



**sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;** 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 65 **Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.** 66 **What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.** 67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, 68 Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?...**27:1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:** 2 And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

**Mark 14:53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.** 54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55 **And the chief priests and all the council (4892) sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death;** and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together. 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63 **Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?** 64 **Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.** 65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands. 66 **And as Peter was beneath in the palace (833),** there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: **15:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.**

**John 19:7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.**

As Jewish Encyclopedia explains, the Law of Moses required death by stoning for anyone found guilty of blasphemy.

**Capital Punishment – Modes of Punishment – 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;** – Jewish Encyclopedia

The specific passage recording the Mosaic requirement for death by stoning for all blasphemers comes from Leviticus 24:11-23.

**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.

In this passage we are first given an instance in which someone blasphemes the name of the Lord (verse 11.) The text then explains that the blasphemer was taken outside the camp and stoned (verse 13.) Notice that, as with the killing of the red heifer and the burning of the remains of other sacrificial animals, stoning a blasphemer had to be done outside the camp (or city.) In connection to the specific case just mentioned, verse 16 instructs the people of Israel that a blasphemer shall surely be put to death. However, the manner of death is not specified in this verse. But, if we continue through the remainder of the account, we see that verse 23 connects the specific case from verses 11-13 with the general instruction to put to death blasphemers in verse 16. Verse 23 reiterates that persons guilty of such crimes must be brought outside the camp and stoned.

Consequently, it is no surprise when the New Testament reports that the Jewish leaders sought to stone Jesus because they believed he had committed the crime of blasphemy.

**John 10:31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone (3034) him.** 32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; **for which of those works do ye stone (3034) me?** 33 **The Jews answered him, saying,**

**For a good work we stone (3034) thee not; but for blasphemy;** and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

**John 11:8** His disciples say unto him, **Master, the Jews of late sought to stone (3034) thee;** and goest thou thither again?

Other instances of the Jewish authorities seeking to stone someone for blasphemy are included in the New Testament. The cases of Stephen and Paul are found in the Book of Acts. The account of Stephen's death begins in Acts 6 where we see that, like Jesus, he is accused of blasphemy.

**Acts 6:13** And set up false witnesses, which said, **This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place (5117),** and the law: **14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place (5117),** and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. **15 And all that sat in the council (4892),** looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Notice that (as was the case with Jesus) Stephen is being accused before the Jewish high court known as the Sanhedrin as they sat in their chambers. This is demonstrated by several factors. First, there is the use of the Greek word "sunedrion" (4892) in verse 13.

4892 συνέδριον **sunedrion**

from a presumed derivative of a compound of 4862 and the base of 1476; TDNT-7:860,1115; n n

AV-council 22; 22

1) any assembly (esp. of magistrates, judges, ambassadors), whether convened to deliberate or pass judgment

2) any session or assembly or people deliberating or adjudicating

2a) **the Sanhedrin, the great council at Jerusalem, consisting of the seventy one members, viz. scribes, elders, prominent members of the high priestly families and the high priest, the president of the assembly. The most important causes were brought before this tribunal, inasmuch as the Roman rulers of Judaea had left to it the power of trying such cases, and also of pronouncing sentence of death,** with the limitation that a capital sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrin was not valid unless it was confirmed by the Roman procurator.

2b) a smaller tribunal or council which every Jewish town had for the decision of less important cases.

Second, note that verse 13 also explains that the Sanhedrin was seated. This is likely a reference to their being seated in their official chambers inside the Temple courts. As we continue with the account of Stephen into Acts 7 we find out that, in accordance with Mosaic Law, Stephen was taken outside the city and stoned for blasphemy.

**Acts 7:58 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.

Paul was present at Stephen's stoning. However, after his conversion Paul himself was the target of plans by other Jews to put him to death by stoning. One of these attempts on Paul's life is discussed in Acts 14. This passage recounts Paul and Barnabas' missionary work in Iconium. There they encounter non-Christian Jews who object to Paul and Barnabas' teaching and attempt to kill the believers by stoning them.

**Acts 14:1** And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. 2 **But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles,** and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. 3 **Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord,** which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with **the apostles.** 5 **And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them...**

The intention to stone Paul and Barnabas in Iconium was unsuccessful. However, as we continue in Acts 14, we see that the non-Christian Jews follow Paul and Barnabas from Iconium to Lystra and there they succeed in driving Paul out of the city and stoning him.

**Acts 14:19** 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.

While the translation may seem to indicate that Paul was dragged out of the city after he was stoned the language itself doesn't convey that conclusion. As we know Jewish law required that a person who was to be stoned was first to be taken out of the city before being put to death. Likewise, the Greek text in Acts 14:19 simply states that they stoned Paul, removed him from the city, and believed that Paul was, in fact, dead. The Greek word translated as "drew" is "suro" (4951) and it speaks of dragging someone to their punishment. (This is how it is used by Luke elsewhere in Acts – see Acts 8:3 and 17:6.) Given the requirements of Jewish law it is, therefore, likely that Paul was dragged from the city and then stoned.

4951 σὺρω **suro**

probably akin to 138; to trail; ; v

AV-draw 3, drag 1, hale 1; 5

1) to draw, **drag**

1a) **of one before the judge, to prison, to punishment**

From the accounts of Jesus, Stephen, and Paul we can see that, in accordance with the Law of Moses, the method of execution employed by the Jewish authorities was stoning. The reason that it is important to recognize that the Jewish authorities sought to stone Jesus and Paul (as they did Stephen) relates to the Law of Moses' instructions about stoning found in Deuteronomy 21 and 22.

Earlier we discussed Leviticus 24 and the Mosaic requirements for stoning. Additional information on this procedure is provided in the Book of Deuteronomy. The critical verse occurs in Deuteronomy 21:22. We have also included Deuteronomy 21:21 and a portion of Deuteronomy 22 in order to demonstrate that Deuteronomy 21:22 is spoken within the immediate context of the topic of 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:** 23 **His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day;** (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

**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 (04191)**; 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.

The critical detail here is that Deuteronomy 21:22 commands the Israelites to hang a person who was to be stoned on a tree. Notice also that verse 23 specifies that they are not to be left on the tree through the night but must be buried that same day. In Jewish reckoning, new days began at sunset and, consequently, this passage requires that the person be removed by sunset of the day on which he was hung.

We also must be careful here. This verse is not talking about Roman crucifixion. The mode of death is clearly specified as stoning, not crucifixion. As in Leviticus and throughout the Law of Moses, those who are to be put to death ("muwth," 04191) are to be taken outside the city and stoned to death. They are not hung and left to die by means of the hanging itself. A comparison of uses of the Hebrew word "muwth" (04191) further demonstrates that stoning is what Deuteronomy 21:22 has in mind. The following passages all show that in the Law of Moses the command to "put to death" ("muwth," 04191) included the specification that the required mode of death was stoning.

**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.

**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.**

**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.

The most significant detail from these Mosaic texts is that Deuteronomy 21:22 indicates that the Law of Moses required the criminal to be hung from a tree. The Book of Joshua provides accounts of instances when these Old Testament

punishments were carried out. In both Joshua 8 and 10, men were hung on trees until sundown just as Deuteronomy 21:22-23 instructed.

**Joshua 8:29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree (06068) until eventide (06153): and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree (06068), and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.**

**Joshua 10:24 And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them. 25 And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight. 26 And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees (06068) until the evening (06153). 27 And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees (06068), and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.**

Earlier we reviewed historic and linguistic material which informed us that the Greek verb “stauroo” (4717) which is translated in the New Testament as “crucify” simply indicates that a condemned person was hung or affixed to a vertical object. The use of “stauroo” does not tell us the type of object that a person was hung upon or affixed to (whether a tree or a wooden post.) We have since become familiar with the fact that the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 21:21-23) required those executed for capital crimes to be stoned and hung on a tree. Likewise, the Law of Moses spoke of execution using the Hebrew verb “muwth” (04191) which most often corresponded to execution by stoning.

Capital sentences requiring this procedure also included false prophets. Deuteronomy 18:20 plainly states that a false prophet must be put to death using the same Hebrew term “muwth” (04191) which, as Jewish Exyclopedia explains, ancient Jews understood to refer 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, 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**

**Deuteronomy 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die (04191).**

With these facts in mind we must consider statements made in Matthew 23. Here Jesus discusses the historic role of the Jewish leadership in putting to death, not false prophets which is what Deuteronomy 18:20 intended, but true prophets who had been sent by God. As Jesus presents this rebuke he specifically says that some of these prophets were stoned (verse 37) which is exactly what we would expect based on the Law of Moses' requirements and the ancient Jewish understanding and application of them.

Perhaps more significant is the fact that Jesus also connects this to crucifixion in the same statement. In verse 34, Jesus uses the word "stauroo" (4717) or crucified. Essentially, Jesus is saying that they would "kill and crucify" those he sent in the future (verse 34) because of their track record of "killing and stoning" the prophets of days gone by (verses, 35 and 37). In fact, the word for "kill" is the same in verses 34 and 37, which suggest that the words "crucify" and "stoning" are simply being alternated interchangeably in reference to the same, continuous and longstanding means of execution. The continuity and connection between these two phrases in combination with the close association of stoning and hanging on a tree in Deuteronomy 21:21-23 likewise strongly suggests that, according to Jesus, the prophets of old were likely also hung on a tree and stoned to death.

**Matthew 23:34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill (615) and crucify (4717); 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 (615) 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!

4717 σταυροω **stauroo**

from 4716; TDNT-7:581,1071; v

AV-crucify 46; 46

1) **to stake, drive down stakes**

2) **to fortify with driven stakes, to palisade**

3) to crucify

3a) to crucify one

3b) metaph. to crucify the flesh, destroy its power utterly (the nature of the figure implying that the destruction is attended with intense pain)

When considered within the linguistic and historical context of the Law of Moses and first-century Judaism's practice of execution, Jesus' statement provides additional insight into the apostolic usage of "stauroo" (4717) in the New Testament. Jewish authorities in Old Testament times as well as the first-century AD did not execute by use of crucifixion. Instead, they hung people to trees and stoned them. This included those condemned as false prophets. Jesus' pairing of stoning with "stauroo" in reference to the death of those unjustly condemned as false prophets must be understood in accordance with Mosaic requirements to stone and hang from a tree rather than in reference to the Roman or Gentile practice of crucifixion.

This being the case, we now have strong New Testament evidence that Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament itself (at least sometimes) used "stauroo" to refer to the act of hanging or affixing someone on a tree in accordance with Mosaic Law. Although we know from other explicit verses that Jesus was crucified (not merely hung on a tree in some other manner), this verse makes it clear that we cannot assume anything about whether Jesus' crucifixion occurred on a post or a tree based on the mere use of the term "stauroo," especially given the fact that these verses apply "stauroo" to any means by which someone is fixed to a tree, even when it is not crucifixion. Furthermore, in Matthew 23 Jesus is clearly connecting the unjust stoning and hanging of the prophets to his own death at the hands of the Jewish leadership. In light of this biblical, linguistic, and historical material we must understand that other New Testament passages may also simply use "stauroo" (4717) to refer to the Jewish practice of hanging someone on a tree, without necessarily discussing crucifixion in general or more specifically the particular type of object to which someone is affixed.

Now that we have become familiar with Deuteronomy 21:21-23's requirements for the punishment of capital crimes, additional inquiry is warranted. We know that the Law of Moses required capital crimes to be carried out by hanging the

condemned on trees and stoning them. We now need to further examine whether these criminals were hung from the tree after they were stoned to death or whether they were hung from the tree in order to be secured so that they could be stoned to death.

Interestingly enough, the Temple Scroll (one of the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran,) provides evidence that some ancient Jews understood Deuteronomy 21:22 to require a criminal to be hung by a tree first and then stoned. Below is the information on the Temple Scroll followed by the relevant quote from the scroll's discussion of Deuteronomy 21:22.

**Temple Scroll – The Temple Scroll is one of the longest of the Dead Sea Scrolls.** Among the discoveries at Qumran it is designated: 11QTemple Scroll(11Q19[11QTa]).1 – wikipedia.org

**Dead Sea Scrolls** – Dead Sea Scrolls ancient leather and papyrus scrolls first discovered in 1947 in caves on the NW shore of the Dead Sea. **Most of the documents were written or copied between the 1st cent. BC and the first half of the 1st cent. AD. Three types of documents have been found in the caves near Qumran:** copies of books of the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Isaiah, of which two almost complete scrolls have been found; copies of books now collected in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, e.g., Tobit, 1 Enoch, and Jubilees; **and documents composed by an ascetic community, e.g.,** a book of community rules called The Manual of Discipline, an allegorical account of the community called The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness, a group of devotional poems called The Thanksgiving Psalms, a commentary on the Book of Habakkuk, **and an extensive work, known as the Temple Scroll, containing ritual law. Documents from the third group have been identified by some scholars with the Essenes, a Jewish religious sect living an ascetic communal agricultural life in the region between the 2d cent. BC and 2d cent. AD** – Columbia Encyclopedia

If a man has informed and has delivered his people up to a foreign nation, and has inflicted harm on his people, **you shall hang him on a tree and he shall die....If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and has fled to the midst of the non-Jews and cursed his people and the children of Israel, you shall hang him also on a tree and he shall die...** – Temple Scroll 64:6–11

Note that the Temple Scroll is quoting Deuteronomy 21:22 and that it places hanging the criminal on the tree before putting the criminal to death. It is important to note that Deuteronomy 21:22 itself states that the criminal could not be left hanging on the tree after sundown. Therefore, the criminal's death was not due to being left to starve to death or suffocate from exhaustion on the tree, both of which would have taken significant time. Rather, the manner of death, as Deuteronomy 21:22 and other places in the Law of Moses specify, was stoning. In his book *The Secrets of Golgotha*, Dr. Ernest L. Martin provides his own commentary on the relevance of the Temple Scroll alongside that of Jewish scholar Yigael Yadin.

