

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS, THE KEY EVENT IN HISTORY ATTRACTED ALMOST NO ATTENTION AT THE TIME!

One of the crucial events in human history, the crucifixion of a Jewish prophet and teacher named Jesus, is one of the most difficult Biblical events to document outside the Bible.

In recent years archeologists have made many discoveries in the Bible lands of the Middle East which corroborate to an astonishing extent many of the Old Testament stories.

A book about these finds, "The Bible as History" by a German journalist named Werner Keller, lists event after event in the time of David and later kings of Judah and Israel which were taken to be fairy tales but which have been backed up by archeological diggings in Palestine and Mesopotamia. But this has not proved to be the case concerning the events of the life of Jesus.

Our best authorities on that subject remain the four Gospels of the New Testament and the letters of the Apostle Paul in which he talks of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Why is this? Perhaps the best answer is given in a book, "The History of Israel," by a German historian, Professor Martin Noth.

Noth writes, "World history at the time took no notice of Him (Jesus). For one short moment His appearance stirred men's minds in Jerusalem; then it became an episode in past history, and people had to concern themselves with what seemed more important things. Yet this was a final and decisive crisis in the history of Israel. It was only when the numbers of His followers made them a force to be reckoned with in terms of world history that His Name began to be mentioned at all."

In his book, journalist Keller lists three passages in ancient history related to Jesus. The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived at the time of Jesus, referred in his "Antiquities of the Jews" to the early Christian community in Jerusalem. He spoke of "Jesus who was called Messiah."

Tacitus, the great Roman historian, mentioned Jesus specifically in his "Annals" while explaining the meaning of the word "Christians": "Christ, from whom they derived their name, was condemned to death by the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of the Emperor Tiberius."

Another Roman writer Suetonius, in his book "The Twelve Caesars," describes a Messianic movement during the reign of Claudius who was Roman emperor from A.D. 41 to 54. He wrote, "He drove the Jews out of Rome who were writing because of Christ." This indicates that, within fifteen to twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, there was a Christian community already in Rome.

SITES MARKED

the Roman Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena. After Constantine was converted to Christianity in 313 A.D., he made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire.

The Empress Helen made a trip to the Holy Land and marked the various sites, such as Calvary, the Via Dolorosa along which Jesus carried the cross, the Ecce Homo arch where Pontius Pilate told the rioting crowds, "Behold the man," and the place where Jesus was believed to have been buried. Constantine had a magnificent sepulchral tower erected in 326 A.D. over this tomb.

Biblical scholars have been more successful in recreating the details of the crucifixion itself. Here is an explanation in Keller's book:

"And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him" - Mark 15:25. According to our division of time, the "third hour" in the ancient East is 9 A.M. And at the "ninth hour," in our reckoning three o'clock in the afternoon, the tragedy came to an end. "Jesus cried with a loud voice ... and gave up the ghost" - Mark 15:34-37.

What was the cause of Jesus' death? Of recent years, scientific investigations carried out by medical specialists in Cologne have attempted to answer the question.

In the case of a person suspended by his two hands the blood sinks very quickly into the lower half of the body. After six to twelve minutes, blood pressure has dropped by fifty percent, and the pulse rate has doubled. Too little blood reaches the heart and fainting ensues.

This leads to a speedy orthostatic collapse through insufficient blood circulating to the brain and the heart. Death by crucifixion is, therefore, due to heart failure. It is a well-authenticated fact, that victims of crucifixion did not usually die for two days or even longer. On the vertical beam there was often a small support attached called a "sedile" (seat) or a "cornu" (horn).

If the victim hanging there eased his misery from time to time by supporting himself on this, the blood returned to the upper half of his body and the faintness passed. When the torture of the crucified man was finally to be brought to an end, the "crurifragium" followed: his legs were broken below the knee with blows from a club. That meant that he could no longer ease his weight on the footrests, and heart failure quickly followed.

"Crurifragium"

"Jesus was spared the "crurifragium." Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs" John 19:32, 33.

"The Jews had asked Pilate for the "crurifragium," for it was the day before the Sabbath and also the day of preparation for the Passover. According to Jewish law, the bodies of victims after crucifixion were not allowed to remain hanging overnight ... (Deut. 21:23).

"At 6 P.M. the Sabbath of Passover week began, when all kinds of normal activity were

As to sites of these events in and around Jerusalem, much is owed to the efforts made by

forbidden. The imminence of this important festival explains the precipitate hast of the events that preceded it: the arrest by night, the condemnation, the execution and burial of Jesus all within a few hours," explains Keller.

It is easy to understand why almost no one present, at such a hurried and not too unusual an affair in those strife-ridden days, would have imagined that this was an event which would shape all history to come.

NEW STRENGTH FOR NEW BURDENS, NEW COURAGE FOR OLD; NEW FAITH
FOR WHATEVER THE DAY MAY UNFOLD.
AS FRESH FOR EACH NEED AS THE DEW ON THE SOD;
NEW EVERY MORNING ARE THE MERCIES OF GOD.

EULA YOUNG

THE END