

The end was rapidly approaching. The loss of tissue fluids had reached a critical level; the compressed heart was struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood to the tissues, and the tortured lungs were making a frantic effort to inhale small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues sent their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasped His fifth cry: "I thirst." Again we read in the prophetic psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psalm 22:15 KJV).

A sponge soaked in *posca* [ὄξος, ὄξος], the cheap, sour wine that was the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, was lifted to Jesus' lips. His body was now in *extremis* [L: "at the end"], and He could feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brought forth His sixth word, ... "It is finished." His mission of atonement had been completed. Finally, He could allow His body to die. With one last surge of strength, He once again pressed His torn feet against the nail, straightened His legs, took a deeper breath, and uttered His seventh and last cry: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Death

The common method of ending a crucifixion was by *crurifracture*, the breaking of the bones of the leg [L: *crura fracta*: Death was sometimes hastened by breaking the legs of the victims (*ISBE*, 2:762)]. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers approached Jesus, they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. John 19:34 states, "And immediately there came out blood and water." Thus there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and the blood of the interior of the heart. This is rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Jesus died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.¹

37. The horrible details of the crucifixion amplify the prophecies of verses 14 and 15. The phrase in verse 14, "My heart is like wax; it is melted within Me" is described thusly by Davis:

¹ C. Truman Davis, "The Medical Account of Christ's Last Days and the Cross," *Arizona Medicine*, vol. 22, no. 3, March 1965.

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38. This ordeal led to physical exhaustion, extreme thirst, and impending death. Davis analyzes verse 15's prophecy:

The markedly dehydrated tissues sent their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasped His fifth cry: "I thirst."

39. Davis quotes from:

John 19:28 - _____ Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I thirst."

40. The phrase in Psalm 22:15, "You lay Me in the dust of death," is the Lord's acknowledgement that He is approaching physical death yet knowing He had accomplished Operation Reconciliation He was free to ask for water.

41. In verse 16, David describes the manner by which the Messiah was to be executed, a clear prophecy of the crucifixion, a type of punishment unknown in the tenth century B.C.

Psalm 22:16 - For dogs [Gentiles, primarily Roman soldiers] have surrounded Me. The assembly of the wicked [the Jewish religious leadership and those who followed them] have encircled Me. They have pierced My hands and My feet [crucifixion].

42. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Roman soldiers surrounding the Lord is found in:

Matthew 27:36 - Sitting down, they [the Roman soldiers] began to keep watch over Him there [on Golgotha].

43. Later Matthew comments on the Jews gathering around to view Jesus crucified:

Matthew 27:39 - Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads.

Matthew 27:40 - and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

v. 41 - In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying,

v. 42 - “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.”

44. The statement, “They have pierced My hands and feet,” can only be fulfilled by the act of crucifixion, fulfilled in:

Matthew 27:22 - Pilate said to them [**chief priests and elders**], “What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Crucify Him!”

v. 26 - Then he [**Pilate**] released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Matthew 27:33 - When they [**the Roman soldiers**] came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull,

v. 34 - they gave Him wine to drink, mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.

v. 35 - And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots.

45. The words “crucify” and “crucified” in these verses are the Greek noun **σταυρός**, **staurós**, and verb **σταυρόω**, **stauróō**. They refer to the device and the act respectively.
46. The *staurós* is the vertical post, referred to by Davis with the Latin word *stipes*. The crosspiece was called in the Latin, *patibulum*. In the New Testament these specifics are not recognized and the word *stauros* is consistently translated “cross” while the verb form, *stauróō*, is always used for the act of crucifixion.
47. The next verse describes the physical effects of being crucified:

Psalm 22:17 - I can count all My bones. They [all who observe Him] keep looking [נִבְּחָה *navath*] at Me and staring [רָאָה *ra'a*] at Me.

48. Crucifixion causes the body to be stretched to such a degree that the bones are exposed in a ghastly manner thus attracting the lurid attention of observers.
49. Those so gathered have already been observed. Here David describes a couple of mannerisms that reveal not only their rejection of Jesus as the Christ and but also the opinion that He is deserving of His treatment.
50. *Navath* refers to one's visual perception, from the casual glance to studied and sustained evaluation. Some keep glancing up at him while others stare in bemusement.
51. The word *ra'a* in this context means "to gawk" much like those who bottleneck freeways by rubbernecking at fender benders. A brief analysis of the word follows:

Not rarely the sight of misfortune has an aura of sensationalism that evokes gawking. In Judges 16:24, the people [the Philistines] gawk at Samson as he is led before them. In 2 Samuel 20:12 the people stand in the street to gawk at the body of Amasa \am'-a-sal [assassinated by Joab]. In Psalm 22:18 (17) the psalmist complains of being surrounded by a gawking rabble who gloat over his suffering.²
52. The idea of staring and gawking is brought out in the Gospels, specifically in Matthew 27:39-44, Mark 15:29-32, and Luke 23:35-38.

² G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 13:221.