**Yigael Yadin** – Yigael Yadin (Hebrew: יְגִיאֵל יָדִין, born Yigael Sukenik (Hebrew: קִינְקוּס לֵאֲנִי) on **21 March 1917**, died **28 June 1984**) was an **Israeli archeologist**, politician, and the second Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces. – wikipedia.org

It is now proved that blasphemers and traitors were sometimes *first* hanged on the tree and *then* they were killed. **One of the important Dead Sea Scrolls is called “The Temple Scroll.” The late Yigael Yadin wrote a major work about the contents of this scroll and we now have available an English version of the full text** provided by Johann Maier (edited by Clines and Davies). **These scholars were surprised to find a reference in Column 64 of the text that spoke about hanging traitors and THEN they would be killed while they were suspended from the tree.** I will quote the section of the scroll concerning this important point...Both Yadin and Maier considered that these texts in the Temple Scroll which spoke about Israelitish executions were referring to crucifixions like the Romans were performing on criminals in the first century. At first glance one might come to that conclusion. But in no way is this what the authors of the Temple Scroll had in mind. **The text does not say “nail him to a tree and leave him there to die.” Had the scroll meant that he was nailed to the tree and then left there without food or water to die, then it would have signified the type of crucifixion that Romans were used to in the first century. But this is not what the Temple Scroll meant because it says right in the text itself that “they shall not let *his corpse* hang on the wood, but must bury it on the same day.” The Temple Scroll itself demands that the criminal which was hanged alive on the tree would be a corpse before sundown of the day he was tied (or nailed) to the tree! This means that every criminal who was alive and tied (or nailed) to a tree for execution was going to be a dead person (according to the Temple Scroll) before sundown of the day the criminal was hoisted up to the tree.** In the case of the two robbers who were crucified with Christ, the Roman soldiers broke their legs which killed them. But Pilate was surprised that Christ was already dead without his legs being broken to bring on his death. Something had already killed him. **Even the Temple Scroll informs us how those who had committed abominable crimes were to be killed. In the very context of the Temple Scroll of which we are referring it said (in the previous section): “Then all the men of the city shall stone him, so that he die.” The only official method of execution in the Mosaic Law (which the Temple Scroll was trying to implement) was by stoning. Only by stoning was the blasphemer or traitor executed according to Mosaic Law. And this is the method by which the Temple Scroll itself shows that anyone tied (or nailed) to a tree would die before sundown of the day on which the person was hoisted to the tree...Professor Yadin even showed that such an interpretation was understood by the ancients. He pointed out that the Syriac translation of Deuteronomy 21:22 shows a close relationship to what the Temple Scroll related. “He is hanged on a tree and is put to death” (p. 207). This plainly shows that the criminal was hanged on a tree in order to be put to death. He was certainly not tied (or nailed) to the tree to die a lingering death some days later. The criminal was suspended on a tree in order to be put to death.**

**And what kind of death did the person experience? It was the only one sanctioned in the Mosaic Law and also in the Temple Scroll for ultra-criminals. It was by stoning! And note this point. Not only does the Syriac translation of Deuteronomy 21:22 state that the blasphemer is to be “hanged on a tree AND is put to death”... – Ernest L. Martin, The Secrets of Golgatha, p. 193-194**

As we proceed it is important to keep in mind several facts that have been so far established. First, the New Testament reports that the Jewish authorities intended to stone Jesus, Stephen, and Paul in accordance with their being charged with blasphemy as required by the Law of Moses. Second, we have seen that Deuteronomy 21:21-22 indicates that those who were to be stoned were to be hung from a tree. And third, the Temple Scroll indicates that the ancient Jewish community understood Deuteronomy 21:21-22 to indicate that, at least some times, the condemned person was hung to the tree first and then stoned.

Having become familiar with the requirements of capital punishment as it was conducted under the Law of Moses and by the first-century Jewish authorities we can now take a closer look at the New Testament’s account of Jesus’ execution to determine to what extent he was executed in accordance with Jewish and Roman legal customs.

Earlier, as we discussed crucifixion practices we noted the commentary from Smith’s Bible Dictionary which stated that crucifixion was practiced by the Egyptians. In the article, Smith’s refers to Genesis 40:19 in support of this practice. As we saw, Genesis 40:19 is the account of Joseph interpreting the dream of the Pharaoh’s baker. As the dream foretold, the baker was later hung on a tree.

**Crucifixion – Crucifixion was in use among the Egyptians, Gen. 40:19.** – Smith’s Bible Dictionary.

**Genesis 40:19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang (08518) thee on a tree (06086); and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee. 20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. 21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand: 22 But he hanged (08518) the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.**

What is interesting to note is that the phrase “hung on a tree” as it appears in Genesis 40:19 and 22 in reference to Egyptian crucifixion is identical to the phrase “hung on a tree” as it appears in Deuteronomy 21:22 as well as Joshua 8:29 and 10:26-27. In all four cases we have the Hebrew words “talāh” (08518, “talāh”) meaning “hang” and “ets” (06086) meaning tree.

06086 עץ ‘ets

from 06095; n m; {See TWOT on 1670 @@ "1670a"}

AV-**tree 162**, wood 107, timber 23, stick 14, gallows 8, staff 4, stock 4, carpenter + 02796 2, branches 1, helve 1, planks 1, stalks 1; 328

1) **tree**, wood, timber, stock, plank, stalk, stick, gallows

1a) **tree, trees**

1b) wood, pieces of wood, gallows, firewood, cedar-wood, woody flax

The important point is that Moses was intimately familiar with the Egyptian government. Certainly, he would have been aware that they employed some manner of punishment by hanging criminals on a tree. And here he stipulates similarly that the Israelites should put someone to death, not by crucifixion, but by stoning them and hanging them on a tree. The relationship between crucifixion and hanging someone on a tree is not likely to have been absent from the mind of Moses as he wrote the instructions provided in Deuteronomy 21:21-22 or to the Israelites who received these instructions after they left Egypt.

Even more significant is the fact that the Book of Numbers records a peculiar event in which the Israelites were delivered from the consequences of a sin they had committed. As the passage explains, as a consequence of their sin, the Israelites suffered a plague involving a wound from a serpent.

**Numbers 21:5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses,** Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6 **And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. 7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.** And Moses prayed for the people. 8 **And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it (07760, LXX 5087) upon a pole (05251, LXX 4592):** and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9 **And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put (07760, LXX 2476) it upon a pole (05251, LXX 4592),** and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

We should note that, in fact, neither the Hebrew text, nor the Septuagint, nor the New Testament's reference to these events actually indicates that the serpent was lifted up on a "pole" specifically. The Hebrew word translated as "pole" is "nec" (05251) which is most often used to speak simply of something lifted up such as a sign or banner. It comes from the verb "nacac" (05264) which simply means "to be lifted up" or "displayed."

05251 נֶס **nec**

**from 05264;** n m; {See TWOT on 1379 @@ "1379a"}

AV-standard 7, ensign 6, pole 2, banner 2, sail 2, sign 1; 20

1) **something lifted up**, standard, signal, signal pole, ensign, banner, sign, sail

1a) standard (as rallying point), signal

1b) standard (pole)

1c) ensign, signal

The Septuagint translates “nec” with the Greek word “semeion” (4592) which simply means a sign or even a symbol.

4592 σημειον **semeion**

from a presumed derivative of the base of 4591; TDNT-7:200,1015; n n

AV-sign **50**, miracle 23, wonder 3, token 1; 77

1) **a sign**, mark, token

1a) that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and is known

1b) a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e. an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature

1b1) **of signs portending remarkable events soon to happen**

1b2) of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's

From the language we can see that the Old Testament text itself simply states that Moses was to lift up a serpent on something as a sign symbolizing something else. The people were to look upon the sign of the “lifted up serpent” and be delivered from the consequences of their sin. Given that it was Moses who also passed on the account of Genesis 3 to the people of Israel, there is little reason to doubt that God intended the deliverance of Numbers 21 to symbolically instruct the people about being healed from the wounds of a serpent. This was done by lifting up a serpent as a symbol for the people to look upon and be delivered from the consequence of their sin.

