WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED?

The Bible, the Qur’an, and History

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Was Jesus crucified? This is a question that Christians and Muslims often discuss. Christians are taught from the Bible and history that Jesus was crucified and killed on a Roman cross around the year 33A.D. His death on the cross is a central part of the Christian faith. Muslims, however, are taught that Jesus only appeared to be crucified and killed. Muslim leaders give a variety of explanations as to what actually happened to Jesus, and these can be categorized into four main types: no one was crucified; someone else was crucified in Jesus’ place; Jesus was crucified; we cannot know what happened on the cross.

Therefore, since there are these different perspectives between Christians and Muslims, and between Muslims themselves, we will need to understand each perspective, examine the evidence for it, and then make a decision as to which perspective is best. This is what we will do in this booklet. First, we will consider which explanation of the crucifixion in the Qur’an makes the best sense. Then, we will consider the evidence from the Bible; then the evidence from history outside of the Bible. After this we will be able to make an informed decision and answer the question, was Jesus crucified?

This booklet has the following chapters:

- The Qur’an and the Crucifixion
- The Bible and the Crucifixion
- History and the Crucifixion

Each chapter ends with a FAQ section.

If you are a Christian, and discuss the crucifixion with a Muslim friend, you should not assume you know what they believe. Instead, it would help if you asked them what they believe happened to Jesus. You may like to read this booklet with them and discuss the ideas in it.

If you are a Muslim, please read this booklet and work out for yourself which explanation of the Qur’an makes the best sense. Then consider the evidence from the Bible and history. If you want a Bible to check the references for yourself just ask your Christian friend or look online. You may like to read this booklet with them.
THE CRUCIFIXION IN THE QUR’AN

What does the Qur’an say about the crucifixion of Jesus? Muslim leaders and scholars give a variety of answers to this question. In this chapter we will consider these answers. Then we will read the verses ourselves and evaluate which answer makes the most sense.

The Islamic Explanations of the Crucifixion

Explanation 1. No one was crucified. It was a vision.

In this explanation, there was no historical crucifixion. People saw an illusion or communal vision. Therefore, Jesus appeared to be crucified to those who saw the vision, but this was not reality.

Explanation 2. No one was crucified. It is a myth.

In this explanation, there was no historical crucifixion event. Ijaz Ahmad suggests that the whole crucifixion story is a myth that developed over time. It appeared to happen because people said it happened, but it is just a myth.

Explanation 3. Someone was substituted for Jesus.

The substitute theory is that there was a real crucifixion, and it appeared to be Jesus, but it was in fact someone else. Many classical Islamic scholars hold this view. The idea of a substitute does not come from the Qur’an, or from an explanation given by Muhammad, but from other teaching that interprets the Qur’an. Al-Tabari records eleven such explanations which differ widely in detail. Some say the substitute was Judas, or a volunteer disciple, or the Romans mistakenly crucified Barabbas or Simon of Cyrene.

Explanation 4. We do not know what happened.

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This view says we cannot know any more than what the verses in the Qur’an say, and the verses only say that the Jewish leaders did not crucify or kill Jesus, even though it appeared they did. What exactly happened to Jesus we do not know. This view is held by the significant 20th century commentators Abul A’la Maududi and Sayyid Qutb.5

The Qur’an explicitly states that the Jews did not succeed in putting Jesus to death and that Allah raised him to Himself, but it is silent about the nature and details of the matter and does neither say explicitly whether Allah raised him body and soul together from the earth to some place in heaven, nor that he died like other mortals and only his soul was raised to heaven. Therefore, on the basis of the Qur’an neither aspect can be definitely denied or affirmed.6

Explanation 5. Jesus was crucified by the Romans, not the Jewish Leaders.

The Qur’an says that the Jewish leaders did not crucify or kill Jesus; it never says “Jesus was not crucified or killed.” This observation has led some to suggest that the Qur’an is not denying the historical crucifixion of Jesus, but denying that it was the Jewish leaders who did it. The Romans crucified Jesus; it only appeared to be the Jewish leaders.7

Explanation 6. Jesus’ body was crucified, but his soul was taken without death.

This explanation says that Jesus’ soul left his body without him dying and only his body was crucified, so he only appeared to die.8 This idea is based on a teaching in the Qur’an that says God takes our soul not only at death but also when we are asleep, without death.

