnesses in his favour for forty days before his execution. No one comes forth and in the end he is stoned and hanged on the Eve of Passover. – wikipedia.org

MISHNAH. **If then they find him innocent, they discharge him; but if not, he goes forth to be stoned,** and a herald precedes him [crying]: so and so, the son of so and so, is going forth to be stoned because he committed such and such offence, and so and so are his witnesses. Whoever knows anything in his favour, let him come and state it. GEMARA. Abaye said; It must also be announced: On such and such a day, at such and such an hour, and in such and such a place [the crime was committed], in case there are some who know [to the contrary], so that they can come forward and prove the witnesses Zomemim. AND A HERALD PRECEDES HIM etc. This implies, only immediately before [the execution], but not previous thereto.³³ [In contradiction to this] it was taught: **On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!** – Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin 43a, http://halakhah.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html

There is even more Jewish evidence on this matter. **Professor Jacob Z. Lauterbach in his book “Rabbinic Essays” recalls a Jewish Baraita (a Jewish teaching that was not codified when the first part of the Talmud was devised or that no longer appears in the Talmud) in which it says that Jesus actually met his death by stoning and not by crucifixion alone: In a long discourse on this subject, the Baraita recorded: “he [Jesus] is going out to be stoned”**

followed by “they *hanged* him” (pp. 494-497). This early Jewish tradition shows that Christ was indeed stoned to death while he was hanging on the tree. This is similar to what the Temple Scroll said, but in the case of the Temple Scroll the victim was tied (not nailed) to the tree and then he was stoned to death. – Ernest L. Martin, *The Secrets of Golgatha*, p. 195

Jacob Zallel Lauterbach – Jacob Zallel Lauterbach (1873–1942) was an American Judaica scholar and author who served on the faculty of Hebrew Union College and composed responsa for the Reform movement in America. He specialized in Midrashic and Talmudical literature, and is best known for his landmark critical edition and English translation of the Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael.
– wikipedia.org

As we conclude this portion of our study we should summarize our findings in regard to Jesus’ death. First, we have seen that the biblical, historical, and linguistic evidence that Jesus was crucified to a tree outweighs the alternative conclusion that he was hung on a wooden post. Second, while it remains inconclusive, there is good reason to consider that Jesus was stoned by the Jewish authorities and perhaps the crowds as he hung on the cross. If Jesus was, in fact, stoned in accordance with Mosaic Law as he hung upon the cross, this would help explain why (even though Pilate thought Jesus would recover from previous wounds) Jesus died in less than six hours when crucifixion victims (including the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus) typically lasted for twelve to 72 hours. Likewise, Jesus being stoned would also explain how his blood was shed in a manner paralleling the bloodshed of sacrificial animals and Stephen who was also stoned.

The bible places a great deal of significance on Christ’s blood being shed in regard to atonement and redemption. Crucifixion does not result in this kind of blood loss. As we have seen, crucifixion victims typically survive long enough to die of suffocation or starvation, something that would not occur if they were experiencing dramatic blood loss. While Jesus’ beatings or floggings would have resulted in some bleeding, neither can be considered as a likely cause for such bloodshed as stoning, especially since Pilate expected Jesus to survive the beating and flogging. While Jesus’ stoning is not conclusive or essential to the more substantial case that Christ’s was hung on a tree, it does fit with the relevant biblical and historical material we have. And there is little reason to absolutely reject the possibility.

For some, there may be a temptation to be hesitant and, subsequently, to not allow the idea that Jesus may have been stoned by the Jewish authorities as he hung upon the cross. The rationale for this hesitation might be the notion that if such a thing did occur it would certainly be more clearly portrayed in the New Testament. However, once the biblical and historical evidence has been taken into account, the objection that stoning is not portrayed (particularly in the subtext) in common New Testament descriptions of Christ’s death seems less credible. Perhaps we just miss the available evidence because we aren’t aware of all the biblical details and because we fail to consider these things within the proper first-

century Jewish context. In this way, something that would have been obvious to first-century Jews and adequately indicated by the kind of references we do find in the bible and in the historical records can be easily lost on those of us who are not sufficiently familiar with the biblical and historical context and linguistic descriptions of Christ's death. In other words, because it may have been common knowledge to them as first-century Jews who were well-versed in the Law of Moses, the New Testament authors may not have felt it was necessary to spell out these matters for us with more explicitly than they already have. We have to consider that the obscurity that may exist for us on this issue could be more of a product of our lack of biblical and historical context than it is a failure of the bible to adequately attest to factors that potentially contributed to Christ's death.

