



FOUNDATION

Personal Bible Study Series



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Preface

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

And God permitting, we will do so.

Hebrews 6:1-3

This study series was assembled with faith, love and prayer to help people seeking God come to a full knowledge of the truth. It lays a foundation for a spiritual walk with God that will last a lifetime. The first century church appeared to teach similar basics as elementary or foundational teachings (**Hebrews 6:1-3**).

The outlines offered here are, as Hebrews 6 says, elementary teachings or principles. They are not the final word. Simply reading these outlines to your friend will not guarantee salvation to anyone. Keep in mind that you are studying the Bible, not just these outlines, with your friend. If you have any other scriptures or other basics in mind, by all means, include them! In all these things, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and correctly handles the word of truth.

TIPS ON USING A STUDY SERIES:

- A study series is a guide. People did not use this series on the day of Pentecost. They did, however, witness and have personal understanding of what Jesus did, they were cut to the heart (broken), repented, and were baptized because of their faith. A good study series really works as a tool because it joins scriptures together so God's purposes are understandable and clear.
- A study series is like an outline. It is a skeleton, and you must put flesh on it with your life, your knowledge and understanding of God, and your love. You CAN interchange scriptures and put studies in a different order- the goal is that your friend will come to understand God and what it means to live for Him.

TIPS FOR LEADING STUDIES:

- Be transparent when you set up the study. The most fundamental principle to keep in mind when setting up a study, or teaching a study, is to practice the Golden Rule. This means that we are totally up front at all times regarding our intents and purposes. We are sharing the principles from the Bible that have changed our lives. We never want these friends to feel that we are in any way trying to manipulate them into believing or doing something to please us. Our only goal is to help them have a meaningful encounter with God through His word.
- Pray before you lead the studies. Pray for God's spirit to guide you, and for you to treat your friend with compassion and conviction like Jesus would. Pray for the hearts

of everyone in the study to accept and be fertile soil for God's Word.

- Get to know them well. It is always good to get to know the person you are studying the scriptures with and allow them to get to know you. Talk about your life, family, work, friends, and your spiritual walk, and ask about theirs. We must be far more interested in getting to know our new friend than just moving them through the process of the study series. Jesus was always interested in the person, often taking time to sit down and get to know them as opposed to preaching at them.
- Take time to prepare for each study. Please review and study each lesson before presenting it to others. Some brief explanations of the Scriptures in the studies are provided, and are meant as general suggestions, not points that must be presented verbatim. Feel free to explain these principles in your own words. Also, keep the studies simple and to the point. You will know more details about the subjects and the Scriptures than will need to be shared; stick with the basics unless an obvious need arises for deeper or broader explanations. For your own preparation, take the time to study the passages within the context of the chapters in which they are found. Although you will not ordinarily need to explain the broader context to the person in the study, you will be able to do so when needed, and you will have more confidence in the study yourself.
- **Proverbs 20:5:** “The purposes of a man’s heart are deep

waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.”

- Your job is to plant and water. You don’t have to force something; God has the power to make it grow (**1 Cor. 3:5-9**)!
- Make sure your friend has a Bible with a good translation he/she can readily understand. If not, a great gesture would be to get your friend one!
- Be a great example - **1 Timothy 4:16**: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Your example of living a balanced life will speak volumes to your friend.
- Get a good feel for each study. The studies are laid out in a very practical manner. There are discussion questions at the end of each study. Any or all of these questions can be used during the study to foster discussion and help your friend learn how the scriptures apply to them personally.
- Be led by the Spirit and enjoy yourself. God is about to do a miracle, even if we don’t know how!
- **Mark 4:26-29** “He also said, ‘This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain- first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.’”

God Has a Plan

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day.

Genesis 1:1-5

Genesis 1:1-6

- God is the Creator of all things, and, as we will find as we continue to read the Bible, He is also the Ruler, Judge, and Redeemer of all things.
- How does the earth begin? Would this be a good place to live? Why do you say so?
- What changes this situation?
- God brings order to an otherwise uninhabitable earth.

Genesis 1:26-28

- Humans are made in God’s image. They are made to reflect God’s glory.
- What is God’s first action toward human beings? He

blesses them. God intends for humans to be blessed.

