## The Lord's Wonderful hands.

I expect that most, if not all, have heard of Corrie ten Boom of 'The Hiding Place' fame. Corrie was one of the relatively few people who died on the same date as the date on which they were born. In her case she died on her 91st birthday.

It was in September 1944 that Corrie and her sister, Betsy, were imprisoned in the notorious 'Ravensbrück' concentration camp for helping to harbour hundreds of Jewish refugees in the Netherlands during the Second World War. It had been seven months before, at the end of February 1944, that the Nazis had raided the ten Boom house,<sup>2</sup> which resulted in the arrest of the entire ten Boom family.

Betsy died in that camp, but Corrie survived, going on to fulfil a long Christian ministry, to write many, many books, and even to be knighted.

And I am going to commence by quoting a short extract from one of her many books: 'He Is More Than Able'.'

When encouraging us to put everything we have in the Lord's hands, she wrote, 'The first time a cowboy heard the story of Jesus riding on an unbroken colt, he exclaimed, "What wonderful hands He must have had!"

No doubt the cowboy of whom she wrote would have been accustomed to controlling unsaddled horses with his hands. Although the cowboy was clearly wrong in his understanding of how it was that the Lord Jesus was able to ride an unbroken colt, I do agree with his exclamation, and, indeed, I am going to adopt it as my 'text' ... 'What wonderful hands He must have had!'

And that brings us to our Bible reading, which is taken from the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 6:

He (Jesus) went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him.

And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that even such mighty works are done by His hands? Is this not the carpenter?'

It may seem hard to believe, but there are well over 30 references to Jesus' hands in the gospels.<sup>4</sup> And we have read just one of those references, from Mark 6 – the words of His astonished fellow townspeople, concerning the 'mighty works' which had been 'done' (had been 'performed') 'by His hands'.<sup>5</sup>

And, in his gospel, Mark draws attention to the healing power of Jesus' hands no less than seven times.

In chapter 1, we read that Jesus took Simon's mother-in-law by the hand and dispelled her fever,<sup>6</sup> and, separately, that, moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand and touched a leper.<sup>7</sup>

In chapter 5, He took the daughter of Jairus *by the hand* and raised her to life.<sup>8</sup> In our chapter, He '*laid His hands*', we read, 'upon a few sick folk, and healed them'.<sup>9</sup>

In chapter 7, 'they brought to Him', we are told, 'one that was deaf, and had a speech impediment; and they begged Him to *lay His hand* on him ... and He put His fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue'.<sup>10</sup>

In chapter 8, He took a 'blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village ... and laid His hands on him'.11

And, in chapter 9, He took 'by the hand' the seemingly-dead, once demon-possessed boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, and lifted him up.12

And yet to the men in the synagogue of Nazareth the Lord Jesus was just 'the carpenter'. As Justin Martyr wrote in the middle of the second century, 'He was deemed a carpenter, for He was in the habit of working as a carpenter when among men, making ploughs and yokes'. <sup>13</sup> And, the men in the synagogue naturally associated His hands only with such 'works'. In their

eyes, He was more likely to *construct* a synagogue lectern than He ever was *to read from one!* Hence their astonishment at both His wisdom, and His works of power.

You will be glad to know that I do not plan to go through the 34 gospel references to our Lord's hands. Indeed, I intend to develop our subject in an entirely different way.

Back in Exodus 4, at the Bush, the Lord asked Moses, 'What is that in your hand?' Moses had just had the temerity to flatly contradict the Lord Himself.

For, when the Lord had told him, 'Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, The Lord God of your fathers ... appeared unto me, saying, I ... will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to ... a land flowing with milk and honey ... they will listen to your voice', 15 Moses had then 'answered and said, But, behold, they will not ... listen to my voice!' 16 And then, when the Lord asked him, 'What is that in your hand?' he replied, 'A rod (or 'staff')'. 17

In one sense, I want to turn the question which the Lord posed to Moses back on Himself, and to ask *Him*, "What is that in *your* hand, Lord?" That is, I want us to imagine that we are able to ask the Saviour to remind us of *some* of the things which, according to the gospels, He once held in His 'wonderful hands'.

