



## The Passion Story -- Questions and Answers

by Warren Krug

(March-April, 1989)

### **What was the nature of the bread and the cup Jesus served at the Last Supper?**

The bread was unleavened bread, which means that it was made without yeast or other leavening. It may have been baked in the form of sheets which were then broken into pieces. The cup was surely fermented wine, customarily two parts water to one of wine.

### **What is the scientific explanation for the phenomenon in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44) in which it is said that Jesus sweat bloodlike drops?**

There are at least two possible viewpoints in regard to this happening. The first holds that the drops of Jesus' sweat are being compared only in size to that of blood. The second maintains that Jesus actually did perspire a mixture of water and blood. It is physiologically possible for the human body to sweat blood in cases of extreme stress. Blood vessels can rupture, allowing the blood to become mixed with perspiration. Medically speaking, it is a very rare phenomenon brought on by severe mental distress and strain.

### **What can be said about the wine mixed with gall offered to Jesus before his crucifixion and the wine vinegar later offered to him on the cross.**

The word "gall" here probably refers to myrrh, a gum resin used for various purposes. It was not unusual for soldiers to offer condemned criminals a narcotic drink, as this was, before their executions, either to make the pain more endurable or to make the victims easier to handle. Jesus tasted the bitter drink - that only increased His suffering - but He would not lessen the pain by drinking it.

The wine vinegar offered to Him on the cross was a cheap grade of wine. It was a refreshing drink, not an unpalatable one, and, as John 19:28 indicates, Jesus now could drink it because His work of suffering for our sins was completed.

### **Could there have been a natural explanation for the darkened sky during the crucifixion?**

Since there was a full moon at this time, the darkness could not have been caused by a solar eclipse. In a solar eclipse the moon moves between the Earth and the sun and would appear as a new moon on Earth. Bible scholars are divided on whether this darkness covered the whole Earth or just the "land." Paul Maier suggests a dark sirocco or windstorm blowing in from the desert as a possible natural explanation for the uncanny darkness. However, Harold Wicke reminds us of God's ability to control the sun supernaturally in the cases of the darkness over Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23) and the sun standing still (Joshua 10:12-14).

**How cruel was crucifixion?**

Crucifixion had been practiced for several centuries before Christ. One account quoted by Maier has it that Darius I once crucified 3,000 political enemies in Babylon in 519 B.C.

Crucifixion was one of the cruelest forms of punishment known. Maier believes that a man sentenced to be crucified would typically be forced to carry only the crossbeam, which in itself weighed 30 to 40 pounds. The crossbeam then would be attached to an upright stake already standing there. While on the cross, the victim would have to endure cramped muscles, crawling and flying insects, thirst, and taunting crowds. The slow death normally would come from exhaustion, dehydration, or exposure.

There is some uncertainty as to exactly where the nails likely were placed in the hands of a crucified man. Some people feel the nails were driven through or close to the wrists so that there would be enough bone structure to hold up the victim. But Maier says that often a crucified man was made to straddle a wedge placed between his legs. This could have borne the weight of the body enough to have permitted nailing the hands without tearing them.

**Is there a medical explanation for the separation of the blood and water which flowed from the body of Jesus after the piercing?**

Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be much agreement on the part of medical authorities as to what exactly happened to cause this separation of blood and water.

**What can be said regarding the nature of the seal on the tomb of Jesus?**

The seal was probably nothing more than a cord or rope strung across the rock and fastened at each end with clay. An official seal then was probably stamped into the clay. The purpose of the seal was to indicate tampering, not to prevent people from breaking into the tomb. *LSI*

**References**

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