

The “Cross”

Was Christ Nailed to a “Cross”? or a “Stake”?



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Do the Scriptures actually teach that the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to a “cross”?

The “Christian Cross” is the preeminent symbol of Christendom. However, most are unaware that the Greek word *stauros*, traditionally translated as “cross,” primarily denotes an upright “pale” or stake.

Let’s begin with a look at the word *stauros* itself. Here are some actual definitions for this Greek word:

A stake. — Robert Young¹

A stake. — Wesley J. Perschbacher²

A stake or post. — James A. Strong³

An upright stake. — Joseph Thayer⁴

An upright pointed stake. — Rick Renner⁵

An upright pale or stake. — E.W. Bullinger⁶

1. Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*.
2. Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*.
3. James A. Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, #4716.
4. Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.
5. Rick Renner, *Sparkling Gems from the Greek*.
6. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*.

An upright stake or pale, without any crosspiece. — A.E. Knoch⁷

A mere stake of one single piece *without* transom [crossbar].⁸

Stauros, designated a pointed, vertical wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground. ... They were set up as instruments of torture on which serious offenders of law were publicly suspended to die.⁹

There is nothing in the Greek of the New Testament even to imply two pieces of timber. — E.W. Bullinger¹⁰

Stauros denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. On such, malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauroo*, to fasten to a stake or pale, are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of the two-beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as a symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the third century A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system, pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered [t], was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ. — W.E. Vine¹¹

We can see from these Greek language sources that the word “cross” is just another place where religion has “*changed the truth of God into a lie*” (Romans 1:25). Our Lord Jesus Christ did not give His life for us on a “cross.” He died on “a stake or post,” or what is elsewhere referred to in the Scriptures as a “*tree*.”

*Who His Own self bare our sins in His Own body **on the tree** ...* (I Peter 2:24).

*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who **hangs on a tree**”* (Galatians 3:13).

The “cross” is not just something that religion has *corrupted* for its own purposes; it is something it *injected* as a replacement for our Savior’s “*tree*.” There is nothing Christian about the pagan “cross.” Genesis’ garden starts with a “*Tree*” of Life. Revelation ends with a “*Tree*” of Life. In between, our Savior provided *Life* for us on a “*tree*.”

Note these further references to the “cross” and its true origin.

How did the cross find its way into Christian worship? This question must seem strange to those who have ever regarded it as THE Christian Symbol. As a fact (and the evidence is so abundant) the cross is not in any sense a Christian emblem, but a notorious heathen one. It is one of the oldest and best

7. A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Keyword Concordance*, p. 63.

8. *The Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*.

9. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 825.

10. E.W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 162: “The Cross and the Crucifixion.”

11. W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

authenticated heathen emblems known to mankind, and the era of its adoration [can be] ascertained by anyone who cares to investigate the subject dispassionately. The cross existed in Africa, Asia, America and Europe as a religious symbol quite two thousand years before the “Christian era.”¹²

In the Egyptian churches the cross was a pagan symbol of life borrowed by the Christians and interpreted in the pagan manner.¹³

It never means two pieces of timber placed across one another at any angle, but always of one piece alone ... Crosses were used as symbols of the Babylonian sun god ... It should be stated that Constantine was a sun god worshipper ... The evidence is thus complete, that the Lord was put to death upon an upright stake, and not on two pieces of timber placed at any angle.¹⁴

This Pagan symbol ... the Tau, the sign of the cross, the indisputable sign of Tammuz, the false Messiah ... the mystic Tau of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and Egyptians – the true original form of the letter T, the initial of the name of Tammuz ... the Babylonian cross was the recognized emblem of Tammuz.¹⁵

The coins of Constantine show an even-armed cross as a symbol for the Sun-god.¹⁶

It was not until Christianity began to be paganized that the cross came to be thought of as a Christian symbol. It was in 431 A.D. that crosses in churches and chambers were introduced, while the use of crosses on steeples did not come until about 586 A.D. In the 6th Century, the crucifix image was introduced and its worship sanctioned by the Church of Rome.¹⁷

A tradition of the Church which our fathers have inherited was the adoption of the words “cross” and “crucify.” These words are nowhere to be found in the Greek of the New Testament ... Why then was the “cross” brought into the Faith? Again, historical evidence points to Constantine as the one who had the major share in uniting Sun-worship and the Messianic Faith. Constantine’s famous vision of “the cross superimposed on the sun,” in the year 312, is usually cited. Writers, ignorant of the fact that the cross was not to be found in the New Testament Scriptures, put much emphasis on this vision as the onset of the so-called “conversion” of Constantine. But, unless Constantine had been misguided by the Gnostic Manichean half-Christians, who indeed used the cross in their hybrid religion, this vision of the cross superimposed on the sun could only be the same old cosmic religion, the astrological religion of Babylon. The fact remains: that which Constantine saw is nowhere to be found in Scripture ...

