

## The Cross in the Gospel and the Quran

This subject perhaps more than many others raises controversy among Muslims in general and especially among Muslim scholars. Although the Quran mentions the death of the Lord Jesus before He enters heaven, Islamic scholars disagree about the interpretation of the word “*mutawaffika*”.

The relevant passages are:

Sura 19:34, *“The peace of God was on me the day I was born and will be the day I shall die and the day I shall be raised to life.”*

Sura 3:47-48, *“And the Jews plotted, and God plotted. But of those who plot God is the best. Remember when God said, ‘O Jesus, verily I will cause you to die (mutawaffika) and will take you up, (rafi’uka) to myself and deliver you from those who believe not.’”*

Sura 4: 156-158, *“And for their (the Jews) saying, ‘Verily we have slain the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, an apostle of God’, yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness. And they who differ about him were in doubt concerning him: no sure knowledge had they about him, but followed only an opinion and they did not really slay him, but God took him up (rafi’uka) to himself. And God is mighty and wise.”*

Sura 5:117, [Jesus speaks] *“I was a witness of their actions while I stayed among them; but since thou has taken me (tawaffaitani) to thyself thou hast thyself watched them. Thou art a witness of all things.”*

Notice in these passages it is stated that the Lord Jesus **will** “die”. But once the phrase, “*God took him up*” is used, it allows Muslims to state emphatically that **the Jews did not kill him nor crucify him**. So there is a confusion of mind caused by the vague and conflicting statements in the Quran.

### The Orthodox Sunni Muslim View – Jesus did not die.

The major view of all Sunni Muslims is that Jesus did not die, but was “taken up” while He was alive by God into heaven. This belief is based on the interpretation of Sura 4:156. It is argued that God would never have permitted His “apostle” to die so shameful a death, otherwise Jesus would be cursed by God (Deut. 2:23) and this was an impossible fate for a prophet of God. Support for this view is found in Sura 3:48 where it is stated that God will “deliver” Jesus from those who do not believe – i.e. God intervened to frustrate the plans of the Jews to cause Jesus to die on the Cross.

So, in the Muslim view, what actually happened was that “*they only had his likeness*” or more exactly “*One was made to appear to them like*” Jesus – Rodwell’s translation of the Quran of “*Walakin shubbiha lahum*”. Palmer’s translation of this phrase in the Quran has, “*But a similitude was made for them*”. Yusuf Ali’s translation reads, “*But so it was made to appear to them*”.

So Yusuf Ali says, “The Quranic teaching is that Christ was not crucified nor killed by the Jews, notwithstanding certain apparent circumstances which produced the illusion in the minds of His enemies that disputations, doubts and conjectures on such matters are vain and that he (Jesus) was taken up to God.”

But from the Quranic account, there clearly was confusion about the identity of the Lord Jesus. Those sent to arrest the Lord Jesus, “*Were in doubt concerning him*” (*akhtalafu fiki lafi shakkin minhu*). This is in clear contradiction to the betrayal of the Lord Jesus by Judas – who knew the Lord Jesus extremely well – “**with a kiss**” (Lk. 22:48).

But the phrase that has provoked much speculation is, “*walakin shubbiha lahum*” (a similitude was made for them). Baidhawi laid out some options on the interpretations of this phrase:

- Jesus was really crucified
- Someone else was made to resemble Him in His features and this person died on the Cross.

Much has been said of the identity of the person mistakenly crucified in the place of Jesus. Baidhawi mentions a man called Titanus as this individual. Other names, such as Faltiamus, have been suggested.

It is stated that God changed these men into the form or appearance of Jesus. Tabari, commenting on this passage, quotes Ibn Abbas to the effect that Jesus, in Gethsemane, asked, *"Is there anyone who will offer himself in my stead? I will promise him a place in heaven."* Then one of His disciples, named Sergius, gave himself to Jesus to be transformed into His likeness and crucified instead of Him. After the crucifixion the disciples discovered one of their number missing. Then Judas hanged himself, because he realised he had been the means of the death of a fellow disciple.

