



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 15:6** Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9 **But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?** 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. 11 **But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.** 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 23:17** (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. 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.**

**John 18:38** Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. 39 **But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?** 40 **Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.**

The circumstances of Jesus and Barabbas parallel both those of Abel and Cain as well as the goat dedicated to the Lord and the goat given to Azazel. In all three cases, the innocent party is slain, while the guilty party is allowed to live and released. While the parallels are perhaps obvious the significance of the parallels may require more contemplation.

According to biblical teaching, the nations of man were distributed to angelic rulers in heaven. According to the Book of Daniel and the New Testament,

dominion over the earth and its kingdoms was held by these angels who were headed by the top-ranking satanic (adversarial) angels. We have already covered Genesis 3-4's discussion of how, through sin, dominion was transferred to these satanic angels who had the power to put to death sinful men and to keep them from the presence of God (in hell after they died). And yet, even as early as Genesis 3, God promised that eventually an offspring of Adam and Eve would conquer the serpent and reclaim man's dominion, redeeming his fellow men from that satanic angelic authority. According to Genesis 3 the conquest of the serpent's authority would occur in an act in which the seed of the woman would also be wounded.

The New Testament reports that the satanic angels made several attempts to prevent Christ from fulfilling the promised redemption. When Christ was a child Herod sought to have him killed. As he began his ministry, one of the high-ranking satanic angels personally came to tempt Jesus into sin. When Jesus had proven that he would not succumb to temptation and sin, the goal instead became to put Jesus to death.

The New Testament makes it clear that the satanic angels were directly involved in instigating the death of Jesus. Several factors make this plain.

First, John provides an account of Jesus' interaction with the religious leaders of the Jews. There are several relevant details in this passage. First, Jesus is explaining that sinful men are under the dominion of sin. Here, Jesus' language parallels Paul's later account in Romans 5 wherein the authority of the satanic angels over sinful man is presented through the idea of servitude to sin. Both Jesus and Paul are referencing material from Genesis 3 and 4 which we have already examined.

Second, throughout this encounter, Jesus repeatedly references the desire of certain Jews to kill him (verses 37 and 40). In verse 59, the Jewish leaders pick up stones in order to kill Jesus right then and there. Alongside these statements, Jesus says that those who sought to kill him were children of their father, the devil, who Jesus' describes as a murderer from the beginning of creation.

**John 8:31 Then said Jesus** to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 **And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.** 33 **They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?** 34 **Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.** 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. 37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but **ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.** 38 **I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.** 39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 **But now ye seek to kill me,** a man that hath told you the truth, which I have

heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41 **Ye do the deeds of your father.** Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 **Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer (443) from the beginning,** and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. 48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? 49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. 50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. 51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. 59 **Then took they up stones to cast at him:** but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

In his epistle, John makes similar comments about Cain.

**1 John 3:12** Not as **Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.** And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Hebrews also presents a connection between Christ and Abel in regard to their having been put to death and making offerings to God.

**Hebrews 11:4** **By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice** than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

**Hebrews 12:24** **And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.**

We can see then that John and the author of Hebrews refer to the idea of the enmity that Genesis 3 declares would exist between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. According to John (and Jesus) the first-century Jewish

authorities and Cain were to be identified as the seed (or children) of the devil (the wicked one). And the enmity is demonstrated in the attempts by these parties to put to death Christ and Abel respectively. In fact, Christ compared the religious leaders (who he identified as children of the devil and who sought to kill him) with those who killed the prophets.

**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 11:50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.**

These passages affirm and explain for us the kind of enmity that Genesis 3 first spoke about. Throughout John 8, Jesus is drawing intentional parallels to God's promise of a redeemer in Genesis 3. Both passages discuss the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the promised redeemer who would set free those in bondage. In John 8, the children of the devil seek to kill Jesus in accordance with the will of their father, the devil, whose actions they mirror. Here again for comparison and reference is Genesis 3.

**Genesis 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**

In John 8:44, Jesus indicts the devil as committing murderer from the beginning of creation. In this way, Jesus acknowledges the devil's abuse of his authority to kill those who were not deserving of the death sentence. The Greek word here is "anthropoktonos" which simply means "manslayer" or "killer of man."

