

Jesus, son of Mary (part 4 of 5): Did Jesus Really Die?

Description: This article outlines the Muslim belief concerning Jesus and the crucifixion. It also repudiates the notion of a need of 'a sacrifice' to pay for the original sin on behalf of mankind.

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The idea of Jesus dying on the cross is central to the Christian belief. It represents the conviction that Jesus died for the sins of mankind. The crucifixion of Jesus is a vital doctrine in Christianity; however Muslims reject it completely. Before describing what Muslims believe about Jesus' crucifixion, it may be useful to understand the Islamic reaction to the notion of original sin.

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree in paradise, they were not tempted by a serpent. It was Satan who deceived and cajoled them, whereupon they exercised their free will and made an error in judgement. Eve does not bear the burden of this mistake alone. Together, Adam and Eve realised their disobedience, felt remorse and begged for God's forgiveness. God, in his infinite mercy and wisdom, forgave them. Islam has no concept of original sin; each person bears responsibility for his own deeds.

"And no bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden". (Quran 35:18)

There is no need for God, a son of God, or even a Prophet of God to sacrifice himself for mankind's sins in order to buy forgiveness. Islam refuses this view entirely. The foundation of Islam rests on knowing with certainty that nothing should be worshipped but God alone. Forgiveness emanates from the One True God; so, when a person seeks forgiveness, he must turn to God submissively with true remorse and beg forgiveness, promising not to repeat the sin. Then and only then will sins be forgiven.

In the light of Islam's understanding of original sin and forgiveness, we can see that Islam teaches that Jesus **did not** come to atone for the sins of mankind; rather, his purpose was to reaffirm the message of the Prophets before him.

".. None has the right to be worshipped but God, the One and the Only True God..." (Quran 3:62)

Muslims do not believe in the crucifixion of Jesus, nor do they believe that he died.

The Crucifixion

Jesus' message was rejected by most of the Israelites as well as the Roman authorities. Those who believed formed a small band of followers around him, known as the disciples. The Israelites plotted and conspired against Jesus and formulated a plan to

have him assassinated. He was to be executed in public, in a particularly gruesome manner, well known in the Roman Empire: crucifixion.

Crucifixion was considered a shameful way to die, and "citizens" of the Roman Empire were exempt from this punishment. It was designed to not only prolong the agony of death, but to mutilate the body. The Israelites planned this humiliating death for their Messiah - Jesus, the messenger of God. God in his infinite mercy prevented this abominable event by putting the resemblance of Jesus on somebody else and elevating Jesus alive, body and soul, to heaven. The Quran is silent about the exact details of just who this person was, but we know and believe with certainty that it was not Prophet Jesus.

Muslims believe that the Quran and the authentic narrations of Prophet Muhammad contain all the knowledge mankind needs in order to worship and live according to God's commandments. Therefore, if small details are not explained, it is because God in His infinite wisdom has judged these details to be of no benefit to us. The Quran explains, in God's own words, the conspiracy against Jesus and His plan to outwit the Israelites and raise Jesus to heaven.

"And they plotted to kill Jesus and God planned too. And God is the Best of the planners." (Quran 3:54)

"And because of their boasting, "We killed Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God." But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but the resemblance of Jesus was put over another man, and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge; they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely, they killed him not. But God raised him (Jesus) up unto Himself. And God is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise." (Quran 4:157-158)

Jesus Did Not Die

The Israelites and the Roman authorities were not able to harm Jesus. God says clearly that He took Jesus up to Himself and cleared him of the false statements made in Jesus' name.

"O Jesus! I will take you and raise you to Myself and clear you of the forged statement that Jesus is God's son." (Quran 3:55)

In the previous verse, when God said He "*will take*" Jesus, he uses the word *mutawaffeeaka*. Without a clear understanding of the richness of the Arabic language, and knowledge of the levels of meaning in many words, it may be possible to misunderstand God's meaning. In the Arabic language today the word *mutawaffeeaka* is sometimes used to denote death, or even sleep. In this verse of Quran, however, the original meaning is used and the comprehensiveness of the word denotes that God raised Jesus to himself, completely. Thus, he was alive at his ascension, body and soul, without any injury or defect.

Muslims believe Jesus is not dead, and that he will return to this world in the last days before the Day of Judgement. Prophet Mohammad said to his companions:

"How will you be when the son of Mary, Jesus descends amongst you and he will judge people by the Law of the Quran and not by the law of Gospel." (*Saheeh Al-Bukhari*)

God reminds us in the Quran that the Day of Judgement is a Day that we cannot avoid and cautions us that the descent of Jesus is a sign of its nearness.

"And he, Jesus, son of Mary shall be a known sign for the Hour. Therefore have no doubt concerning it. And follow Me! This is the Straight Path." (Quran 43:61)

Therefore, the Islamic belief about Jesus' crucifixion and death is clear. There was a plot to crucify Jesus but it did not succeed; Jesus did not die, but ascended to heaven. In the last days leading up to the Day of Judgement, Jesus will return to this world and continue his message.

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