In the spurious **Gospel of Barnabas** (a document from the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century) and clearly a forgery, it says that it was Judas who suffered crucifixion because of mistaken identity. God, seeing the danger to which the Lord Jesus was exposed at the approach of the soldiers, commanded Gabriel and other angels to "take Jesus out of the world". He was taken out, "by the window ...." They placed Him in the third heaven in the company of angels blessing God for evermore. [This is quoted from an Urdu book called, **The Proof of the Prophet Muhammad from the Holy Bible.**]

All this was in harmony with Sura 3:48, *"God is the best of those who plot"*. So the Orthodox Muslim view is that Jesus was not crucified but they (the soldiers) mistook another person for Him. "It was a deception by God!"

Another version is that it was Jesus Himself who was crucified and that He really died and remained dead for brief while (seven hours) after which God restored Him to life and "took him up" into heaven (*Rafa'ahu ila-l-samae*).

Many commentators agree that *"mutawaffika"* does mean *"I will cause you to die"*, but that it actually means God "took his soul" but His body stayed dead. But this contradicts Sura 4:156 that Jesus was not killed.

Sadly, much of this speculation among Muslims comes from two heretical Christian groups, the Gnostics and the Docetics in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. Mani, one of these heretics, claimed it was Simon of Cyrene who took the place of the Lord Jesus and it was Simon who was crucified. The Gnostics thought that Jesus was "an abstract phantom".

So Yusuf Ali says in his commentary on Sura 4:156 referring to **the myth** that "Jesus was taken down from the Cross dead and was buried and on the third day He rose in His body with His wounds intact and walked about and talked and ate with His disciples and was afterwards taken bodily into heaven". The myth was necessary for the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement for sins which is rejected by Islam.

Again Yusuf Ali says that Sura 3:48 and Sura 4:156 should be read together, *"It is said that the Jews neither crucified nor killed Jesus, but that another was killed in His likeness. The guilt of the Jews remained, but Jesus was eventually taken up to God."*

Many devout Muslims are not sure, on the basis of the Quran, whether Jesus really died on the Cross or not. One wrote, "The end of the life of Jesus involved as much mystery as His birth and indeed the greater part of His private life, except for His three years of ministry. It is not profitable to discuss the many doubts and conjectures among the early Christian sects and among Muslim theologians."

But this is to ignore the four Gospels – our earliest and only historical documents on the subject. Why not be guided by these? These Gospels, with one voice, state that Jesus of Nazareth was put to death on the Cross by the orders of Pontius Pilate at the instigation of the Jewish authorities. In these records there is not the slightest doubt that the Lord Jesus actually died on the Cross. But rather than face the fact, our Muslim friends prefer to speculate about what they admit is heresy.

I don't want to spend time on the Ahmadi views on this issue. According to Mirza Ghulam of Qadian, "Jesus didn't die on the Cross, but was taken down by His disciples in a swoon and healed within 40 days by a miraculous ointment called in Farsi 'marham-i-Isa' (the ointment of Jesus). Jesus then travelled east on a mission to Persia, Afghanistan and Kashmir and finally died at the age of 120 and was buried in what is now a little mosque in Khan Yar Street in Srinagar, Kashmir!

So the Ahmadi view is an example of the “swoon theory” – that Jesus merely swooned on the Cross, was taken down and was revived. Ahmadi didn’t invent this theory. It was first developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by German rationalists. Ahmadi wanted not only to deny the historicity of the Resurrection, but also to proclaim that Jesus died an ordinary death of old age.

Other Muslim commentators such as Muhammad Ali, who neither believe that Jesus died on the Cross nor that He was “*taken up alive into heaven*”, had to admit that “*mutawaffika*” means, “*I will cause you to die*”.

Clearly Muslim commentators on the Quran have a difficulty; for it is clear that Sura 3:48 appears to contradict Sura 4:156. So many devout and thoughtful Muslims are not sure, on the basis of the Quran, whether Jesus really died on the Cross or not.