The New Testament explains the symbolic importance of the events of Numbers 21. According to Jesus, the serpent which was lifted up symbolized his own death. Note again, that in the Greek John gives no indication of what exactly the serpent was lifted up on in the account of Numbers 21.

**John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up (5312) the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (5213):**

5312 υψωω **hupsoo**

from 5311; TDNT-8:606,1241; v

AV-exalt 14, lift up 6; 20

1) **to lift up** on high, to exalt

2) metaph.

2a) to raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity

2b) to exalt, to raise to dignity, honour and happiness

Keeping in mind that Moses was well aware of the Egyptian practice of execution by hanging someone on a tree (exemplified in Genesis 40) and that the Law of Moses itself instructed criminals condemned to death by stoning to be hung on trees (using the same language as Genesis 40), there can be little doubt that Moses was signifying Christ's execution through the symbol of the serpent being lifted up on some sort of object.

Interestingly, the second-century Christian apologists Irenaeus and Justin Martyr along with the third-century apologist Tertullian provide evidence that early Christians understood that the serpent of Numbers 21 was, in fact, lifted up on a tree and that these events symbolized Christ's execution. While Tertullian is the only one to actually identify the object (upon which the serpent was hung) as a tree, Irenaeus and Justin both connect the bronze serpent of Numbers 21 to the serpent of Genesis 3. Because the serpent tempted Adam and Eve regarding a tree, the implication (confirmed by Tertullian) is that all three events involved a tree, Genesis 3, Numbers 21, and the crucifixion of Christ.

**7. ...For the law never hindered them from believing in the Son of God; nay, but it even exhorted them(6) so to do, saying(7) that men can be saved in no other way from the old wound of the serpent than by believing in Him who, in the likeness of sinful flesh, is lifted up from the earth upon the tree of martyrdom, and draws all things to Himself,(8) and vivifies the dead. – Irenaeus, Book IV, CHAP.II**

**“For tell me, was it not God who commanded by Moses that no image or likeness of anything which was in heaven above or which was on the earth should be made, and yet who caused the brazen serpent to be made by Moses in the wilderness, and set it up for a sign by which those bitten by serpents were saved? Yet is He free from unrighteousness. For by this, as I previously remarked, He proclaimed the mystery, by which He declared that He would break the power of the serpent which occasioned the transgression of Adam, and [would bring] to them that believe on Him [who was foreshadowed] by this sign, i.e., Him who was to be crucified, salvation from the fangs of the serpent, which are wicked deeds, idolatries, and other unrighteous acts. Unless the matter be so understood, give me a reason why Moses set up the brazen serpent for a sign, and bade those that were bitten gaze at it, and the wounded were healed; and this, too, when he had himself commanded that no likeness of anything whatsoever should be made.”** On this, another of those who came on the second day said, "You have spoken truly: we cannot give a reason. For I have frequently interrogated the teachers about this matter, and none of them gave me a reason: therefore continue what you are speaking; for we are paying attention while you unfold the mystery, on account of which the doctrines of the prophets are falsely slandered." 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.

**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.** – Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, Chapter 10. Concerning the Passion of Christ, and Its Old Testament Predictions and Adumbrations.

From these Old and New Testament texts along with these commentaries from early Christian apologists we have every reason to understand that God intended us to connect the accounts of Genesis 3 and Numbers 21 with the events of Christ's death. And, as we have seen, there are many connections between these passages which all speak of our deliverance from the power of the serpent (that is, the devil).

As we continue to investigate New Testament details about what kind of object Jesus was crucified upon we must keep in mind the instructions of Moses regarding execution by stoning and hanging the condemned on a tree, the Jewish leadership's intentions to carry out the Mosaic requirements, and Jesus' application of Numbers 21 to his death. We know that the Greek noun “stauros” (“cross”) is not particularly informative in regard to this question, nor is the Greek verb “stauroo” (“crucify.”) These words can be and are used to speak merely of a crossbeam or tree and not a wooden post. They are also used in reference to both Jewish practices and Roman practices of execution. Likewise, Roman crucifixion itself at times involved either a wooden post or a tree. Despite these difficulties, the New Testament does provide direct information about the object upon which Jesus was hung.

### *Jesus' Execution in Accordance with Jewish Legal Requirements and the Involvement of the Roman State*

We will begin this section of our study by first taking a look at the role of Roman soldiers in the events surrounding Christ's death. In point of fact, Roman soldiers were involved even before authorization was sought from Pilate, the Roman governor, for a death sentence. In the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested, Judas led a group of men which included a band of Roman soldiers.

**John 18:3 Judas then, having received a band (4686) of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees,** cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

4686 σπειρα **speira**

of immed. Latin origin, but ultimately a derivative of 138 in the sense of its cognate 1507; ; n f

AV-band 7; 7

1) anything rolled into a circle or ball, anything wound, rolled up, folded together

2) **a military cohort**

2a) the tenth part of legion

2a1) about 600 men i.e. legionaries

2a2) if auxiliaries either 500 or 1000

2a3) a maniple, or the thirtieth part of a legion

2b) **any band, company, or detachment, of soldiers**

The group of soldiers that were present at Jesus' arrest is likely the same group (or part of the same group) that Pilate indicates were given to the charge of the Jewish authorities for the purpose of conducting the authority the Roman state allowed them.

**Matthew 27:62** Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, **the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,** 63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 **Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.** 65 **Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch (2892):** go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 **So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (2892).**

2892 κουστωδία **koustodia**

of Latin origin; ; n f

AV-watch 3; 3

1) guard: **used of Roman soldiers guarding the sepulchre of Christ**

**A Roman guard was made up of four to sixteen solders.** In combat, they would form a square, and were able to hold off a much larger force.

So, Roman soldiers are involved in the arrest of Jesus. But it is important to note that these soldiers are acting under the direction of the Jewish authorities and their interests. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that Pilate was not aware of Christ (nor any potential political threat Christ was accused of posing to Rome) until after the Jewish leadership brought Christ to Pilate in order to acquire permission to put him to death. In other words, the Roman state had no interest in Christ's arrest, and yet Roman soldiers were present and involved in the action of arresting Christ. Rome is, of course, complicit in Christ's death. But the fact that these Roman soldiers have been dispatched under the direction of the Jewish authorities has direct bearing on the exact manner of Christ's death and to what extent it would conform to Jewish execution. More specifically, these facts prevent us from concluding that the presence and involvement of Roman soldiers in Christ's execution necessarily means that Christ's death was carried out exclusively or even primarily according to Roman custom without regard for Jewish methods of execution. To the contrary, it is entirely reasonable to consider that, as is the case with Christ's arrest, Roman soldiers may have been present and involved in his execution as Roman authority, as manpower, and as the methodology facilitating and augmenting Jewish legal procedures.

Given the requirements of the Law of Moses and the New Testament's consistent affirmation that the Jewish authorities sought to stone Christ (and Stephen) in accordance with those requirements, we can be fairly certain that if left to their own devices, the Jewish authorities would have hung Jesus from a tree and stoned him. The only obstacle in their path was the first-century need for the Jewish leadership to get permission from the Roman authorities regarding capital punishment.