**John 8:31** Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; **32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. **33** They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? **34** Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. **35** And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. **36** If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. **37** I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. **38** I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. **39** They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. **40** But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. **41** Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication;

we have one Father, even God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 **Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer (443) from the beginning,** and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it...59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

443 ἀνθρωποκτονος **anthropoktonos**

from 444 and kteine (to kill); ; adj

AV-murderer 3; 3

1) a **manslayer**, murderer

For Synonyms see entry 5811 & 5889

Greek lexical comparisons of synonymous Greek words indicate that the word Jesus uses here in reference to the devil speaks of the murdering of those who are not worthy of death. It is distinguished from another Greek word “phoneus” (5406) which can be used to refer simply to homicide or manslaughter, in which the death is not premeditated or intentional.

5811

Synonyms

See Definition for ἀνθρωποκτονος [anthropkoktonos] 443

See Definition for σικαριος 4607

See Definition for φονευς [phoneus] 5406

**5406 any "murderer,"**—the type of which 4607 "the assassin" is a special kind; while **443 has in the NT a special emphasis**

5889

Synonyms for Murderer.

See definition for φονευς [**phoneus**] 5406

See definition for ἀνθρωποκτονος [**anthropkoktonos**] 443

See definition for σικαριος 4607

**Both in derivation and usage, φονευς and ἀνθρωποκτονος are distinguished from each other just as the English murderer from manslayer or homicide.**

σικαριος, used only in #Ac 21:38, is the Latin sicarius, and means an assassin, usually hired for the work, who furtively stabbed his enemy with a short sword, the Latin sica. φονευς is a generic word and may denote a murderer of any kind, σικαριος being one of the specific varieties which it includes.

5406 φονευς **phoneus**

from 5408; ; n m

AV-murderer 7; 7

1) a murderer, a **homicide**

For Synonyms see entry 5811 & 5889

We can see then that Jesus is accusing the devil of killing people inappropriately, that is, in a manner which is not the proper use of his authority. The ultimate exercise of that misuse of his power came in the satanic angels' involvement in instigating Jesus' death.

**Luke 22:2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him;** for they feared the people. **3 Then entered Satan into Judas** surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. **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.

**John 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;...27 And after the sop Satan entered into him.** Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

It is in accordance with Genesis 3's discussion of enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the devil and in connection with Jesus and the New Testament authors identification of those who killed the prophets (and Christ) as the children of the devil, that the New Testament also identifies Judas with the title "the son of perdition." (John 17:12). The Greek word translated as "perdition" is "apoleia" (684) which relates to Revelation 9:11's identification of the satanic angelic ruler known as "Apollyon" (623). Both words ("apoleia" and "apollyon") come from the same verbal root "apollumi" (622). The New Testament usage of these terms indicates again that men who work to bring about the death of the righteous (including the redeemer himself) are the "sons of the serpent." And through the New Testament discussion of Judas we again get an indication of the satanic angelic authorities' direct involvement in the unjust death of Christ.

**John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition (684); that the scripture might be fulfilled.**

**Revelation 9:11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon (623.)**

684 ἀπολεία **apoleia**

**from a presumed derivative of 622;** TDNT-1:396,67; n f

AV-perdition 8, destruction 5, waste 2, damnable 1, to die + 1519 1, perish + 1498 + 1519 1, pernicious 1; 20

1) **destroying**, utter destruction

1a) of vessels

2) a perishing, ruin, destruction

2a) of money

2b) **the destruction which consists of eternal misery in hell**

623 Ἀπολλυων **Apolluon**

**active participle of 622;** TDNT-1:397,67; n pr m

AV-Apollyon 1; 1

Apollyon = " Destroyer"

1) **the angel of the bottomless pit, the Destroyer**

**622** απολλυμι **apollumi**

from 575 and the base of 3639; TDNT-1:394,67; v

AV-perish 33, destroy 26, lose 22, be lost 5, lost 4, misc 2; 92

1) **to destroy**

1a) to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin

1b) render useless

1c) to kill

1d) to declare that one must be put to death

1e) metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell

1f) to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed

2) to destroy

2a) to lose

(For more information on the angelic figure identified in Revelation as Apollyon and his involvement with the Roman Empire, Judas, and Christ's death please see the studies in our end-times studies.)

By seeking to tempt Jesus to sin and directly instigating his death, the satanic angels violated the authority they had been given over sinful man and sought not only to get man to sin so they might have rightful authority over him, but to wickedly kill a sinless, innocent man who refused to sin. For these actions, God judged the angels who were involved as Jesus himself explains in reference to his death.