But there are the Gospels, why aren’t Muslims guided by these? It is clear that the Lord Jesus died on the Cross. He was buried and He rose again on the third day and after 40 days He ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses. (Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11)

Any honest seeker of the truth about the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord Jesus must look at the records of the Gospels and these need no interpretation. There are no contradictions with regard to the Death of the Lord Jesus, His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven.

How does this Good News appear in other parts of the New Testament? In 1 Cor. 1:22-24 we read, ***“For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*** [Corinth was a Greek city with a large Jewish population.]

Again in 1 Cor. 2:1-2 we read, ***“And I, when I came to you brothers, did not come to you proclaiming the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”***

Why did the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem believe it was necessary to kill the Lord Jesus? The reason for the arrest and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is made clear to us in John’s Gospel, ***“So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our holy place (i.e. the temple) and our nation?’ But ... Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all nor do you understand it is better for you that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation should perish.’ ”*** (Jn. 11:47-50)

When they hung Jesus on the Cross, He died and was put in the tomb. The door was sealed with Pilate’s seal. The Jewish leaders rejoiced thinking they were finally saved from His teaching and His miracles and that His cruel death was enough to prevent His followers from any further activity.

But the death of the Lord Jesus wasn’t the end! On the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after the Crucifixion, Peter preached to the crowds who had come from many nations (from what is now Turkey, Egypt, parts of Libya and Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula!). Peter ended his message with, ***“Let all the house of Israel ... know for certain that God has made Him (the Lord Jesus) both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified”***. (Acts 2:36) As a result, 3000 of these Jewish people became believers in the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

If we look at the words of the apostles, we can see that from the dawn of Christianity, these amazing events were accepted by the early believers as the truth. They understood that this was very joyful Good News and that the death of the Lord Jesus saved them from the consequences of their sins. Paul summarised this in 1 Cor. 15:1-6, ***“Now I would remind you brothers, of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures and He appeared to Peter and then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time most of whom are still alive ....”***

About 500 years after Paul wrote this letter and after the Gospel had spread throughout Egypt, North Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia and then eastwards to Iran and to what is now the Indian subcontinent, as well as to Spain and much of Europe, there were still those who said to the believers in the Lord Jesus, "You are completely mistaken in your religion".

These people who didn't believe took their ideas from heretical Christians. Some were Jews who had converted to Christianity, but whose fathers believed that the Messiah could not die. John wrote in his gospel (Jn. 12:32-34) of a common misunderstanding held by the Jewish people until this day. ***" 'And I (Jesus) when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die. So the crowd (mainly made up of Jews) answered Him, 'We have heard from the Law that the Messiah remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?' "***

Historians maintain that this false teaching that Jesus couldn't be Messiah because He died, was widespread among the Jews of Arabia and even some Christians, who said that the Lord Jesus was able to transform Himself from one image or form to another and when His enemies came to arrest Him He cast His likeness on some other man and it was that man who was crucified instead of Him, but the Lord Jesus was lifted up to the God who sent Him – scorning His enemies.

The passage in the Quran about the last days of Jesus is in agreement with this story and opposed to the Biblical version. There were other heretics with similar ideas that the death of the Lord Jesus was not a historical event. But if this is so, then there is no doctrine of redemption. The heavy Cross on which the Lord Jesus was crucified was never seen by these people as the altar of our redemption where the Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world. They rejected this truth as unimportant, but which Paul proclaimed to the nations in Gal. 3: 13-14, ***"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree' (Deut. 21:23) so that in Christ Jesus the blessings of Abraham might come to the Gentiles (i.e. non-Jews) so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."***

Perhaps the strongest objection to the Cross is found in a counterfeit gospel (attributed to John but clearly not his – written by heretics). There is little doubt that Muslims inherited their aversion to the Cross from these "Christian" heretics who were scattered about Arabia – the cradle of Islam.