4892 συνέδριον **sunedrion**

from a presumed derivative of a compound of 4862 and the base of 1476; TDNT-7:860,1115; n n

AV-council 22; 22

1) any assembly (esp. of magistrates, judges, ambassadors), whether convened to deliberate or pass judgment

2) any session or assembly or people deliberating or adjudicating

2a) **the Sanhedrin, the great council at Jerusalem**, consisting of the seventy one members, viz. scribes, elders, prominent members of the high priestly families and the high priest, the president of the assembly. **The most important causes were brought before this tribunal, inasmuch as the Roman rulers of Judaea had left to it the power of trying such cases, and also of pronouncing sentence of death, with the limitation that a capital sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrin was not valid unless it was confirmed by the Roman procurator.**

2b) a smaller tribunal or council which every Jewish town had for the decision of less important cases.

**John 18:31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:**

After the Jewish high court (the Sanhedrin) issued their own verdict that Christ should die for blasphemy, they took him to Pilate in order to acquire permission to kill him. (See Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1-2, and Luke 23:1, and John 18:28-31 above.) In order to get authorization to execute Jesus, the Jewish authorities needed the Roman state to find him worthy of a crime considered to be a capital offense under Roman law. So, even though they sought to kill Jesus for blasphemy in accordance with the Law of Moses, when they brought Jesus before Pilate the Jewish authorities accused him of the crime of treason against Caesar.

**Luke 23:1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.**

**John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. 29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? 30 They**

answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. 31 **Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:**

**John 19:12** And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but **the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.**

So, the Jewish authorities sought to have Rome authorize Jesus execution as traitor against Caesar. But the gospels make it clear that Pilate found Jesus to be innocent of this charge and sought to release him rather than put him to death as the Jewish authorities desired.

**Matthew 27:14** And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. 15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. 16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. 17 Therefore when they were gathered together, **Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?** 18 **For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.** 19 **When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man:** for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. 20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. 21 **The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?** They said, Barabbas. 22 **Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.** 23 **And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done?** But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

**Mark 15:12** **And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?** 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 **Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done?** And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

**Luke 23:3** **And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?** And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. 4 **Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.** 5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. 7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again

to Pilate. 12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves. 13 **And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.** 17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20 **Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus,** spake again to them. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22 **And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.**

**John 19:**1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. 2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. 4 **Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.**

We can see then that the Jewish leadership found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, a crime for which the Law of Moses required him to be hung from a tree and stoned. Before Pilate, however, Jesus is accused of treason against Caesar, a crime which required death under Roman law. However, Pilate found Jesus to be innocent of the crime of treason against Caesar and instead of executing him he sought to release him.

It is true that Pilate agreed to have Jesus executed, which is an all the more significant injustice given the fact that Pilate had found Jesus innocent. Matthew 27:24 and 23:23 indicate that Pilate was worried about the relentless uproar resulting from his reluctance to have Jesus' executed.

**Matthew 27:24** **When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made,** he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

**Luke 23:23** **And they were instant with loud voices,** requiring that he might be crucified. **And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 And Pilate gave sentence** that it should be as they required.

Consequently, the texts indicate that Pilate was motivated in part, if not entirely, by the general Roman interest of keeping its conquered peoples peaceful. However, these New Testament details inform us that Jesus' death was not conducted in accordance with the demands, interests, or intentions of the Roman state with any specific regard to Jesus himself. Despite these facts, Pilate still ultimately chose to appease the Jewish authorities by delivering Jesus over to

them so that they could put him to death in accordance with their laws and requirements. By these actions, the Roman state through Pilate became complicit in knowingly authorizing the death of an innocent man and in assisting in that unjust execution through the use of government agents (Roman soldiers).

**Matthew 27:24** When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, **he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.** 25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. 26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged **Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.**

**Mark 15:12** And Pilate answered and said again unto them, **What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?** 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 **Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done?** And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. 15 **And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.**

**Luke 23:20** **Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus,** spake again to them. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22 **And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.** 23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of **the chief priests prevailed.** 24 **And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.** 25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but **he delivered Jesus to their will.**

Notice Luke 23:24-25 explicitly state that Pilate simply ordered what the Jewish authorities demanded be done and that he delivered Jesus to them to do as they willed. John's account likewise specifically informs us that Pilate delivered Jesus to the chief priests themselves. This was Pilate's initial reaction to the situation as we might recall from John 18:31 in which Pilate expressed his desire for the Jewish authorities to simply take care of the matter themselves. In the end, he simply granted the Jewish authorities the right to do as they desired and as their laws required.

**John 18:31** Then said Pilate unto them, **Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.** The Jews therefore said unto him, **It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:**

**John 19:15** 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.**

These details help us to have a biblical perspective on the circumstances of Christ's death. As we have said, undoubtedly Roman authorities were complicit in

Christ's death. As the governing power, Rome was vested with discharging justice in society (Romans 13:1-7.) However, in this case, through the authority vested in Pilate (and Herod) the Roman state willingly authorized the execution of someone they knew was innocent in order to cater to the desires of wicked men. This was a violation of the trust and responsibility of their authority.

More importantly, we can see that the New Testament emphasizes that Christ's death was carried out through the desires and intentions of the Jewish religious authorities who sought to have Christ put to death on the charge of blasphemy. Likewise, the gospels all indicate that the Roman state was not particularly interested in Christ or his death. Pilate is depicted as an unjust collaborator who gave the Jewish leadership permission and assistance to carry out Jesus' execution according to their own intentions. These biblical details provide good reason to suspect that Christ's death was carried out in accordance with Jewish law. As we have seen this law would have required Jesus to be hung from a tree and stoned. We have also seen that crucifixion and the Greek terms for "cross" and "crucify" can and do at times simply refer to the idea of being affixed to a tree and that the Romans sometimes used trees in their crucifixions. All these observations as a whole prevent us from concluding that Christ was crucified to a wooden post. To the contrary, the Jewish leadership, having obtained permission to kill Christ, was free to crucify him to a tree in accordance with the Mosaic requirements.

### *The Presentation of the Blood of the Sacrificial Animal before the Lord*

Matthew and Mark both report that some of the chief priests were present at the site of Christ's crucifixion. When Christ was about to die a sponge filled with vinegar was lifted up to him on a hyssop branch.

**Matthew 27:41 Likewise also the chief priests** mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. 48 **And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge (4699), and filled it with vinegar (3690), and put it on a reed (2536),** and gave him to drink. 49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

**Mark 15:29** And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross. 31 **Likewise also the chief priests** mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save....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 (4699) full of vinegar (3690), and put it on a reed (2563), 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.

**Luke 23:36** And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, **and offering him vinegar (3690),**

**John 19:19** And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. 21 **Then said the chief priests** of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. 22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. 23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. 24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. 25 **Now there stood by the cross of Jesus** his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and **the disciple standing by, whom he loved,** he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 **Then saith he to the disciple,** Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. 28 **After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.** 29 **Now there was set a vessel (4632) full of vinegar (3690): and they filled a sponge (4699) with vinegar (3690), and put it upon hyssop (5301), and put it to his mouth.** 30 **When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar (3690), he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.**

4699 σπογγος **spoggos**  
perhaps of foreign origin; ; n m  
AV-sponge 3; 3  
1) sponge

3690 οξος **oxos**  
from 3691; TDNT-5:288,701; n n  
AV-vinegar 7; 7  
1) vinegar  
1a) the mixture of sour wine or vinegar and water which the Roman soldiers were accustomed to drink

2563 καλαμος **kalamos**  
or uncertain affinity; ; n m  
AV-reed 11, pen 1; 12  
1) a reed  
2) a staff made of a reed, a reed staff  
3) a measuring reed or rod  
4) a writer's reed, a pen

4632 σκευος **skeuos**

of uncertain affinity; TDNT-7:358,1038; n n

AV-vessel 19, goods 2, stuff 1, sail 1; 23

1) a vessel

2) an implement

2a) in the plural

2a1) household utensils, domestic gear

2a2) the tackle and armament of vessels, used specifically of sails and ropes

3) metaph.