In the space available, we can hope to do no more than take a fleeting look at each of these, but, even so, we shall find that each item has something rather 'wonderful' to tell us about the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus.

We ask then, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And first He says:

# 1. "A whip of cords".

We are in John chapter 2, verse 15 of which reads, 'When He had made *a whip of cords*, He drove them all out of the temple'. The word translated 'whip' comes from a Latin word<sup>18</sup> describing a lash of cords.

With this whip He drove *out* the sheep, and drove *out* the oxen. And He then poured *out* the money of the money-changers, and ordered those that sold doves to take them *out*. Out... out...out! 'Do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise (an emporium, a place of trade)', He ordered.

In John chapter 14, He used the same expression again, 'My Father's house'. But there He referred to something infinitely grander and more glorious than Herod's temple. And there in chapter 14, praise God, His operative word was, not 'out', but 'in' – 'In my Father's house are many abiding places'.

And, if in *chapter 2* the house was *emptied* of all that defiled and was unfitting, in *chapter 14* the house is to be *filled* – filled with saved sinners. For one day, as promised, He will 'come again' to escort all true believers to His Father's heavenly house to be forever with Himself.

'Then His disciples remembered', John added, 'that it was written, "The zeal for your house has consumed me (has devoured me, has eaten me up)"; 19 a quotation from one of the Old Testament 'messianic psalms'. 20

So I have the very highest authority for saying that the whip of cords in His hand tells us something of *His consuming zeal* for God and His house.

Again we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And this time the Lord says:

# 2. "A book of scripture".

We move now into Luke's gospel and chapter 4, verse 16 of which reads, 'As His custom was, He went into the synagogue (of Nazareth, that is) on the sabbath day, and stood up to read'.

I take it that this was by prior arrangement with the Chief Ruler of the Synagogue, as was the normal synagogue procedure.<sup>21</sup> In all likelihood, the previous miraculous sign at Cana, just four miles distant, was now well known (just as, clearly from verse 23, were some of His

previous miraculous works at Capernaum), which may well explain the Synagogue Ruler's readiness to let our Lord read and speak.

'And He was handed', we read, 'the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable (the favourable) year of the Lord"<sup>22</sup> – which section struck, of course, the key-note to the whole of His public ministry.<sup>23</sup>

And there (sounding the trumpet-blast announcement of God's gracious 'Year of Jubilee' in a world of misery) He broke off, stopping in mid-sentence. For, in full, the prophet Isaiah had written, 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God'<sup>24</sup> ... but 'that 'day of vengeance' had not yet come.

'Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed (were riveted) on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". And all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words ('at the words of grace') which proceeded out of His mouth'<sup>25</sup> – consistent with what is said of the Messiah in Psalm 45, 'grace is poured upon your lips'.<sup>26</sup> Grace, that is, was poured 'on' His lips, and words of grace therefore proceeded 'out of' His mouth.

So the book of scripture in His hand tells us of <u>His gracious mission</u> He had come to accomplish at His first advent.

Again we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And this time the Lord says:

## 3. "A loaf of bread".

Now we move back into John's gospel, this time into chapter 6: 'Jesus said, "Make the people sit down". Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and, when He had given thanks, He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down'.<sup>27</sup>

We read of loaves of bread in our Lord's hands on five separate occasions, not only here on the occasion of the feeding of the 5,000 men plus the women and children, but:

- (i) at His later feeding 4,000 men plus the women and children,<sup>28</sup>
- (ii) at the institution of the remembrance supper, at which, 'taking a loaf, He gave thanks, broke it and gave to them, saying, this is my body',<sup>29</sup>
- (iii) in the house of Cleopas and his companion at Emmaus, where, 'as He sat at the table with them, He took a loaf, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them', 30 and then
- (iv) on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, when, having invited His seven disciples, 'come and dine', He then 'came and took the bread and gave it to them'.<sup>31</sup>

