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# The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan (Online Edition)

by Peter and Christie Michas with Robert Vander Maten

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## Chapter 7

### Messiah Yeshua Crucified on the Almond Tree

And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree (Acts 10:39, NKJV).

Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb (Acts 13:29, NKJV).

Although Christian tradition depicts Yeshua crucified on a Roman cross, the Word of God shows that Yeshua was crucified on a tree. The Romans not only crucified people on upright stakes but also used trees for this purpose when necessary. There is also a precedent during the Second Temple period for Jews crucifying Jews.

## NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO THE CRUCIFIXION TREE

In the following verses, the King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), and Amplified Bible correctly translate the Greek word *xulon* (Strong's #3586) as “tree”, showing that Yeshua was crucified on a tree:

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus [Yeshua] whom you murdered by **hanging on a tree [xulon]** (Acts 5:30, NKJV, emphasis added).

And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, **whom they killed by hanging on a tree [xulon]** (Acts 10:39, NKJV, emphasis added).

Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, **they took Him down from the tree [xulon]** and laid Him in a tomb (Acts 13:29, NKJV, emphasis added).

Christ [Messiah] has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “**Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree [xulon]**”) (Galatians 3:13, NKJV, emphasis added).

who Himself bore our sins in **His own body on the tree [xulon]**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed (1 Peter 2:24, NKJV, emphasis added).

As Yeshua was led to be crucified, He referred to “the green tree”:

“**For if they do these things in the green tree [xulon]**, what will happen in the dry?” (Luke 23:31, emphasis added).

As in the passages referring to the tree upon which Yeshua was crucified, the Greek word translated “tree” is *xulon*. The Greek word *ugros* (*hugros*, Strong’s #5200) translated as “green” literally means “full of sap”.<sup>1,2</sup> Yeshua may have been referring to the living tree upon which He was to be crucified. Since Yeshua was being led to the Mount of Olives, which was covered with trees, this does fit the picture.

## **YESHUA CARRIED THE CROSSBAR, NOT A ROMAN CROSS**

As Yeshua was led to His crucifixion, He carried the crossbar. At some point when He was no longer able to carry it, a man by the name of Simon carried it for him:

They took Jesus [Yeshua] therefore, and He went out, **bearing His own cross [crossbar]**, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha (John 19:17, emphasis added).

And as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they **pressed into service to bear His cross [crossbar]** (Matthew 27:32, emphasis added)

And they pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), **to bear His cross [crossbar]** (Mark 15:21, emphasis added).

And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and **placed on him the cross [crossbar] to carry** behind Jesus [Yeshua] (Luke 23:26, emphasis added).

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, New Testament Dictionary, p. 2296.

The Greek word *stauros* (Strong's #4716), translated as "cross", refers to the crossbar, the horizontal beam that in this case was attached to the tree.<sup>3,4</sup> It was to this plank of wood that Yeshua was nailed at the wrists.<sup>5,6</sup> The crossbar was then nailed to the tree.

There were various methods of performing the execution. **Usually, the condemned man, after being whipped, or "scourged," dragged the crossbeam of his cross to the place of punishment,** where the upright shaft was already fixed in the ground. Stripped of his clothing either then or earlier at his scourging, he was **bound fast with outstretched arms to the crossbeam or nailed firmly to it through the wrists. The crossbeam was then raised high against the upright shaft and made fast to it** about 9 to 12 feet (approximately 3 metres) from the ground. Next, the feet were tightly bound or nailed to the upright shaft. A ledge inserted about halfway up the upright shaft gave some support to the body; evidence for a similar ledge for the feet is rare and late. Over the criminal's head was placed a notice stating his name and his crime. Death, apparently caused by exhaustion or by heart failure, could be hastened by shattering the legs (*crurifragium*) with an iron club, so that shock and asphyxiation soon ended his life (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>

The Greek word *stauros* has other meanings, including upright pole or stake.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this same word can be used to refer to the crossbar, the tree used as the stake for the crucifixion, or the crossbar-tree combination, as it is in the following verses.

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<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, p. 2277.

<sup>4</sup> Merrill C. Tenney (Editor), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 1038.

<sup>5</sup> The traditional depiction of nails through the hands is physically impossible because the body's weight would cause the nails to tear through the hands.

<sup>6</sup> QUOTE: In popular depictions of the crucifixion of Jesus (possibly because in translations of John 20:25 the wounds are described as being "in his hands"), Jesus is shown with nails in his hands. But in Greek the word "χείρ", usually translated as "hand", referred to arm and hand together,[31] and to denote the *hand* as distinct from the *arm* some other word was added, as "ἄκρην οὐτάσε χεῖρα" (he wounded the end of the χείρ, i.e., he wounded her hand).[32] A possibility that does not require tying is that the nails were inserted just above the wrist, between the two bones of the forearm (the *radius* and the *ulna*).[33] - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion> - section "Nail placement" - accessed August 2014.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/144583/crucifixion> - section "Punishment" - accessed August 2014.

<sup>8</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 138.

“Let this Christ [Messiah], the King of Israel, now **come down from the cross**, so that we may see and believe!” And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him (Mark 15:32, emphasis added).

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even **death on a cross** (Philippians 2:8, emphasis added).

According to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

The height of the stake was usually little more than the height of a man.<sup>9</sup>

The height of Jesus’ cross has been estimated from the length of the reed (hyssop, John 19:29). The reed was prob. about three ft. in length, and thus **the height of the cross [crossbar on the tree] was probably seven to nine ft.** (emphasis added).<sup>10</sup>

In this case, a tree was used rather than a stake, but this gives us an idea of how high Yeshua was elevated on the tree.

### **MELITO OF SARDIS – YESHUA “HUNG ON A TREE”**

Several times in his homily, *On Pascha (On the Passover)*, Melito of Sardis states that Yeshua was hung on a tree:

This is the one made flesh in a virgin, who was **hanged on a tree** ...

... who was **not broken on the tree** ...

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<sup>9</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 1040.

<sup>10</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, pp. 1041-1042.

And so he is **lifted up on a tall tree**, and a placard is attached to show who has been murdered.

He who hung the earth is hanging. He who fixed the heavens in place has been fixed in place. He who laid the foundations of the universe has been **laid on a tree**.

For this reason the great lights turned away, and the day was turned to darkness; to hide **the one denuded on the tree** ...

He it is who made the heaven and the earth, and formed humanity in the beginning, who was proclaimed through the law and the prophets, who took flesh from a virgin, who was **hung on a tree**, who was buried in the earth, who was raised from the dead ... (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

Melito was the Bishop of Sardis, where one of the Seven Churches of Revelation was located. He was Jewish by birth and wrote *On Pascha* between about 160 and 170.<sup>12</sup> Like other Jewish believers in Messiah Yeshua, Melito continued to observe Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. In contrast, the Bishop of Rome changed the date for the observance of Passover and wanted all who adhered to the Biblical date to conform to Rome's observance.<sup>13</sup> As Melito held to the true date for Passover, he also held to the truth that Yeshua was crucified on a tree. It was the Church of Rome that gave Christianity the false portrayal of Yeshua's crucifixion on a Roman cross.

## **IMAGES OF THE CROSS AND CRUCIFIX NOT BIBLICAL**

Not until the early Fourth Century was the symbol of the cross adopted by Christianity and not until the Sixth Century was the crucifix, the image of the Crucifixion on the cross, depicted:

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<sup>11</sup> Alistair Stewart-Sykes (Translator), *On Pascha – With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, pp. 56 (70, 71); p. 63 (95); p. 64 (96, 97); p. 66 (104).

<sup>12</sup> Stewart-Sykes, pp. 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartodecimanism> - accessed August 2014.

The representation of Christ on the cross has been an important subject of Western art since the early Middle Ages. Concerned primarily with simple symbolic affirmations of salvation and eternal life, and repelled by the ignominy of the punishment, the early Christians did not represent the Crucifixion ... before the 5th century; instead, the event was symbolized first by a lamb and, **after the official recognition of Christianity by the Roman state in the early 4th century, by a jewelled cross. By the 6th century, however, representations of the Crucifixion became numerous ...** (emphasis added).<sup>14</sup>

**It is important to note that the crucifix, that is a cross upon which an image of Christ is present, is not known to have been used until the 6th century AD.[12]** (emphasis added).<sup>15</sup>

In fact, the symbol of the cross predates Christianity and is associated with pagan religions, especially worship of the sun:

**The cross-shaped sign**, represented in its simplest form by a crossing of two lines at right angles, **greatly predates, in both East and West, the introduction of Christianity**. It goes back to a very remote period of human civilization. It is supposed to have been used not just for its ornamental value, but also with religious significance.[2] It may have represented the apparatus used in kindling fire, and thus as the symbol of sacred fire or as a **symbol of the sun**, denoting its daily rotation. It has also been interpreted as the mystic representation of **lightning** or of the god of the tempest, or the emblem of the **Aryan** pantheon and the primitive Aryan civilization.[2]

Another associated symbol is the ansated cross (**ankh** or *crux ansata*) of the ancient Egyptians, often depicted in the hands of the goddess **Sekhmet**, and as a hieroglyphic sign of life or of the living. **Egyptian Christians (Copts) adopted it**

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/144583/crucifixion/1641/Crucifixion-in-art> - accessed August 2014.

<sup>15</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross) - section "Early Christian" - accessed August 2014.



**as the emblem of the cross.**[2] In his book, *The Worship of the Dead*, Colonel J. Garnier wrote: "The cross in the form of the 'Crux Ansata' ... was carried in the hands of the Egyptian priests and Pontiff kings as the symbol of their authority as **priests of the Sun god** and was called 'the Sign of Life'." [3]

**In the Bronze Age a representation of the cross as conceived in Christian art appeared**, and the form was popularised. ... **In the proto-Etruscan cemetery of Golasecca every tomb has a vase with a cross engraved on it.** True crosses of more or less artistic design have been found in **Tiryns**, at **Mycenæ**, in Crete, and on a fibula from **Vulci**.<sup>16</sup> (bold emphasis added).

According to Vine, the meaning of the Greek word *stauros* (Strong's #4716) is:

to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a **two-beamed "cross."** **The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the 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 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. 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 [Church of Rome] pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration of 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, was adopted to stand for the "cross" of Christ.**

As for the Chi, or X, which [Roman Emperor] Constantine declared he had seen in a vision leading him to champion the Christian faith, that letter was the initial of the word "Christ" and had nothing to do with "the Cross" (for *xulon*, "a timber beam, a tree," as used for the *stauros*, see under TREE) (emphasis added).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross) - section "Pre-Christian" - accessed August 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Vine, p. 138.

The symbols of the cross and crucifix came from the Church of Rome, which corrupted Biblical truth by mixing it with paganism, creating an apostate church. This is the Apostasy (falling away from Biblical truth) that the apostle Paul warned about (2 Thessalonians 2:3). For a detailed study of this subject, see our free study “A New Look at the Book of Revelation & Daniel End-Time Prophecies”, Part 6 “The Man of Lawlessness & the Apostasy – Emperor Constantine & the Roman Church” ([www.messengers-of-messiah.org](http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org)).

## **YESHUA AND THE TWO CRIMINALS CRUCIFIED ON THE SAME TREE**

According to Luke’s account of the Crucifixion, the two criminals were crucified with Yeshua:

And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, **one on the right and the other on the left** (Luke 23:33, emphasis added).

None of the Biblical accounts of the Crucifixion state that the three were crucified on three separate Roman stakes of execution. In fact, John’s account shows that all three were crucified on the SAME *stauros*, meaning the same execution stake, which in this case was the tree.

The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that **the bodies should not remain on the cross [*stauros* – tree]** on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away (John 19:31, emphasis added).

The word “bodies” is plural and the word *stauros* is singular, meaning all three were crucified on the same tree.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Thanks to Ernest Martin, who makes note of this in his book, *Secrets of Golgotha*, p. 274. See “Preface to *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God’s Master Plan* (Online Edition)” that explains how Peter Michas and Ernest Martin reached some of the same conclusions about the Crucifixion on the Mount of Olives, as well as the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden (Jerusalem), as a result of independent research.

John's description of "one on either side" clearly fits what he tells us that all three were crucified on one and the same *stauros*, referring to the tree:

There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, **one on either side, and Jesus [Yeshua] in between** (John 19:18, emphasis added).

In spite of the agony and labored breathing of crucifixion, the three were able to speak among each other because they were so close together on the tree:

And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ [Messiah]? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus [Yeshua], remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-43).

### **"CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"**

In referring to Yeshua's crucifixion, the apostle Paul makes the statement: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). This is a direct reference to Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

Christ [Messiah] redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" (Galatians 3:13).

"And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and **he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree**, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for **he who is hanged is accursed of**

**God**), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23, emphasis added).

A controversy existed among the Rabbis (Pharisees) whether hanging on a tree was to be done before or after death. The final rabbinic ruling was based on humane considerations and called for a quick death by strangulation, followed by hanging.<sup>19</sup> However, there is evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Temple Scroll and Nahum Commentary) that this same passage was originally interpreted to mean that a man was hanged alive on a tree as the method of execution.

According to the Temple Scroll (Column 64), a person guilty of certain political crimes was to be killed by hanging on a tree:

If a man informs against his people, and delivers up his people to a foreign nation, and does harm to his people, **you shall hang him on the tree, and he shall die**. ... And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and has defected into the midst of the nations, and has cursed his people and the children of Israel, **you shall hang him also on the tree, and he shall die** (Col. 64) (emphasis added).<sup>20</sup>

This is relevant to Yeshua’s crucifixion because the High Priest and Chief Priests not only falsely accused Yeshua of blasphemy – a crime that was punishable by stoning (Leviticus 24:16; John 10:31-33) – but also falsely accused Him of being an enemy of Rome and of their own nation, a political crime that may have been punishable by crucifixion:

As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “**If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar**” (John 19:2, emphasis added)

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<sup>19</sup> Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>20</sup> Yadin, p. 206.

The High Priest, Caiaphas, determined that Yeshua must die because He threatened the power and authority of the Sadducean political-religious leadership that depended upon compliance with Rome:

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. **If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**” But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that **it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish**” (John 11:47-50, emphasis added).

Caiaphas was a Sadducee, like all the other High Priests since Judea had become a Roman province in AD 6; so were most of the Chief Priests and Sanhedrin.<sup>21,22</sup> He worked with Rome because his position was approved and secured by Rome. From his point of view, Yeshua was guilty of blasphemy and treason, qualifying Him for death by hanging alive on a tree. As a Sadducee, he rejected the Oral Law of the Pharisees (Rabbis).<sup>23</sup> This may have included the rabbinic interpretation of Deuteronomy 21:22-23, that a man was to be hung after death, allowing Caiaphas to take the position that Yeshua was deserving of being hanged (including by crucifixion) alive on a tree as the method of execution.

## **CRUCIFIXION BY JEWS DURING THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD**

According to the Jewish Sages (prominent Rabbinic Torah scholars), only blasphemers and idolaters were to be hanged on a tree, although by the more humane act of hanging after death.<sup>24</sup> However, the Temple Scroll shows that during the Second Temple period, hanging (including crucifying) alive on a tree was a possible method of execution. According to Yigael Yadin:

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<sup>21</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, p 213.

<sup>22</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadducees> - accessed August 2014.

<sup>23</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, p 214.

<sup>24</sup> Yadin, p. 205.

It is possible, of course, that **hanging alive goes back to the Second Temple period** as the legitimate interpretation of the Bible's command to execute by 'hanging', and that it was only the later Pharisaic halachah which gave a different interpretation, and condemned the practice of stringing up a condemned man while still alive. There is in fact proof of this in the Aramaic Targum (of a sentence in Ruth) which dwells on the four methods of carrying out judicial sentences of death. It affirms that the fourth type, which is strangulation in rabbinic terminology, is indeed 'hanging on a tree'. And the late Israeli scholar Professor J. Heinemann pointed out that this Targum **preserves an ancient pre-Tannaitic (i.e. before the mishnaic sages) tradition of punishment by actual hanging — namely, with hanging as the cause of death** (emphasis added).<sup>25</sup>

Yadin has reinterpreted the Nahum Commentary (Peshar Nahum) in light of the Temple Scroll to support the argument that the Deuteronomy passage does indeed refer to hanging alive on a tree and that this was practiced in ancient Israel.<sup>26</sup>

This is relevant to the Crucifixion because the Sadducees rejected the Oral Law or Rabbinic interpretation of the Pharisees and accepted only the Written Torah<sup>27</sup> as authoritative. Based upon this understanding, Caiaphas and the other Sadducean Chief Priests and members of the Sanhedrin may have been open to crucifying Yeshua on a tree, as crucifixion could have been considered a form of hanging alive.<sup>28</sup>

During the Second Temple period, Josephus records that High Priest-King Alexander Jannaeus crucified 800 rebellious Pharisees.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps Caiaphas viewed this as a precedent for Yeshua's crucifixion as an enemy of the state:

Crucifixion was most frequently used to punish political or religious agitators, pirates, slaves, or those who had no civil rights. In 519 BCE Darius I, king of

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<sup>25</sup> Yadin, pp. 207-208.

<sup>26</sup> Yadin, pp. 216-217.

<sup>27</sup> The Torah refers to the first five books of the Bible written by Moses and containing the Mosaic Law.

<sup>28</sup> Yadin, p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> William Whiston, Translator, *Josephus Complete Works*, p. 433 (*Wars of the Jews*, IV, 6).

Persia, crucified 3,000 political opponents in Babylon; **in 88 BCE Alexander Jannaeus, the Judaeen king and high priest, crucified 800 Pharisaic opponents**; and ... [in AD 31] Pontius Pilate had Jesus of Nazareth put to death by crucifixion (emphasis added).<sup>30</sup>

## **YESHUA CRUCIFIED ON THE TREE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES**

Certainly, the corrupt religious leaders demanding Yeshua's crucifixion had an understanding of crucifixion on a tree. Pilate did not want to crucify Yeshua but he told them: "See to that yourselves" and "Take Him yourself, and crucify Him":

And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; **see to that yourselves**" (Matthew 27:24).

When therefore the chief priests and the officers [of the Levite Temple Guard] saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify, crucify!" **Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."** The Jews [corrupt religious leaders] answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God" (John 19:6-7, emphasis added).

Pilate washed his hands of the entire affair because he knew Yeshua was innocent of any charge, placing the responsibility for Yeshua's death on the corrupt religious leaders who wanted Yeshua executed because He was a threat to their power and authority (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10). They understood Pilate's action according to their own Jewish law, whereby Pilate absolved himself of any responsibility for the murder of an innocent man (Deuteronomy 21:6-9).

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/144583/crucifixion> - accessed August 2014. Note: AD 31 is the correct year of the Crucifixion; see *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan*, Chapter 8 "Timeline of Yeshua's Birth, Ministry, and Crucifixion: Feast of Trumpets 3 BC – Day of Atonement AD 28 – Passover AD 31" (free study at [www.messengers-of-messiah.org](http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org)).

Once Pilate turned Yeshua over to the corrupt Chief Priests, who were accompanied by the Levite Temple Guard (John 19:6), they led Yeshua to the place of execution outside the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount, on the Mount of Olives (see Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion”). This was the place according to Jewish law for the execution of those condemned for blasphemy, the accusation against Yeshua (Matthew 26:65; Mark 14:64).

So he [Pilate] then delivered Him to them [Chief Priests and Levite Temple Guard] to be crucified. **They took Jesus [Yeshua] therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross [crossbar], to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha [on the Mount of Olives].** There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus [Yeshua] in between (John 19:16-18, emphasis added).

This was not a place chosen by the Romans and there were no Roman execution stakes there. But there was a tree that was set apart for this purpose, one that the Chief Priests – possibly even the High Priest, Caiaphas, himself – unknowingly selected for Yeshua’s crucifixion (see Chapter 6 “Aaron’s Rod, The Tree of Life, and the Crucifixion Tree”). Although the Romans typically nailed people to a crossbar that was then attached to an upright wood beam, they also used trees for crucifixion when necessary:

In some cases the victim was suspended from a crossbeam connecting them at the top – the *patibulum*. In others the beams more closely resembled the letter Y – the *furca*. It is also clear that **crucifixion sometimes involved nailing the victim on to a tree still rooted to the ground**, a practice which Tertullian says was used by Emperor Tiberius against certain priests (bold emphasis added).<sup>31</sup>

It may be that the Levite Temple Guard actually performed the Crucifixion under the supervision of the Roman centurion who was present with his soldiers (Matthew 27:54). This is a possibility since Pilate told the Chief Priests, who were accompanied by the Temple Guard: “Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him” (John 19:6). It was also the Temple

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<sup>31</sup> Carsten Peter Thiede and Matthew d’Ancona, *The Quest for the True Cross*, p. 12.



Guard, not Roman soldiers, who arrested Yeshua (Matthew 26:47); and the Guard put on the Tomb was a Levite Temple Guard, not a Roman Guard (Matthew 27:65-66). The Levite Temple Guard carried out the orders of the Chief Priests and reported to them, not to the Romans (Matthew 28:11).

## **MESSIAH YESHUA LIFTED UP ON THE ALMOND TREE**

In the previous chapter, we showed the possible connection of Aaron's Rod, a branch from an almond tree, to the Tree of Life; reasons why Aaron's Rod would have been used as the standard for the serpent; and evidence that King David may have planted Aaron's Rod with the serpent on the summit of the Mount of Olives, the place where God was worshipped. About three hundred years later, Hezekiah destroyed the serpent, but the tree that could have grown from Aaron's Rod – a supernaturally living branch with almond buds, blossoms, and ripe almonds – remained for God to work His ultimate redemptive plan for all humankind.

When Nicodemus asked how a person could enter the Kingdom of God, Yeshua replied:

**“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life”** (John 3:14-15, emphasis added).

As the serpent was lifted up on the Rod to provide forgiveness and escape from death to the Israelites, Messiah Yeshua was lifted up on the tree we believe grew from the Rod to provide forgiveness and escape from spiritual death to humankind. If true, the Rod God used to redeem the Israelites was the same Rod God used to redeem all humankind.

Messiah Yeshua came into the world to redeem humankind from the law of sin and death.

For **the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] our Lord (Romans 6:23, emphasis added).

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] has set you free from **the law of sin and of death** (Romans 8:2, emphasis added).

Yeshua was lifted up on the highest place in Jerusalem, the summit of the Mount of Olives, so that all could see Him and witness His loving sacrifice for them. All who look to Yeshua and trust in His sin-atonement sacrifice receive total spiritual healing and eternal life.

God showed the Rod of an Almond Tree to the prophet Jeremiah and revealed the New Covenant to him:

And the word of the LORD came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “**I see a rod of an almond tree.**” Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for **I am watching over My word to perform it**” (Jeremiah 1:11-12, emphasis added).

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “**I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people**” (Jeremiah 31:31-33, emphasis added).

The Lord showed Jeremiah that His Word, Messiah Yeshua, would perform the act of atonement necessary to seal the New Covenant by His blood (see Chapter 6 “Aaron’s Rod, the Tree of Life”, and the Crucifixion Tree”, section “Jeremiah’s Vision of the Almond Rod and the New Covenant Prophecy”).

We see a definite link between the vision of the Almond Rod and the prophecy of the New Covenant. There is only one Almond Rod in the Word of God that was used for God's redemptive purposes – Aaron's Rod. As we have shown, we believe the connection has to do with Aaron's Rod being a branch from the Tree of Life, and that it grew into the Crucifixion Tree upon which Messiah Yeshua was crucified.

## THE CRUCIFIXION TREE AND THE TREE OF LIFE

As previously explained, the Greek word *xulon* (Strong's #3586) is used in New Testament references to the tree on which Yeshua was crucified. In other references to trees in the New Testament, the Greek word *dendron* (Strong's #1186) is used, referring to "a living, growing tree" ... "known by the fruit it produces".<sup>32</sup>

It is also important to note that in the Septuagint,<sup>33</sup> the late Second Century BC Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), the Greek word *xulon* is used in references to all the trees of the Garden of Eden, including the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.<sup>34</sup>

And out of the ground the LORD **God caused to grow every tree [xulon]** that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; **the tree [xulon] of life** also in the midst of the garden, and **the tree [xulon] of the knowledge** of good and evil (Genesis 2:9, emphasis added).

We believe that it is prophetically significant that the only other example in the New Testament where the Greek word *xulon* appears is in the Book of Revelation, referring to the Tree of Life.<sup>35</sup>

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the **tree [xulon] of life**, which is in the Paradise of God' (Revelation 2:7, emphasis added).

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<sup>32</sup> Vine's, p. 642.

<sup>33</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint> - accessed August 2014.

<sup>34</sup> *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha with an English Translation*, p. 3

<sup>35</sup> Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, pp. 727, 775, 777.

in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the **tree [xulon] of life**, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2, emphasis added).

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the **tree [xulon] of life**, and may enter by the gates into the city (Revelation 22:14, emphasis added).

and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the **tree [xulon] of life** and from the holy city, which are written in this book (Revelation 22:19, emphasis added).

Because the Greek word *xulon* is only used to refer to the Crucifixion Tree and the Tree of Life in the New Testament, this suggests to us a link between the two.

In contrast, the Greek word *dendron* is used in Revelation 7:1 and 9:4 to refer to ordinary trees.<sup>36</sup>

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind should blow on the earth or on the sea or on any **tree [dendron]** (Revelation 7:1, emphasis added).

And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any **tree [dendron]**, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 9:4, emphasis added).

And the specific Greek word, *suke* (Strong's #4808), meaning fig tree, is used in Revelation 6:13.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Marshall, pp. 739, 743.

<sup>37</sup> Marshall, p. 739.

and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a **fig tree [suke]** casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind (Revelation 6:13, emphasis added).

The use of the Greek word *xulon* to refer only to the Crucifixion Tree and the Tree of Life seems not only prophetically significant but also literally significant, as we have linked the Crucifixion Tree to Aaron's Rod, a supernaturally living Rod of an Almond Tree that may be a branch from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. As the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden was the source of eternal life for Adam and Eve, the only way of salvation and eternal life with God is by partaking of the sacrifice made by Messiah Yeshua on the Crucifixion Tree.

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