- God wills that human beings would fill the earth and rule over it.

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17

- God allows the humans to eat from the “tree of life,” but they are not allowed to eat from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”
- God knows what is good for humans. Should human beings trust God?
- By obeying God humans will live, but disobedience will bring about death.

Genesis 3:1-24

- The humans decide to listen to the serpent rather than God. In so doing they cease to reflect God’s glory.
- Humans once lived in the garden with God, but because of disobedience they are exiled from God’s presence. In other words, heaven and earth have been driven apart.
- God prevents them from eating from the “tree of life.” Death becomes a reality.

*These verses teach us that God has a plan for His creation. He intends to bless human beings, and He wills that they would flourish in His good creation. Humans however have turned away from God’s plan, and as a result have been banished from His presence. **Genesis 1-2** describe God’s good creation, but **Genesis 3-11** show us a world in disarray. A fallen world. A world in desperate need of repair.*

Genesis 12:1-3

- God calls a man named Abram (Abram is later re-named Abraham).
- God promises to bless Abram, and through him bless all people.
- Abram is God's solution to the problems found in **Genesis 3-11**.
- God has a plan to redeem and restore humanity through Abraham.
- The rest of the Bible focuses on God's promise to bring blessing to the world through Abraham's family (Israel).

Matthew 1:1

- The New Testament begins by telling us that Jesus Christ is one of Abraham's descendants.
- In other words, God is faithful to His plan. God promised to bring blessing to all people through Abraham, and in Jesus Christ He has fulfilled His promise.

Jesus is the climax of the biblical story .

*Jesus Christ was God's Son (**John 3:16-18**). He died on a cross, and was resurrected so that human sin could be forgiven (**1 Corinthians 15:3-4**). Your sin. My sin.*

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

- Jesus brings about new creation. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.
- Through Christ God is reconciling the world to Himself. Through faith in Jesus Christ all may participate in God's plan for His creation.

- God is still reconciling the world to Himself through Jesus Christ. God wants all people to participate in His new creation. That includes you and me.

Revelation 21:1-4; 22:1-5

- Through Jesus Christ, one of Abraham’s descendants, all creation will be renewed.
- God will dwell with humans, just as he always desired. God’s presence among human beings will be restored.
- Humans will again have access to the tree of life.
- Instead of two humans in a garden, the Bible ends by showing us a city full of people, just as God intended (compare to **Gen 1:28**).
- Heaven and earth will brought back together (**Rev 21:1**).

DISCUSSION

1. What is God’s plan? What is God up to in our world?
2. God wants to bless all people, and that includes you (see **Acts 17:24-28**)!
3. God seeks to live among us.
4. God has given His Son so that we might participate in His plan.
5. How will you respond?
6. What is your next step?
7. God calls His creation “good” (**Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31**). What is good about it?

God's Word

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

2 Timothy 3:16–17

- All Scripture comes from and is approved by God.
- It is relevant and useful for righteous living.
- It is to be applied to our lives.

Hebrews 4:12–13

- The Word is relevant to our lives.
- The Word cuts (hurts); it is precise and reveals the depths of our hearts.
- See also **James 1:22-25**

Matthew 15:1–9

- Traditions that supersede the Word of God are worship in vain.

1 Timothy 4:16

- Watch your life and doctrine closely; they are inseparable.
- Which is more important, life or doctrine?
- Neither. It is much like the wings of an airplane. You need both to fly.

- Why is it so important to learn, teach, and live correct doctrine?
- To save yourself and those who hear you.
- We learn both correct doctrine and how to live it out in the Bible.

Psalm 19:1–11

- The Psalmist is celebrating the goodness of God’s word.
- What language is the Psalmist using to describe God’s word?
- What does he mean when he says it is better than honey and pure gold?
- What is the ultimate warning/promise?

DISCUSSION

1. How does this fit into God’s plan?
2. Will you live by the Scripture? Your feelings, traditions, needs, etc. may have some validity but they cannot supersede what the Bible says.
3. Start the habit of reading the Bible and praying daily.
4. What would prevent you from reading the Bible on a regular basis?

Discipleship

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:16-20

Matthew 28:16-20

- What does being a disciple of Jesus have to do with God’s plan?
- Discipleship is God’s plan.
- It’s through Christ that God that God is reconciling the world to Himself.

Mark 1:14-18

- Jesus called His first disciples to “Follow me” and they left everything.
- “God did not create a mission for His church He created a church for His mission.” --Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*

John 8:31-32

- Knowing God comes from experiencing Him.
- Believing in Jesus requires life change.

Luke 9:23-26

- What does it mean to “carry your cross”?
- Carry the cross daily. Our walk with God is a daily reality.
- “Christ bids me come and die.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*
- We spend much of our lives trying to preserve life. Jesus is teaching us that only he can give life.
- Gain the world and lose your soul, or surrender your life to Jesus and have eternal life with Him.
- See **Matthew 26:36-46** for Jesus’ example of complete surrender to God’s will.

Luke 14:25-33

- Jesus is being very clear about what it means to be a disciple.
- This passage is about our ability to become a follower of Christ. Who do you say is able to become a follower?
- Anyone who is willing.
- Jesus calls us to make Him the priority in our lives.
- Total commitment and surrender of our will is essential.
- Discussion Questions
- How does this fit into God’s plan?
- Are you willing to trust God and his plan, and what could hinder you from living this life?

Sin

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Genesis 3:7

When did sin enter the world? What were some of the consequences (see **Genesis 3:1-24**)? We were made in God's image, but sin tarnishes that image.

Psalm 51:1-4

- Read the heading of the psalm. This psalm is related to David's sin with Bathsheba (see **2 Samuel 11-12**).
- All sin is against God.
- Sin is a threat to our lives before God.
- We need God's forgiveness.

Isaiah 59:1-2

- Sin, much like a wall, separates us from God.
- Can you remove this "wall"?
- Only God can remove our sin.
- You are only reconciled to God if He removes the "wall". He must forgive you.

Romans 3:22-24

- Everyone has fallen short. Sin has had an impact on everyone.
- No one is sinless (see also **1 John 1:10**).

- There is no good deed that you can perform that will save you from your sin.

Galatians 5:16-25

- The sinful nature opposes the Spirit. We must live according to the Spirit.
- We will not inherit the Kingdom of God if we choose to live according to the sinful nature.

James 4:17

- It is sin to fail to do good. We were created to do good (see also **Ephesians 2:10**).
- **Romans 6:20-23**
- Sin brings about death. It is through sin that death entered the world.
- Death is the wage we receive for our sin, but eternal life is a gift we receive from God through Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION

1. How does this affect God's plan?
2. How has this changed your understanding of sin?
3. What is the problem of sin?
4. If sin separates us from God, who has the power to remove the barrier?
5. It may be helpful for you to write down on paper the sin in your life. Take some time to write a letter to God specifically confessing your sin to him. This helps us to see how much we need God.

The Cross and Resurrection

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Matthew 26:36-41

Matthew 26:36-27:56

- Tools can be used (e.g. Movies such as *Passion of the Christ* or articles like “The Medical Account” in Appendix B), but are not always necessary. The goal is to move the heart to respond, not just create an emotional reaction.
- Emotions can easily come to the surface when reading this account and emotions are an important part of deal-

ing with the pain of our sin. Tears are often shed when discussing the pain of the crucifixion, but tears are not the end goal. God wants the sacrifice of his son to produce life change in us.

Matthew 27:57-28:20

- Jesus has overcome death NEVER to die again.
- He is the first and only human to rise from the dead by his own power after three days in the tomb.

1 Corinthians 15:1-19

- Resurrection is the centerpiece of our faith, without it our faith is meaningless.
- Sin brings about death (**Romans 6:23**) but through the resurrection Jesus has overcome death and rendered sin powerless.
- The Cross and Resurrection work together to deliver us from sin and death.

