

The Cross and Crucifixion.

This Is Appendix 162 From The Companion Bible.

In the Greek New Testament two words are used for "the cross" on which the Lord was put to death.

1. The word *stauros*; which denotes an upright pole or stake, to which the criminals were nailed for execution.

2. The *xulon*, which generally denotes a piece of a dead log of wood, or timber, for fuel or for any other purpose. It is not like *dendron*, which is used of a living, or green tree, as in Matthew 21:8; Revelation 7:1, 3; 8:7; 9:4, etc.

As this latter word *xulon* is used for the former *stauros*, it shows us that the meaning of each is exactly the same.



The verb *stauroō* means to drive stakes.¹

Our English word "cross" is the translation of the Latin *crux*; but the Greek *stauros* no more means a *crux* than the word "stick" means a "crutch".


Homer uses the word *stauros* of an ordinary pole or stake, or a single piece of timber.² And this is the meaning and usage of the word throughout the Greek classics.³

It never means *two* pieces of timber placed across one another at any angle, but always of one piece alone. Hence the use of the word *xulon* (No. 2, above) in connection with the manner of our Lord's death, and rendered "tree" in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29. Galatians 3:13. 1 Peter 2:24. This is preserved in our old English name *rood*, or *rod*. See the *Encycl. Brit.*, 11th (Camb.) ed., volume 7, page 505d.

There is nothing in the Greek of the New Testament even to imply two pieces of timber.

The letter *chi*, **X**, the initial of the word Christ (**ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ**), was originally used for His Name; or **ΧΡ**. This was superseded by symbols  and , and even the first of these had four *equal* arms.

These crosses were used as symbols of the Babylonian sun-god, , and are first seen on a coin of Julius Cæsar, 100 - 44 B.C., and then on a coin struck by Cæsar's heir (Augustus), 20 B.C.⁴

On the coins of Constantine the most frequent symbol is ; but the same symbol is used without the surrounding circle, and with the four equal arms vertical and horizontal; and this was the symbol specially venerated as the "Solar Wheel". It should be stated that Constantine was a sun-god worshipper, and would not enter the "Church" till some quarter of a century after the legend of his having seen such a cross in the heavens (EUSEBIUS, *Vit. Const.* I. 37).

The evidence is the same as to the pre-Christian (phallic) symbol in Asia, Africa, and Egypt, whether we consult *Nineveh* by Sir A. H. LAYARD (ii 213), or *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, by Sir J. GARDNER WILKINSON, iii. pages 24, 26, 43, 44, 46, 52, 82, 136.

Dr. SCHLIEMANN gives the same evidence in his *Ilios* (1880), recording his discoveries on the site of prehistoric Troy. See pages 337, 350, 353, 521, 523.

Dr. MAX OHNEFALSCH - RICHTER gives the same evidence from Cyprus; and these are "the oldest extant Phoenician inscriptions"; see his *Kypros, the Bible, and Homer : Oriental Civilisation, Art, and Religion in Ancient Times*, Plates XIX, XXV, XXVI, XXX, XXXI, XXXII, XL, LVIII, LXIX, etc.

The Catacombs in Rome bear the same testimony : "Christ" is never represented there as "hanging on a cross", and the cross itself is only portrayed in a veiled and hesitating manner. In the Egyptian churches the cross was a pagan symbol of life, borrowed by the Christians, and interpreted in the pagan manner. See the *Encycl. Brit.*, 11th (Camb.) ed., volume 14, page 273.

In his *Letter from Rome* Dean Burgon says : "I question whether a cross occurs on any Christian monument of the first four centuries".

In Mrs. Jameson's famous *History of our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art*, she says (volume ii, page 315) : "It must be owned that ancient objects of art, as far as hitherto known, afford no corroboration of the use of the cross in the simple transverse form familiar to us, at any period preceding, or even closely succeeding, the time of Chrysostom"; and Chrysostom wrote half a century after Constantine!

"The Invention of the Cross" by Helena the mother of Constantine (in 326), though it means her *finding* of the cross, may or may not be true; but the "invention" of it in pre-Christian times, and the "invention" of its use in later times, are truths of which we need to be reminded in the present day. The evidence is thus complete, that the Lord was put to death upon an upright stake, and not on two pieces of timber placed at any angle.

