

On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ

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▪ Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion his wrists were nailed to the patibulum, and after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post, (stipes) his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus' death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.

(*JAMA* 1986; 255:1455-1463)

Talmud, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, although the authenticity of portions of the latter is problematic.²⁶

The Shroud of Turin is considered by many to represent the actual burial cloth of Jesus,²² and several publications concerning the medical aspects of his death draw conclusions from this assumption.^{5,11} The Shroud of Turin and recent archaeological findings provide valuable information concerning Roman crucifixion prac-



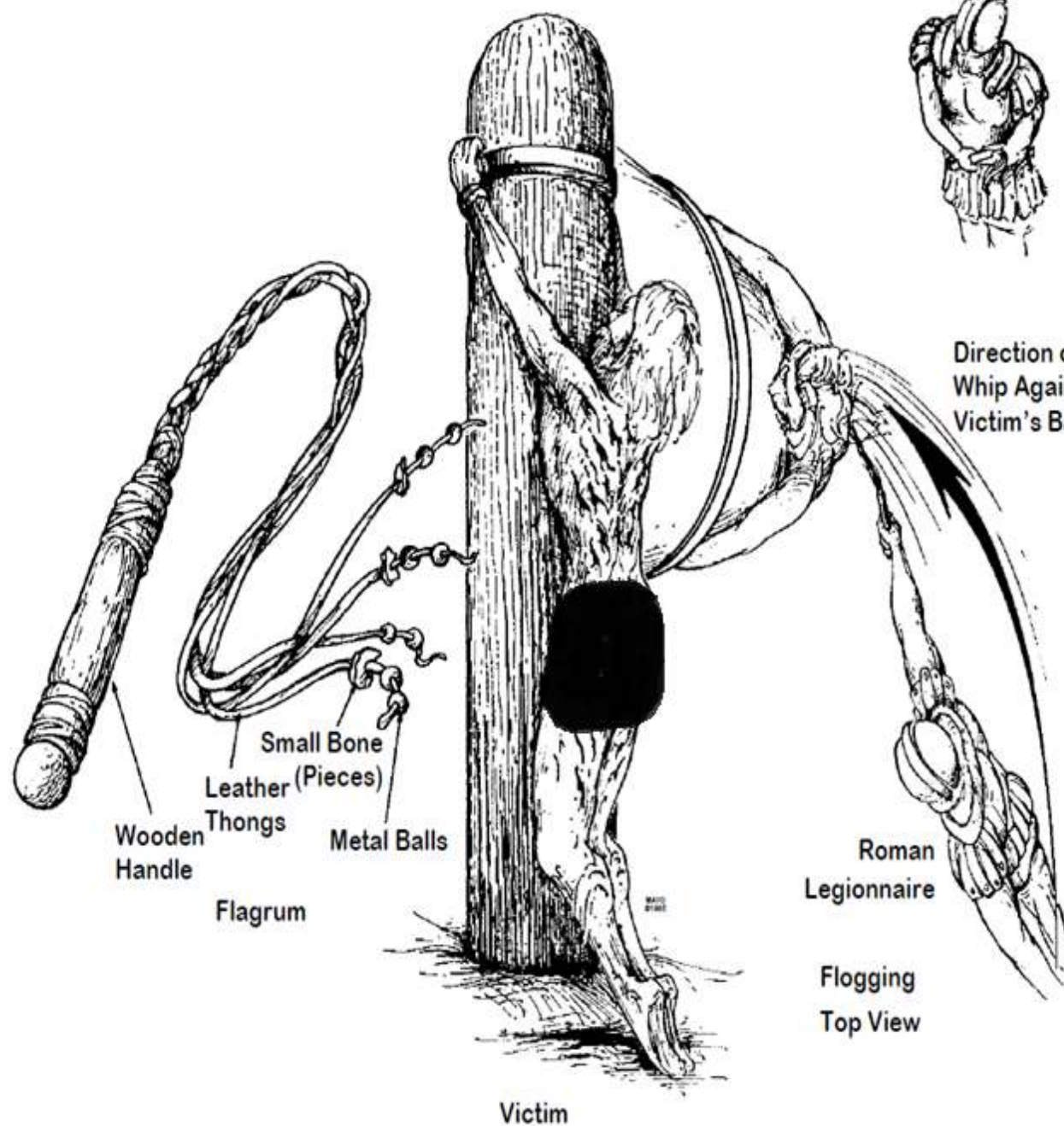
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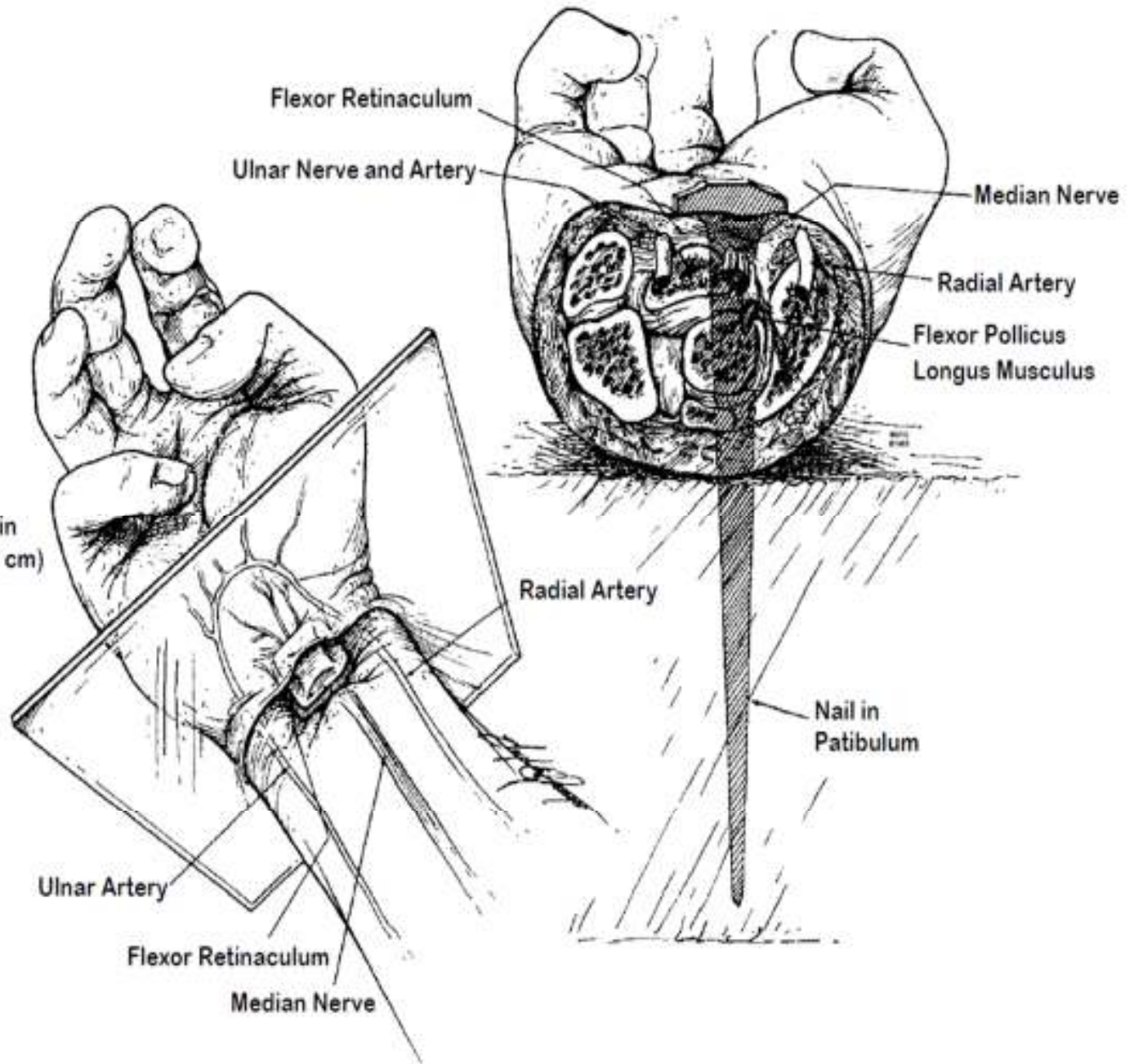
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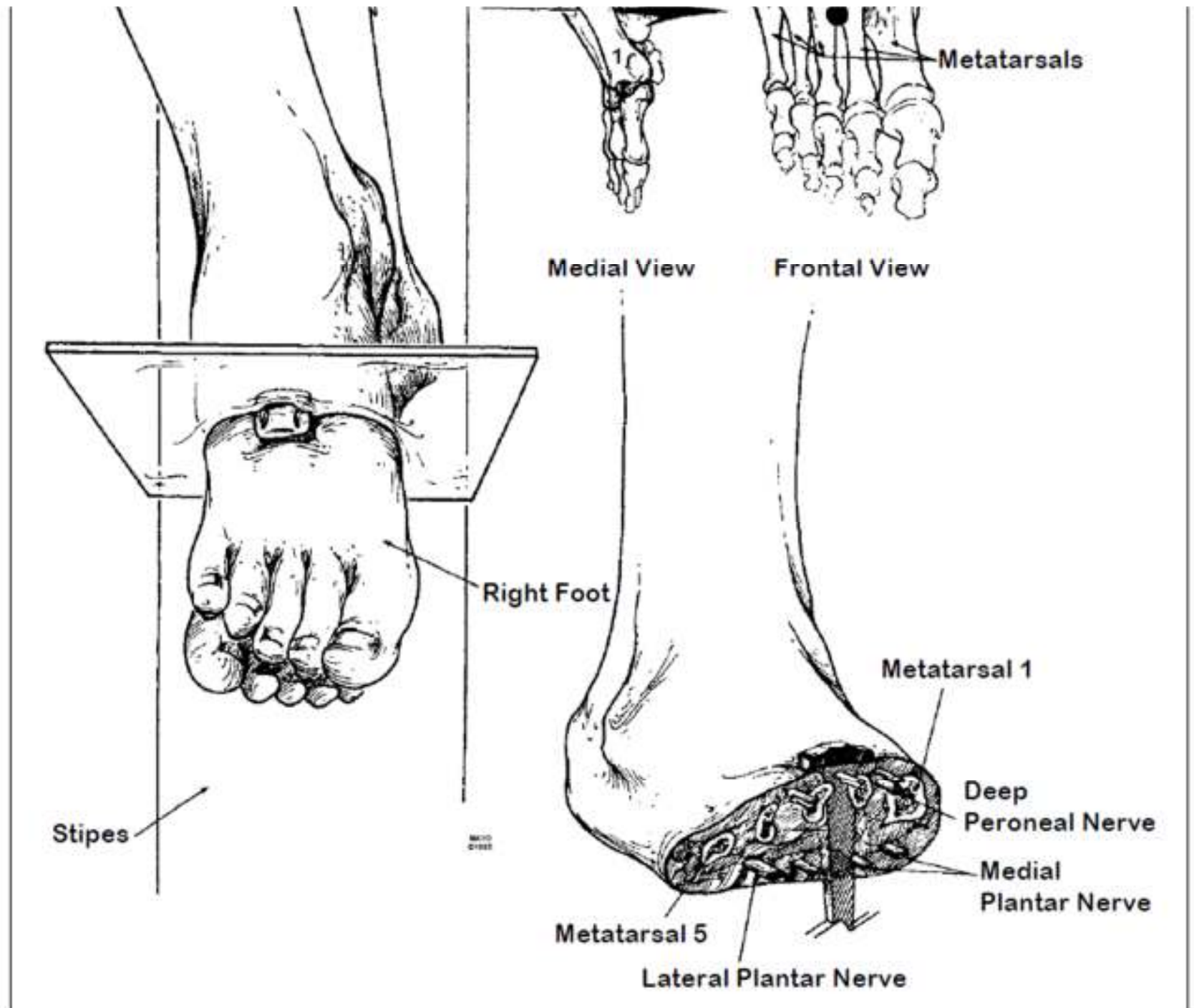


