



## The Case for the Cross: Fact or Fiction

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَاتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَالُوا  
وَمَا صَاحِبُوهُ إِلَّا ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَا خَلَقُوا بِهِ آيَةً لِّئَلَّا يَقُولُوا لِمَ كَذَّبْنَا  
بِهِ وَكَلَّمَهُ بِالْحَقِّ لَأَنَّا نَقُولُهُمْ قَوْلَ لِقَابِهِ إِنَّ هُوَ مُبْتَلًى  
بِئْسَ الْبَدِيعَةُ قَالُوا أَتُتْبَعُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ آلٌ لَهُمْ وَهُمْ مُضَاهَوْنَ  
آلَهُمْ خَلْقًا كَمَا كَانُوا آلَ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانُوا يَلْقَوْنَ فِيهَا قَوْمًا يَشْرُونَ  
بِئْسَ مَا يَدْعُونَ لِقَابَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمَسِيحَ... عَزَّ وَجَلَّ 14:6

Note: The words of the Quran are taken from Youssef Ali's translation and the words of the Bible are according to King James' translation.

The crucifixion of Christ has created a great deal of controversy between Muslims and Christians. The Quran and the Bible present contradictory accounts. To the Christian, the crucifixion is the supreme sacrifice. To Muslims, the crucifixion is an illusion. We will analyze the claims made in each book and look for outside sources to validate them. While seeking the truth, motivated by respect and love, let us honestly consider the facts.

### The Testimony of the Bible

**The Old Testament prophets foretold Jesus' suffering and death.** Several Old Testament writers made these prophecies in different geographical locations and different generations, hundreds of years before Christ was born, and long before the Roman crucifixion method of execution. Isaiah prophesied that He would be condemned and executed like a criminal (Isaiah 53:12) and buried with a rich man (Isaiah 53:9). David prophesied that He would die in His youth (Psalm 89:45). Daniel prophesied that He would be cut off and die (Daniel 9:26). Zechariah prophesied His hands and feet would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10). All these prophecies are precisely fulfilled in the Gospels.

**The Gospels' authors affirmed Jesus' crucifixion.** Writers of the four gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — recorded eyewitnesses account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their writings are in perfect harmony about the exact time, place, and date of the crucifixion and are recorded in Matthew 27:27–56, Mark 15:21–38, Luke 23:26–49, and John 19:16–37.

**Jesus predicted His own death.** Jesus prophesied His own crucifixion and death in Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22–23; Mark 10:45, and Luke 18:31–33.

**Jesus confirmed His own death.** The Bible portrays Jesus as the only person who never sinned (1 Peter 2:22). As such, He certainly did not lie when He said, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen..." (Revelation 1:18)

**Eyewitnesses confirmed Jesus' crucifixion and death.** The Romans crucified Jesus in a public place where many people saw Him, including a great multitude (Luke 23:27), the Apostle John (John 19:26), Mary the mother of Jesus (John 19:26), Nicodemus (John 19:35), Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joseph, and Salome the mother of Zebedee's sons (Matthew 27:56).

**Roman authorities authenticated Jesus' death.** The Romans, the legal authority in Palestine, sentenced Jesus to death after a series of religious and civil trials. They tortured and humiliated Him and then nailed Him to a cross to die. The Roman centurion and soldiers were required to validate that Jesus had died, and Pilate, the Roman governor, verified His death with the centurion before he gave Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea to be buried (Mark 15:44–45, John 19:33–34).

**Jewish authorities confirmed Jesus' death.** Because the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as their promised Messiah, they succeeded in having Him crucified by the Roman authorities. To ensure that their wishes were carried out, they witnessed His death for themselves (Matthew 27:41–43, 62–66; Mark 15:31–32; John 19:31).

**Modern medicine has proven that Jesus died.** When a Roman soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear to assure that He was dead, a combination of blood and water flowed from His side (John 19:34). This mixture is scientific proof that physical death had, indeed, occurred. In fact, modern medicine validated this claim in an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (21 March 1986).

### The Testimony of the Quran

**The Quran does not deny the crucifixion but denies that Jesus Christ was the one crucified.** This claim is based on a single verse from the Quran that says, "That they said (boastfully), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger

of Allah'; — but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them ... for of a surety they killed him not: — Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself. ... (Surah 4:157)

"وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَٰكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا" سورة 4:157-158

Due to the lack of details of this verse, Muslim scholars have different opinions and views. The verse has no reference to the people who said they killed Jesus, no reference to the person they say appeared in place of Jesus, and no reference to what happened to Jesus after this event.

• **The Quran confirms Jesus' death.** The Quran declares that Jesus died (Surah 3:55, 5:117). In one example, Jesus, Himself, says in Surah 19:33, "So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, And that day I shall be raised up to life."

"السَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أُمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا" سورة 33:4

Most Muslims interpret this verse as an event that is going to happen in the future, but this explanation is problematic because just a few verses earlier the very same phrase with the same words is used for John the Baptist (Yhna) (Surah 19:15). No Muslim would shift the death of John the Baptist to the future. It is a past event. If we apply the same reasoning, we confirm that Jesus died in the past on a Roman cross.

*Note: If God allowed another man to be crucified instead of Jesus, then God mislead and acted unjustly toward the person crucified for a crime he did not commit, toward His disciples and followers who sincerely believed Jesus died on that cross, and toward the whole world, despite of the historical evidence.*

## The Testimony of History

The unbiased records of history convey events as they happened, and history consistently supports the crucifixion as an historical event.

- **Roman Historians**
- **Cornelius Tacitus** (ca. AD 55–120), called the greatest historian of ancient Rome, wrote, "... Christ, [Christ] ... suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus ..."
- **Mara Bar-Serapion** (ca. AD 73–131), a pagan philosopher, wrote, "What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? ... Nor did the wise king die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given."

### Greek Historians

- **Celsus** (ca. AD 140), a mortal foe of Christianity, said, "Christ endured the anguish of the cross for the welfare of humanity."
- **Lucien of Samosata** (ca. AD 100) ridiculed Christians and their beliefs and said, "The Christians continue to worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine because He brought a new religion to the world."

### Jewish Historians

- **Josephus** (ca. AD 37–97), known for being objective in his historical approach, said, "At this time there was a wise man that was called Jesus ... Pilate condemned Him to be crucified and to die. **The Talmud**, a central and holy text in Judaism, states, "Jesus was crucified one day before the Passover."

**Early Christian Writings.** Early church leaders were known for accurate records due to their deep faith. **Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch** (ca. A.D. 110), wrote, "Jesus Christ ... was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heavens and on earth and those under the earth."

- **Justin Martyr** (ca. AD 150) said, "... For indeed the Lord remained upon the tree almost until evening, and they buried Him at eventide; then on the third day He rose."

### Further Testimonies

- All the prophets since Adam have died and were buried in their tombs, but the tomb of Jesus Christ continues to be empty, testifying that He died yet came back to life.
- To Jews and Romans, the cross was a symbol of shame, but to the Christians, it became a symbol of hope and faith. They proudly raise crosses on church steeples and engrave it on tombs to remind them God's love and His great sacrifice.
- In the early church, all the disciples, except John, died as martyrs. If these Christians had not been sure of Christ's crucifixion, they would not have endured suffering, even death, for the sake of their Savior.

## My Muslim friend,

Truth should reflect reality. Jesus' death on the cross is validated by factual evidence. You can choose to ignore the evidence and cling to your belief, but the fact is that Jesus Christ took our sin on Himself and died in our place. The Bible says, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through faith in what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross, you can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. [www.lifelinehere.com](http://www.lifelinehere.com)

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