

In my previous post I tried to show why Craig's argument that Roman governors on (widely!) isolated occasions showed clemency to prisoners (those not sentenced to death) has no relevance to the question of whether Jesus, condemned to crucifixion for treason against the Roman state, would have been allowed a decent burial, contrary to Roman practice. The "clemency" argument - even in the sources that Craig himself cites, only seems to show that in cases that were completely unlike that of Jesus himself, Roman governors could on rare occasions be merciful and/or bribed.

Craig goes on to say that this clemency was extended to the burial of executed criminals. Now in theory, this should be relevant to the question of whether Pilate showed mercy on Jesus by allowing his body to be buried on the day of his execution. But when you actually look at the evidence, once again it is not relevant - or rather, as in the other cases, it actually supports the view that is opposite to the one Craig wants to argue.

Craig claims "that Roman justice not only allowed for the executed to be buried, but it even encouraged it in some instances." That sounds promising for his own, traditional, view (so when I first read this, I was holding my breath! What did I miss when doing my research?!?). But then comes the "evidence" that he cites. It is drawn from the summary of Roman law known as the *Digesta*. Craig doesn't tell his readers that this is the compilation of legal opinions made under the emperor Justinian in the sixth century CE - that is, five hundred years (!) after the death of Jesus. But it may not matter: the Digest is citing earlier rulings (in this particular case, a third century author who claims to be quoting a first century source - again Craig doesn't tell us this somewhat complicated history of transmission). And so there's a good chance that in fact this ruling did apply in the first century. Here's what the ruling says, as Craig quotes it:

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