**John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.**

The events of Genesis 3-4 and the Day of Atonement rituals provide a picture of the mechanism and circumstances by which God would redeem us from our bondage to the power of the devil. And these events also portray the transgressions for which the satanic angels were judged and for which their authority was taken from them and given to the promised redeemer. The satanic angels were judged both for killing a sinless, innocent man who had proven that he was mature in character and would not sin. For this reason, God corrected this grave angelic sin by resurrecting that sinless and mature man (Jesus) to immortal life. Likewise, the satanic angels were judged for misusing their authority which was intended to prevent the proliferation of sin (through the death of the sinner) and instead enticing men to sin while also allowing sinful men to prosper and unjustly rule in this world.

The circumstances of Christ's death as a sinless man (including maturity of character in regard to obedience) and the complicitness of the Roman state portray

the guilt of the satanic angels who gained authority through man's sin. The indictments included: tempting or attempting to incite men to sin, killing a man who was known to be innocent, releasing a man who was known to be guilty, failing to promote justice, failing to prevent wickedness, and appeasing those who sought such evil. These were the causes for which these angelic rulers were both judged and stripped of their authority. That authority was then awarded to Christ (as seen in Christ's reception of the keys of death and hell in Revelation 1:18). Having that authority, Christ is empowered to resurrect all mankind, judge the righteous and the wicked, condemn the wicked to eternal damnation, and redeem his fellow men to eternal fellowship on the basis of faith in him and repentance. Christ's death precisely accomplishes the need created by men's sin and perfectly fulfills the prophetic descriptions of redemption contained in Old Testament passages and sacrificial rituals.

**Revelation 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead;** and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; **and have the keys of hell and of death.**

This is why blood was so important in all of the Old Testament sacrificial rituals, because the life is in the blood, and those who shed man's blood, whether they were men or beasts (like the serpent in Genesis 3) would be held responsible. In shedding Christ's blood by putting him to death, the satanic angels became culpable for violating God's commandment.

**Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof,** shall ye not eat. **5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed:** for in the image of God made he man.

### *The Significance of New Testament Reports that Jesus was Crucified Upon A Tree*

Having seen the relationship of Jesus' death to the Day of Atonement and Cain and Abel as well as to Passover, we can now turn to yet another aspect of Christ's death and redemptive work, which is portrayed in the Old Testament. Earlier, we saw that the gospel accounts reported that the Roman authorities had no direct interest or intention to execute Jesus. Pilate found Jesus innocent of the capital crime with which he was charged. However, Pilate did give permission to the Jewish leadership to kill Jesus as they intended and as the Law of Moses required.

Undoubtedly, the Roman state itself (through Pilate and Herod) committed a sinful and wicked act and a grave injustice by permitting a man they knew to be innocent to be put to death by those who falsely accused him. The fact that the Jewish authorities utilized Roman soldiers who, under the chief priests' direction, accomplished Christ's execution demonstrates further the complicity of Rome in these affairs. However, we must recognize that the gospels all inform us plainly that Jesus was put to death by the Jewish authorities themselves (without

particular interest or intent from the Roman authorities) in accordance with their own laws and requirements. Jesus did not remain in Roman custody to be executed by the soldiers for a transgression of Roman law. Rather, he was turned over to the Jewish authorities to be killed according to their law.

Certainly, the New Testament does report that Jesus was crucified. However, as we have seen the Greek words only require that he was hung or affixed (nailed) to a wooden crossbeam and placed upon some sort of vertical object. The linguistic, biblical, and historical details we have examined so far do not provide direct information as to whether that object was a wooden post (as in conventional views) or a tree. We do know that the Law of Moses would have required Jesus to be stoned and hung from a tree rather than a wooden post, that the Jewish authorities had previously sought to fulfill the Mosaic requirements by stoning Jesus, and that Pilate turned Jesus over to the Jewish authorities to do as they willed rather than to carry out any verdict or punishment required by Roman law or state interests.

With these facts in mind must give serious consideration to New Testament texts that report specifically on the object to which Jesus was affixed. There are no less than five instances in which the apostles themselves declare that Jesus was, in fact, hung from a tree just as the Law of Moses required.

**Acts 5:30** The God of our fathers raised up **Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged (2910) on a tree (3586).**

**Acts 10:39** And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; **whom they slew and hanged (2910) on a tree (3586):**

**Acts 13:29** And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, **they took him down from the tree (3586),** and laid him in a sepulchre.