God takes the souls at the time of their death; and in their sleep those that have not died. (Qur’an 39:42, Jones)

Therefore, Jesus’ soul was taken, without death, even though it appeared he

5 Sayyid Qutb, In the Shade of the Qur’an, Surah 4, p. 318
https://tafsirzilal.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/an-nisa-eng.pdf
8 Jesus’ death according to the Quran, accessed March 7, 2018, quran-islam.org/main_topics/quran/new_information/jesusand039s_death_(P1261).html
died.

Explanation 7. Refuting the Jewish Talmud

This explanation says the Qur’an is refuting the death of Jesus as it is presented in the Jewish Talmud. The Talmud says that Jesus was stoned and then crucified. The Qur’an is said to be correcting this by saying he was not stoned and then crucified this way. Thus the Qur’an is rejecting the Jewish account in the Talmud not the Christian account in the Bible.

Explanation 8. Jesus was crucified but survived.

The Ahmadiya sect of Islam believe that Jesus was crucified, he fainted and appeared dead, but survived. Shabir Ally suggests this explanation too. Therefore, the crucifixion only appeared to be successful at killing him.

Ahmed Deedat refused to say what he believed happened on the cross. However, when he taught the Bible he said it taught that Jesus was crucified but survived.

Explanation 9. Jesus was crucified, and the Qur’an is describing him as a martyr.

This explanation is that the Qur’an is denying the death of Jesus in the same way it denies the death of any martyr. This is based on the Qur’an’s teaching that martyrs only appear to be dead (Q2:154, 3:169) and have been taken up to Allah (3:158). Therefore, the Qur’an is describing the unseen realities of the crucifixion.

Conclusion: It is surprising to see how diverse the explanations are, and how many of them involve Jesus being crucified. If you are a Muslim, which

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12 Ahmed Deedat, Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction? Durban, RSA: IPIC, no date, p. 88.

13 Ahmed Deedat, pp. 31, 36, 42, 45, 68-69.

Islamic explanation do you believe?

**Understanding the Qur’an Correctly**

We have now surveyed the various explanations Muslim leaders give for the crucifixion and it is time to read the Qur’an ourselves. But how do we interpret the Qur’an properly? Islamic scholars tell us that the first method of interpreting the Qur’an is to let the Qur’an explain itself.

The Qur’an is considered to be a unified whole with a unity of purpose. This means that difficult sections or verses of the Qur’an are clarified in another part of the text. ... The explanation of one verse by another is called interpretation of the Qur’an by the Qur’an, and is considered by many exegetes to be the best and most authoritative form of interpretation. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) says:

> The best method in [*tafsir*] is that the Qur’an be interpreted by the Qur’an. Where the Qur’an sums up [a point], the same point is elaborated in another place. What is briefly mentioned in one place is explained in detail in another place.

And this what the Qur’an claims for itself.

> [We] have sent down to you the Scripture [the Qur’an] as an explanation of everything. (Qur’an 16.89, Jones)

Therefore, we have to start by letting the Qur’an explain itself. After this we may consult the Hadith for an explanation. In the case of the crucifixion, there is no hadith from Muhammad explaining it, and there is no hadith from his companions in the collections of Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Al-Tirmizi, Al-Nasai, Ibn Maja. For this reason, it is all the more necessary to

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15 *Tafsir* is the work of interpreting the Qur’an.
17 The Hadith are the collected sayings and actions of Muhammad and his companions.
18 While there is no record of Muhammad speaking directly about the crucifixion there is this intriguing hadith: Narrated 'Abdullah: As if I saw the Prophet talking about one of the prophets whose nation had beaten him and caused him to bleed, while he was cleaning the blood off his face and saying, "O Allah! Forgive my nation, for they have no knowledge." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*: vol. 4, bk. 56, no. 683). This corresponds to the words of Jesus on the cross in Luke 23:34.
allow the Qur’an to explain itself.

**Reading the Qur’an Ourselves**

The crucifixion, death, and taking of Jesus are described in Q4:157-158. His being taken by God is described in Q3:55 and 5:117; and his death and resurrection are described in Q19:33-34. If we want to let the Qur’an explain itself we will need to consider these verses. The longest description is 4:157-158, so we will start here.

They [the Jewish leaders] said, “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God”; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ about this are full of doubts, with no knowledge, but only assumption to follow, for of certainty they killed him not. Rather, God raised him to himself. (Qur’an 4:157-158)

You will notice that these verses do not say “Jesus was not crucified or killed”, instead, they say that the Jewish leaders did not crucify or kill him, even though it appeared they did. What does this mean? At the start of this chapter we read various explanations. We will now go through these verses section by section and see how the rest of the Qur’an explains these ideas, and see which of the explanations makes the most sense. Here is the first section.

