

WAS JESUS LEFT UP ON THE CROSS TO BE EATEN BY ANIMALS AND BIRDS?

The gospel claim that Jesus was taken down from the cross soon after his expiration is controversial. Many authors feel that he definitely was left on the cross until he rotted away and was eaten. Some believe that because Jesus was an exceptional case and if anybody was going to be left hanging he was. Others feel that his being taken down and buried is unlikely but possible. Some question the gospel for saying Pilate permitted Jesus to be removed from the cross and argue that if he was taken down it was theft. The tomb Jesus was put in was found empty so you would wonder if it was a decoy.

PHILO - DOES HE SHOW JESUS COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS?

Philo of Alexandria wrote that burials can be allowed by governors for crucifixion at festal times. Another option was to postpone the execution. To any rational mind, the latter would have been virtually the only option. He wrote that the governors "handle crucifixions at festal times either by postponing them or by allowing burial: I have known cases when, on the eve of a holiday of this kind [an imperial birthday] people who have been crucified have been taken down and their bodies delivered to their kinsfolk, because it was thought well to give them burial and allow them the ordinary rites. For it was meet that the dead also should have the advantage of some kind treatment upon the birthday of the emperor and also that the sanctity of the festival should be maintained. But Flaccus gave no orders to take down those who had died on the cross."

Pilate would not have let Jesus be removed and would not have considered the Passover sacred in his eyes.

JOSEPHUS - DOES HE SHOW JESUS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TAKEN DOWN EVEN ALIVE?

The contemporary of Jesus, Josephus says: "I was sent by Titus Caesar with Cerialius and a thousand riders to a certain town by the name of Thecoa to find out whether a camp could be set up at this place. On my return I saw many prisoners who had been crucified, and recognized three of them as my former companions. I was inwardly very sad about this and went with tears in my eyes to Titus and told him about them. He at once gave the order that they should be taken down and given the best treatment so they could get better. However two of them died while being attended to by the doctor; the third recovered."

The gospel writers, notably Luke, were mining Josephus' writings to make up stories. It is remarkable here how we three men and two die and one recovers which makes you think is that enough to prompt the notion of two being crucified with Jesus? In the gospels the other men die and Jesus dies too but comes back.

We must be open to the possibility that the gospels are talking about three men on Calvary but that does not rule out a mass crucifixion that day like this one. In the mess bodies had to vanish and if Jesus were removed alive from the cross he could have survived.

There is no evidence that anybody had Jesus rescued by the authorities like Josephus' friend was.

YOHANAN

The man nailed to a cross in some cases was already dead and just hung as an example. Crucifixion was essentially about deterrence rather than killing.

Zealot by Reza Aslan reads, "Because the entire point of crucifixion was to humiliate the victim and frighten the witnesses, the corpse would be left where it hung to be eaten by dogs and picked clean by birds of prey." A Psalm allegedly about Jesus's crucifixion says that the victim's hands and feet would be like the lion. Lions ate bodies too.

When people were crucified, most (if not all) were not buried. They were left on the crosses for birds and animals and wild dogs to feast on. This was the norm. There is much archaeological evidence and evidence from texts that this was so. The epitaph for a person murdered in the second century says that the murderer was hung from a tree while alive for the feeding of the beasts and the birds. It is impossible to find the bodies of crucified people because all that is left is what was dragged away the dogs. Only one heel bone from a crucified man has been found, the bone of a Jew called Yohanán (John). This was found in an ossuary.

The crucifixion victim, Yohanán Ben Ha'Galgal's remains were found in a tomb in 1968. He is held to back up the Bible's claim that Jesus was put into a tomb (page 98, The Resurrection Factor). But it is possible that Yohanán was thought to be as bad as Jesus. Jesus was a super-criminal in the sight of the Jews and Rome. And Yohanán might have been exonerated

when it was too late so Rome let him be buried properly for he never should have been put to death. But we do not even know for sure if Yohanan was crucified under Roman law (Still Standing on Sinking Sand).

