

The Cross

Today millions see the cross and immediately think about Christianity and Jesus being crucified. The cross serves both as a symbol for identifying Christians and it represents how those who are baptized believers should separate themselves from the powers of the world and put Christ first in their lives.

The cross has been around for several thousand years. 700 hundred years before Jesus was born the Carthaginians used the cross as a way to slowly murder criminals and slaves. The Romans learned about this while battling them in many wars and they brought this system of punishment and death to Rome. In 70 B.C. which was 100 years before Jesus was crucified, the Romans crucified over 4000 men and some women on the Appian Way (a road) leading to Rome.

When Jesus was hung on the cross at Golgotha outside Jerusalem, the Jewish people wanted his death to be quick. Jesus was scourged (beaten with a whip with pieces of bone in the leather whip), he was beaten and kicked for a long time. Then, they had him carry a part of the cross to the hill. Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross the rest of the way for Jesus because he lost his strength after being so severely beaten.

Most criminals and slaves were tied to the crosses in order for the crucifixion to last a long time, so that the suffering was for a long time. They wanted Jesus to have a heavy amount of suffering, but a quick death. So, they nailed his hands and feet to the cross. Like almost all of those crucified, Jesus died mostly of suffocation because he could not raise himself up to catch his breath. The blood loss while on the cross contributed to hurrying along his final moments. It was not the loss of breath, but the shedding of His blood that washed away our sins.

Question Time:

1. Why did they scourge Jesus before they took him to the cross?
2. Why did they nail him to the cross instead of tying him with ropes?
3. Why is the blood so important?

Scripture:

John 20:25 ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

Psalm 21:16 ¹⁶ Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

Next Steps: Talk to your parents about this scripture.

Matthew 16:24-26 English Standard Version (ESV)

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”