In conclusion, since we cannot simply dismiss the idea that Jesus was stoned as he hung upon the cross, we cannot discard the idea that he was hung upon a tree on the basis that he wasn't stoned. Since, Jesus' stoning in accordance with Mosaic Law is a real biblical and historical possibility, we must allow the weight of the evidence in favor of his being crucified on a tree to be given its proper due as at least evidentially superior to the alternative view (that he was crucified on a wooden post). In the next section we will add evidence from the early church in support of the conclusion that Christ was crucified on a tree and not a wooden post.

(Additional note: Earlier in this section we compared aspects of Stephen's death with Christ's. In his book, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, author and apologist Craig Blomberg addresses one particular difference Stephen's death and Christ's. That difference relates to the fact that the Jewish authorities had to officially acquire Roman approval for putting Jesus to death. However, Acts 7:58 reports no such approval in the case of Stephen. As Blomberg explains, the reason for this difference is that Stephen's stoning seems to be portrayed more as the reaction and work of the angry mob rather than an intentional act of the Jewish governing authorities.

Third, the claim that **the Romans retained the sole right of capital punishment (18:31)** has often been termed a Johanine error, especially in view of the counter-example in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58). But **this right is strikingly confirmed by a passage in the Talmud, which says that capital punishment had been taken from the Jews forty years before the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (pSanh. 1:1, 7:2). Stephen's stoning reads more like mob action which defied technical legalities.** – Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 178-179

Early Christian Descriptions of Christ's "Cross"

Along with the New Testament and Talmudic accounts indicating that Jesus was crucified on a tree, we also have testimony from the early church. In this section

of our study we will present statements from leading Christians of the first three centuries AD describing Jesus' cross as a tree rather than a wooden post. We will begin with the Epistle of Barnabas, which is dated to between 70-131 AD.

The Epistle of Barnabas – The first editor of the epistle, Hugo Menardus (1645) advocated the genuineness of its ascription to Barnabas, but the opinion today is that Barnabas was not the author. **Many scholars today believe it was probably written in the years 70 – 131**, and addressed to Christian Gentiles. In 16.3-4, the Epistle reads: "Furthermore he says again, 'Behold, those who tore down this temple will themselves build it.' It is happening. For because of their fighting it was torn down by the enemies. And now the very servants of the enemies will themselves rebuild it." **This passage clearly places Barnabas after the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70. But it also places Barnabas before the Bar Kochba Revolt of AD 132, after which there could have been no hope that the Romans would help to rebuild the temple. The document must come from the period between the two revolts.** The place of origin remains an open question, although the Greek-speaking Eastern Mediterranean appears most probable (Treat). – wikipedia.org

In like manner He points to the cross of Christ in another prophet, who saith,(18) "And when shall these things be accomplished? **And the Lord saith, When a tree shall be bent down**, and again arise, and when blood shall flow out of wood."(19) Here again you have an intimation concerning the cross, and Him who should be crucified. – The Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter XII

The Son of God therefore came in the flesh with this view, that He might bring to a head the sum of their sins who had persecuted His prophets(1) to the death. For this purpose, then, He endured. For God saith, "The stroke of his flesh is from them;"(2) and(3) "when I shall smite the Shepherd, then the sheep of the flock shall be scattered."(4) **He himself willed thus to suffer, for it was necessary that He should suffer on the tree. For says he Who prophesies regarding Him, "Spare my soul from the sword,(5) fasten my flesh with nails;** for the assemblies of the wicked have risen up against me."(6) And again he says, "Behold, I have given my back to scourges, and my cheeks to strokes, and I have set my countenance as a firm rock."(7) – The Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter V

Another early Christian who speaks of Christ's cross as a tree is Ignatius. Ignatius was the disciple of John the Apostle and a bishop of Antioch. He lived and wrote in the first decades of the second century AD. In his Letter to the Trallians, Ignatius, though speaking figuratively about false teachers, provides some indication that, like other trees, Christ's cross had branches.

Ignatius of Antioch – Ignatius of Antioch (Ancient Greek: Ἰγνάτιος, also known as Theophorus from Greek Θεοφόρος "God-bearer") (ca. 35 or 50-between 98 and 117)[1] was **among the Apostolic Fathers, was the third Bishop of Antioch, and was a student of John the Apostle.**[2][3] – wikipedia.org

Flee, therefore, those evil offshoots [of Satan], which produce death-bearing fruit, whereof if any one tastes, he instantly dies. **For these men are not the planting of the Father. For if they were, they would appear as branches of the cross,** and their fruit would be incorruptible. By it(9) He calls you through His passion, as being His members. The head, therefore, cannot be born by itself, without its members; God, who is [the Saviour] Himself, having promised their union. (10) – Ignatius, Letter to the Trallians, Chapter 11

Like Ignatius, Polycarp was a disciple of John the Apostle. He was a bishop of Smyrna, one of the seven churches to whom the Book of Revelation was delivered. He lived and wrote between 69-155 AD.

