



# The Suffering and Death of Jesus Christ

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Learn about the suffering and death as documented by the Bible and annotated with medical insights. In this short informative paper Dr. Brenda Smith provides insights into the physical suffering endured by Jesus prior to his death and ascension.

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# *The Suffering and Death of Jesus Christ*

## **The Last Supper**

### **Date**

14 Nissan AD 30?

The years 30-33 AD have been suggested

### **Passover**

1. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
2. Jews from all over the world would be in Jerusalem to celebrate

### **Day of the Week**

1. The Jewish day began from sundown on one day to sundown the next
2. The Last Supper/Crucifixion would have been sundown Thursday to sundown Friday

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## Gethsemane (The Oil Press)

### Agony

Agony (contest)- the only place mentioned in the KJV.

The suffering of intense physical or mental pain

1. Prayer- Jesus prayed to His Father 3 times for this “cup” to pass
2. Hematidrosis/Hemohidrosis/Hematidrosis



Figure 1- Garden of Gethsemane

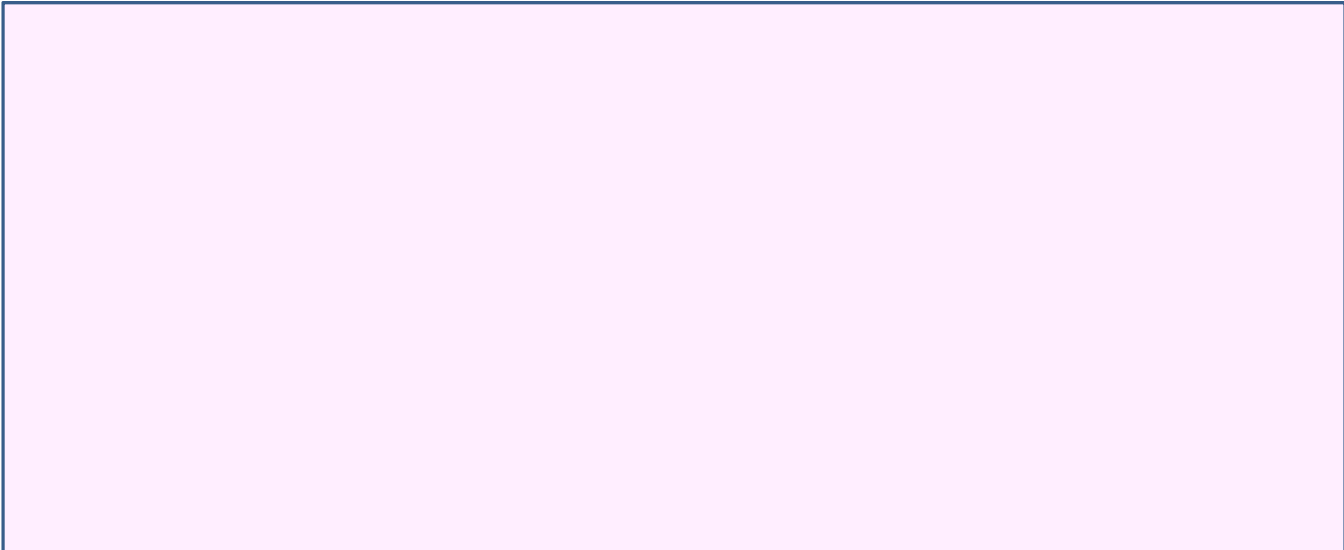
“And being in agony He prayed more earnestly and

his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” [Luke 22:44](#)

- a. some have questioned whether this was just a metaphor due to use of terms “as it were”
- b. this is a real medical condition documented historically and given the context would fit accurately since Luke was a doctor

### Arrest

1. A great multitude from the chief priests and elders and scribes and Captains of the temple (temple guard)- [Luke 22:52](#)
2. A band-300-600 Roman soldiers-John 18:3 (this has been questioned; only John suggests this in his gospel and the words that have been variously translated as troops, band, etc. are in italics meaning they were added by the translators.)
3. Abandonment by friends  
...“Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled” [John 18:3](#)



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## Trials (5-7)

### Before Annas- [John 18:13](#)

- He was not the high priest but was the father-in-law of Caiaphas
- Slapped by one of the officers [John 18:22](#)