3a) a man of quality, a chosen instrument

3b) in a bad sense, an assistant in accomplishing an evil deed

++++

"Vessel" was a common Greek metaphor for "body" since Greeks thought of souls living temporarily in bodies.

5301 υσσωπος **hussopos**

**of foreign origin** בִּזְזָא, 0231; ; n f

AV-hyssop 2; 2

1) hyssop

**2) a plant used by the Hebrews in their ritual sprinklings**

0231 בִּזְזָא 'ezowb

probably of foreign derivation, Greek 5301 υσσωπος; n m; {See TWOT on 55}

AV-hyssop 10; 10

**1) hyssop, a plant used for medicinal and religious purposes**

The giving of the hyssop branch to Christ is another connection to his role as the Passover Lamb and as the fulfillment of the red heifer offerings. The Law of Moses prescribed that the blood of the Passover lamb was to be sprinkled on the doorposts and thereby signaled the deliverance of the Israelites from death. In particular, notice from verse 22 that the hyssop was the means by which the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts.

**Exodus 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. 22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop (0231), and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. 23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. 24 And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.**

Likewise, as Jewish Encyclopedia explains, the blood of the Passover lamb was collected by priests and presented before the Lord. (Note also, that the explanation of how the lamb was killed, included hanging it upon special sticks, provides a potentially striking parallel to Christ's being nailed to the cross.)

**Passover Sacrifice – The animal was slain on the eve of the Passover, on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, after the Tamid sacrifice had been killed, i.e., at three o'clock, or, in case the eve of the Passover fell on Friday, at two. The killing took place in the court of the Temple, and might be performed by a layman, although the blood had to be caught by a priest, and rows of priests with gold or silver cups in their hands stood in line from the Temple court to the altar, where the blood was sprinkled.** These cups were rounded on the bottom, so that they could not be set down; for in that case the blood might coagulate. The priest who caught the blood as it dropped from the victim then handed the cup to the priest next to him, receiving from him an empty one, and the full cup was passed along the line until it reached **the last priest, who sprinkled its contents on the altar. The lamb was then hung upon special hooks or sticks** and skinned; but if the eve of the Passover fell on a Sabbath, the skin was removed down to the breast only. The abdomen was then cut open, and the fatty portions intended for the altar were taken out, placed in a vessel, salted, and offered by the priest on the altar, while the remaining entrails likewise were taken out and cleansed. **On Sabbath Eve – Even if the eve of the Passover fell on a Sabbath, the paschal lamb was killed in the manner described above, the blood was sprinkled on the altar,** the entrails removed and cleansed, and the fat offered on the altar; **for these four ceremonies in the case of the paschal lamb, and these alone, were exempt from the prohibition against working on the Sabbath.** This regulation, that the Sabbath yielded the precedence to the Passover, was not definitely determined until the time of Hillel, who established it as a law and was in return elevated to the dignity of nasi by the Bene Bathyra (Pes. 68a). – Jewish Encyclopedia

Below is Numbers 19's information on the ritual of the red heifer offering. As with the Passover lamb, this ritual involved sprinkling of blood and the use of a hyssop branch.

**Numbers 19:1** And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, **2 This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: 3 And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face: 4 And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times: 5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: 6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop (0231), and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. 7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. 8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 9 And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. 10 And he that gathereth the ashes of the**

heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: **and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.**

**Psalm 51:7 Purge me with hyssop (0231), and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

Hebrews 9, likewise, explains the use of hyssop as the instrument for the sprinkling of blood in order to inaugurate a covenant and to consecrate unto ministry. As we have seen, the red heifer offering was the mechanism for consecration in the Old Testament.

**Hebrews 9:18** Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. **19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop (5301), and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,** **20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.** **21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.** **22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.** **23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.**

From these biblical details we can see how the New Testament intended to identify Christ's fulfillment of various redemptive necessities depicted in Mosaic rituals including the Passover lamb, the red heifer, and other animal sacrifices for atoning for sin and consecration.

In fact, during the red heifer offerings the high priest accompanied the animal (which was to be offered) to the altar of burning on the Mount of Olives.

**All the [Temple] walls were high, save only the eastern wall, because the Priest that burns the Heifer and stands atop the Mount of Olives should be able to look directly into the entrance of the Sanctuary when the blood is sprinkled.** – Middoth 2:4, quoted from Ernest L. Martin, *Secrets of Golgatha*, p. 34

**Numbers 19:1** And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, **2 This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke:** **3 And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face:** **4 And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:** **5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:** **6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and**

**cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.** 7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, **and afterward he shall come into the camp,** and the priest shall be unclean until the even. 8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 9 **And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.** 10 And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: **and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.**

It is in no way insignificant then that the chief priests both condemned Jesus to death in the Temple courts and then at least some of them accompanied him to the place of his death near this same altar where the red heifer was killed and burned. As they condemned Jesus and escorted him to his death, the priests were actually fulfilling important aspects of sacrificial ritual required by the Law of Moses for the Passover lamb, the Day of Atonement, and the red heifer offering.

We have seen the importance that was placed on the action of presenting the blood of the sacrificed animal before the Lord. In the rituals of Passover and the Day of Atonement the blood served the purpose of allowing people to enter God's presence and survive the death imposed by angelic powers upon any sinful man attempting to do so. There are several other points worth discussing in regard to the requirement for the blood of these sacrificed animals to be sprinkled before the Lord in the Temple itself.

Matthew's gospel includes an often unnoticed detail that relates to this concept. Before we get to that information it is first useful to become familiar with the use of money in various atonement procedures in the Law of Moses.

The books of Exodus and Numbers record instances in which God required the people of Israel to atone for their souls by paying a sum of money (equivalent to a half shekel.) This money was put into the treasury for use in the service of the tabernacle.

**Exodus 30:11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,** 12 When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, **then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD,** when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. 13 **This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary:** (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) **an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.** 14 Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. 15 **The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement (03722) for your souls.** 16 **And thou shalt take the atonement (03725) money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of**

**the tabernacle of the congregation;** that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, **to make an atonement (03722) for your souls.**

**Numbers 31:50 We have therefore brought an oblation (07133) for the LORD, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement (03722) for our souls before the LORD.** 51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, even all wrought jewels. 52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the LORD, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.

In these passages, the same Hebrew word for “atonement” is used that occurs in passages discussing the Day of Atonement.

**Leviticus 23:27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement (03725):** it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

So, in Exodus and Numbers God accepts and, in fact, requires a payment of money to make atonement for the souls of his people. In Leviticus 17, God explains that blood makes atonement for the souls.

**Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.**

There is then some interplay between blood which provides atonement and money which is paid for atonement. Indeed, the concept of a monetary payment for atonement perfectly aligns with the concepts of redemption and ransom which are intimately related to atonement in the bible.