Polycarp – Saint Polycarp (69 – 155) (Ancient Greek: Πολύκαρπος) was a **2nd century Christian bishop of Smyrna.**[1]...**It is recorded by Irenaeus, who heard him speak in his youth, and by Tertullian,[3] that he had been a disciple of John the Apostle.**[4] – wikipedia.org

Let us then continually persevere in our hope, and the earnest of our righteousness, which is **Jesus Christ, "who bore our sins in His own body on the tree,"**(3) "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,"(4) but endured all things for us, that we might live in Him.(5) Let us then be imitators of His patience; and if we suffer(6) for His name's sake, let us glorify Him.(7) For He has set us this example s in Himself, and we have believed that such is the case. – Polycarp, Epistle to the Philippians, Chapter VIII

Like his predecessor Polycarp, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, writing at around 180 AD, also described Jesus' cross simply as a tree.

Irenaeus – Saint Irenaeus (/aɪrəˈniːəs/; Ancient Greek: Εἰρηναῖος), (**2nd century AD – c. 202**) was Bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, then a part of the Roman Empire (now Lyon, France). He was **an early church father and apologist,** and his writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. **He was a hearer of Polycarp,[1] who in turn was a disciple of John the Evangelist.** – wikipedia.org

3. And not by the aforesaid things alone has the Lord manifested Himself, but [He has done this] also by means of His passion. **For doing away with [the effects of] that disobedience of man which had taken place at the beginning by the occasion of a tree, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;"**(3) **rectifying that disobedience which had occurred by reason of a tree, through that obedience which was [wrought out] upon the tree [of the cross].** – Irenaeus, Book IV, CHAP.XVI

3. Therefore, by remitting sins, He did indeed heal man, while He also manifested Himself who He was. For if no one can forgive sins but God alone, while the Lord remitted them and healed men, it is plain that He was Himself the Word of God made the Son of man, receiving from the Father the power of remission of sins; since He was man, and since He was God, in order that since as man He suffered

for us, so as God He might have compassion on us, and forgive us our debts, in which we were made debtors to God our Creator. And therefore David said beforehand, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD has not imputed sin;"(6) pointing out thus that remission of sins which follows upon His advent, by which "He has destroyed the handwriting" of our debt, and "fastened it to the cross;"(7) **so that as by means of a tree we were made debtors to God, [so also] by means of a tree we may obtain the remission of our debt.** – Irenaeus, Book IV, CHAP.XVII

Just earlier than Irenaeus, in the middle of the second-century AD, apologist Justin Martyr likewise identified Jesus' cross as a tree and related it to the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness.

Justin Martyr – Justin Martyr, also known as just Saint Justin (103–165), was an **early Christian apologist**. Most of his works are lost, but two apologies and a dialogue survive. – wikipedia.org

Then **I replied, "Just as God commanded the sign to be made by the brazen serpent,** and yet He is blameless; even so, though a curse lies in the law against persons who are crucified, yet no curse lies on the Christ of God, by whom all that have committed things worthy of a curse are saved.(1) – Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, CHAP. XCIV – **In What Sense He Who Hangs On A Tree Is Cursed**

"For it was not without design that the prophet Moses, when Hur and Aaron upheld his hands, remained in this form until evening. **For indeed the Lord remained upon the tree almost until evening,** and they buried Him at eventide; then on the third day He rose again. – Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, CHAP. XCVII

And when I had quoted this, **I added, "Hear, then, how this Man, of whom the Scriptures declare that He will come again in glory after His crucifixion, was symbolized both by the tree of life, which was said to have been planted in paradise,** and by those events which should happen to all the just. Moses was sent with a rod to effect the redemption of the people; and with this in his hands at the head of the people, he divided the sea. By this he saw the water gushing out of the rock; and when he cast a tree into the waters of Marah, which were bitter, he made them sweet. Jacob, by putting rods into the water-troughs, caused the sheep of his uncle to conceive, so that he should obtain their young. With his rod the same Jacob boasts that he had crossed the river. He said he had seen a ladder, and the Scripture has declared that God stood above it. But that this was not the Father, we have proved from the Scriptures. And Jacob, having poured oil on a stone in the same place, is testified to by the very God who appeared to him, that he had anointed a pillar to the God who appeared to him. And that the stone symbolically proclaimed Christ, we have also proved by many Scriptures; and that the unguent, whether it was of oil, or of stacte,(4) or of any other compounded sweet balsams, had reference to Him, we have also proved,(5)