The prophecies about the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament. In Jn. 12:32-33, the Lord Jesus said, ***"And I when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die."***

Miracles continued through the apostles by the power He gave them. We read in Acts 19:11-12, ***"And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick and their diseases left them and evil spirits came out of them."***

So we can accept the verse in the Quran as a testimony against those who are unbelievers, ***"Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt, they have no knowledge thereof, save the pursuit of an assumption, they slew him not for certain."*** (Sura 4:156)

The Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and during 40 days He appeared many times to His disciples and then He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God in keeping with the Quranic saying, ***"Lo, I am gathering thee causing thee to ascend unto me."***

### **What are the proofs for the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus?**

There are many. Here are 9 of these proofs:

#### **Proof No. 1. The Prophecies and their Fulfilment**

There are many prophecies in the Bible that point to the atoning death of the Lord Jesus. All were literally fulfilled.

- **The Prophecy: Selling the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver**

Zech. 11:12, *"Then I said to them, 'If it seems good for you, give me my wages, but if not keep them.' ... And they weighed out my wages – 30 pieces of silver."*

This was written by the prophet Zechariah ~500 years before the time of the Lord Jesus.

**The Fulfilment** is found in Mt. 26:14-16, *"Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver Him (the Lord Jesus) over to you?' And they paid him 30 pieces of silver. From that moment he (Judas) sought an opportunity to betray Him".*

- **The Prophecy: Buying the Potter's Field with the money**

Zech. 11:13, *"Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it into the Treasury' – the lordly price at which I was paid off by them. So I took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them into the Treasury of the House of the Lord."*

**The Fulfilment** is in Mt. 27:3-8, *"Then when Judas, His betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' They said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the Treasury since it is blood money.' So they took counsel and bought with them the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. So that field has been called the 'field of blood' to this day."*

- **The Prophecy: The Mocking and the Crucifixion**

Ps. 22:16-18 – this Psalm was written by King David ~ 1000 years before the Crucifixion.

*"For dogs encompass Me, a company of evildoers encircles Me. They have pierced My hands and My feet. I can count all My bones; they stare and gloat over Me. They divide My garments among them and for My clothing they cast lots."*

**The Fulfilment** comes in Mk. 15:12-20, *"And the soldiers led Him (the Lord Jesus) away inside the Palace (of the Roman governor Pilate) and they called together the whole battalion. They clothed Him in a purple cloak and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on Him. Then they began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They were striking His head with a rod and spitting on Him and kneeling down in homage to Him. When they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the purple cloak, put His own clothes on Him and led Him out to be crucified."*

- **The Prophecy: Wounded and Beaten**

Is. 53:5, *"But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His stripes we are healed."*

Zech. 12:10, *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him".*

**The Fulfilment** comes in Lk. 22:63-65, *"The men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him as they beat Him. They blindfolded Him and kept asking Him, 'Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?' They said many other things against Him, blaspheming Him."*

Jn. 19:34, *"One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and there came out blood and water."*

- **The Prophecy: The Lord Jesus accepted this ordeal in silence.**

Is. 53:7, *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."*

**The Fulfilment** comes in 1 Pet. 2:22-24, *"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree that we might die to sin and live in righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."*

- **The Prophecy:** The Lord Jesus was beaten and spat upon.  
Is. 50:6, *"I gave My back to those who strike and My cheeks to those who pull out My beard. I hid not My face from disgrace and spitting."*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Mk 15:19, *"And they were striking His head with a rod and spitting on Him and kneeling down in homage to Him."*
- **The Prophecy:** They mocked Him.  
Ps. 22:6-7, *"But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see Me mock Me. They make mouths at Me and wag their heads"*.  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Mt. 27:39-42, *"And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.' So the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked Him saying, 'He saved others, He cannot save Himself. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross and we will believe Him.'"*
- **The Prophecy:** His apparent astonishment that God had forsaken Him  
Ps. 22:1, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me, from the words of My groaning?"*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Mt. 27:46, *"Now from the 5<sup>th</sup> hour (noon) there was darkness over all the land until the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (3 pm). And about the 9<sup>th</sup> hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'"*
- **The Prophecy:** "They gave Him sour wine to drink." (While the Lord Jesus hung on the Cross)  
Ps. 69:21, *"... For My thirst they gave Me some wine to drink."*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Jn. 19:28-30, *"After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished said, to fulfil the Scripture, 'I thirst'. A jar of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of sour wine in a hyssop branch and held it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished' and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."*
- **The Prophecy:** The soldiers divided His clothes by lot.  
Ps. 22:18, *"They divided My garments among them and for My clothing they cast lots."*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Jn. 19:23-24, *"When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier – also His tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to each other, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.'"*
- **The Prophecy:** His bones were not broken.  
Ps. 34:20, *"He keeps all His bones, not one of them is broken."*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Jn. 19:32-33, *"So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, they saw He was already dead and they did not break His legs."*
- **The Prophecy:** He was pierced by a spear.  
Zech. 12:10, *"When they look on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him."*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Jn. 19:34, *"But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water."*
- **The Prophecy:** His death was with the wicked, but it was also honoured.  
Is. 53:9, *"They made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence and there was no deceit in His mouth."*  
**The Fulfilment** comes in Mt. 27:57-60, *"When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph .... He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud"*

***and laid it in his own tomb which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.”***

These are some of the Old Testament prophecies written many hundreds of years before the death of the Lord Jesus concerning how He would be killed and their exact fulfilment in the New Testament.

**Proof No. 2. The second evidence that the Lord Jesus died on the Cross is the statements He made before the Cross about His coming death.**

Many times He told His disciples that His work of salvation necessitated His death on the Cross. The most outstanding occasion was in His farewell message on the night of His betrayal and the day before His Crucifixion. He went over the wonder of the Gospel. The following are some of His announcements about His death on the Cross to redeem humanity:

- Mt. 16:21, ***“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”***
- Mt. 17:22-23, ***“As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of man and they will kill Him and He will be raised on the third day.’ And they were greatly distressed.”***
- Mt. 26:1-2, ***“When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, ‘You know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.’ ”***
- Mk. 8:31, ***“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.”***
- Mk. 9:3, ***“... He taught His disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of man and they will kill Him and when He is killed, after three days, He will rise.’ ”***
- Mk. 10:32-34, ***“They were on the road going to Jerusalem and Jesus was walking ahead of them and they were amazed and those who followed were afraid. And taking the 12 aside, He began to tell them what was to happen to Him saying, ‘See we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him and flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise.’ ”***
- Lk. 9:32, ***“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.”***
- Jn. 3 13-15, ***“No-one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”***

**Proof No. 3. The Testimony of the Apostles to the Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus**

All who read the Acts of the Apostles and the apostles’ letters to the various churches in the Mediterranean area can see what they taught as eyewitnesses. The message they spread in many parts of the world was the message of Jesus Christ crucified for our sins and for the sins of the world. What follows is a gleaning of the words of the apostles who, after preaching this message, wrote it down for our instruction as they were guided by the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 2:22-24, ***“Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourself know, this Jesus was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge. You, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the Cross. But God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by them.”***

Peter said this to a large crowd in Jerusalem 50 days after the Crucifixion.

- Acts 2:32, ***"This Jesus, God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses."***
- Rom. 6:5-6, ***"For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."***  
This letter was written by Paul, a Roman citizen and a Jew, to the believers in the Lord Jesus in Rome in about 54 A.D.
- 1 Cor. 1:17-18, ***"For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the Gospel and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the Cross of Christ be emptied of its power."***
- 1 Cor. 2:1-2, ***"And I when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."***
- 1 Cor. 2:7-8, ***"But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."***
- 2 Cor. 13:3-4, ***"Since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me, He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God."***
- Gal. 3:13-14, ***"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree', so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."***
- Phil. 2:5-8, ***"Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a Cross."***
- Heb. 12:2, ***"Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."***
- 1 Jn. 1:7, ***"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we shall have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."***

#### **Proof No. 4. The Signs that accompanied His Death**

- Mt. 27:50-54, ***"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And the earth shook and rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. Many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep (i.e. had died) were raised and coming out of the tombs after the Resurrection, they went into the Holy City and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus (on the Cross) saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'"***

This unique phenomenon had never been seen either before the death of Jesus or since.

#### **Proof No. 5. The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus**

This wonderful event was fulfilled in keeping with the words of the Lord Jesus to the Pharisees and the scribes, ***"Destroy this temple and I will raise it up on the third day."*** (Mt. 26:61)

In fact, on this third day, the first day of the week, the greatest miracle of all time happened! The Lord of Glory rose from among the dead. Heaven itself proclaimed this wonderful event. Before dawn came, there was a great earthquake as God's angel descended from heaven and rolled away the huge stone from the door of the tomb. His appearance was as lightning and the guards, who were charged by Pilate to keep the tomb safe, shook with terror. The guards were there because in Mt. 27:62-66 we read, ***".... The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, 'We remember how***



***that impostor said, while He was alive, 'After three days I will arise'. Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day lest His disciples go and steal Him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead' and the last fraud will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.' So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard."***

But on that glorious morning of the Resurrection, a group of women came to the tomb bringing spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus. They thought this would be their last chance to show respect for the Lord Jesus. Two of them were Mary Magdalene and another Mary, the mother of James. When they arrived, ***"Behold there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow and for fear of him, the guards trembled and became as dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Don't be afraid, for I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen as He said. Come and see the place where He lay then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead and is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him.'*** So they left the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell the disciples. And Jesus met them and said, ***'Greetings!' And they took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee and there they will see Me.'*** " (Mt. 28:2-10)

Matthew continues with the story of what happened to the guards, ***"While they were going, some of the guards went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. When they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers and said, 'Tell people His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.'*** So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day." (Mt. 18:11-15)

This is a true account of what happened on the Day of Resurrection. It is a true record of what was written down by eyewitnesses and by the inspiration of God. No one who believes the Word of God dare deny it. If they do, they are accusing God and all the angels of heaven and the Lord Jesus Himself of agreeing to deceive people!

#### **Proof No. 6. The Testimony of History**

The death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross was confirmed by many early historians – both Jewish and Roman – who wrote clearly about it. Here are three examples:

- **Tacitus**, a Roman, wrote a volume of Roman History in ~105 A.D. – about 75 years after the Crucifixion. He writes as follows, ***"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind."***

The very fact that Tacitus is a reliable historian writing some 70 years after the crucifixion and that he mentions Christ and His execution under Pontius Pilate, is extremely significant and an enormous vindication of the historicity of the Crucifixion.

**Josephus**, a Jewish historian, wrote in a book called **Antiquities** (Vol. 18:5.1, 2) about Jesus Christ. It was written soon after the Jewish War against the Romans that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This is some of what he wrote:

***"Now there lived about this time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one may call him a man. For he was a doer of marvellous works, a teacher of such, that men receive what is true with pleasure***

***and many of the Jews and many also of the Greeks he won over to himself. This was the Christ (Messiah) and after that Pilate condemned him to the Cross on the indictment of the chief men among us. They who had loved him at first, did not cease to do so for he appeared on the third day to them, after his death, the divine prophets having stated these and countless other marvels about him."***

Josephus also records the fact that Pilate, the Governor in Jerusalem, communicated to the Roman Emperor Tiberius, concerning the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus. For Pilate had learned of His other marvellous deeds and how His rising again from the dead had caused many to believe in God.

- **Lucian**, a Greek satirist, wrote in 170 A.D. about the death of the Lord Jesus and about the Christians. Lucien was an Epicurean by belief. He couldn't understand the faith of Christians and their readiness to die for Christ. In his writings he ridiculed belief in the immortality of the soul and the longing for heaven. He looked on them as deceived people, clinging to uncertainties after death rather than living for the present. One of his comments on Jesus Christ in his writings is this, **"The Christians continue to worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine because he brought a new religion to the world."**

#### **Proof No. 7. The Symbol of the Cross**

This is a material proof that no one can deny. Every world religion has its distinguishing emblem such as the six-pointed star of the Jews and the crescent of the Muslims. The sign of the Cross was known from the earliest times of Christianity. Early Christian believers carved it on the graves of the dead in the catacombs in Rome and in the underground maze of tunnels just outside Rome that became a refuge for Christians where they used to meet in times of persecution by the Roman Emperor Nero.

Nero needed scapegoats to divert the charge that he was responsible for the Great Fire of Rome. So he rounded up as many Roman Christians as he could find and had them cruelly executed. Many of the Christians hid in the catacombs just south of Rome. These can be visited today and there are many symbols of the Cross from these very early days of Christianity.

#### **Proof No. 8. The Testimony of Time and the continuing worldwide celebration of Jesus' Death and Resurrection**

The Lord's Supper (communion) that reminded the first disciples of Jesus Death and Resurrection is a living testimony over the centuries that the Lord Jesus died and rose again. This rite that the Lord Jesus instituted on the night He was betrayed and which He commanded His disciples to observe is a continuous reminder of His atoning death and a strong proof that is impossible to contradict.

The apostles committed this rite to the new churches from the beginning. Paul said, ***"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks, broke it and said, 'This is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way, He took the cup after supper saying, 'This is the new covenant in My blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of Me. Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.'"***

#### **Proof No. 9. The Testimony of the Jewish Talmud**

The Talmud is a Holy Book in Jewish eyes. It has been collected in huge volumes that anyone interested can see. In a copy published in 1943 in Amsterdam, Holland (when under Nazi occupation) you can read on page 42 this sentence, ***"Jesus was crucified one day before the Passover. We warned him for 40 days that He would be killed because He was a magician and planned to deceive Israel with His delusions. Whoever wished to do so was asked to defend Him and when none did, He was crucified on the eve of the Passover. Does anyone dare to defend this? Was he not a stirrer up of evil? It is said in the prophets to a person such as this, 'You shall not yield to him or listen to him nor shall your eye pity him nor shall you spare him. But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death.'"*** (Deut. 13:8-9)

## So why was the Lord Jesus crucified?

This question is often asked, especially in these days. There is a clear answer in the Christian Creed of Faith. **"It was for us humans and for our salvation that He came down from heaven and was born of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary. He became a man and was crucified for us in the days of Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven."**

### Some proofs of the necessity of Christ's atoning death on the Cross

#### ➤ We need to be saved.

There is no doubt that all people need salvation, because sin is found in every human heart.

**"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** (Rom. 3:23)

Is. 53:6, **"All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."**

1 Jn. 1:8-10, **"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."**

In the heart of every person is the awareness of past sins. This isn't enough to remove past sins. There must be a more effective way to obtain forgiveness. There must be atonement for sin.

The need for atonement is brought about by three things:

- ✓ the universality of sin (1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 14:3; Eccl. 7:20; Mk. 10:18; Rom. 3:23)
- ✓ the seriousness of sin
- ✓ our inability as human beings to deal with sin

The seriousness of sin is seen in passages that show God's aversion to it.

- Hab. 1:13, **"You are of purer eyes than to look on evil and You can't look on wrong."**
- Sin separates us from God (Is. 59:2; Prov. 15:29)
- The Lord Jesus said of one sin – blaspheming against the Holy Spirit – that it will never be forgiven. (Mk. 3:29)
- For an unrepentant sinner there awaits only, **"A fearful prospect of judgement and a fury of fire that will consume all adversaries."** (Heb. 10:27)
- We can't deal with this situation. We can't keep sin hidden. (Num. 32:23)
- We can't cleanse ourselves. (Prov. 20:9)
- No deeds of the Law will enable us to stand before God justified. (Rom. 3:20 and Gal. 2:16)
- If we have to depend on ourselves we will never be saved.

There must be atonement for our sins, otherwise how can we explain the existence of sacrifice from the beginning of time and widespread sacrifice among most of the religions of the world. Is it not an understanding of the concept of atonement meeting the needs in the heart of a sinner?

### The Proof of Reason

We all believe that God is holy and mankind is sinful. Sin is an insult to the name of God and it is destructive to all men and women for we are created in some way in His likeness. So now we deserve the judgement of God. God can't be just unless He punishes the sinner. Our repentance is a return to the place of obedience, but it can't bring the justification we seek for there is nothing of atonement in repentance. The honour and justice and holiness of God can't be satisfied merely by our repentance.

#### ➤ The Atonement meets the requirements of the Law.

God's Law can't renounce its right to judge. The Law says, **"The wages of sin is death"**. (Rom. 6:23)

It demands the punishment of the offender. A law that lets the offender off is not a just law.

A public prosecutor can't ignore the demands of the law that the offender be punished or he will be discredited as a dishonest upholder of divine justice.

Our hearts should be filled with praise and thanks that Jesus Christ offered this atonement for man and, as a result, everyone who accepts Him as Saviour and Lord obtains, in His name, forgiveness of their sins. The blessing for all humanity is that this atonement is inclusive and no one can say that Jesus Christ did not die for him or her.

How wonderful are the words of Is. 53:12, ***“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors.”***

Heb. 5:7-8 says, ***“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered and being made perfect, He became the eternal source of salvation to all who obey Him.”***

➤ **The Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is the atonement that meets our moral need.**

It is true that every person has a moral nature and a conscience and is able to appreciate the heights of true justice and holiness. If he is dissatisfied with his sin and finds no atonement, he is troubled in spirit and his moral sense is disturbed. Despite his downfall into sin, man hasn't had his conscience destroyed. This moral power remains and can distinguish right from wrong deciding either to reward or punish. We can say that this power is enough of the voice of God, who created it, and is absolutely fitted to respond to His Laws given on Mount Sinai – the Ten Commandments. This power, the conscience, important as it is, can't save a man from judgement. It can influence a man's leanings towards sin, but it can't justify him. It believes the Law is good, but the Law can't justify us. The only thing the Law can do, as Paul said, is to lead us to Christ. (Rom. 2:4) So the voice of conscience or a sense of sin demands a righteous mediator who will atone for our sin. But despite the importance of this truth, most people try to solve the problem of conscience by doing works of righteousness and hoping that good works are comparable to the great mercy of God.

➤ **Proof that the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is God's plan for the atonement of our sin**

If there had been no reason for atonement, then God wouldn't have planned it. The Lord Jesus said, ***“.... The Son of Man (Jesus) came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.”*** (Mt. 20:28) Again Jesus said, ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave his Only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”*** (Jn. 3:16)

Paul wrote, ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law to redeem those who were under the Law so we might receive adoption as sons.”*** (Gal. 4:4)

These verses show that God loves mankind with a wonderful love and is rich in mercy. This love was incarnate in Jesus who showed it by the redemption He completed on the Cross so that all may know that God is not only **holy** and **just**, but is also **love**.

This redemption awakens a sinner's conscience. This amazing love is the bond linking us as sinners to the Cross. Without it God could not prove His love. So Jesus said, ***“I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”*** (Jn. 12:32)

Today we live in a time of many voices calling us this way or that, but we are a huge cross-cultural “family” and we long for others to join us. All voices that leave out the death of the Lord Jesus on the Cross and His Resurrection on the third day are empty. The great mistake of our generation is the same as that of the Greeks and the Romans and the first century Jews in their thoughts about the Cross. They saw it as foolishness, as weakness, as insignificant and as a stumbling block. In their mistaken estimation, they forgot to raise the cry of help or to say, ***“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (Jn. 1:9) They forgot the word of wisdom that says, ***“Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people”.*** (Prov. 14:34)