The Hebrew word for redeem is “ga’al” (01350.) It is used in passages which discuss God’s deliverance (through Passover) of his people from their bondage to the Egyptians. And it is closely related to the idea of the kinsman redeemer by which a man can buy his relatives out of the servitude they entered into through debt.

01350 גָּאֵל **ga’al**

a primitive root; v; {See TWOT on 300}

AV-redeem 50, redeemer 18, kinsman 13, revenger 7, avenger 6, ransom 2, at all 2, deliver 1, kinsfolks 1, kinsman’s part 1, purchase 1, stain 1, wise 1; 104

**1) to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman**

**1a) (Qal)**

1a1) to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer

1a1a) by marrying brother’s widow to beget a child for him, to redeem from slavery, to redeem land, to exact vengeance

**1a2) to redeem (by payment)**

- 1a3) to redeem (with God as subject)
- 1a3a) individuals from death
- 1a3b) Israel from Egyptian bondage
- 1a3c) Israel from exile
- 1b) (Niphal)
- 1b1) to redeem oneself
- 1b2) to be redeemed

**Exodus 6:6** Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and **I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem (01350) you** with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

**Leviticus 25:47** And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: **48** After that he is sold he may be redeemed (01350) again; one of his brethren may redeem him: **49** Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or **any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him**; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. **50** And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. **51** If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for.

Additionally, Leviticus 5 describes an offering that is made for those who sin in ignorance. In this instance, the man sinning in ignorance is to bring a ram to the priests and the priests are to estimate the value of the ram in silver pieces. The man was to pay the value and then the priests would kill the ram in order to make atonement for the man's sin. In the Septuagint, the Hebrew word for "estimation" is "time" (5092.)

**Leviticus 5:14** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **15** If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation (LXX, 5092) by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, **for a trespass offering**: **16** And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, **and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.**

5092 τιμη **time**

from 5099; TDNT-8:169,1181; n f

AV-honour 33, price 8, sum 1, precious 1; 43

1) a valuing by which the price is fixed

1a) of the price itself

1b) **of the price paid or received for a person or thing bought or sold**

2) honour which belongs or is shown to one

2a) of the honour which one has by reason of rank and state of office which he holds

2b) deference, reverence

Similarly, the Greek words for ransom and redeem that are used in the New Testament are “exagorazo” (1805) and “lutroo” (3084.)

1805 εξαγοραζω **exagorazo**

from 1537 and 59; TDNT-1:124,19; v

AV-redeem 4; 4

1) **to redeem**

1a) **by payment of a price to recover from the power of another, to ransom, buy off**

1b) metaph. of Christ freeing the elect from the dominion of the Mosaic Law at the price of his vicarious death

2) to buy up, to buy up for one’s self, for one’s use

2a) to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well doing are as it were the purchase money by which we make the time our own

3084 λυτροω **lutroo**

from 3083; TDNT-4:349,543; v

AV-redeem 3; 3

1) **to release on receipt of ransom**

2) **to redeem, liberate by payment of ransom**

2a) **to liberate**

2b) **to cause to be released to one’s self by payment of a ransom**

2c) **to redeem**

2d) to deliver: from evils of every kind, internal and external

The New Testament uses these words to describe Christ’s atoning work.

**Luke 24:20** And how **the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.** 21 But we trusted that it had been **he which should have redeemed (1805) Israel:** and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

**Titus 2:14** **Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem (3084) us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**

In this way, we can see that Christ’s blood paid the ransom to redeem us from the power of the devil to whom we were in bondage because of our sin.

In addition, we must realize that many Jewish pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem on the feast days and at other times in order to present offerings for various purposes (thank offerings, sin offerings, etc.). In some cases, these travelers would bring animals with them in order to sacrifice at the Temple. However, in many cases, it was not convenient or feasible to bring sacrificial animals from a long way off all

the way to the Temple. In such cases, the pilgrims would bring money to the Temple and exchange it for animals there which they could offer. It is for this reason that the Temple had various areas occupied by money changers selling animals for the purpose of making an offering. In John 2, Jesus rebukes the money changers for abusing and taking advantage of this necessity and turning it into an opportunity for greed and profit.

**John 2:13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.**

We can see then that the Law of Moses included various rituals that were intended to be instructive regarding our redemption and atonement. These rituals involved payment being made by coins and the blood of animals. In some cases that money went into the treasury as an offering to the Lord. In other cases, the money was exchanged for animals which were sacrificed to the Lord in order to atone for sin. The blood of these animals was sprinkled before the Lord.

An interesting parallel to these Mosaic prototypes can be seen in Matthew's account of the circumstances in which Judas arranged to deliver Jesus to chief priests to be put to death. The relevant remarks are found in Matthew 26 and 27. Matthew 26 points out that Judas agreed to give Jesus into the hands of the chief priests for a price of thirty pieces of silver.

**Matthew 26:15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver (3860) him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray (3860) him.**

Mark and Luke's accounts explain similarly using the Greek word "argurion" (695) meaning "silver, money, a silver piece, a shekel."

**Mark 14:10** And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. **11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money (694).** And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

**Luke 22:4** And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. **5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money (694).** **6** And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

694 ἀργυριον **argurion**

neuter of a presumed derivative of 696; ; n n

AV-money 11, piece of silver 5, silver 3, silver piece 1; 20

- 1) **silver**
- 2) money
- 3) **a silver coin, silver piece, a shekel**

These events are oddly reminiscent of Leviticus 5, where a man who sinned in ignorance brought a ram to the priests to be killed. The priests estimated the value of that ram in silver pieces, the price was paid, and the ram was killed to atone for the man's sin. In light of this it is worth noting that Luke reports that when Jesus died he asked God to forgive those who put him to death because they did not know what they were doing.

**Luke 23:34** Then said **Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.** And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

In this way the people of Israel, or perhaps just its leadership, is like the man in Leviticus who sins in ignorance. The party sinning in ignorance would have to select a ram to be offered. Then that ram would be valued by a priest at a certain price to be paid in silver pieces. The sinning party would then pay that price and the ram would be killed to atone for the trespass of the party who sinned in ignorance. In this case, the price in silver pieces was paid to Judas for the ram (Jesus) which was to be sacrificed for sin.

The connections do not end there. In Matthew 27:6 the chief priests refer to the thirty pieces of silver given to Judas using the same Greek word "time" (5092) that Leviticus uses when discussing the estimation of the value of the ram in silver pieces.

**Matthew 27:3** Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 Saying, I have sinned in that **I have betrayed (3680) the innocent blood.** And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5 **And he cast down (4496) the pieces of silver in (1722) the temple (3485),** and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 **And the chief priests (749) took (2983) the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful (1832) for to put (906) them into (1519) the treasury (2878), because it is the price (5092) of blood.** 7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Notice from verse 6 that the chief priests considered this money as ordinarily designated for the treasury. This is reminiscent of Exodus 30:16 in which the atonement money of the children of Israel given for each man was also to be put away for service in the tabernacle.

Moreover, verse 5 states that after Judas realized the full extent of what he had done and that Jesus was condemned to death, he cast down the pieces of silver into the temple. There are several aspects of this account that deserve our attention. First, we must recognize that verse 7 reports that the chief priests reckoned this money to be the price ("time" 5092) of blood which connects to the

close relationship exhibited in the Old Testament between redemption and atonement by blood or by paying a price (in coins.)

Second, we have to take note of the fact that Matthew 27:5 uses the Greek word “naos” (3485) here to refer to the Temple. This Greek word is used in the New Testament to refer to the Temple house itself (which was comprised of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) and not to the courts or the rest of the Temple complex.