**Galatians 3:13** **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth (2910) on a tree (3586):**

**1 Peter 2:24** **Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree (3586),** that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

In all of these five passages, the Greek word translated as tree is “xulon” (3586.)

3586 ξυλον **xulon**

from another form of the base of 3582; TDNT-5:37,665; n n

AV-**tree 10**, staff 5, wood 3, stocks 1; 19

1) wood

1a) that which is made of wood

1a1) as a beam from which any one is suspended, a gibbet, a cross

1a2) a log or timber with holes in which the feet, hands, neck of prisoners were inserted and fastened with thongs

1a3) a fetter, or shackle for the feet

1a4) a cudgel, stick, staff

2) a tree

While “xulon” can refer to anything that is made from a tree, it is important to note that it is translated as tree 10 out of its 19 occurrences in the New Testament. Likewise, “xulon” is the commonly used in the Septuagint when trees are discussed. Here are a few prominent examples establishing this usage and meaning.

**Genesis 1:11 And God said,** Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and **the fruit tree (06086, LXX 3586)** yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. 2 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, **and the tree (06086, LXX 3586)** yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good...29 **And God said, Behold, I have given you** every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and **every tree (06086, LXX 3586), in the which is the fruit of a tree (06086, LXX 3586)** yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

**Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree (06086, LXX 3586) that is pleasant to the sight,** and good for food; **the tree (06086, LXX 3586)** of life also in the midst of the garden, and **the tree (06086, LXX 3586)** knowledge of good and evil...16 **And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree (06086, LXX 3586) of the garden thou mayest freely eat:** 17 But of the **tree (06086, LXX 3586)** of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

**Exodus 9:25** And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, **and brake every tree (06086, LXX 3586) of the field.**

**Exodus 10:5** And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, **and shall eat every tree (06086, LXX 3586) which groweth for you out of the field:**

**Leviticus 27:30** And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of **the fruit of the tree (06086, LXX 3586),** is the LORD’S: it is holy unto the LORD.

**Psalms 1:3** **And he shall be like a tree (06086, LXX 3586) planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither;** and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

While “xulon” does not always have to refer to a living tree, there is no doubt that in the New Testament passages discussing Jesus’ death the apostles are plainly stating that Jesus was killed by the Jewish leadership in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:22. As we have seen, Deuteronomy 21:22 required those condemned to death to be hung from an actual tree, not a wooden post.

**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 (06068):** 23 **His body shall not remain all night upon the tree (06086, LXX “xulon”), but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed [LXX 2672, “kataraoimai”] of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.**

First, notice verse 23. This verse declares that anyone who was hung on a tree as verses 21-22 required was considered to be accursed. Galatians 3:13 explicitly includes this portion of Deuteronomy 21. In fact, the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13 use very closely related Greek words to translate the Hebrew word “accursed.” Deuteronomy 21:23 uses the Greek verb “kataraoimai” (2672) while Galatians 3:13 uses “epikataratos” (1944), an adjective derived from it, alongside two uses of the noun from which the verb (used in Deut. 21:23) is itself derived.

2672 καταραομαι **kataraoimai**  
middle voice **from 2671**; TDNT-1:448,75; v  
AV-curse 6; 6  
1) to curse, doom, imprecate evil upon

1944 επικαταρατος **epikataratos**  
**from 1909 and a derivative of 2672**; TDNT-1:451,75; adj  
AV-cursed 3; 3  
1) accursed, execrable, exposed to divine vengeance, lying under God’s curse

2671 καταρα **katara**  
from 2596 (intensive) and 685; TDNT-1:449,75; n f  
AV-curse 3, cursing 2, cursed 1; 6  
1) an execration, imprecation, curse

**Galatians 3:13** Christ hath redeemed us from the curse (2671) of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed (2671) is every one that hangeth on a tree (3586):

Even more importantly, Acts 5:30, Acts 10:39, and Galatians 3:13 all couple the Greek verb “kremannumi” (2910) meaning “to hang” with the noun “xulon.” Likewise, the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 21:22 uses the same Greek verb coupled with “xulon.” Furthermore, Acts 5:30, 10:39, and 13:29 all

expressly articulate that it was the Jewish authorities who slew Jesus and hung him from the tree in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:21-23's requirements.

**Acts 5:30** The God of our fathers raised up **Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged (2910) on a tree (3586).**

**Acts 10:39** And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; **whom they slew and hanged (2910) on a tree (3586):**

**Acts 13:29** And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, **they took him down from the tree (3586),** and laid him in a sepulchre.