inasmuch as the word says: 'Therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.'(6) For indeed all kings and anointed persons obtained from Him their share in the names of kings and anointed: just as He Himself received from the Father the titles of King, and Christ, and Priest, and Angel, and such like other titles which He bears or did bear. Aaron's rod, which blossomed, declared him to be the high priest. Isaiah prophesied that a rod would come forth from the root of Jesse,[and this was] Christ. And David says that the righteous man is 'like the tree that is planted by the channels of waters, which should yield its fruit in its season, and whose leaf should not fade.'(7) Again, the righteous is said to flourish like the palm-tree. God appeared from a tree to Abraham, as it is written, near the oak in Mature. The people found seventy willows and twelve springs after crossing the Jordan.(8) David affirms that God comforted him with a rod and staff. Elisha, by casting a stick(9) into the river Jordan, recovered the iron part of the axe with which the sons of the prophets had gone to cut down trees to build the house in which they wished to read and study the law and commandments of God; **even as our Christ, by being crucified on the tree**, and by purifying[us] with water, has redeemed us, though plunged in the direst offences which we have committed, and has made[us] a house of prayer and adoration. Moreover, it was a rod that pointed out Judah to be the father of Tamar's sons by a great mystery." – Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, CHAP. LXXXVI

In addition, Melito of Sardis, writing at about the time of Irenaeus, also describes Christ's cross as a tree.

Melito of Sardis – Melito of Sardis (died c. 180 C.E.) was the bishop of Sardis near Smyrna in western Anatolia, and a **great authority in Early Christianity**: Jerome, speaking of the Old Testament canon established by Melito, quotes Tertullian to the effect that he was esteemed a prophet by many of the faithful. – wikipedia.org

For this reason did the Father send His Son from heaven without a bodily form, that, when He should put on a body by means of the Virgin's womb, and be born man, He might save man, and gather together those members of His which death had scattered when he divided man. *And further on: -The earth shook, and its foundations trembled; the sun fled away*, and the elements turned back, and the day was changed *into night: for they could not endure the sight of their Lord hanging on a tree.* – Melito of Sardis, From the Discourse on Soul and Body

He was nailed upon the tree, and yet was the Lord of all things. - Melito of Sardis, From the Discourse on the Cross.

He who was betrayed by Judas; He who was apprehended by the priests; He who was condemned by Pilate; **He who was pierced in the flesh; He who was hanged on the tree**; He who was buried in the earth; He who rose from the place of the dead; He who appeared to the apostles; He who was carried up to heaven; He who is seated at the right hand of the Father; - Melito of Sardis, On Faith

This is He who took a bodily form in the Virgin, **and was hanged upon the tree**, and was buried within the earth, and suffered not dissolution; He who rose from the place of the dead, and raised up men from the earth—from the grave below to the height of heaven. This is the Lamb that was slain; this is the Lamb that opened not His mouth. This is He who was born of Mary, fair sheep *of the fold*. This is He that was taken from the flock, and was led to the slaughter, and was slain in the evening, and was buried at night; **He who had no bone of Him broken on the tree**; He who suffered not dissolution within the earth; He who rose from the place of the dead... Thou slewest thy Lord, and He was lifted up upon the tree; and an inscription was fixed *above*, to show who He was that was slain. And who was this? (that which we shall not say is *too shocking to hear*, and that which we shall say is very dreadful: nevertheless hearken, and tremble.) *It was He* because of whom the earth quaked. **He that hung up the earth in space was Himself hanged up**; He that fixed the heavens was fixed *with nails*; **He that bore up the earth was borne up on a tree**; the Lord *of all* was subjected to ignominy in a naked body—God put to death! the King of Israel slain with Israel's right hand! Alas for the new wickedness of the new murder! The Lord was exposed with naked body: He was not deemed worthy even of covering; and, in order that He might not be seen, the luminaries turned away, and the day became darkened **because they slew God, who hung naked on the tree...** This is He who made the heaven and the earth, and in the beginning, together with the Father, fashioned man; who was announced by means of the law and the prophets; who put on a bodily form in the Virgin; **who was hanged upon the tree**; who was buried in the earth; who rose from the place of the dead, and ascended to the height of heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father... - Melito of Sardis, V

Next we have Tertullian, who, writing around the year 200 AD, also identifies Jesus' cross as a tree. Tertullian likewise connects Jesus' crucifixion to the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness. He also cites instances in which Roman authorities crucified criminals to trees.

Why, again, did the same Moses, after the prohibition of any “likeness of anything,” Exodus 20:4 set forth a brazen serpent, placed on a “tree,” in a hanging posture, for a spectacle of healing to Israel, at the time when, after their idolatry, they were suffering extermination by serpents, except that in this case he was exhibiting the Lord's cross on which the “serpent” the devil was “made a show of,” and, for every one hurt by such snakes— that is, his angels — on turning intently from the peccancy of sins to the sacraments of Christ's cross, salvation was outwrought? For he who then gazed upon that (cross) was freed from the bite of the serpents. Come, now, if you have read in the utterance of the prophet in the Psalms, “God has reigned from the tree,” I wait to hear what you understand thereby; for fear you may perhaps think some carpenter-king is signified, and not Christ, who has reigned from that time onward when he overcame the death which ensued from His passion of “the tree.” – Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, Chapter 10. Concerning the Passion of Christ, and Its Old Testament Predictions and Adumbrations.