DISCUSSION

1. How does the Cross and Resurrection fit into God's plan?
2. What does an appropriate response look like for you?

Baptism

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

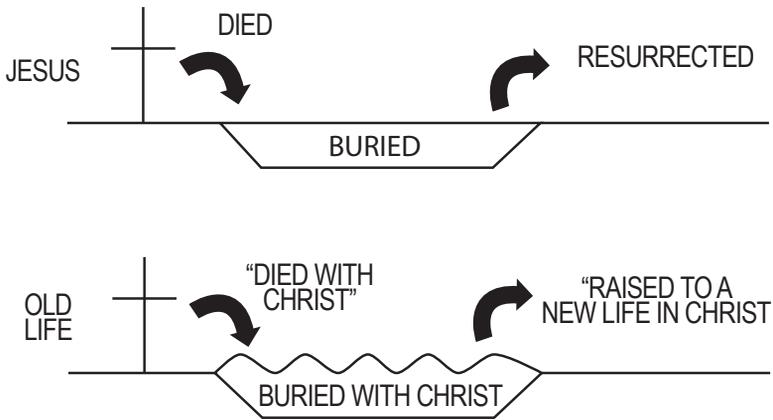
Acts 2:38-39

Acts 2:22-24, 36-41

- Jesus was crucified as a sacrifice for our sins.
- The response to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is repentance.
 - “Repent” means to turn around and return to God.
 - See **2 Corinthians 7:10-11** for difference between worldly sorrow/guilt and godly sorrow that brings about this turning/repentance.
- In order to become a Christian, a person must decide to repent and be baptized.
- These are the conditions connected to God’s promise to bring us into Christ, to make us one of His people. The benefits of this identity include forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- A person must have faith in Jesus, see their need for a Savior, and decide to live under Jesus’ lordship. They then get baptized for the forgiveness of sins, entrance into God’s Kingdom, and to become one of God’s people.

Romans 6:1-12

- Baptism brings about new creation. Through baptism the old life is gone and we have been raised to new life. (**2 Corinthians 5:17**)
- Baptism is not simply about entrance into heaven, it is about living the life He created us to live in Christ right now.
- How does this fit into God's plan for us and His creation?



- It is at baptism that we are brought into and clothed with Christ (**Galatians 3:26-29**). We become a new creation, a Kingdom person, we get a new identity. We get all of the benefits of being a member of God's family: the Holy Spirit, forgiveness of sins, citizenship in God's Kingdom, heirship in God's family, eternal life, etc.! (**1 Corinthians 12:13**)
- **Matthew 28:18-20**

DISCUSSION

- How does this fit into God's plan for us and His creation?
- Do you understand the biblical call for and reasons to be baptized?
- Do you see your own need for baptism and for the forgiveness of your sins, to receive the Holy Spirit, and to become a Kingdom person?

The Church

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into this marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10

1 Peter 2:9-12 (See also **Exodus 19:4-6**)

- The church is part of God's plan for the world.
- God has chosen the church to be His priests in the world. Christ followers have been called out of darkness in order that they may represent God to the world.
- “[I]t is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world but that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission - God's mission” (Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 62).

Colossians 1:15-18

- Jesus is the head of the body, the church.
- The church cannot exist without Christ!

Ephesians 2:19-22

- The church = family of God with “brothers and sisters”

in Christ

- Foundation = scriptures; Cornerstone = Christ
- Those who are in Christ are God's people.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- When we are baptized we become part of the church-God's family on earth.
- We need the body to survive and the body needs its parts so it can function the way God intended it to function.

Mark 3:31-35 (Luke 14:26)

- Jesus lived in a society that valued family above all else.
- Jesus' followers became his family. That transferred their loyalty to Him and the body of believers.
- For additional study: **Mark 1:16-20, Mark 10:28-30, Luke 9:59-60**

Acts 2:42-47

- All Christ-followers have Jesus in common.
- True Christian community must have Jesus at the center.

Hebrews 10:24-26

- We need to be active participants in the community of Christ.
- We need to be involved in discipling relationships in order to encourage one another in the faith.

1 John 4:19-21

- Loving your brother and sister in Christ is an inseparable part of your relationship with God.

- Conflict in relationships is inevitable. We cannot ignore problems in relationships and still think we have a great relationship with God.
- If you don't love those around you, you don't love God!

2 Corinthians 8:7, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

- We worship God through sacrifice. The heart behind the obedience matters to God.
- Every Disciple of Jesus is called to contribute to the needs of the Church.

DISCUSSION

1. What does the Church have to do with God's mission in the world?
2. What specifically will you need to do to prioritize your life so that you can live the way this way?
3. Do you understand that being saved means being saved into the body of Christ? That it means being a part of His family with God as our Father and other Christians as our brothers or sisters?