They said, “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God”; but they killed him not, nor crucified him. (Qur’an 4:157a)

What does it mean to boast of killing someone and then be told you did not kill them? How does the rest Qur’an understand this idea? The Qur’an has a similar idea in the following verse.

You did not kill them. God killed them. (Qur’ans, 8:17, Jones)

This verse is speaking to the jihadists/mujahadeen who were boasting of killing Muhammad’s enemies. They are told that they did not kill them. There is no doubt that at the battle of Badr the jihadists did kill people, but the Qur’an interprets it differently and says they did not kill them. This is similar to how the Qur’an speaks about the crucifixion: the Jewish leaders are boasting of having killed Jesus, but the Qur’an says they did not.

To understand this further we must understand the Islamic concept of life and
death. In the Qur’an, God is the only one who truly gives and takes life.

No soul may die except by God’s permission, according to a fixed record. (Qur’an 3:145, Jones)

It is We who give life and cause death and to Us is the journeying. (Qur’an 50:43, Jones)

Therefore, according to the Qur’an you cannot boast of giving or taking life, only God does that. The Qur’an is not denying the historical crucifixion or the deaths at the battle of Badr, but interpreting them in the light of the fact that only God gives and takes life.

The next section is the following.

*but so it was made to appear to them (Qur’an 4:157b)*

What does it mean that someone only appears to die? How does the rest of the Qur’an understand this idea? These verses answer this for us.

Do not say of those who are killed in the way of God, “dead”. No, They are living, but you do not perceive [that]. (Qur’an 2:154, Jones)

Do not reckon those who were killed in God’s way as dead: No! [They are] alive with their Lord. (Qur’an 3:169, Jones)

These verses are referring to the martyrs of Islam who have died for the cause of Allah. Notice what is said about them: they are not dead, though it appears they are; instead they are alive in paradise with God. The Qur’an is revealing the unseen reality of the martyr. Therefore, Muslims are not allowed to speak of the martyrs as dead. They are to be considered “living martyrs” even though it does not appear that way. Sayyid Qutb explains this.

To all intents and purposes, those people [the martyrs] may very well appear lifeless, but life and death are not judged by superficial physical means alone. ... According to Islamic tradition, people who are killed “for the cause of God” are not washed or prepared for burial in the conventional way, but buried in the clothes they happen to be wearing, because they are considered clean and pure, and because in reality they are not dead. ... But who are the living martyrs? They are those killed in
God’s cause, and in God’s cause alone.\textsuperscript{19} 

The Qur’an’s description of the crucifixion is describing Jesus this way: His death is denied, though he appeared to be dead. 

The next section is the following. 

\textit{and those who differ about this are full of doubts, with no knowledge, but only assumption to follow, for of certainty they killed him not. (Qur’an 4:157c) } 

What does it mean to be full of doubts, with no knowledge but only assumption to follow? This idea is spoken of dozens of times throughout the Qur’an. The Qur’an sees itself as the source of true knowledge because it reveals the seen and the unseen. 

[Allah is] Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Grand, the Exalted. (Qur’an, 13:9, Jones) 

Those who reject the Qur’an reject this knowledge. They only see the appearance of things, and do not know the unseen realities. Therefore, when the Qur’an is describing the crucifixion it is claiming to reveal the unseen realities of what happened to Jesus, not the things that only appeared to happen. 

The last section is, 

\textit{Rather, God raised him to himself. (Qur’an 4:158) } 

The Qur’an finishes with God raising Jesus to himself. What does this mean? Again, this idea is spoken about elsewhere in the Qur’an. 

If you are killed or die in God’s way, pardon and mercy from God are better than what they collect. If you die or are killed, you will be gathered up to God. (Qur’an 3:157-158) 

Do not reckon those who were killed in God’s way as dead: No! [They are] alive with their Lord. (Qur’an 3:169) 

That is, the souls of the martyrs are immediately taken up to be with God in paradise. This is the unseen reality. Q4:158 does not say that Jesus’ body was taken, but simply that he was raised up to be with God. According to the Qur’an, this is what happens to the soul of a martyr. God gives martyrs special treatment, and Jesus seems to be an example of this.

So far we have interpreted Q4:157-158 by the Qur’an and seen that Jesus as a martyr is a reasonable and consistent explanation. But what about the other verses? What do they show? We will now consider Q3:55 and 5:117.