Perhaps Yohanan's body was stolen and buried. Or perhaps somebody stole what they thought were his bones so that he could be buried. Yohanan's heel bone being found in an ossuary does not indicate that he was buried but only that pieces of him may have been gathered up and put into the tomb. That he is all that can be found shows that it was very unlikely for Jesus to have been buried. If Yohanan was buried that does not make it likely that Jesus was buried.

We don't even know if Yohanan died because of Roman crucifixion. Sometimes fanatics nailed corpses up as a warning. That a piece of the cross was attached to his heel does not sound like a professional Roman crucifixion.

Read *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography*, John Dominic Crossan, HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1994.

If Yohanan having been buried proves that Jesus was buried, then why is he the only example of a crucified skeleton that we have? Page 141 says that he was nailed through the heelbones. And his arms were tied to the cross and wrapped behind the t bar. His plaque was nailed on on top of his heel, on each side, to prevent him tearing his foot free. A piece of his cross is attached to the nail going through his heel bone. His legs were not broken - the gospels say that the Romans broke legs to kill the victims faster.

The bodies of crucified men were guarded until death and then left on their crosses for scavengers as a warning to those who would break Roman law (Conspiracies and the Cross, page 155). Jesus committed a very serious breach - even more serious than any other crucified man. He claimed to be king and rode into Jerusalem in kingly style to the acclaim of the people - major treason. Jesus more than anyone would not have got any burial.

EATEN BY DOGS?

The earliest Christian writer, top apostle, Paul, wrote in Galatians 3 that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us on the cross for it is written, "Cursed be the person who hangs on a tree". He misquotes God in Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 which say nothing of the sort. The verses only say that the bodies of hanged criminals must be taken down and buried to prevent the land being defiled. It says nothing about a curse. Granted the misquote comes from the Septuagint which was a tarnished translation of the Hebrew Bible but Paul knowing the Hebrew Bible had no excuse. Some say that Paul was saying that because God is fair, he was cursing Christ for Christ was a great sinner. They believe that Jesus died as evil and rotten and was raised as good and holy and as saviour and Christ. There is another possibility. Did Paul mean by curse that Jesus was left on the cross? Did he mean that Jesus was left to rot on the cross and so defiled the land and was cursed that way? Does he mean that Jesus was not cursed by God but by those who left him to rot? He says elsewhere that Jesus was buried - perhaps this is referring to when there was nothing left but bones! Three days after burial he rose again according to Paul.

This is an examination of the argument that Jesus was left on the cross and eaten by animals. A counter to this argument is to be found in *Conspiracies and the Cross*, Timothy Paul Jones, Front Line, A Strang Company, Florida, 2008.

My reply is,

The claim of the book that the Jews insisted on burial is very weak for the Jews hated Jesus and wanted him nailed to show he was cursed. The assertion of Josephus that the Jews got crucified men buried before sunset is not backed up by the evidence. Joseph of Arimathea is supposed to have gone in secret to get the body of Jesus to bury it. The Jews did not want to bury Jesus and they were not exactly queuing up to do it.

The book says that Pilate allowed Jesus to be buried for he was crucified outside of war time. It says it was only during war that the burial of crucifixion victims did not take place. Philo wrote of cases where burials were allowed by the Romans. In those cases the family wanted the body buried before the religious feasts and their wish was granted. For all Rome knew, it could have been wartime with the death of a descendant of David at their hands.

The book with typical Christian illogic, provides texts from Roman law that speak only of releasing the body to relative to support the gospel claim that Joseph of Arimathea received the body of Jesus. This law would in fact prove different for Joseph and Jesus were not related. It is also foolish how the book says that Pilate gave the body to Joseph because he wanted to keep the peace with the Jews (page 157). This contradicts the gospels in which Jesus is hated so much by the Jews that they didn't care what they did to get rid of him and the more he was mistreated the happier they were. The Roman law text says that bodies of people guilty of high treason were not to be given for burial. Jesus' treason was extremely high - he claimed to have supernatural powers and be protected in a way the godlike Roman emperor was not and to be the true King of Israel.

There is no reason at all to believe that if Jesus died on the cross that he was buried after.