It is critical to recognize that Acts 5:30 is an encounter between the apostles and the same Jewish authorities who put Jesus to death. In this context, we have two Jewish groups. One group, the apostles, is plainly declaring that the other group, the Sanhedrin, executed a man in accordance with the Law of Moses' requirements to hang someone from a tree. If, in fact, Jesus was not killed in accordance with the Law of Moses by the ruling Jewish high court, but was instead crucified on a wooden post by Roman state authorities, then the apostles could not have charged the Sanhedrin with these statements. Nor would the Sanhedrin have left these charges unchallenged. They could simply have rebutted the apostles by saying, "We didn't kill him or hang him from a tree. Everyone knows he was crucified on a wooden post by the Romans for treason against Caesar." In short, this is an exchange between two Jewish parties citing a specific Mosaic command wherein one asserts that this command was applied to Jesus and the other doesn't challenge that assertion. This provides another piece of evidence that the New Testament authors themselves understood that the object to which Jesus was crucified (affixed, hung) was, in fact, a tree, just as the Law of Moses specified.

The fact that these New Testament passages and the Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 21:22 use "xulon" provides clear evidence that Jesus was crucified to a tree. The explicitness of these biblical texts and their language in concert with historical data certainly exceeds the mostly presumptuous nature of the support offered in favor of Jesus having been crucified to a wooden post. Additional statements provided in Luke's account of Jesus' crucifixion provide even more demonstration of the conclusion that Jesus was crucified on a tree.

Luke 23 records Jesus' interaction with some women who followed him as he approached the place where he was to be crucified. Verse 26 refers to the crossbeam which Jesus and Simon of Cyrene carried using the Greek word "stauros." This crossbeam was essentially a piece of wood to which Jesus' hands would later be nailed. Verses 27-31 record the exchange between Jesus and some of his women followers. Immediately after this, verse 32 discusses the crucifixion of Jesus and the two thieves at Calvary.

**Luke 23:26** And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross (4716,)

**that he might bear it after Jesus.** 27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31 **For if they do [5719] these things in (1722) a green (5200) tree (3586), what shall be done [5638] in the dry?** 32 **And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.** 33 **And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.**

The critical component occurs in verse 31 where Jesus comments on what was presently being done in or with a living (green) tree. We should note that translations typically render the Greek preposition “en” (1722 – “en a green tree”) with the English preposition “in.” However, here the Greek preposition “en” is used with the dative case of the noun “xulon.” When “en” is used with a noun in the dative declension, it can be translated either as “in,” “by,” or “with.” More importantly, when the noun is given in dative case and is coupled with the preposition “en” then the noun is being identified as the instrument by which the action is done.

**Dative Case – In general, the dative marks the indirect object of a verb,** although in some instances the dative is used for the direct object of a verb pertaining directly to an act of giving something. In Russian and Swiss German, for example, the verb "to call (by telephone)" is always followed by a noun in the dative. The thing being given may be a tangible object, such as "a book" or "a pen", or it may be an intangible abstraction, such as "an answer" or "help". In some languages, the dative case has assimilated the functions of other now-extinct cases. **In Ancient Greek, the dative has the functions of the Proto-Indo-European locative and instrumental as well as those of the original dative.** – wikipedia.org

### **En (Dative)**

1. Spatial/Sphere: *in* (and various other translations)
2. Temporal: *in, within, when, while, during*
3. Association (often close personal relationship): *with*
4. Cause: *because of*
5. **Instrumental: *by, with***
6. Reference/Respect: *with respect to/with reference to*
7. Manner: *with*
8. Thing Possessed: *with* (in the sense of which possesses)
9. Standard (=Dative of Rule): *according to the standard of*
10. As an equivalent for *eis* (with verbs of notion)

– <http://fdier.free.fr/GG.pdf>, This grammar is a compilation primarily from Wallace and Mounce below: Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, Wallace; A

Graded Reader of Biblical Greek, Mounce; BGreek Mailing List; Free Bible Online Software

An agent is a living being and agency is normally expressed by *υπο* with the genitive... Sometimes *απο* and *δια* (both with the genitive) are used in the same sense... On the other hand, **an instrument is nearly always inanimate. It may be expressed by the dative alone... More commonly, however, *εν* with the dative is used.** – Teach Yourself New Testament Greek, Section 11.2, p. 103

