

## The Cross

IN ancient times one of the most horrible methods of execution known to man was crucifixion on a cross. Victims were known to endure the agony of the cross for hours and in some cases, days, before dying. To die on a cross was a shame, for the Bible says, "...: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13b)

ALL crosses were instruments of death, but not all were the same. Of all the crosses, history records that one was destined to be different. Perhaps the carpenter who made it did not realize that this particular one would become famous - but God knew! It stood on a hill, outside of the city; a place away from the populace, a place of death. It had been borne there by a man under orders from the Roman army, a man who was just passing through.

THE "criminal" was brought to the cross and had his hands and feet nailed to it by the Roman soldiers. The pain that was endured by this "criminal" had never before been known to man, nor has it since. After approximately three hours this "criminal" died, after which a spear was thrust into his side to leave no doubt of death. The blood from the hands, feet, and wounded side of this "criminal" has not been washed from the cross with the tide of time. You see, my friend, this was not just an ordinary cross and an ordinary man. Please allow me to explain.

THE "criminal" was an innocent man, so admitted the governor, Pilate, when he said, "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him." (Luke 23:14) The man's name was Jesus of Nazareth. He was (is) the Son of God who left heaven's glory and, humbling Himself, took on the form of a man, having been born of a virgin (Mt. 1:18-25). His one and only purpose in coming to earth was to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10) because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Ro. 3:23)

A perfect sacrifice was needed to pay the sin debt, and to satisfy the demands of a thrice holy God (He. 9:11-14). As a sacrifice, He was in reality our literal substitute, taking on Him our punishment (Isa. 53:1-12; I Pe. 2:24). After shedding His perfect blood as the full and final payment for our sins, He was buried and three days later bodily raised, and today He sits on the right hand of God (He. 10:12) By enduring the pain of the Cross, Jesus Christ suffered all that we would have suffered in hell. The forgiveness of sin and eternal life awaits those who repent (turn from their sinful ways) and accept Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. Rejection of Jesus Christ brings condemnation and eternal damnation in hell (Jn. 3:16-18).

MY friend, God loves you just the way you are (Ro. 5:8) and does not want to see you go to hell (2 Pe. 3:9). His Son, Jesus Christ, endured the Cross and all its shame just for you, because He loves you. For the sake of your eternal soul, I plead with you to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, today! Acknowledge to God that you are a sinner, ask for forgiveness and for Jesus Christ to save you for all eternity. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 Jn. 5:11-13)

*~Richard A. Ciarrocca*