### Before Caiaphas

1. Privately questioned
2. With chief priests, elders and council

**“Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?” [Matthew 26:67-68](#)**

**“And when they had blindfolded Him...” [Luke 22:64](#)**



Figure 2- Jesus Faces Pontius Pilate

### Before Sanhedrin (in the morning)

### Before Pilate

See [Luke 23:1-5](#)

### Before Herod Antipas

See [Luke 23:6-12](#)

**“And Herod with his men of war set Him at hought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.” [Luke 23:11](#)**

**Mock-** to deride; to laugh at; to ridicule; to treat with scorn or contempt;



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## Before Pilate

See [John 18:28 – 19:3](#)

### 1. Scourged-

- a. instrument was a short whip of leather strips that had small iron balls and pieces of bone attached and was called a flagellum or flagrum.
- b. one or two highly trained Roman soldiers called lictors carried out the punishment
- c. the result was bruising of the skin by the iron balls resulting in damage to the underlying capillaries which then leaked plasma into the tissues resulting in circulatory or hypovolemic shock; the bones attached would split the skin leaving it in ribbons of flesh and causing further damage to the underlying muscles with significant blood loss
- d. the victim was completely naked during this process  
**"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."** [Isaiah 50:6](#)

**"Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men;"** [Isaiah 52:14](#)

2. Crown of thorns
3. Mocking, smiting, spitting [Mark 15:19-20](#)



Figure 3- Medical examination photo of Gordon

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Medical examination photo of Gordon showing his **scourged** back, widely distributed by Abolitionists to expose the brutality of slavery.

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### Crucifixion (Excruciating!)

#### History

1. Probably invented by the Assyrians/Persians  
Assyrians would impale victims on a spear
2. Very slow, painful death
3. Several types of crosses
  - a. Latin or t-shaped
  - b. Tau or T-Shaped
  - c. X Shaped



Figure 4- Representation of Jesus' crown of thorns and a nail

#### March to Calvary

1. Did Jesus carry the entire cross or just the crosspiece (patibulum)?
2. Vertical portion of the cross (stipes) was usually in place
3. Entire cross might have weighed 300 lbs. as opposed to 80-100 lbs.
4. Preceded by the sign or titulus containing the name and crime of the condemned

#### Nailing of the hands/wrists and feet

1. Done with the victim lying on the ground
2. Nail (7-9 inches) driven into the wrist between the radius and ulna and severing the median nerve. This is the same nerve affected in carpal tunnel syndrome) resulting in agonizing pain shooting up the entire arm
3. Patibulum lifted up and placed on the upright (stipes)  
**“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die.” [John 12:32-33](#)**
4. Weight of the body now pulling on the wrists probably causing dislocation of the shoulders and elbows  
"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me." [Psalm 22:14](#)



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5. Feet nailed through tops with one on top of the other- probably severing the dorsalis pedis artery and other nerves.

**“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.” [Psalm 22:16](#)**

6. Titulus attached to the cross- KING OF THE JEWS written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew

7. Taunting from crowd and soldiers

**“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” [Psalm 22:7-8](#)**



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### Causes of Death

1. Before crucifixion Jesus is already weakened from fatigue, dehydration, severe pain and hypovolemic shock from blood loss
2. At crucifixion
  - a. In normal breathing inspiration is an active process which involves the diaphragm contracting downward increasing the length of the chest cavity and the external intercostal muscles contracting to elevate the rib cage increasing the anterior-posterior diameter of the chest cavity; exhalation is passive with relaxation of the diaphragm and relaxation of the external intercostal muscles and slight contraction of the intercostal muscles.
  - b. With the weight of the body pulling down on the arms and shoulders the process is reversed and with the muscles of the chest wall be-coming cramped and unable to move effectively so that carbon dioxide begins to build up in the body causing a condition called acidosis which results in damage to the tissues of the lungs and eventually leading to a buildup of fluid around the heart and lungs which leads to death if not corrected.
  - c. In order to breathe effectively the victim would have to try to raise the body up by pushing against the nailed feet which will cause more pain in the wrists and feet and also causing the already shredded back to rub up against the wood of the cross.