**“If they do these things in (Greek dative: *with*) a green tree (*xylon*), what will occur in (Greek dative: *with*) the dry tree?” (Luke 23:31). Christ was saying that it was *with* (or *by means of*) a green tree (*xylon*) that he would meet his death. This reference in Luke’s Gospel shows that the instrument of Christ’s execution was a *green tree (xylon)* and not with some dry pieces of timber nailed together in the form of a Latin or Greek cross (or any other configuration of dry timber beams.) – Ernest L. Martin, *Secrets of Golgotha*, p. 179**

For comparison, 1 Corinthians 6:11 uses the Greek word “*εν*” (1722) twice. In both cases it is coupled with a noun in the dative case. And in both cases the dative noun is the instrument by which the action is performed. Here, Paul explains that the instruments or means by which we are washed, justified, and sanctified are the name of the Lord and the Spirit of God.

**1 Corinthians 6:11** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified **in (1722) the name (dative)** of the Lord Jesus, and **by (1722) the Spirit (dative)** of our God.

Similarly then, in Luke 23:31, Jesus is discussing an action that is done by means of or through the instrumentation of a living tree.

The bracketed numbers in Luke 23 (above) are the lexical references denoting the tense of the verb. We can see that what is being done with the living tree is stated in the present tense, active voice, indicative mood. This means that Jesus is referring to an action that is being performed (or is about to be performed) as he spoke. It is a statement of fact. (What might happen at some other point in time with a dry tree is rendered in the aorist tense, middle deponent voice, and subjunctive mood.)

**Luke 23:26** And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross (4716,) that he might bear it after Jesus. 27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31 **For if they do [5719] these things in (1722) a green (5200) tree (3586), what shall be done [5638] in the dry?** 32

**And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.**

5719

TVM: **Present 5774, Active 5784, Indicative 5791**, Count: 3014

5638

TVM: Second Aorist 5780, Middle Deponent 5788, **Subjunctive 5792**, Count: 66

Furthermore, the Greek word for tree is “xulon” (3586.) Here it is coupled with the Greek word “hugros” (5200.)

5200 υγρος **hugros**

from the base of 5205; ; adj

AV-green 1; 1

1) damp, moist, wet

2) full of sap, green

3586 ξυλον **xulon**

from another form of the base of 3582; TDNT-5:37,665; n n

AV-**tree 10**, staff 5, wood 3, stocks 1; 19

1) wood

1a) that which is made of wood

1a1) as a beam from which any one is suspended, a gibbet, a cross

1a2) a log or timber with holes in which the feet, hands, neck of prisoners were inserted and fastened with thongs

1a3) a fetter, or shackle for the feet

1a4) a cudgel, stick, staff

**2) a tree**

The definitions of these words clearly inform us that Jesus is referring to a living tree. Furthermore, Jesus is referring to something that is currently being done by a third party with a living tree.

The critical question then is this: what action is Jesus saying somebody was performing using a living tree? The critical contextual clue comes from the fact that the verses that immediately follow Jesus’ statements about the living tree discuss Jesus and the two thieves being crucified. Furthermore, we have already seen that the apostles state plainly that Jesus was hung on a tree in accordance with the Law of Moses using the same Greek word “xulon” (tree) that is used in Deuteronomy 21:22 and here in Luke 23:31. These facts leave little reason to doubt that Jesus is here stating that he was being crucified by means of a living tree (xulon).

This conclusion (that Luke 23 is stating that Jesus was crucified to a crossbeam that was affixed to a living tree) is confirmed by details provided in John’s gospel.

As we move to John's account let's note Luke 23:31-33's proclamation of three particular details: 1) something was presently being done with a living tree, 2) that Jesus was crucified with two malefactors, and 3) one of these men was crucified on his right and the other on his left.

**Luke 23:31 For if they do [5719] these things in (1722) a green (5200) tree (3586), what shall be done [5638] in the dry? 32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.**

Matthew and Mark report this same configuration while specifically identifying that the two malefactors were, more precisely, guilty of some form of thievery.

**Matthew 27:38 Then were there two thieves (3027) crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.**

**Mark 15:27 And with him they crucify two thieves (3027); the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.**

3027 ληστης *lestes*  
 from leizomai (to plunder); TDNT-4:257,532; n m  
 AV-thief 11, robber 4; 15  
 1) **a robber, plunderer**, freebooter, brigand  
 For Synonyms see entry 5856

John 19:31-34 also reports on the deaths of Jesus and the two men who were crucified with him.

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

There are several important details to note in this passage. First, we must note that verse 31 refers to 3 bodies using the Greek word "soma" (4983) in its plural form ("σωματα"). This makes sense because John is reporting on the crucifixion of three men (Jesus and the two thieves). However, the word "stauros" (4716) is rendered in the singular ("σταυρου"). The language that John employs presents us with the idea that all three men (Jesus and the two thieves) were hung upon a single vertical object ("stauros"). The use of the singular for "stauros" is not the only detail that points to this conclusion. Verse 32 uses the verb "sustauroo" (4957) which is a compound word formed from the verb "stauroo" (4717) meaning "to crucify" and the conjunction "sun" (4862) meaning "with." In verses

31 and 32, John seems to be plainly stating that all three men were “crucified together” on a single “stauros.”

4957 σταυρωω **sustauroo**  
 from 4862 and 4717; TDNT-7:786,1102; v  
 AV-**crucify with** 5; 5  
 1) **to crucify along with**

Furthermore, the report that the two thieves were crucified on either side of Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left, also supports the conclusion that all three men were hung on the same object. John’s gospel explains that the soldiers went to break the legs of Jesus and the two thieves in order to hasten their deaths so that they would not remain on the “stauros” when the Sabbath commenced that evening. John reports the order in which the soldiers approached the three men. According to John, the soldiers first approached one of the thieves, then they went to the other thief, and lastly they came to Jesus. Additionally, the soldiers did not discover that Jesus was dead until after they had broken the legs of both of the two thieves. The following question emerges. If Jesus was in the middle of the two thieves and the three men were hung on separate “crosses,” then why didn’t the soldiers come to Jesus second rather than after they had already broken the legs of both of the other two men? Or, if they came to one thief, then passed over Jesus in the middle and went to the other thief, how would they not have noticed that Jesus was already dead when they walked by him?

The explanation to these questions come by recognizing that all three men hung on separate sides of a single “cross” just as verses 31-32 of John 19 report. Since all three men were affixed to a single vertical object, the soldiers approached them in either clockwise or counterclockwise order starting with one of the thieves, proceeding to the other, and then ultimately to Jesus last. This would also explain why they did not know Jesus was dead until after they’d broken the legs of the other two men. The reason they wouldn’t have known that Jesus was already dead, was because they had not passed by him at all but came to him last in their circuit around that single, vertical object and would not have had an occasion to see Jesus directly until that point.

When we take into account both Luke and John’s descriptions of the crucifixion of Jesus and these two thieves it becomes clear that Jesus was crucified on a living tree. Not only does the language of Luke 23:31-33, Deuteronomy 21:22, and other New Testament verses such as Acts 5:30 require that conclusion, but we must concede that it would be difficult, if not impossible to imagine all three men being affixed to a single wooden post. However, all three men could easily be crucified on a single, sufficiently large tree.

When we take all of these Old and New Testament factors into account a startling picture emerges. Perhaps some aspects of the evidence may be considered less than conclusive when considered on their own. But we have two competing theories here. There is the alternative we have just outlined above involving a living tree as well as the conventional view that Jesus and the two thieves were

each hung on separate, wooden posts. As we consider which view to adopt, we must ask whether the evidence for the conventional view is more or less conclusive than the evidence for the view we have presented here. We believe a fair assessment demonstrates that the above conclusions are exegetically, linguistically, and historically supported while the conventional view tends to rest on assumptions more than evidence.

A summary of the above facts is now in order so that we can grasp the full biblical significance of Christ's crucifixion. As we have seen, when carefully (rather than presumptuously) considered within their historical and Old Testament context, the details reported in the New Testament indicate that Jesus was crucified in a garden on the Mount of Olives just east of the Temple (somewhere near the altar where the red heifer was killed) on a single, living tree along with two thieves. This astounding set of circumstances surrounding Christ's death contains significant connections to Old Testament teaching and precedent.

