How do we know that Jesus was hung on a cross and not a stake or a tree? Does it really matter how he was crucified?

I must admit this is an intriguing question for me since I am not exactly sure why the question is being asked? But I will attempt to answer the questions hopefully to the person’s satisfaction. I will start with the second question first. I am not sure it is important how the crucifixion happened as a matter of faith. It is more important to believe that Jesus was crucified.

How do we know that Jesus was hung on a cross as to a stake or a tree is rather simply to answer: that is how the Romans did it. We know both from historical writing and archeological evidence what the manner of Roman crucifixion was. The Romans were not the first or only people to use this form of punishment. It was widely used, and various methods were used as crucifixion was concerned. The Romans wanted the maximum sense of suffering to occur and that is why they used the form they did. The real historical question that has been brought up was Jesus actually nailed to the cross. The typical Roman crucifixion entailed tying a person to the cross. But, there now appears to be archeological evidence that seems to support the idea that there were times the Romans would nail a person to the cross.

As Christians we look to the cross as our great sign of hope, God transformed one of the cruellest and most brutal methods of killing a person into our sign of hope. It is from this method of death that comes the hope of eternal life. It is a sign to us that God’s unconditional love triumphs over all. It is from a tree that death entered the world and it is from the wood of a tree that life was restored to us. What began as the means of our destruction and separation from God become the means of our salvation and unity with God. The juxtaposition of death from a tree and new life from wood I do not think was accidental.

Christ was very clear about how he would die. And he is also very clear how we are called to follow him. We must take up our cross and follow the Lord each and every day. As we look upon the cross it is a clear sign that we at times may struggle and the cross will be at times difficult to bear. But we are not without hope for we know the cross is not the final answer. Rather, the cross leads to the tomb and the tomb leads us to eternal life. And we will never carry our cross alone. Christ, if we let him, will always carry it with us.

So, the question is not so much how but rather what we can come to understand about our lives in Christ. It is about what Christ is trying to teach us and how we are called to live our lives in him. It is about the willingness to die to self in order to rise to new life in Christ. It is about living out his example of life each every day.