And when God said to Jesus, I am going to take you and raise you to Me. (Qur’an 3:55)

I [Jesus] was a witness over them [the Jews] as long as I was among them. When You took me, it was you who were the watcher over them. (Qur’an 5:117)

These verses describe how the Jewish leaders planned to kill Jesus but God intended to take him. The Arabic word for take/took is mutawaffî. This is the standard word in the Qur’an for when God takes someone in death.

*Take in I shall take thee* translates mutawaffî, which is usually understood to mean that God takes one unto Himself, that is in death. In the context of this verse, most [commentators] assert, however, that it does not refer to being taken in death, but rather to being taken from the world, although others believe this does refer to God causing Jesus to die.

The overwhelming standard use of the word mutawaffî is when God takes someone in death, and this is the word that is used twice to describe God taking Jesus to himself. Again, this is consistent with the Qur’an describing Jesus as a martyr.

The final verses we will examine are Q19:33-34. In these verses the Qur’an gives a summary of Jesus’ life.

Peace be on me the day I [Jesus] was born, the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive. That is Jesus, the son of Mary. (Qur’an 19:33-34, Jones)

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This summary is exactly the same as the summary given for John the Baptist.

Peace on him [John] the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised up alive. (Qur’an 19:15, Jones)

Muslims and Christians agree that John was a killed, and here we see the Qur’an describing Jesus’ life as the same as John’s. Therefore, Jesus being a martyr is a reasonable explanation for what happened to Jesus. It is also an explanation that honours Jesus because in the Qur’an martyrs are highly honoured. Jesus is not only a prophet and the messiah, he is also a martyr. No one else in the Qur’an is given this type of honour.

Conclusion

At the start of this chapter we looked at nine different explanations that Muslim scholars give about the cross. One of these was that the Qur’an is describing Jesus as a martyr. Now that we have read the Qur’an, and allowed it to explain itself, we can see that this is a good explanation. It is consistent with the Qur’an. Therefore, Jesus being crucified is a valid interpretation of the Qur’an, and something that Muslims can, and do believe.

FAQ

1. Muslim: Jesus was not crucified because Allah would never let one of his prophets be treated this way.

   Christian: The Qur’an says that prophets were mistreated and killed.


2. Muslim: Judas was made to look like Jesus and crucified in his place.

   Christian: Where does the Qur’an say this? It never does. We must let the Qur’an explain itself.

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THE CRUCIFIXION IN THE BIBLE

Reading the Bible Ourselves

Jesus spoke of his death on many occasions.

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. (Matthew 16:21)

Now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man [Jesus] will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Matthew 20:17-19)

The Son of Man [Jesus] came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28)

All of the Gospel accounts record that Jesus was crucified.

When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (Matthew 27:34-35)

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. (Mark 15:22-24)

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left. (Luke 23:32-33)

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of
the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others - one on each side and Jesus in the middle. (John 19:16-18)

The Apostles of Jesus and their companions speak of his crucifixion and death.

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. (Acts 2:23-24)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)

We preach Christ crucified. (1 Corinthians 1:23)

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (Hebrews 6:6)

Now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:15)

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep. (Hebrews 13:20)
I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!
And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (Revelation 1:18)

The Bible says again and again that Jesus was crucified and died. All Christians agree about this. Trying to deny this is like saying the Qur’an teaches there are many gods. It is ridiculous. Unfortunately, there are some Muslim leaders who try to do this.

**Ahmed Deedat, Zakir Naik, and Others**

Even though the Bible is clear that Jesus was crucified people like Ahmed Deedat and Zakir Naik teach Muslims that this is not the case.

*No Witnesses*

In his famous book, *Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction*, Ahmed Deedat says the disciples of Jesus were not witnesses to the crucifixion and so the whole story in the Bible is just hearsay.22

However, this is false and shows that Ahmed Deedat did not read the Bible. The Bible says Jesus’ disciples and mother were witnesses of the crucifixion.

> When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. (Luke 23:48-49)

> Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. (John 19:25-27)

> We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. (Acts 10:39-40)

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22 Ahmed Deedat, *Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction?*, pp. 7-8 & 55.
The Sign of Jonah

Ahmed Deedat is famous for teaching about the sign of Jonah. He claims that just as Jonah was alive in the fish, so too Jesus said he would be alive on the cross and in the tomb. Therefore, Jesus only appeared to be dead like the Qur’an says.

However, whether Jesus is dead or alive is not the question. The question is, was Jesus crucified? and Ahmed Deedat has actually shown that Jesus was. Firstly, Jonah did not appear to be in the whale, he was in the whale; therefore, Jesus did not appear to crucified and in the tomb, he was crucified and in the tomb. Secondly, Jonah was in the whale, not someone who looked like Jonah; therefore, Jesus was crucified and not someone who looked like him. The sign of Jonah actually proves that Jesus was crucified! Ahmed Deedat and those like him do not read the Bible carefully.