3485 ναός **naos**

from a primary naio (to dwell); TDNT-4:880,625; n m

AV-temple 45, a shrine 1; 46

- 1) **used of the temple at Jerusalem, but only of the sacred edifice (or sanctuary) itself, consisting of the Holy place and the Holy of Holies** (in classical Greek it is used of the sanctuary or cell of the temple, where the image of gold was placed which is distinguished from the whole enclosure)
- 2) any heathen temple or shrine
- 3) metaph. the spiritual temple consisting of the saints of all ages joined together by and in Christ

The Greek word translated as “cast down” is “rhipto” (4496.) It conveys the idea of throwing down, setting down, or throwing to the ground. So, according to Matthew, Judas throws the money (which the chief priests valued for Jesus’ life) into the Temple building itself, at least as far as the Holy Place.

We must keep in mind that Herod’s Temple complex was quite large in size and that the Temple building was surrounded by a large court, the court of the priests. In order for Judas to actually have thrown down the silver pieces into the Temple building it is very likely that he would have had to been standing in the Temple itself or perhaps near the Temple in the court of the priests. Consequently, in order to be in position to throw the silver coins into the Temple itself Judas would therefore have to be a priest. Otherwise, he would not have been permitted to be in a location near enough to place the silver coins in the Temple itself. Furthermore, if the Temple doors were not normally left open, then the conclusion that Judas was actually standing in the Temple building itself (and not just near to it) seems absolutely necessary.

We must also note some connections between these events and Zechariah who, in addition to being a prophet, was also a priest.

**Zechariah 1:1** In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of **the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet**, saying,

**2 Chronicles 24:20** And the Spirit of God came **upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest**, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus

saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

“**Zechariah. 1.** The eleventh in order of the twelve minor prophets. **He called in his prophecy the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo...Zechariah, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel before him was priest as well as prophet.**” – Smith’s Bible Dictionary, p. 758

In the gospels, Jesus refers to Zechariah being put to death between the altar and the Temple.

**Matthew 23:35** That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed 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.**

**Luke 11:51** 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.

In these passages and elsewhere in the gospels, Jesus connects the persecution and death of the prophets of the Mosaic period to his own death at the hands of the religious leaders. We must note several further parallels between Zechariah and Jesus.

Zechariah 11 records a word from the Lord to the leaders of Israel. In the passage these leaders are identified as the shepherds of God’s people (v. 1-5, 8, 12). They are also identified as those who possess God’s flock and who sell them (v. 5). The Hebrew word translated as “possessors” in verse 5 is “qanah” (07069). It is connected to the idea of redemption through the idea of paying a price to purchase something. In this way we can see connections to the notion of the kinsman redeemer and the idea of paying a price to purchase God’s people who have come into bondage and servitude to other masters. In fact, the Hebrew word that is translated as “sell” in the phrase “they that sell them” (Zechariah 11:5) is the same word used in Leviticus 25:47 and 48 to speak of those who are sold into bondage and redeemed by their fellow Israelite.

07069 **qanah** kaw-naw’

a primitive root; v; {See TWOT on 2039}

AV-Buy 46, get 15, **purchased** 5, buyer 3, possessor 3, possessed 2, owner 1, recover 1, **redeemed** 1, misc 7; 84

1) **to get, acquire, create, buy, possess**

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to get, acquire, obtain

1a1a) of **God originating, creating, redeeming His people**

1a1a1) possessor

1a1b) of Eve acquiring

1a1c) of acquiring knowledge, wisdom

1a2) to buy

- 1b) (Niphal) to be bought
- 1c) (Hiphil) to cause to possess

In verse 12-13, Zechariah tells these shepherds of God's people to give him the price they valued him at. We are told that the price that he is valued at is thirty pieces of silver. This is reminiscent of the concepts presented in Leviticus 5:15. There we saw that a sin offering could be made wherein a man would bring a ram from his flocks before the priest. The priest would then estimate the value of the ram in pieces of silver. Here, Zechariah is given thirty pieces of silver, the same value given to Judas for Jesus' life. And like, Zechariah who was killed by the religious authorities of his day between the Temple and the altar, Jesus too was condemned to die by the Sanhedrin. In addition, Zechariah is told to cast the thirty pieces of silver in the house of the Lord. The Hebrew word translated as "cast" is "shalak" (07993) meaning "cast, cast out, cast down, cast forth." This parallels Judas casting the thirty pieces of silver into the Temple. Likewise, Zechariah is told to give his thirty pieces of silver to the potter. In the case of Judas, the money given to him for Jesus' life is used to buy the potter's field.

These observations are not novel. They are well-known because Matthew's account of Jesus' betrayal by Judas specifically quotes this passage from Zechariah (Matthew 27:9-10).

**Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. 7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. 9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; 10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.**

**Zechariah 11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.**

The added fact that Zechariah himself was put to death by the leaders of Israel very near the location Jesus himself was condemned is simply another facet of these connections.

(NOTE: Matthew's attribution of this quote from the Book of Zechariah to Jeremiah is easily explained. First, ancient Jews may have attributed a quote to

the first book that was found in the scroll which also contained the book whose passage they are quoting. That the Book of Jeremiah was the first book in a scroll also containing the minor prophets is certainly plausible. Likewise, a study of Matthew's wording may reveal that he has intentionally referenced material from both Zechariah and Jeremiah. Jeremiah 32:8-9 seems particularly possible in that those verses record God's prophetic instruction for the purchase of a field for a price weighed out as seventeen shekels of silver. This purchasing of a field mentioned in Jeremiah relates to the purchasing of the potter's field with the silver pieces that were given to Judas. It is quite understandable then that Matthew is connecting the events surrounding Judas' betrayal to prophecies found in both Zechariah and Jeremiah and for this reason also was able to reference the Book of Jeremiah as the source for at least some of the relevant prophetic material. Another plausible explanation that has been offered by scholars is that the final chapters of Zechariah were, in fact, written by Jeremiah and included after the portion of the scroll containing Zechariah's prophecies.)

We have already seen the significance of the involvement of the chief priests in Christ's death particular in relation to details paralleling Mosaic rituals for important sacrifices and offerings. It is likewise significant that because of the location required for throwing the silver into the Temple house, Matthew's account provides strong reason to conclude that Judas himself (like Zechariah) was a priest. These factors invite us to consider the additional significance of Judas' actions in this passage.

Consider that Judas has been paid the estimated value for Jesus' life in pieces of silver in close parallel to Leviticus 5. But, we have also seen that Exodus and Numbers indicate that God required atonement to be paid in coins. Likewise, we know that animals could be purchased at the Temple for sacrificial purposes. Monetary offerings were to be placed in the Temple treasury. The blood which was used in atonement was to be sprinkled before the Lord in the Temple by a priest. And we have seen that the blood of the Passover lambs was sprinkled in the Temple by the attending priests. It is within this context that Judas (a priest) stands in the Temple (or the court of the priests) and casts the silver pieces that are identified by the chief priests themselves as blood money for Jesus' death. In this way, Jesus' blood was figuratively sprinkled into the Temple by a priest in the form of the silver pieces for which he was valued as the ram atoning for sin. Christ's blood paid the ransom for our sins.

(For information on other apostles who might have been priests see *Addendum Three: John the Apostle, a Priest*)