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3. In order to speed up the process, often the Roman soldiers would perform the crurifragium or the breaking of the legs so that the victim could no longer push up to exhale leading to death in minutes. However, Jesus was already dead before this and in order to make sure He was dead, a spear thrust into His chest from the right side resulting in piercing of the lungs and pericardial sac where fluid had accumulated and through the heart which led to water and blood flowing out from the wound.

**“But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” [John 19:33-34](#)**

**...“Not one of His bones shall be broken.” [John 19:36](#)**

4. Jesus’ last words from the Cross

**...“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do...” [Luke 23:24](#)**

**...“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” [Luke 23:43](#)**

**...“Woman, behold thy son!.... Behold thy mother!” [John 19:26-27](#)**

**...“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” [Matthew 27:46](#)**

**...“I thirst.” [John 19:28](#)**

**...“It is finished:” [John 19:30](#)**

**...“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:” [Luke 23:46](#)**

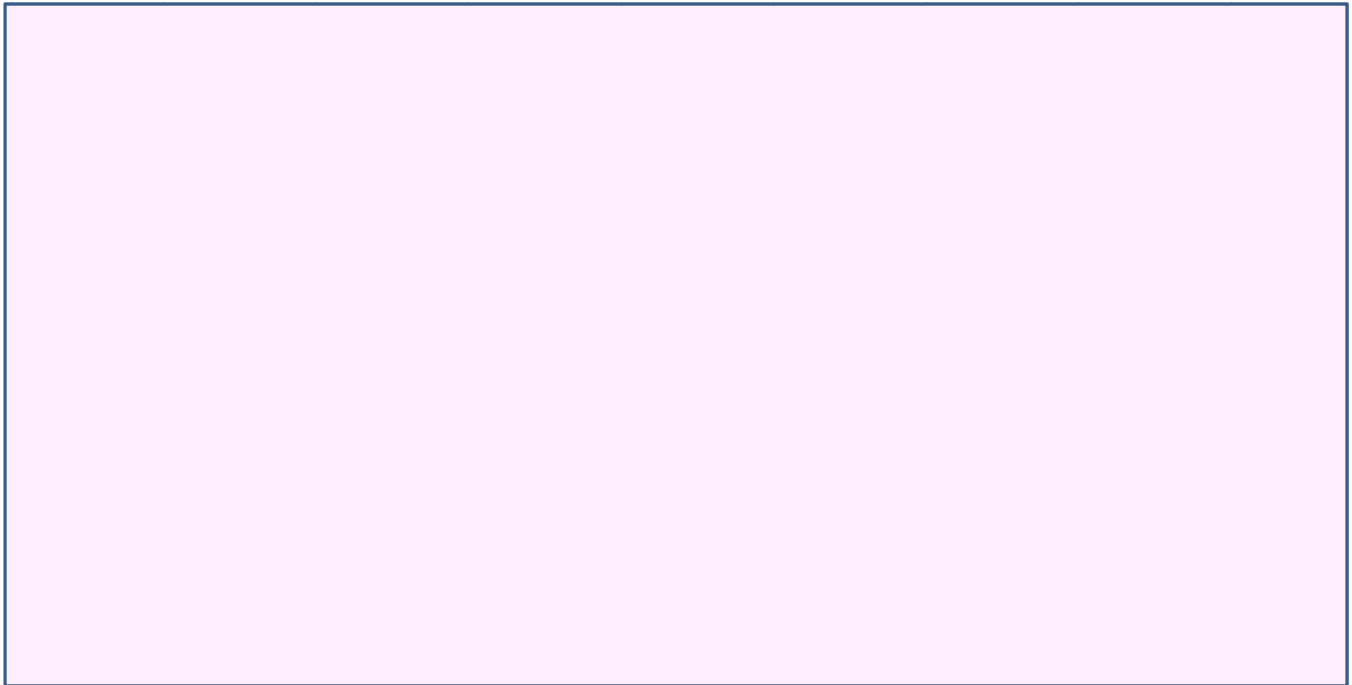


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### 5. Timeline

- a. Crucified at 9 AM on Friday
- b. Darkness over all the land from 12 noon to 3 PM Matt 27:45
- c. Dead at 3 PM (or shortly thereafter significant for this being time of the evening sacrifice of the lambs for Passover.)



Notes