Appendix A

Sin Definitions from **Galatians 5:19-21**

- **Sexual Immorality: Fornication (Acts 15:20)**, any sexual union outside of marriage. Denotes ungodly sexual acts and relationships; prostitution, rape, homosexuality, petting, adultery, child abuse, bestiality.
- **Impurity: Any sinful thinking.** Anything vulgar, wrong thoughts, lust, masturbation, wrong motives, pornography, fantasy.
- **Debauchery: Any misuse of the body.** Usually referring to sexual excesses but, in general, refers to a readiness to indulge in any pleasure (indecency, lewd dancing, anorexia and bulimia). There is no respect for anyone else. In this state, man is at the mercy of his passions, impulses, emotions, etc. He is completely undisciplined (e.g. gives in to gluttony, laziness, smoking, cravings, masturbation, unlimited pleasure).
- **Idolatry: Worshipping anything other than God.** Giving or devoting one's time substance, talents to anything that keeps one from obeying and following God in every way (e.g. status symbols, investments, engrossing sports or hobbies, selfish ambitions, relationships, property, possessions, pleasure and wants, school, work, pride). Praying to anyone other than God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit.
- **Witchcraft: Seeking or being involved in any spiritual realm other than God's.** Includes astrology (i.e. the stars control; consequently, God does not rule), horo-

scopes, Satan worship, the occult, magic spells, good luck charms or pictures, praying to saints, drug use, tarot cards, palm reading, channeling, (the New Age Movement), Ouiji board etc.

- **Hatred:** Wishing ill or harm on anyone. Looking down on anyone, bitter feelings, resentment, wanting revenge. Murder and abortion.
- **Discord:** Anything that breaks up relationships. Stirring up trouble, an inability to get along with people, arguing, slander, gossip, malicious talk and criticalness.
- **Jealousy:** Possessiveness, not sharing
- **Fits of Rage:** Uncontrolled anger, losing temper. Temper tantrums, quick temper, angry shouting, cursing and profanity, fighting.
- **Selfish Ambition:** Living to please self. Wanting one's own way, getting what one wants at any cost, desiring to be first at any cost, overly competitive spirit. Not willing to do menial or demeaning tasks, refusing to admit being wrong, arrogance, doing things for honor or glory, wanting to look good for others, refusing to compromise, pride, selfishness and independence.
- **Dissension:** Rebelling against the authority. Not submitting. Habitually disagreeing, arguing, causing division, starting arguments, stirring up trouble.
- **Factions:** Feeling superior to others. Cliques, refusing to associate with anyone because they are different or for any other reason. Wanting to be with "own" kind, preju-

dice bigotry, and racism.

- Envy: Desiring something another person has while wishing that they didn't have it at all. (e.g. wealth, status, ability, physical features, spirituality, relationships).
- Drunkenness: Anything that causes one to lose control. Intoxication, alcohol, drug abuse.
- Orgies: Living without restraint. Includes "partying," sexual parties, unrestrained sex, vandalism, carousing.
- And the Like: Lying, stealing, cheating, deceit, etc.

See also sins listed in:

Mark 7:20

Colossians 3:5-11

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Revelation 21:8

1 Corinthians 6:5-20

James 4:17

Appendix B

The Medical Account of the Crucifixion of Christ Dr. C. Truman Davis

A Physician Analyzes the Crucifixion

In this paper, I shall discuss some of the physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane, through His trial, His scourging, His path along the Via Dolorosa, to his last dying hours on the cross.

This led me first to a study of the practice of crucifixion itself; that is, torture and execution by fixation to a cross. Apparently, the first known practice of crucifixion was by the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world — to Egypt and to Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice from the Carthaginians and (as with almost everything the Romans did) rapidly developed a very high degree of efficiency and skill at it. A number of Roman authors (Livy, Cicero, Tacitus) comment on crucifixion, and several innovations, modifications, and variations are described in the ancient literature.

For instance, the upright portion of the cross (or stipes) could have the cross-arm (or patibulum) attached two or three feet below its top in what we commonly think of as the Latin cross. The most common form used in our Lord's day, however, was the Tau cross, shaped like our T. In this cross the patibulum was placed in a notch at the top of the stipes. There is archeological evidence that it was on this type of

cross that Jesus was crucified.