As stated above, the indisputable sign of Tammuz, the mystic Tau of the Babylonians and Egyptians, was brought into the Church chiefly because of Constantine, and has since been adored with all the homage due only to the Most High. The Protestants have for many years refrained from undue adoration of or homage to the cross, especially in England at the time of the Puritans in the 16th-17th centuries. But lately this un-scriptural symbol has been increasingly accepted in Protestantism ...

12. Baron Alfred Porcelli, *The Cross: Its History, Meaning and Use* (The Protestant Truth Society, 1920), p. 3.

13. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edition, Vol. 14, p. 273.

14. E.W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 162.

15. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (Loiuzeaux Bros., 1961), pp. 197-205.

16. Johannes Geffcken, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*, p. 319.

17. Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion*, p. 50.

The evidence for its pagan origin is so convincing that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that “the sign of the cross, represented in its simplest form by a crossing of two lines at right angles, greatly antedates, in both the East and the West, the introduction of Christianity. It goes back to a very remote period of human civilization.” It then continues and refers to the Tau cross of the pagan Egyptians, “In later times the Egyptian Christians (Copts), attracted by its form, and perhaps by its symbolism, adopted it as the emblem of the cross.” Further proof of its pagan origin is the recorded evidence of the Vestal Virgins of pagan Rome having the cross hanging on a necklace, and the Egyptians doing it too, as early as the 15th century B.C.E. The Buddhists, and numerous other sects of India, also used the sign of the cross as a mark on their followers’ heads.¹⁸

The “cross” itself, long revered as the symbol of Christ’s crucifixion, actually originated in the pagan cultures. The Aztecs who had never heard of Christ, had used the symbol of the cross centuries earlier. The translators of the New Testament mistranslated the Greek term which meant “stake” into the word “cross.” It would be more correct to say that Jesus was crucified on a big tree-like stake. It is reported, scholars and the Anglican clergy were aware of this in the Eighteenth Century. The cross was not adopted until about three hundred years after the crucifixion, and it wasn’t portrayed in Christian art until the middle of the Fifth Century ... The cross was another pagan symbol adopted and claimed by the Church.¹⁹

The crucifix – a cross, a sculpture of art, an icon of human sentiment – is as false as it can be, because our Lord was not crucified on a cross. He was crucified on a pole or a stake – an upright stake. Now that’s a historical fact. The cross is an emblem of the Christian religion, a worldwide religion, a worldwide deception ... The cross of Christianity is tainted, it’s already wrong; it’s only an emblem, a piece of jewelry, a status symbol that you belong to the club ... and yet Christianity is totally and emotionally in love with it – infatuated.²⁰

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THE “CROSS”

An Explanation of Its Use in the Concordant Version

by — A.E. Knoch

The “cross” has been a heavy cross for the translator of the *Concordant Version* to bear. Knowing full well that our Lord was not impaled upon a pole with a cross-piece, but on a single upright stake, he avoided the term and used “stake” for a time in his translations. Yet this proved even more unsatisfactory than the word “cross,” for a stake is not used for a large pole, as a rule, and when it is, death by burning is implied. Pale also was tried, but now it suggests a part of a fence.

Far more important than the exact form (for the cross-piece does not really alter the cause of death by nailing to an upright pole, or the resultant suffering and shame), are the spiritual thoughts which time has attached to it. It has become a standard figure of speech for trial and tribulation.

18. *The Final Reformation* (Institute for Scripture Research).

19. Robert W. Stace, *Why Weren’t We Told?* 2001, p. 83.

20. Martin Zender, *Crack O’ Dawn Report*, #31 (2011).

“*Bearing a cross*” means much more than lifting a stake or a pole. The word “cross” has gathered around it so much of spiritual value that it seems sacrilegious to use the other terms, which correct only the outward, material appearance, yet discard the inward spiritual aspect.

The *Concordant Version* seeks to conform as closely as practicable to the outward form as well as the inward spirit, and, in most cases, it has been possible to do so; but when repeated efforts fail to fulfill our wishes in this regard, we fall back upon other means of revealing and guarding the truth. In the lexicon [*Keyword Concordance*] we can give the facts, and in the sublinear we can cleave closer to them than in the idiomatic version.

Those who have written, criticizing the rendering “cross” and “crucify,” seeking to correct us on this point, should consult these before writing, for these give the more exact equivalents, without observing English idiom and usage. The lexicon reads, “an upright stake or pale, without any cross-piece” (page 322), and the sublinear has “pale” throughout, with “impale” for the verb. I will gladly bear this figurative “cross” for the sake of the saints. If I translated otherwise, a much greater mob would seek to impale me; but both would probably join and cry “crucify him!” If there is a better solution we will gladly adopt it.²¹

21. A.E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 42 (1951) Abridged.

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