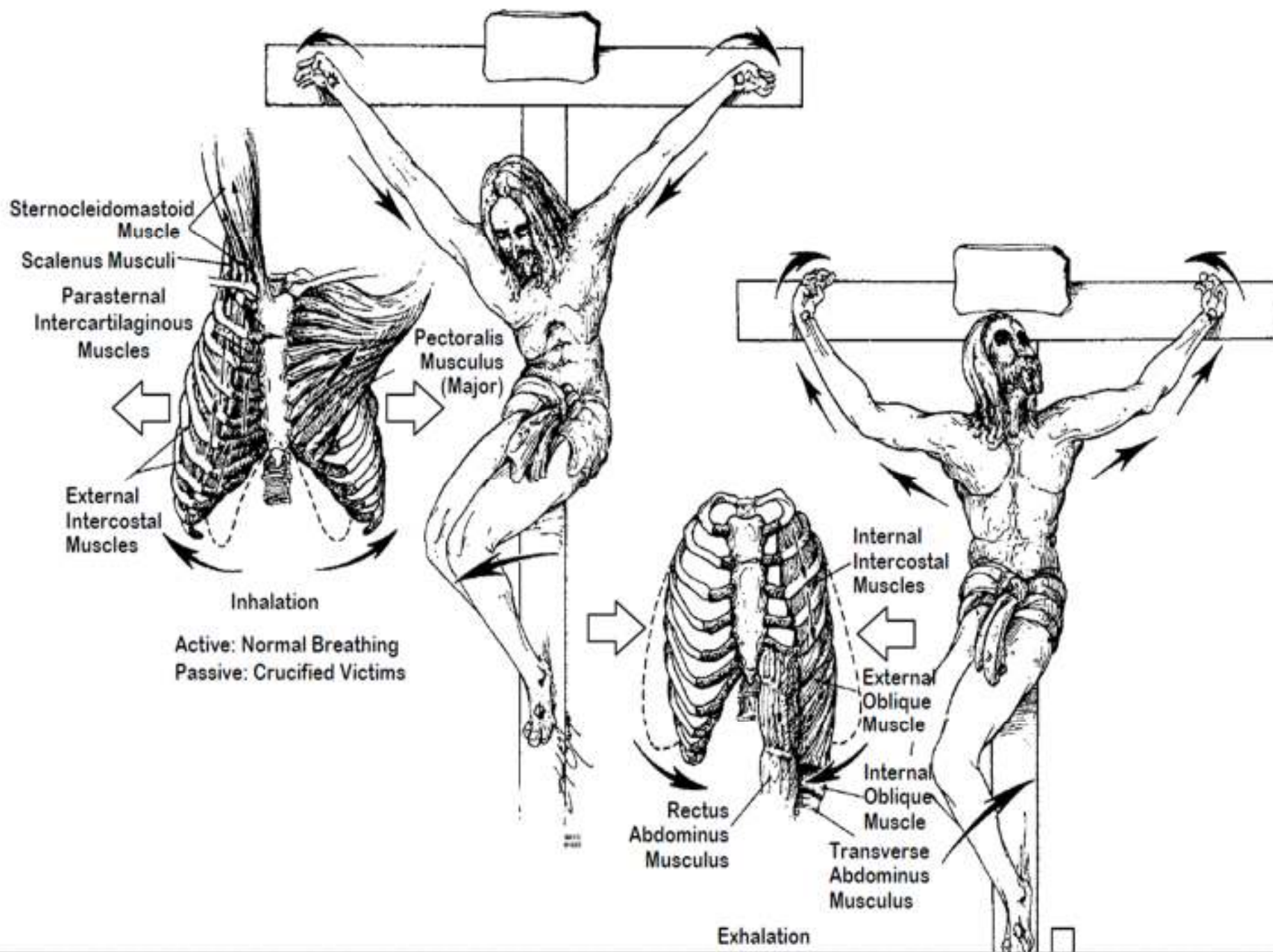
Direction of
Whip Against
Victim's Back

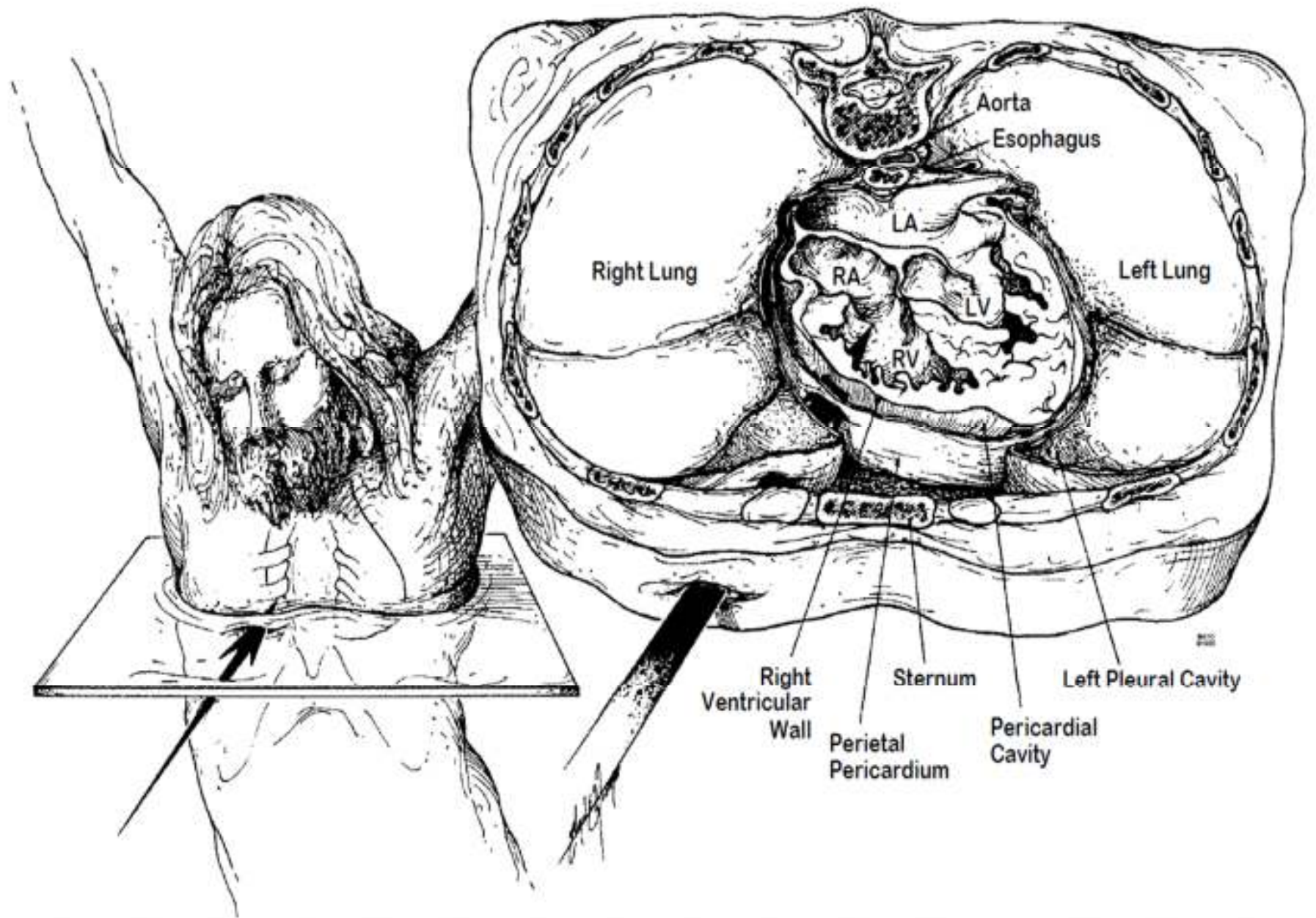
















Matthew 27:34 (KJV)

³⁴ They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.



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“Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge...(he) was dead when taken down from the cross.”