When I read this account of His feeding the crowd of 5,000 men, I am reminded of an incident in 2 Kings 4, where 'a man from Ba'al-shalisha' came to the prophet Elisha and brought him, we read, 'twenty *loaves of barley bread*, and newly ripened grain in his sack. And he (Elisha) said, "Give it to the people that they may eat". But his servant said, "What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?" He said again, "Give it to the people that they may eat: for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat, and shall *have some left over*".

In the case of our Lord's feeding of the 5,000 men, John records the words of his own fellow-disciple Andrew, 'There is a lad here, who has five *barley loaves*, and two fish: but what are they among so many?'<sup>33</sup> 'And', John continues, 'Jesus said, Make the men sit down ... when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain" ... they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which were *left over* by them who had eaten'.<sup>34</sup>

On this occasion, it was *not twenty barley loaves to feed one hundred men, but five barley loaves to feed 5,000 men* (together with many women and children<sup>35</sup>), *and, again, with much 'left over'*.

So I can safely say that the loaf of bread in His hand tells us of His abundant provision.

Again we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And He says:

## 4. "A towel".

And now we move on from John chapter 6 into chapter 13, where we read that Jesus 'rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself'.<sup>36</sup> These words stand in marked and deliberate contrast with what was said in the verse immediately before: 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given *all things* into His hands'.<sup>37</sup> But now *in His hands*, John wants us to see, *He has not only 'all things'*, *but He has 'a towel'*.

The word translated 'towel' comes from the Latin term for a linen cloth, which, according to the Roman historian Suetonius, was the garb worn by a slave.<sup>38</sup>

Previously, John the Baptist had acknowledged himself unworthy to kneel and unloose the straps of the Lord's sandals, in all likelihood to remove them with a view to washing His feet.

In scripture, it was customary for a person to wash his or her own feet.<sup>39</sup> In New Testament days, however, the task was often performed by a slave – although to the Jews of those days, feet-washing was regarded as such a menial and demeaning task that no Jewish slave could be required to wash the feet of his Jewish master. That duty was reserved for gentile slaves.<sup>40</sup>

In chapter 5 of his first epistle, Peter exhorted his readers, 'Be clothed with humility',<sup>41</sup> where the word translated 'clothed' carries the idea of 'tying on securely', and, it is claimed, can refer to the apron worn by slaves.<sup>42</sup> Thank you, Peter, we'll follow your suggestion, 'Be clothed with *humility'*. And so the towel in the Lord's hand tells us of His *lowliness* – that which, in the light of His own statement at the time, 'I have given you an example',<sup>43</sup> we can safely call <u>His</u> exemplary lowliness.

Again we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And now He says:

## 5. "A reed".

We turn back now to Matthew's gospel, chapter 27 and verse 29, 'When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him'. According to verse 27, the soldiers of the governor had summoned the whole garrison into the Praetorium, where they proceeded to have their moment of fun and sport at His expense. There they (i) arrayed Him in a scarlet/purple robe and a crown of thorns, (ii) thrust a reed into His hand to serve as a mock sceptre, and (iii) bowed the knee before Him.

I suspect that the reed the soldiers used was anything but slight and flimsy. From the use of the word in the Greek Old Testament, it seems likely that this was a thick and reasonably sturdy reed, such as a man might attempt to use as a walking cane and staff.

The word is used, for example, in 2 Kings 18, where we read that the king of Assyria (Sennacherib) sent his Rabshakeh to Jerusalem. When he arrived, the Rabshakeh declared, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this in which you trust? Behold, you trust upon the *staff* of this bruised *reed*, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it'.<sup>44</sup> And, indeed, the reed was an eminently suitable picture of Egypt, because the Nile, the river of Egypt, has always been rich in sturdy reeds.

