

Crucifixion

Some early historians credited the Persians with the first use of crucifixion, while others said it was a cruel practice the Romans picked up from various barbarous peoples they had conquered. The Greeks had used it--Alexander the Great crucified 2,000 people after the siege of Tyre.

The Romans originally considered it a slave's punishment. It was later extended to foreigners and robbers and those convicted of treason.

Crucifixion was designed to subject the victim to the greatest possible humiliation. For that reason corpses were sometimes crucified.

Some form of torture customarily preceded crucifixion, such as flogging, in order to start the blood flowing. The victim often had to carry his own crossbeam to the place of execution, which was intentionally very public. He was most often tied to the cross, sometimes nailed. Stretched and immobilized, the victim could find no relief from searing pain. Movement was excruciating. Not moving was torture. The suffering was intense and protracted. Death rarely came sooner than 36 hours (thus Pilate's surprise when Jesus was dead in only a few hours--another sign that Jesus had given up His own life). The final cause of death is uncertain, but gradual suffocation resulting from fatigue is most likely.

In 1968, the first skeleton identifiable as a victim of crucifixion was unearthed in Jerusalem. The two heel bones were still fastened together by a single iron nail.

Hymn: **Crucifixion Hymn**

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