That I may refute more thoroughly these charges, I will show that in part openly, in part secretly, practices prevail among you which have led you perhaps to credit similar things about us. Children were openly sacrificed in Africa to Saturn **as lately as the pro-consulship of Tiberius, who exposed to public gaze the priests suspended on the sacred trees overshadowing their temple-so many crosses on which the punishment which justice craved overtook their crimes, as the soldiers of our country still can testify who did that very work for that proconsul.** – Tertullian, Apology, Chapter IX

So that it is, indeed, a mighty consolation to us who are punished for these gods, to find them suffer the like with us, before they come to be worshipful; **for Christians are fastened to crosses and stumps of trees;** and have you ever an image that has not been so applied in its formation? It is upon a frame of wood in the form of a gibbet where the body first takes its degree of divinity. Our Christian sides are torn with nails; but how is every member of your poor gods mauled with hatchets, saws, and files? – Tertullian, Apology, Chapter XII

Give us now what names you please from the instruments of cruelty you torture us by; call us Sarmenticians and Semaxians, **because you fasten us to trunks of trees,** - Tertullian, Apology, Chapter L

And finally, writing at around 230 AD, we have Hippolytus who repeatedly identifies Jesus' cross as a tree and who, like Tertullian, reports on the Roman practice of crucifying Christians to trees.

But that He is one who has appeared (amongst us), both having submitted to generation from a virgin, and as a man having held converse among men. And, on account of the birth that had taken place, He confessed Himself to those beholding Him a Son, no doubt; yet He made no secret to those who could comprehend Him of His being a Father. **That this person suffered by being fastened to the tree,** and that He commended His spirit unto Himself, having died to appearance, and not being (in reality) dead. And He raised Himself up the third day, after having been interred in a sepulchre, and wounded with a spear, and perforated with nails. – Hippolytus, Chapter IX

For the blessed David sings, "Rulers have taken counsel together against the Lord," [1148] and so forth. And of this conspiracy the Spirit prophesied, saying, "Let not my soul contend," desiring to draw them off, if possible, so that that future crime might not happen through them. "They slew men, and houghed the bull;" by the "strong bull" he means Christ. And "they houghed," since, **when He was suspended on the tree, they pierced through His sinews...And Christ, too, when He suffered on the cross,** delivered us from accusations and sins, and washed us in His own blood most pure. And He who fixed the heavens like a vault is fastened to the cross by the Jews. And He who is inseparable from the Father cries to the Father, and commends to Him His spirit; and bowing His head, He gives up the ghost, who said, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again;" [1705] and because He was not overmastered by death, as being Himself Life, He said this: "I lay it down of myself." [1706] And He who

gives life bountifully to all, has His side pierced with a spear. And He who raises the dead is wrapped in linen and laid in a sepulchre, and on the third day He is raised again by the Father, though Himself the Resurrection and the Life. – Hyppolytus, On Genesis

When he came into the world, He was manifested as God and man. And it is easy to perceive the man in Him, when He hungers and shows exhaustion, and is weary and athirst, and withdraws in fear, and is in prayer and in grief, and sleeps on a boat's pillow, and entreats the removal of the cup of suffering, and sweats in an agony, and is strengthened by an angel, and **betrayed by a Judas, and mocked by Caiaphas, and set at nought by Herod, and scourged by Pilate, and derided by the soldiers, and nailed to the tree by the Jews, and with a cry commits His spirit to His Father, and drops His head and gives up the ghost, and has His side pierced with a spear, and is wrapped in linen and laid in a tomb, and is raised by the Father on the third day.** – Hyppolytus, On Psalm II, From the Exposition of the Second Psalm

1. He who delivered from the lowest hell the man first made of earth, when lost and bound by the chains of death; He who came down from above, and exalted earth-born man on high; He who is become the preacher of the Gospel to the dead, the redeemer of souls, and the resurrection of the buried;--He became the helper of man in his defeat, and appeared in his likeness, the first-born Word, and took upon Himself the first Adam in the Virgin; and though spiritual Himself, He made acquaintance with the earthy in the womb; though Himself the ever-living One, He made acquaintance with the dead in transgressions; Himself the heavenly One, He bore the terrestrial on high; Himself of lofty extraction, He chose, by His own subjection, to set the slave free; and making man, who turns to dust, and forms food for the serpent, unconquerable as adamant, and that, too, **when hung upon the tree, He declared him lord over his victor, and is thus Himself proved conqueror by the tree.** – Hyppolytus, On Psalm CIX. Or CX. From the Commentary by the Same on the Great Song.