It may well have been with some such thick reed that Pilate's men repeatedly beat<sup>45</sup> our Lord's head, on which they had earlier placed the crown of thorns.<sup>46</sup> And twice in the context Matthew tells us they 'mocked' Him.<sup>47</sup>

The reed in His hand therefore speaks volumes to us of *His deep humiliation*.

Yet again we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And this time He says:

## 6. "A nail".

Speaking of the Lord Jesus, John tells us in his gospel that, 'bearing His cross, He went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him'.48

Back in the summer of 1968, in a tomb in the north east of Jerusalem, archaeologists discovered an ossuary (a box containing the bones of the dead). The ossuary had an Aramaic inscription on it (the name 'Yohanan the son of Ha'galgol') and contained the bones of a

young man in his twenties.<sup>49</sup> The ossuary and its contents have been dated by scholars to sometime in the first century A.D.<sup>50</sup>

And this particular set of bones was distinguished by the fact that the right heel bone was pierced by an iron nail some four to five inches in length. Yohanan *had been crucified*.<sup>51</sup>

I have no way of knowing whether my Lord's hands and feet were nailed to His cross with four to five inch nails, or whether the nails were longer. What I do know is that He said prophetically some 1,000 years before the event, 'They pierced my hands and my feet'.<sup>52</sup>

As the carpenter of Nazareth, Jesus would have been no stranger to driving nails. Many times He must have pounded nails hard into wood. And I cannot help wondering, when He had then taken the mallet in His hand, if He had thought of the day when Roman soldiers would take a mallet to smash nails into some splintered wooden beam – through that very hand!

Because men gave Him, not only for His back *the cross to bear*, and for His head *the thorns to wear*, but for His hands *the nails to tear*.

And well might we remind ourselves of the poignant words of the second verse of Katherine Kelly's hymn 'Give me a sight, O Saviour', where, having posed the question ...

Was it the nails, O Saviour, That bound Thee to the tree?

... she answered it herself ...

Nay, 'twas thine everlasting love -Thy love for me, for me.

Yes indeed, the nail in our Saviour's hand assures us of *His boundless love for us*.

And again we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And this time He says:

# 7. "A scar".

We return now to the closing section of John 20.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting that, when Luke and John record separately how, following His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples, both tell us, in the very same words, that He 'showed them His hands'.<sup>54</sup>

The disciples told Thomas (who had been absent at time), "We have seen the Lord". But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe".<sup>55</sup>

'And after eight days', we read, 'His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came and said ... to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands". 56

We read in 1 Samuel 17 how, following David's spectacular (quite literally, 'stunning'!) victory over the Philistine champion, Goliath,<sup>57</sup> he (David) emerged unscathed from the valley of Elah.

The chapter more or less concludes by telling us, 'So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone', and that he (David) 'ran and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of its sheath ... and killed him, and cut off his head with it ... And, as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner (King Saul's uncle, and commander-in-chief of Saul's army) took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand'.58

In the young man's hands that day was the evidence (indeed, the proof) that the great battle was over, and that the people need cower in fear no more. This fight would never need to be fought again.

And, in a somewhat similar way, the wound (the nail-print) in our Lord's hand declares loudly (in the language of Revelation 5) that He, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed'<sup>59</sup> ('has overcome', 'has conquered'<sup>60</sup>). The scar proclaims that, in His death,<sup>61</sup> He has roundly and once-for-all defeated sin, Satan and death for all of His people! Truly, *in His hand was the proof* that the battle was over ... that His people need cower in fear of sin, Satan and death no more ... that this fight would never need to be fought again.

And so the scar in my Lord's hand tells me of *His mighty victory*.

I don't pretend for one moment that this list is in any way exhaustive, and certainly there are other instances which I *could* mention,<sup>62</sup> but I shall confine myself to one final example – one which I simply dare not leave out.

