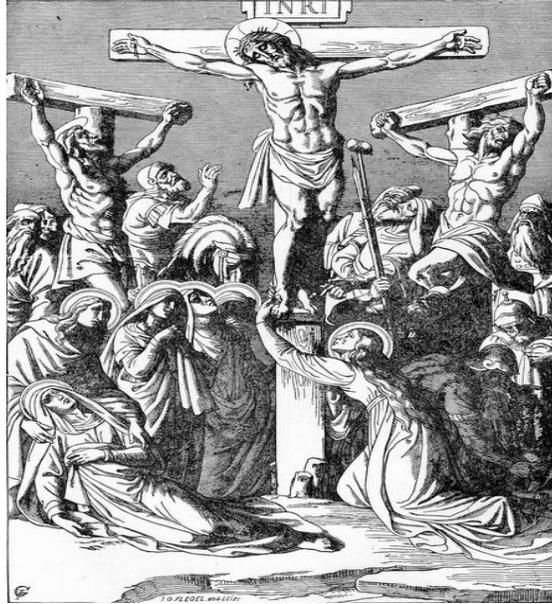


## Crucifixion of Christ Incorrectly Portrayed?



by Larry Ray Hafley

"Image of Jesus' crucifixion may be wrong, says study."

PARIS (AFP) - The image of the crucifixion, one of the most powerful emblems of Christianity, may be quite erroneous, according to a study which says there is no evidence to prove Jesus was crucified in this manner. Around the world, in churches, on the walls of Christian homes, on crucifixes worn as pendants, in innumerable books, paintings and movies, Jesus Christ is seen nailed to the cross by his hands and feet, with his head upwards and arms outstretched.

But a paper published by Britain's prestigious Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) says this image has never been substantiated in fact. Christ could have been crucified in any one of many ways, all of which would have affected the causes of his death, it says. "The evidence available demonstrates that people were crucified in different postures and affixed to crosses using a variety of means," said one of the authors, Piers Mitchell of Imperial College London. "Victims were not necessarily positioned head up and nailed through the feet from front to back, as is the imagery in Christian churches."

The authors do not express any doubt on the act of Jesus' crucifixion itself. But they note that the few eyewitness descriptions available today of crucifixions in the 1st century AD show the Romans had a broad and cruel imagination. Their crucifixion methods probably evolved over time and depended on the social status of the victim and on the crime he allegedly committed, says the paper in April's issue of the RSM journal.

The cross could be erected "in any one of a range of orientations", with the victim sometimes head-up, sometimes head-down or in different postures. Sometimes he was nailed to the cross by his genitals, sometimes the hands and feet were attached to the side of the cross and not the front, or affixed with cords rather than nails.

"If crucified head-up, the victim's weight may also have been supported on a small seat. This was believed to prolong the time it took a man to die," says the study, co-authored by Matthew Masien, also of Imperial College London's medicine faculty.

Crucifixion was widely practised by the Romans to punish criminals and rebels, but if the empire ever circulated instructions for the soldiers who carried out the gruesome task, none has survived today.

Nor is there any detailed account of the method of Jesus' crucifixion in the four Gospels of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which are believed to be near contemporary accounts of the life of Christ...Given the uncertainty as to exactly how he was crucified, the answer may only ever come if some new archaeological evidence or piece of writing emerges from the shadows of the past, it says.

## Response And Comments

Scripture shows that Jesus was indeed crucified in the very form and image in which his crucifixion typically is portrayed.

(1) "And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:37). If Jesus had been crucified upside down, Scripture would have said, "And they put under his head, not "up over his head."

(2) When Jesus needed a drink, a sponge was put on a stick and it was lifted up to his lips. "Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave it to Him to drink" (Matthew 27:48; Cf. John 19:29).

(3) The fact that the soldiers sought to break the legs of the crucified ones may evidence the fact that their legs were not extended above their heads (John 19:33, 34). If their legs were thus extended, it would have been much more difficult to have broken their legs, thus indicating that their legs were nearer the ground.

(4) Since a seat, the above article says, was designed to prolong life, the fact that Jesus died surprisingly early shows that he had no seat on the cross (Mark 15:44).

(5) Perhaps some ancient crucifixions used cords rather than nails; maybe some had spikes driven through their genitals, but Jesus had nails driven into his hands and feet (Luke 24:39; John 20:25, 27). He was "pierced," not tied to the cross (Revelation 1:7). He was scourged by cords, but crucified with nails.

We may be assured that Jesus was crucified as the Bible says he was. More importantly, that instrument of his death is the power of our life. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18). "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).