Without any historical or biblical proof, Medieval and Renaissance painters have given us our picture of Christ carrying the entire cross. But the upright post, or stipes, was generally fixed permanently in the ground at the site of execution and the condemned man was forced to carry the patibulum, weighing about 110 pounds, from the prison to the place of execution.

Many of the painters and most of the sculptors of crucifixion also show the nails through the palms. Historical Roman accounts and experimental work have established that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists (radius and ulna) and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when made to support the weight of the human body. The misconception may have come about through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas, "Observe my hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrist as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually placed on a staff, carried at the front of the procession from the prison, and later nailed to the cross so that it extended above the head. This sign with its staff nailed to the top of the cross would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

But, of course, the physical passion of the Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, the one of greatest physiological interest is the bloody sweat.

It is interesting that St. Luke, the physician, is the only one to mention this. He says, “And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground.”

Every ruse (trick) imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this description, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just doesn’t happen. A great deal of effort could have been saved had the doubters consulted the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of Hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress of the kind our Lord suffered, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process might well have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus was next brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest; it is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blind-folded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat upon Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and exhausted from a sleepless night, Jesus is taken across the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. You are, of course, familiar with Pilate’s action in attempting to pass responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate. It was then, in response to

the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion.

There is much disagreement among authorities about the unusual scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two. Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as his full punishment and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the Procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who allegedly claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging were carried out when the Prisoner was stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful the Romans would have made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter, but the Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes.

The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs. At first the thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.

The small balls of lead first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally the skin

of the back is hanging in long ribbons and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be king. They throw a robe across His shoulders and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. Flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used in bundles for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp. Again there is copious bleeding, the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body.

After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back. Already having adhered to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, its removal causes excruciating pain just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, and almost as though He were again being whipped the wounds once more begin to bleed.

In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross is tied across His shoulders, and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the

heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. He stumbles and falls. The rough wood of the beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond their endurance.

The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock, until the 650 yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed.

Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the patibulum on the ground and Jesus quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square, wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes and the titulus reading “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” is nailed in place.

The left foot is now pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified. As He slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists excruciating pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain — the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this

stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, as the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by his arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed and the intercostal muscles are unable to act. Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, he is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

The second, to the penitent thief, “Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.”

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief-stricken adolescent John — the beloved Apostle — he said, “Behold thy mother.” Then, looking to His mother Mary, “Woman behold thy son.”

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the 22nd Psalm, “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”

Hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain where tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber. Then another agony begins... A terrible crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

One remembers again the 22nd Psalm, the 14th verse: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

It is now almost over. The loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level; the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissue; the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry, "I thirst."

One remembers another verse from the prophetic 22nd Psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death."

A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionaries, is lifted to His lips. He apparently doesn't take any of the liquid. The body of Jesus is now in extremis, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words, possibly little more than a tortured whisper, "It is finished." His mission of atonement has completed. Finally He can allow his body to die.

With one last surge of strength, He once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, “Father! Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that the condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crucifracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; thus 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 came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. The 34th verse of the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John reports: “And immediately there came out blood and water.” That is, there was an escape of water fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, giving postmortem evidence that our Lord 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.

Thus we have had our glimpse — including the medical evidence — of that epitome of evil which man has exhibited toward man and toward God. It has been a terrible sight, and more than enough to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have the great sequel in the infinite mercy of God toward man — at once the miracle of

the atonement and the expectation of the triumphant Easter morning.

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Appendix C

Additional Thoughts on Baptism

See Paul's conversion in **Acts 9:17-19, 22:12-16**. Notice the phrases, "What are you waiting for?" and, "be baptized and wash your sins away!"

See the Ethiopian Eunuch's conversion in **Acts 8:26-40**. Notice when Phillip told him, "the good news about Jesus" the Eunuch's first response was, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

See Apollos' conversion in **Acts 18:24-26**. He only knew about John's baptism. Wasn't it enough that he had already been "baptized"? No, he needed to be taught more adequately about baptism, even though he had been instructed in the way of the Lord and taught accurately about who Jesus was.

See **1 Peter 3:18-22** for the importance of baptism.





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