And so, once more we ask, 'Lord, what is that in your hand?' And He says:

# 8. "One of my sheep".

In chapter 10 of John's gospel, our Lord described Himself twice as 'the Good Shepherd',<sup>63</sup> following which we read His breath-taking promise, 'My sheep ... follow me: and I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them *out of my hand*'.<sup>64</sup>

Earlier in that same passage, our Lord had contrasted the true shepherd of the sheep with a hireling who, when he 'sees the wolf coming', our Lord said, ' ... leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf *snatches* them and scatters them. The hireling flees', Jesus explained, 'because he is a hireling, and does not care about the sheep' ( literally, 'and it does not matter to him about the sheep').<sup>65</sup>

No, it *didn't matter* to the hireling about the sheep; it only mattered to the hireling about himself. And to *save* his own life, he would willingly let the sheep be *snatched* away.

But, as our Lord made clear, it certainly mattered to Him, the Good Shepherd, about His sheep (His people), and to save them He willingly laid down His own life.<sup>66</sup> And He promised that no-one shall ever *snatch* them out of His hand!

And not only so, but, as He made clear, every last one of His flock is held safely in an all-powerful divine double grip; 'no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand'.<sup>67</sup> Now I tell you, *that* is some security!

So the sheep in His hand tells me of His care and His keeping power.

Today the Saviour says to each of us, as once He said to Thomas, 'see my hands'.

And I want us to remember at least a few of the things we have discovered in those wonderful hands:

A whip of cords:
A book of scripture:
proclaiming His gracious mission.
A loaf of bread:
A towel:
A reed:
A nail:
A scar:
One of His sheep:
proclaiming His consuming zeal.
proclaiming His gracious mission.
proclaiming His abundant provision.
proclaiming His exemplary lowliness.
proclaiming His deep humiliation.
proclaiming His mighty victory.
proclaiming His keeping power.

And I rejoice to know that, by His grace, one day I shall see, not only His beautiful face, 68 but those 'wonderful hands'!

## **Notes**

- 1 15 April 1892 and 15 April 1983.
- <sup>2</sup> 28 February 1944. A Dutch informant had informed the Nazis of the ten Booms' activities.
- <sup>3</sup> Page 94.
- <sup>4</sup> Thirty-four to be precise.
- <sup>5</sup> Mark 6. 1-3.
- 6 Mark 1. 31.
- <sup>7</sup> Mark 1. 41.
- 8 Mark 5. 41.
- 9 Mark 6. 5.
- 10 Mark 7. 32-33.
- 11 Mark 8, 23: cf. v. 25.
- <sup>12</sup> Mark 9. 27.
- <sup>13</sup> 'Dialogue with Trypho', chapter 88; probably written about 150 AD. See ... <u>http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html</u> and ... <u>http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/175.html</u>.
- <sup>14</sup> Exod. 4. 2.
- 15 Exod. 3, 16-18.
- <sup>16</sup> Exod. 4. 1.
- 17 Exod. 4. 2.
- 18 'Flagellum'.
- 19 John 2, 17,
- <sup>20</sup> Psa. 69. 9. More of Psalm 69 is quoted in the New Testament than any other psalm; no less than six passages from the psalm are said there to have been fulfilled.
- <sup>21</sup> 'The chief ruler of the Synagogue ... the virtual rule of the Synagogue devolved upon him. He would have the superintendence of Divine service, and, as this was not conducted by regular officials, he would in each case determine who were to be called up to read from the Law and the Prophets', Alfred Edersheim, '*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*', Book 3, Chapter 10.
- <sup>22</sup> Luke 4. 17-19.
- <sup>23</sup> 'It struck the key-note to the whole of His Galilean ministry', Alfred Edersheim, *op. cit.*, Book 3, Chapter 11.
- <sup>24</sup> Isa. 61. 2.
- 25 Luke 4. 20-22.
- <sup>26</sup> Psa. 45. 2.
- <sup>27</sup> John 6. 10-11.
- 28 Matt. 15. 36.
- <sup>29</sup> Luke 22. 19.
- 30 Luke 24. 30.