11. "He shall wash his garment in wine," that is, according to that voice of His Father which came down by the Holy Ghost at the Jordan. [1428] "And his clothes in the blood of the grape." In the blood of what grape, then, but just **His own flesh, which hung upon the tree** like a cluster of grapes?--from whose side also flowed two streams, of blood and water, in which the nations are washed and purified, which (nations) He may be supposed to have as a robe about Him. [1429] – Hyppolytus, The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus, Part II – Dogmatical and Historical.

1. He who rescued from the lowest hell the first-formed man of earth when he was lost and bound with the chains of death; He who came down from above, and raised the earthy on high; [1858] He who became the evangelist of the dead, and the redeemer of the souls, and the resurrection of the buried,--He was constituted the helper of vanquished man, being made like him Himself, (so that) the first-born Word acquainted Himself with the first-formed Adam in the Virgin; He who is spiritual sought out the earthy in the womb; He who is the ever-living One

sought out him who, through disobedience, is subject to death; He who is heavenly called the terrene to the things that are above; He who is the nobly-born sought, by means of His own subjection, to declare the slave free; He transformed the man into adamant who was dissolved into dust and made the food of the serpent, and declared **Him who hung on the tree to be Lord over the conqueror**, and thus through the tree He is found victor. – Hyppolytus, Fragments of Discourses or Homilies, VII

2. Andrew preached to the Scythians and Thracians, and was crucified, suspended on an olive tree, at Patr, a town of Achaia; and there too he was buried. – Hyppolytus, Hippolytus on the Twelve Apostles

These two belonged to the seventy disciples who were scattered [2030] by the offence of the word which Christ spoke, "Except a man eat my flesh, and drink my blood, he is not worthy of me." [2031] **But the one being induced to return to the Lord by Peter's instrumentality, and the other by Paul's, they were honoured to preach that Gospel [2032] on account of which they also suffered martyrdom, the one being burned, and the other being crucified on an olive tree.** – Hyppolytus, – Hyppolytus, Hippolytus on the Seventy Apostles

While these early Christian accounts are less authoritative regarding biblical facts they certainly are authoritative when it comes to the perceptions of Christ's cross which existed among Christians during the late first century, second-century, and early third century. And like the New Testament and Talmudic accounts, we can see that the earliest Christians commonly spoke of Jesus being crucified on a tree. In this regard we must recognize that we have the combined testimony of the biblical authors, ancient non-Christian Jewish reports, and the earliest church writers and apologists indicating that Jesus was crucified on a tree (not a wooden post). This is a significant amount of positive evidence with very little (if any) biblical, linguistic, or historical reasons to challenge the conclusion it suggests.

Consequences of Christ's Death on Sacrificial Ritual and the Authority of the Sanhedrin

As we study the significance of Christ's atoning work in relation to the larger biblical picture, there are several significant effects that the condemnation of Christ by the Sanhedrin had upon the judicial authority and sacrificial acceptance of the non-Christian Jewish leadership. These consequences are recorded for us in Talmudic tradition as well as other ancient Jewish sources.

Earlier in our study we noted that the official judicial chambers of the Sanhedrin were located in the Temple complex itself next to the court of the priests.

Sanhedrin – More correctly Sanhedrin (Gr. synedrion), meaning "a sitting together," or a "council." This word (rendered "council," A.V.) is frequently used in the New Testament #Mt 5:22 26:59 Mr 15:1 etc. to denote **the supreme judicial and administrative council** of the Jews... **As the highest court of judicature,** "in all causes and over all persons, ecclesiastical and civil, supreme," its decrees were binding, not only on the Jews in Palestine, but on all Jews wherever scattered abroad. Its jurisdiction was greatly curtailed by Herod, and afterwards by the Romans. **Its usual place of meeting was within the precincts of the temple, in the hall "Gazith,"** – Easton's Bible Dictionary

Sanhedrin – Place of Meeting. – **The meetings took place in one of the chambers of the Temple** in order that the discussions and decrees might thereby be invested with greater religious authority. **According to a passage in the Mekilta (Mishpatim, 4 [ed. Weiss, p. 87a]), the Sanhedrin, which was empowered to pass the sentence of capital punishment, sat "in the vicinity of the altar," i.e., in one of the chambers of the inner court of the Temple.** It was called "the hall of the βουλευταί" because the latter sat there. Subsequently it was called "lishkat parhedrin" = "the hall of the πρόεδροι" (Yoma 8b). **In this hall there was also a private room for the high priest** (Yoma 10a; Tosef., Yoma, i. 2). The βουλευταί or the πρόεδροι assembled in this private room (comp. Matt. xxvi. 57; Mark xiv. 63) before they met in the hall. – Jewish Encyclopedia