1. We must recall that in the garden of Eden, the pre-incarnate Word of God met with Adam and provided him instructions. Likewise, the incarnate Word commonly met with his disciples in a garden near the Temple in Jerusalem and there taught them.
2. In the garden of Eden, two human beings (Adam and Eve) took something that was forbidden to them. On the cross, Jesus hung with two thieves who had likewise stolen something that was not theirs to take.
3. In the garden of Eden eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge was the first sin that any man (or woman) had ever committed. The ancient Jews understood the tree of knowledge to be a fig tree in accordance with Genesis 3's statement that the fig tree was immediately available for Adam and Eve to make aprons to cover their nakedness and shame after they'd eaten the forbidden fruit. In the gospels, there was a fig tree in the same garden area where Jesus was crucified whose fruit had all been eaten and which Jesus cursed so that no man would eat from its fruit again.
4. In the garden of Eden there was a tree which, if man ate of it (continually), would allow him to live forever. When man sinned, he was removed from that garden in Eden and prohibited from eating that fruit and living forever. And just as the New Testament reports that Jesus was crucified on a tree in a garden, in John 6 (as well as in the accounts of the Last Supper), Jesus directly speaks of his flesh in connection to the fruit of the tree of life.

**John 6:27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:** for him hath God the Father sealed. 28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. 30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is

written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 **For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.** 34 **Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.** 35 **And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life:** he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...48 **I am that bread of life.** 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 **This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.** 51 **I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.** 52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53 **Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.** 54 **Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life;** and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 **For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.** 56 **He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.** 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: **so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.** 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: **he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.**

5. The New Testament uses the Greek term “paradeisos” (3857) to refer to the garden which was in Eden where the tree of life was located. In Genesis 3, man sinned and he was cast out of the garden and Eden and God killed an animal in order to cover their shame. Note that Revelation 2:7, 22:2, and 22:14 use the Greek word “xulon” (3857) to refer to the tree of life which was in the garden of Eden. This is perfectly fitting since Jesus was crucified on a tree (“xulon”) and his flesh is the bread of eternal life. The language again reinforces and demonstrates the very real parallel that both Jesus and the New Testament authors intended to draw between the tree of life and Jesus’ crucifixion.

**Revelation 2:7** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; **To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree (3586) of life, which is in the midst of the paradise (3857) of God.**

**Revelation 22:2** **In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree (3586) of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree (3586) were for the healing of the nations.**

**Revelation 22:14** Blessed are they that do his commandments, **that they may have right to the tree (3586) of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.**

Furthermore, just before his death, Christ references the idea of the consequences of mankind being cast out of God's presence in paradise (the garden in Eden). In a brief exchange with the particular thief which Luke portrays as repentant, Jesus makes a remark that implies man's banishment would be undone such that this thief would be with the incarnate Word Jesus in paradise.

**Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**

Jesus' statement seems precisely referential to the concept of the reversal of Adam's situation after sin. Adam was cast out of paradise and the presence of the Word of God for taking something forbidden to him. In Genesis 2:17, Adam had been told concerning the forbidden fruit, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The repentant thief was told, "this day you will be in paradise" with the Word of God. This fits with what the rest of the New Testament teaches about repentance and Christ's atoning work. For all those who repent, Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, covers our sin and through faith we can now enter again into God's presence. (For more precise information on the New Testament uses of "paradeisos" please see our Cosmology and Origins and Destinations studies.)

The sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 is perfectly paralleled by the circumstances of Christ's death on a tree in a garden with two men condemned to die for taking something that was forbidden to them. Just as Adam and Eve adequately depict all mankind whose individual sins condemn them to be cast out of God's presence and die, so too the thieves adequately depict all mankind as either remaining in sin and disbelief or as having faith and repenting so that they can live forever in God's presence.

6. Likewise, through sin men become servants to the dominion of the satanic angel who wielded the power of death and authority over the place of the dead (hell). But because he was innocent (and mature in character in regard to obedience) Christ's death was an abuse of the power that was given to these angelic authorities. And for attempting to get Jesus to sin as well as for unjustly instigating his death, these angels were justly judged, their authority over mankind was stripped away from them, and that authority was given to Jesus.

**Revelation 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.**

Now, by his incarnation, sinless obedience, and death as a man, Jesus has become the kinsman redeemer to all mankind and delivered us from bondage under the authority of Satan and his angels. The first act of this authority was Jesus' resurrection from the dead and his removal of the saints of the Old Testament

period from their confinement within Sheol (Hades). (See Matthew 16:18 and 27:52-53.) Through his sinless life and unjust death Christ (the second Adam) defeated the satanic angels and took back man's dominion. Because of this, through Christ all men will be resurrected either to eternal condemnation in the lake of fire or eternal life in fellowship with God on earth (Matthew 25:46).