- 31 John 21. 13.
- 32 2 Kings 4. 42-44.
- 33 John 6. 9.
- 34 John 6. 10-13.
- 35 Matt. 14. 21.
- 36 John 13, 4,
- <sup>37</sup> John 13. 3; compare, 'The Father loves the Son, and has *given all things into His hand*', John 3. 35.
- <sup>38</sup> The word translated 'towel' is the Greek *lention*; this is a transliteration of the Latin *linteum*. 'The *linteum* is worn by a slave, Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars; Caligula, 26. 2', C. K. Barrett, 'The Gospel according to St John', on John 13. 4. See also R. Routledge, 'Passover and Last Supper', Tyndale Bulletin 53. 2 (2002) 203-221, footnote 32.
- <sup>39</sup> Luke 7, 44.
- <sup>40</sup> 'The menial nature of footwashing in Jewish eyes is seen in its inclusion among works which Jewish slaves should not be required to do; the task was reserved for Gentile slaves and for wives and children', G. R. Beasley-Murray, 'John' (the Word Biblical Commentary), on John 13. 4-5.
- <sup>41</sup> 1 Pet. 5. 5.
- <sup>42</sup> The word translated 'clothed' is derived 'from κόμβος, a roll, band, or girth: a knot or roll of cloth, made in tying or tucking up any part of the dress. The kindred word  $\dot{\epsilon}γκόμβωμα$ , from which the verb is directly formed, means a slave's apron, under which the loose garments were girt up', M R Vincent, 'Word Studies', on 1 Pet. 5. 5. Cf. A T Robertson's 'Word Pictures' and G K Blenkin, '1 Peter' (Cambridge Greek Testament), also on 1 Pet. 5. 5.
- 43 John 13, 15,
- <sup>44</sup> 2 Kings 18. 17-21. Interestingly the same picture is painted of Egypt in Ezek. 29. 6-7, "they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel".
- <sup>45</sup> The imperfect tense ( $\xi \tau \nu \pi \tau \sigma v$ ) points to the continued and repeated act of striking.
- <sup>46</sup> Matt. 27. 29-30.
- <sup>47</sup> Matt. 27. 29, 31.
- <sup>48</sup> John 19. 16-18. 'An instrument of the tortures which were inflicted only on slaves and strangers, became on object of horror in the eyes of a Roman citizen; and the ideas of guilt, of pain, and of ignominy, were closely united with the idea of the cross', Edward Gibbon, 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire', chapter 20, part 2. 1.

It seems that it was the Persians who invented this mode of execution. Herodotus tells us that King Darius (mentioned in the Bible) had 3,000 Babylonians crucified in about 519 B.C. (Herodotus 4:43. 2, 7; 6:30. 1; and 7:194. 1).

The feelings of the Roman world for crucifixion were well expressed in the words of Cicero, the great statesman of the first century BC. Crucifixion was, he said, 'the most cruel and hideous form of punishment ... the most extreme penalty ... to bind a Roman citizen is an outrage; to scourge him a crime; it almost amounts to parricide to put him to death; how then shall I describe crucifixion? No adequate word can be found ... the very word "cross" should be foreign not only to the body of a Roman citizen, but to his thoughts, his eyes, his ears', Cicero, 'Verrem', 5.66 and 'Defence of Rabirius', chapter 16.

The Roman jurist Julius Paulus listed crucifixion as the worst of all capital punishments, listing it ahead of death by burning, death by beheading, or death by being thrown to the wild beasts, and the Jewish historian Josephus, who witnessed many crucifixions himself, called it 'the most wretched of deaths'.

See Dr. Richard P. Bucher, 'Crucifixion in the Ancient World' and Martin Hengel, 'Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross', pages 23-63.

