



Christian Questions

TALK RADIO WITH A PURPOSE

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13

Dear Benny,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know if Jesus died on a cross or on a stake.

We researched your question on the Internet. Below is a synopsis of our findings.

The precise shape of the object on which Jesus was crucified cannot be proven explicitly from the Bible. The Greek word translated "cross" is *stauros*, meaning "a pole or a cross used as an instrument of capital punishment." The Greek word *stauroo*, which is translated "crucify" means to be attached to a pole or a cross. Though the Greek usage of these words can mean "pole" or "stake," many scholars argue that Jesus most likely died on a cross in which the upright beam projected across the shorter crosspiece. Interestingly, other biblical writers describe the instrument of Jesus' death as a "tree" (*xulon* in Greek). (See Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29-30, 1 Peter 2:24, and Galatians 3:13.) Some bible commentators say that the reason this term was used is because the authors were making a point to the Jews, since traditionally Jews viewed an individual who hung on a tree as one who was under God's curse (Galatians 3:13, quoting Deuteronomy 21:23). However, when the authors of Acts and Peter used *xulon* they did not mean Jesus was crucified on a living tree, but rather some kind of apparatus fashioned from the timber of a tree. Therefore, commentators conclude that there is no contradiction in scripture concerning these passages.

Historians also informed us that when Roman crucifixion was done in an established place, such as Golgatha, the vertical beam (*stauros*) would have already been in place. Had it not been, Jesus would have had to carry both the vertical and cross beams, a weight of over 300 pounds. It was much more likely that Jesus carried only the crossbeam, which would have weighed between 75 and 125 pounds. Jesus would have been nailed to that beam, arms outstretched and then hoisted to the top of the *stauros* where the beam settled into a notch already carved in the top of the *stauros*.

Catacomb carvings give additional evidence that Jesus died on a cross and not a tree. The carvings date from the time when there would still have been Christians living who were actual eyewitnesses to Jesus' crucifixion. The fact that they carved crosses on the walls is a strong indicator that the cross was the means by which the execution of Jesus was accomplished.

We believe that more important than the instrument of Jesus' death, be it on a cross or a stake, is the meaning of His incredible





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sacrifice. Because of His death and resurrection the entire human race has been redeemed from the Adamic curse of death and has a chance for salvation either in heaven now or on earth later, after a period of trial, during the Millennial Age. We hope we have shed some light on your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.com. The service is free and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio

