Have You Crucified Jesus? - Are You Still Crucifying Christ?

Introduction:
A. A few weeks ago - Sunday, the traditional date of the Resurrection of Christ was celebrated as Easter. "Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene." (Mark 16:9)
1. Three days before, He (the Son of God) was killed by one of the most terrible and inhumane forms of execution known to man; crucifixion.
2. Jon Murray, president of American Atheists said, "There was no such person in the history of the world as Jesus Christ. There was no historical, living, breathing human being by that name. Ever. [The Bible] is a fictional book, non historical narrative. The myth is good for business."

B. Historical Findings:
1. Historical findings have substantiated the traditional cross.
2. One finding is a graffito dating to shortly after 200 A.D., taken from the walls of the Roman Palatine. It is a drawing of a crucified ass; a mockery of a Christian prisoner who worships Christ. The Romans were no doubt amused that Christians worshiped this Jesus whom they had crucified on a cross.
3. In June of 1968, bulldozers working north of Jerusalem accidentally laid bare tombs dating from the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Greek archeologist Vasilis Tzaferis was instructed by the Israeli Department of Antiquities to carefully excavate these tombs. Subsequently one of the most exciting finds of recent times was unearthed - the first skeletal remains of a crucified man. The most significant factor is its dating to around the time of Christ. The skeleton was of a man named Yehohanan son of Chaggol, who had been crucified between the age of 24 and 28.
4. Mr. Tzaferis wrote an article in the Jan/Feb. 1985 issue of the secular magazine Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR), and here are some of his comments regarding crucifixion in Jesus' time:
   a. At the end of the first century B.C., the Romans adopted crucifixion as an official punishment for non-Romans for certain limited transgressions. Initially, it was employed not as a method of execution, but only as a punishment. Moreover, only slaves convicted of certain crimes were punished by crucifixion. During this early period, a wooden beam, known as a furca or patibulum was placed on the slave's neck and bound to his arms.
   b. ...When the procession arrived at the execution site, a vertical stake was fixed into the ground. Sometimes the victim was attached to the cross only with ropes. In such a case, the patibulum or crossbeam, to which the victim's arms were already bound, was simply affixed to the vertical beam; the victim's feet were then bound to the stake with a few turns of the rope.
   c. If the victim was attached by nails, he was laid on the ground, with his shoulders on the crossbeam. His arms were held out and nailed to the two ends of the crossbeam, which was then raised and fixed on top of the vertical beam. The victim's feet were then nailed down against this vertical stake.
   d. In order to prolong the agony, Roman executioners devised two instruments that would keep the victim alive on the cross for extended periods of time. One, known as a sedile, was a small seat attached to the front of the cross, about halfway down. This device provided some support for the victim's body and may explain the phrase used by the Romans, "to sit on the cross." Both Eraneus and Justin Martyr describe the cross of Jesus as having five extremities rather than four; the fifth was probably the sedile. (p. 48,49)
5. In a followup article on this archeological find in the Nov/Dec. issue of BAR, the statement is made:
According to the (Roman) literary sources, those condemned to crucifixion never carried the complete cross, despite the common belief to the contrary and despite the many modern re-enactments of Jesus' walk to Golgotha. Instead, only the crossbar was carried, while the upright was set in a permanent place where it was used for subsequent executions. As the first-century Jewish historian Josephus noted, wood was so scarce in Jerusalem during the first century A.D. that the Romans were forced to travel ten miles from Jerusalem to secure timber for their siege machinery. (p. 21)

Similar are the details mentioned under "Cross" in the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology:

- It is certain only that the Romans practised this form of execution. But is is most likely that the *stauros* had a transverse in the form of a crossbeam. Secular sources do not permit any conclusion to be drawn as to the precise form of the cross, as to whether it was the *crux immissa* (+) or *crux commissa* (T). As it was not very common to affix a *titlos* (superscription, loanword from the Lat. *titulus*), it does not necessarily follow that the cross had the form of a *crux immissa*.
- There were two possible ways of erecting the *stauros*. The condemned man could be fastened to the cross lying on the ground at the place of execution, and so lifted up on the cross. Alternatively, it was probably usual to have the stake implanted in the ground before the execution. The victim was tied to the crosspiece, and was hoisted up with the horizontal beam and made fast to the vertical stake. As this was the simpler form of erection, and the carrying of the crossbeam (*patibulum*) was probably connected with the punishment for slaves, the *crux commissa* may be taken as the normal practice. The cross would probably have been not much higher than the height of a man. (Vol. 1, p. 392)

II. OTHER ARCHEOLOGICAL FINDS:

- Aside from the most recent discoveries, there are a few others of interest we will note.
  1. Here is one involving a discovery in 1873:
     - In 1873 a famous French scholar, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, reported the discovery of a burial chamber or cave on the Mount of Olives. Inside were some 30 ossuaries (rectangular chests made of stone) in which skeletal remains were preserved after their bodies had disintegrated. . . . One (ossuary) had the name "Judah" associated with a cross with arms of equal length. Further, the name "Jesus" occurred three times, twice in association with a cross. . . .
     - It would be unlikely that Christian Jews would have been buried in that area after 135 A.D. since the Romans forbade Jews to enter Aelia Capitolina . . . after the second Jewish revolt. (from Ancient Times, Vol. 3, No. 1, July 1958, p. 3.)
  2. In 1939 excavations at Herculaneum, the sister city of Pompeii (destroyed in 78 A.D. by volcano) produced a house where a wooden cross had been nailed to the wall of a room. According to Buried History, (Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1974 p. 15):
     - Below this (cross) was a cupboard with a step in front. This has considered to be in the shape of an ara or shrine, but could well have been used as a place of prayer. . . . If this interpretation is correct, and the excavators are strongly in favor of the Christian significance of symbol and furnishings, then here we have the example of an early house church.
  3. In 1945 a family tomb was discovered in Jerusalem by Prof. E.L. Sukenik of the Museum of Jewish Antiquities of the Hebrew University. Prof. Sukenik is the world's leading authority on Jewish ossuaries. Note his findings:
     - Two of the ossuaries bear the name "Jesus" in Greek. . . . The second of these also has four large crosses drawn. . . . (Prof. Sukenik) concluded that the full inscriptions and the crosses
were related, being expressions of grief at the crucifixion of Jesus, being written about that time. . . . Professor Sukenik points out . . . (that) the cross may represent a "pictorial expression of the crucifixion, tantamount to exclaiming `He was crucified!'" As the tomb is dated by pottery, lamps and the character of the letters used in the inscriptions--from the first century B.C. to not later than the middle of the first century A.D. this means that the inscriptions fall within two decades of the Crucifixion at the latest. (Ancient Times, Vol. 3, No. 1, July 1958, p. 35. See also Vol. 5, No. 3, March 1961, p. 13.)

III. The Crucifixion Of Christ

A. 2000 years ago, the sinless blood of Jesus Christ dripped to the ground as He hung on the cross.

B. Some 1000 years even earlier, the prophets of Jehovah God foretold of this gruesome event:
   1. In Psalm 22:1-18 (fulfilled in Matthew 27:27-39);
   2. Isaiah 53:1-12 (fulfilled in 1 Peter 2:21-25);
   4. Perhaps the most graphic prophecy of the crucifixion is found in Psalm 22:16-17 "For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me."
      a. We know that this was fulfilled in John 19:31-37 when Christ was nailed to the cross in his hands and feet, but none of his bones were broken.

5. With this kind of detail of prophecy only the willfully blind reject the inspiration of the Bible.

C. A little known fact is that Pilate, the Roman ruler, did not want Jesus Crucified for he knew that Jesus was innocent.
   1. But Pilate the "politician", wishing to please his "constituents", allowed Jesus Crucified at the political gun point of the people.
   2. Here is how the story goes in Matthew 27:15-26 - as we studied two weeks ago!
      a. "Now at the Passover feast the Pilate was accustomed to release for the multitude any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they were holding at that time a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas (a murderer). When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus?' They all said, 'Let Him be crucified!' Pilate said, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they kept shouting all the more, saying, 'Let Him be crucified!' 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.' And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us and on our children! Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he delivered Him to be crucified."
   3. What is interesting is that a few months later, these same people who said to Pilate:
      a. "His blood be on us and on our children" changed their tune in Acts 5:27-28
      b. "The high priest said, 'We gave you (Apostles) strict orders not to continue teaching about Jesus, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with Jesus, and intend to bring Jesus' blood upon us.'"
         (1) But the facts of history are undeniable and Stephen charged the same leaders in Acts 7:52-53
             (a) "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."
         (2) This is the message of the Bible.
IV. The Crucifixion Of Sinners to become A Christian:
   A. Like Christ, His followers must also be crucified, first in obedience to the Gospel call -
      1. Not literally, but symbolically when they are immersed in water at baptism. Romans 6:2-6 "all
         of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?
      2. Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was
         raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."
      3. Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take
         up his cross, and follow Me." (Matthew 16:24)
   B. And next in live generally - Paul said in Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it
      is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith
      in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."
      1. And finally, in Galatians 5:24 "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh
         with its passions and desires."
   C. This may be the reason so many who know the evidence and understand the sacrifices a child of God
      must make - determine never to surrender the knee to Christ - in unbelief and stubbornness of heart
      the shout out Crucify Him - not me!

V. In Conclusion - Christians Who Crucify Christ
   A. But Christians can be the most guilty of anyone on earth of crucifying Jesus.
      1. "For in the case of Christians who have once been enlightened and then have fallen away ... they
         again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame." (Hebrews 6:4-6)
      2. Again, "For if after Christians have escaped the defilement's of the world by the knowledge of
         the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last
         state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known
         the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment
         delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its
         own vomit,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'" (2 Peter 2:20-22)
   B. I believe that I speak for all here today - that we could never see ourselves in the mob that shouted
      Crucify Him, nor stand at the base of the Cross and wag our heads at His dying body - but brethren -
      "I’m the one" - song lyrics says it all - “every time I sin on earth - “I’m the one”.
      1. We need to pause for a moment and see what our sin has done, if it does not bother us - to reject
         Him, deny Him and re-crucify Him then truly our conscience has become dead.
      2. I plead with you open your heart - soften your conscience and submit to the Will of God.
         a. Obey the Gospel call - so that you will not stand with the condemned who actually shouted
            Crucify Him.