<sup>49</sup> The discovery of a crucified man was made in the summer of 1968 by a team of archaeologists led by Vassilios Tzaferis in cave-tombs at Giv'at ha-Mivtar, north of Jerusalem. Scholars reckon that Jehohanan had died around AD 7. Olive wood fragments were found between the large nail head and the bone, which show that a wooden plaque of wood was added to make it harder for him to pull his leg free from the cross.

Despite the earlier assertion that both legs were affixed by one nail, the nail is only 11.5 centimeters in length; thus making it anatomically impossible to affix two feet with one nail. In the case of Jehohanan, it is clear that his hands had been tied – and not nailed – to his cross. But we know that it was often the practice of the Romans to nail those crucified.

For example, during the revolt of the Jews against the Romans in 66-73 AD Josephus mentions that in the fall of Jerusalem (70 AD) 'the soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses', 'Wars of the Jews', Book 5, Chapter 11, Paragraph 1.

That no other example of actual nails have been found can easily be explained. For nails of a victim crucified were among some of the most powerful medical amulets in antiquity and thus removed from the victim following their death. This is attested to by the Mishnaic passage (Shabbath 6.10) which states that both Jews and Amorites (colloquium for non-Jews) may carry a nail from a crucifixion, a tooth from a jackal and an egg from a locust as a means of healing. For the Jews, this was even, according to some Rabbis, permitted on Shabbath when Jews were normally forbidden to carry objects. As this Mishnaic passage mentions both Jews and non-Jews carrying these objects one can infer the power of these amulets and their scarcity in the archaeological record. Not only do Jewish sources attest to the power of these objects but Plinus in Natural History (Book 28, Chapter 4) wrote that a fragment of a nail from a crucifixion wrapped in wool and hung from the neck cures fever while a wood chip from the cross is a talisman for the modern intelligent woman. [Hence no archaeological evidence of nails, except in the case of Jehohanan where, after the nail penetrated the tree or the upright, it may have struck a knot in the wood and bent, thereby making it difficult to remove from the heel when the victim was taken from the cross.]

See Joe Zias at <a href="http://www.mercaba.org/FICHAS/upsa/crucifixion.htm">http://www.mercaba.org/FICHAS/upsa/crucifixion.htm</a>, <a href="http://www.thesacredpage.com/2012/04/crucifixion-history-archaeology-and-why.html">http://www.thesacredpage.com/2012/04/crucifixion-history-archaeology-and-why.html</a>, and <a href="http://hope-of-israel.org/crosschr.htm">http://hope-of-israel.org/crosschr.htm</a>.

- <sup>50</sup> 'The bones ... give clear evidence of first century AD Roman crucifixion', John J. Davis, 'Rethinking the crucified man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar'.
- <sup>51</sup> It was often (although not invariably) the practice of the Romans to nail those who were crucified. 'The soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, *nailed* those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses', Flavius Josephus, '*The Wars of the Jews*', Book 5, Chapter 11, Paragraph 1.

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<sup>52</sup> Psa. 22. 16.
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<sup>53</sup> John 20, 20-27.

<sup>54</sup> Luke 24. 40; John 20. 20.

<sup>55</sup> John 20. 24-25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> John 20. 26-27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> 1 Sam. 17. 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> 1 Sam. 17. 50-57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> KJV – as in 1 Sam. 17. 50.

<sup>60</sup> Rev. 5. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Rev. 5. 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> For example: 'a *scroll*', Rev. 5. 6-7 (proclaiming *His universal authority*), and 'a *sceptre*', Heb. 1. 8 (proclaiming *His royal exaltation*).

<sup>63</sup> John 10. 11, 14.

<sup>64</sup> John 10. 27-28.

<sup>65</sup> John 10. 12-13.

<sup>66</sup> John 10. 11, 15.

- 67 John 10. 28-29.
- <sup>68</sup> Rev. 22. 4.