Sanhedrin – In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Hall of Hewn Stones in the Temple in Jerusalem... The Sanhedrin met in a building known as the Hall of Hewn Stones (Lishkat Ha-Gazith), which has been placed by the Talmud and many scholars as built into the north wall of the Temple Mount, half inside the sanctuary and half outside, with doors providing access both to the Temple and to the outside... **After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70, the Sanhedrin was re-established in Yavneh with reduced authority.** – wikipedia.org

We are told that half of the Sanhedrin Hall was in the Court of the Israelites and half in the Court of the Priests (Middot 5:1, Sanhedrin 11:2, Yoma 25a.) – Ernest L. Martin, The Secrets of Golgotha, p. 223

However, beginning forty years before the Temple was destroyed (in 70 AD) the Sanhedrin was forced to relocate from their chambers near the court of the priests in the Temple. This removal took place in several stages. First, they moved from the Chamber of Hewn Stone to a lesser site that was still on the Temple Mount and known as the trading station. As the Talmud reports, this first move occurred forty years before the Temple was destroyed. Since the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, this would mean that the Sanhedrin was banished (as the Talmudic account says) from the court of the priests at around 30 AD, a year commonly identified as the year of Christ's death.

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin was banished (from the Chamber of Hewn Stone) and sat in the trading station (on the Temple Mount). – Shabbath 15a, The Talmud

Sanhedrin – The place in which the sessions of the Sanhedrin were ordinarily held was, according to the Talmud, a hall called Gazzith...Forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem...the sessions of the Sanhedrin were removed from the hall Gazzith to a somewhat greater distance from the Temple building, although still on Mount Moriah. – Smith's Bible Dictionary

The banishment from the court of the priests in the Temple itself to a lesser location still on the Temple Mount did not last long. But, instead of moving back into the Temple, the Sanhedrin was once again forced to move farther away. Josephus, the first-century Jewish priest and historian reports that at some point the Sanhedrin was further removed from the inner court and seemingly off the Temple mount entirely to another structure located within the city and known as the xystus. During Greek and Roman times, the city of Jerusalem had at least one xystus, which was the term for a covered porch outside a gymnasium or for the gymnasium itself.

Sanhedrin – The Sanhedrin did not, however, always retain this place of meeting; for, according to Josephus, the βουλή was in the vicinity of the xystus ("B. J." v. 4, § 2), hence beyond the Temple mount, or, according to Schürer (l.c. ii. 211), on it, though not within the inner court. In the last years of the Jewish state, therefore, to which the account in Josephus must be referred, the Sanhedrin left its original seat... – Jewish Encyclopedia

Xystus (architectural term) – Xystus was the Greek architectural term for the covered portico of the gymnasium, in which the exercises took place during the winter or in rainy weather, etc. The Romans applied the term to the garden walk in front of the porticoes, which was divided into flower beds with borders of box, and to a promenade between rows of large trees.[1] "Xystus" derives from the Greek word xustos, meaning "smooth", due to the polished floor of the xystus. "Xystus" was used, by extension, to refer to the whole building containing the gymnasium and portico, as in the xysti of Jerusalem and Elis. – wikipedia.org

A fourth relocation occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD wherein the Sanhedrin was forced to move to the city of Jabneh.

The Sanhedrin suffered ten removals; from the Chamber of the Hewn Stone to the trading-station, from the trading-station to (the city) of Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Jabneh... - Rosh Hashanah 31a,b , the Talmud

Sanhedrin – The Great Sanhedrin ceased to exist at Jerusalem after the disastrous rebellion against Rome in ad 66–70. However, a sanhedrin was assembled at Jabneh, and later in other localities in Palestine – Encyclopedia Britannica

The banishment of the judiciary council (which presided over Christ's condemnation and execution) from God's presence in the Temple and ultimately from Jerusalem itself is a serious consequence indicating God's displeasure at the wicked misuse of their authority and opposition to the Messiah. But these removals were not the only negative developments corresponding to Christ's death that were experienced by the Jewish authorities.

The Talmud also informs us that at the same time the Sanhedrin was removed from the Temple itself, God also stopped accepting their sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. As the Talmud explains, there were certain signs that were understood to indicate God had accepted their sacrifices on Yom Kippur. And according to the Talmud, in the years before 30 AD, these signs were sometimes positive (indicating acceptance) and sometimes negative. However, for the entire forty-year period prior to 70 AD, the signs always indicated that God did not accept their offerings.

Azazel – The scarlet thread is symbolically referenced in Isa. i. 18; and the Talmud states (ib. 39a) that during the forty years that Simon the Just was high priest, the thread actually turned white as soon as the goat was thrown over the precipice: a sign that the sins of the people were forgiven. In later times the change to white was not invariable: a proof of the people's moral and spiritual deterioration, that was gradually on the increase, until forty years before the destruction of the Second Temple, when the change of color was no longer observed (l.c. 39b). [14] – wikipedia.org

3. According to b. Yoma 39b, God did not accept the sacrifices that were offered on the Day of Atonement for the last forty years before the destruction of the [Second] Temple (this was known to the people by means of a series of special signs, all of which turned up negative for those forty years; see b. Yoma 39a). – Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Volume 1, Historical Objections, p. 74

Our Rabbis taught: Throughout the forty years that Simeon the Righteous ministered, the lot ['For the Lord'] would always come up in the right hand; from that time on, it would come up now in the right hand, now in the left. And [during the same time] the crimson-coloured strap would become white. From that time

on it would at times become white, at others not. Also: Throughout those forty years the westernmost light¹³ was shining, from that time on, it was now shining, now failing; ... **Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Hekal would open by themselves, until R. Johanan b. Zakkai rebuked them, saying: Hekal, Hekal, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself?⁵ I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. – Yoma 39a, 39b, Babylonian Talmud**

"R. Nahman b. Isaac said it was the tongue of scarlet', as it has been taught: 'Originally they used to fasten the thread of scarlet on the door of the [Temple] court on the outside. 28 If it turned white the people used to rejoice, 29 and if it did not turn white they were sad. They therefore made a rule that it should be fastened to the door of the court on the inside. People, however, still peeped in and saw, and if it turned white they rejoiced and if it did not turn white they were sad. They therefore made a rule that half of it should be fastened to the rock and half between the horns of the goat that was sent [to the wilderness]' ... If you assume It was R. Johanan b. Zaccai [who made the rule], was there in the days of R. Johanan b. Zaccai a thread of scarlet [which turned white]? Has it not been taught: 'R. Johanan b. Zaccai lived altogether a hundred and twenty years. For forty years he was in business, forty years he studied, and forty years he taught', **and it has further been taught: 'For forty years before the destruction of the Temple the thread of scarlet never turned white but it remained red'.** 30 Further, the statement of the Mishnah is, 'After the destruction of the Temple R. Johanan b. Zaccai made a rule'. 31 [What says] the other [to this]? — During those forty years that he studied 32 his status was that of a disciple sitting before his teacher, and he would offer a suggestion and make good his reasons."

(28) After the High Priest had performed the service on the Day of Atonement. V. Yoma, 67a.

(29) This being a sign that their sins had been forgiven.

(30) When then could R Johanan have had an opportunity of making this rule?

(31) This applies presumably to all his rules and regulations.

(32) While the Temple still existed.

– Rosh HaShanah 31b, Babylonian Talmud,

http://halakhah.com/pdf/moed/Rosh_HaShanah.pdf

We have already seen that at Christ's death, the veil in front of the Temple was torn in half. And we have seen that the huge stone lintel above the veil is also reported to have been broken due to the earthquake that occurred at that point. We can add to this that these Talmudic accounts report that the doors to the Temple opened up of their own accord. In addition, at that same time, the Sanhedrin was banished from their location in the court of the priests within the Temple. Ultimately the Sanhedrin was removed from the Temple Mount and from the city of Jerusalem itself. And, during that entire forty-year period after Jesus' death,

God refused to accept the atonement sacrifices on Yom Kippur. Finally, the Temple and the city of Jerusalem itself were destroyed in 70 AD, bringing an end to the practice of the Mosaic Law. The fact that this situation has persisted for nearly 2,000 years indicates that the coinciding of these events with Christ's death is not incidental.

All of these details fit well with the discussion of the Mosaic Covenant in Hebrews 8 which concludes by stating that the Mosaic Covenant was, even at that time, in the process of decaying and would soon vanish away.

Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now **that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.**

The Greek word translated as “made old” and “decayeth” is “palaioo” (3822.) It means to become worn out.

3822 παλαιωω **palaioo**

from 3820; TDNT-5:720,769; v

AV-wax old 2, make old 1, decay 1; 4

1) **to make ancient or old**

1a) **to become old, to be worn out**

1b) **of things worn out by time and use**

2) **to declare a thing to be old and so about to be abrogated**

Besides the two occurrences of “palaioo” here in Hebrews 8:13, we have two other passages where it is used in the New Testament. Both verses indicate that “palaioo” refers to something being replaced because it is not fit for use anymore.

Luke 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; **provide yourselves bags which wax (3822) not old (3822)**, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

Hebrews 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 **They shall perish;** but thou remainest; **and they all shall wax old (3822) as doth a garment;** 12 **And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed:** but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

This is exactly what Talmudic and New Testament report occurred in regard to the Mosaic system in the years after Christ's death. The practice of the Laws of Moses as well as its institutions (the Sanhedrin) and its sacrificial rituals were failing and being removed until, in 70 AD, the entire system was destroyed in the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the desolation and demolition of the Temple itself. All of these historic and biblical facts confirm Christ's fulfillment of the Law of Moses and the replacement of that Law with the new covenant and the Law of Christ just as we have seen in the course of this study.