NOTES

¹ There are two compounds of it used : *sustauroo* = to put any one thus to death with another (Matthew 27:44. Mark 15:32. John 19:32. Romans 6:6. Galatians 2:20); and *anastauroo* = to rise up and fix upon the stake again (Hebrews 6:6). Another word used is equally significant : *prospegnumi* = to fix or fasten anything (Acts 2:23).

² *Iliad* xxiv. 453. *Odyssey* xiv. 11.

³ For example, Thucydides iv. 90. Xenophon, *Anabasis* v. 2. 21.

⁴ Other coins with this symbol were struck by Augustus, also by Hadrian and other Roman emperors. See *Early Christian Numismatics*, by C. W. King, M.A.

The Inscriptions on the Cross.

This Is Appendix 163 From The Companion Bible.

Each of the four Gospels gives a different wording of these inscriptions :-

1. Matthew 27:37: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."
2. Mark 15:26: "The King of the Jews."
3. Luke 23:38: "This is the King of the Jews."
4. John 19:19: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Here again the difficulty is created by assuming that these *similar* but differing records are *identical*, without noticing the exact words which are written. It is universally assumed that there was only *one*, and then follow the efforts to explain the alleged "discrepancies" between the different versions of it.

If we note carefully what is actually said all will be clear.

- I. Mark 15:26 can be dismissed; for he does not say anything about a "title" (Greek *titlos*, John 19:19) being put on the cross or anywhere else, which any one had seen. It is a question of the Lord's "accusation" or "indictment", or the ground or cause of His condemnation as claiming to be "the King of the Jews".
- II. John 19:19 speaks of a "*title*" written by Pilate, *before it left Pilate's presence*; for no one suggests that Pilate went to the scene of the execution and wrote anything there.

In Pilate's writing the three languages were in this order: (1) Hebrew, (2) Greek, and (3) Latin (compare IV. below). And it was read *after the cross had been set up*.

This was the one which gave rise to the argument between the Chief Priests and Pilate (John 19:21, 22); and this argument took place before the parting of the garments (verses 23, 24).

- III. The inscription in Matthew 27:37 was the result of that discussion; for another "title" was brought and "set up over his head", *after they had "parted His garments,"* and having sat down, they watched Him there (Verses 35, 36).

As there could hardly have been two titles at the same time, the former must have been then taken down and the other substituted.

We are not told how long the argument lasted or when it ceased, or what was the final result of it.

IV. A further result is seen in Luke 23:38; for another was brought much later, close upon "the sixth hour" (verse 44), when the darkness fell. It was written with the languages in a different order" (1) Greek, (2) Latin, and (3) Hebrew (verse 38).¹ It was put up "over Him" (Greek *ep' auto*, verse 38), "*after the revilings of the People*" (compare verses 35 - 37, with verse 38); whereas Matthew's (No. III) was set up *before the revilings* (compare Matthew 27:37 with verse 39).

The result is that :-

1. Mark's was only His *indictment*.
2. John's was the *first*, written by Pilate himself (or by his order, in (1) Hebrew, (2) Greek, and (3) Latin, and was put on the cross *before it left Pilate's presence*.
3. Matthew's was the *second*, substituted for the first, in consequence of the arguments which took place, and was set up "over His head" *after* the garments had been divided, and *before* the revilings.
4. Luke's was the *third*. (and last), put up "over Him", *after* the revilings (Luke 23:35), and was seen just before the darkness of the "sixth hour" (verse 44). This was written in three languages, but in a different order: ¹ (1) Greek, (2) Latin, and (3) Hebrew (verse 38). Not in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, as No. II in John 19:19.

Thus, such differences as these are marks of Divine accuracy; and, instead of being sources of difficulties, become, when rightly divided, the means of their removal.

NOTE

¹ But see the texts.

NB: So the "cross" piece was plainly above Christ's head where it could be read. It was as John 19:19 states: ⁹And Pilate wrote a **title**, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰This **title** then read many of the Jews:

The word "title" is of Latin origin (according to Strong's) and otherwise means "placard". A placard is a one sided printed document for "posting up", like a "poster". It does not form any part of the substantive structure. Here is an interesting article: