

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)

JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS

Central to the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ is His death for our sins. A theology of atonement is a biblical-theological explanation of why Jesus, as God’s Son, had to die ... and what He achieved in His death for us as our Savior.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus form the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Jesus prophesied that the religious leaders of His day would crucify Him. At the same time, He also predicted He would rise from the dead on the third day. The fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead proved His ability to give us new life in God.

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES AFFIRMING THE DEATH OF CHRIST:

- Matthew 27:57-60
- John 19:32-34
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
- Ephesians 1:20
- 1 Thessalonians 4:14
- 2 Timothy 2:8
- 1 Peter 2:24
- 2 John 1:7
- Mark 15:37-39
- Acts 2:22-23
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
- Philippians 2:8
- 2 Thessalonians 2:16
- Titus 2:13-14
- 2 Peter 1:13-14
- Revelation 1:18, 2:8, 5:12
- Luke 23:55
- Romans 5:6
- Galatians 2:20-21
- Colossians 1:21-22
- 1 Timothy 2:5-6
- Hebrews 2:9, 9:27-28
- 1 John 3:16

The cross, symbolizing Christ’s saving death by crucifixion, has been a sacred sign and symbol for Christians from the beginning. The crucifixion and death of Jesus as a real event in history, is at the heart of the Christian Faith.

THE WORLD REMAINS FULL OF SKEPTICS

But there are some who deny that Christ died on the cross. Although all four Gospels testify to the Crucifixion, some skeptics chalk up the narratives—or even Christ’s existence—to pagan mythology.

Many Muslims also reject the crucifixion event, a denial rooted in the Qur’an: “That they said (in boast), “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, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.” – Sura 4:157 (Yusuf Ali)

Despite these dissenting claims, the evidence is one-sided in favor of a real, historical crucifixion and death of Jesus. Here are several reasons why.

1. Early sources confirm the crucifixion of Jesus

The Quran was written in the seventh century, almost 600 years after the crucifixion of Christ. The Gospels, in contrast, were written 35 to 65 years after the events they describe. Paul's epistles were written even earlier. His first letter to the Corinthians, written around A.D. 55, contains an early Christian creed that begins:

- *“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.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-7).

Scholars date this creed, which represents an early oral tradition of the Christian Church, to within 6 years after Christ's death. Some have argued that it may have been written months after Christ's death and resurrection. Although this creed does not explicitly mention crucifixion, earlier in the same epistle Paul mentions *“Christ crucified”* on multiple occasions (1 Cor. 1:23, 2:2), confirming the sort of death Jesus died.

2. Multiple ancient sources from Christians and non-Christians

Early canonical and non-canonical Christian sources testify to Jesus's crucifixion, and we can also confirm that early non-Christian sources confirm our case. In the first century, Roman historian **Tacitus** and Jewish historian **Josephus** confirm more than just Christ's crucifixion: they note Pilate's association with the execution. Tacitus, referring to the crucifixion as the “extreme penalty”, writes in *The Annals*:

“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” (15.44).

While noting that there are multiple Christian and non-Christian sources corroborating Christ's crucifixion, it is important also to note the great diversity of genres that mention this event: ancient biography, historiography, creed, epistle, and hymn. ***It would be absurd to indifferently pass over the broad impact of Jesus' death in the ancient world.***

The rejection of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is historically untenable. Thus all non-Christians who are willing to face the fact are left with a jarring conundrum. They must face the questions: How in the world, in light of their Messiah's brutal execution, did the small group of common Jewish men and women known as “Christians” ever come to believe that Christ was God? How on earth did Christianity ever get off the ground? ***Only one answer comes close—and it is the same answer that Christians have given for two thousand years: Christ has died, Christ is risen.***

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS' DEATH

The death and resurrection of Christ are the most significant events in human history. It's no surprise that there would be plenty of Old Testament prophecies pointing to this remarkable event. Here are just a few of the prophecies made and fulfilled:

<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
1. Christ will be our Passover Lamb:	Exodus 12:21-27	1 Corinthians 5:7
2. None of the Christ's bones broken	Exodus 12:46	John 19:31–36
3. The Messiah's blood for atonement	Leviticus 17:11	Matthew 26:28
4. Jesus will be lifted up	Numbers 21:9	John 3:14–18
5. The Messiah would be forsaken	Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46
6. The Messiah would be scorned	Psalms 22:8	Matthew 27:42–43
7. The Messiah's suffering thirst	Psalms 22:15	John 19:28
8. Piercing Christ's hands and feet	Psalms 22:16	John 19:36–37
9. Cast lots for Jesus's clothing	Psalms 22:18	John 19:23–24
10. "Into your hands I commit my Spirit"	Psalms 31:5	Luke 23:46
11. The Messiah would be betrayed	Psalms 41:9	John 13:18
12. Betrayed for 30pcs. of silver	Zechariah 11:12–13	Matthew 27:6–10
13. Messiah given vinegar and gall	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34
14. Messiah mocked and abused	Isaiah 50:3–6	Matthew 27:27–31
15. Messiah despised and rejected	Isaiah 53:3	Luke 4:28–29

“He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” -- Isaiah 53:3-5

TO BE CONTINUED ...