Psalm 91

Abu Zakariya refers to Psalm 91 and claims this Psalm is a prophecy that the Messiah will not suffer, and therefore, Jesus was not be crucified.

Psalm 91 certainly does promise God’s protection to the servant of God; and this is the relationship the Messiah has with God the father. However, we must read all of the Psalms and not just one. Psalm 22 is one of the most famous Messianic Psalms, and it says,

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. (Psalm 22:15-18)

Psalm 22 says that the Messiah will suffer and be laid “in the dust of death”;

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23 Whether Jonah was alive in the fish is debatable. Jonah says he is the grave, the place of the dead. See Jonah 2:2.
24 Ahmed Deedat, Crucifixion or Cruci-Fiction?, p. 68.
26 “they have pierced my hands and my feet” can also be translated as “like a lion at my hands and feet”. Either way his hands and feet are pierced.
and it describes the crucifixion very accurately. So how can the protected Messiah be the Messiah who suffers this way? The answer is that when the Messiah comes he does not come for himself, instead, he comes to save God’s people, and he does this by voluntarily laying aside his protection for the sake of others. We see this perfectly in the life of Jesus: He had the protection of Psalm 91 when he was a child (Matthew 2:13&19); and the care of Psalm 91 after his temptation in the desert (Matthew 4:11); but he voluntarily lays this aside as he offers himself on the cross in fulfilment of Psalm 22.

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:53-54)

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. (John 10:17-18)

Conclusion

When we read the Bible we see it is clear that Jesus was crucified: Jesus said he would be crucified, the Gospel records that he was, and his disciples testify that he was. There is no reason to believe he was not crucified. Muslim leaders like Ahmed Deedat misrepresent the Bible and are just leading people astray. People should read the Bible for themselves.
In this chapter we will look at the evidence for Jesus outside of the Bible in general history, and consider what historians conclude from it.

History Outside of the Bible

The death of Jesus is recorded in several historical documents from around the time of Jesus. We will begin with the Jewish leader, Josephus. He wrote around the 90A.D. and was not a Christian. In his writings he preserves what was known as fact in Jerusalem at this time. He writes about John the Baptist.

Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod’s army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism. (Josephus, Antiquities 18:5:2)

Josephus writes about Jesus’ brother James.

Festus was now dead, Albinus was but upon the road; so he (Ananus) assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned. (Josephus, Antiquities 20:9:1)

And Josephus records that Jesus was crucified.

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and from the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly he was perhaps the messiah of whom the prophets have recounted

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wonders. (Arabic: Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:3:3)  

The famous Roman historian Tacitus (56-120 A.D.) was not a Christian. In his history of Rome he records that Jesus was executed.

Christus, the founder of the name [Christians], had undergone the death penalty in the reign of [emperor] Tiberius, by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. (Tacitus, *Annals* 15:44)

The Jewish Talmud preserves the history of the Jews who rejected Jesus. It records that Jesus was “hanged,” that is, hung on a cross.

Yeshua [Jesus] was hanged on the Passover Eve. Forty days previously the herald had cried, "He is being led out for stoning, because he has practised sorcery and led Israel astray and enticed them to apostasy. Whosoever has anything to say in his defence, let him come forward and declare it." As nothing was brought forward in his defence, he was hanged on Passover Eve. (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a)

Therefore, history from outside of the Bible agrees that Jesus was crucified.

**What Historians Say**

[Jesus] was executed on the orders of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate ... Early on Friday, 15 Nisan, Jesus and two others were taken outside the city walls, nailed to crosses and left to die. (EP Sanders)

It was not on a Jewish religious indictment, but on a secular accusation that he was condemned by the emperor's delegate to die shamefully on a Roman cross. (Geza Vermes)

He was betrayed by the Jews and crucified. Allah lifted him to the

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30 E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, London: Allen Lane, 1993, pp. 11 and 274.

heavens. (Prof. Masud ul-Hasan)\textsuperscript{32}

I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was physically crucified and died on the cross. That is rock-bottom certain in my books. (Bart Ehrman)\textsuperscript{33}

He was flogged and then his body was nailed to a tall cross-shaped structure of timber, with two common criminals placed on smaller but similar crosses on each side of him. (Geoffrey Blainey)\textsuperscript{34}

His main scene of activity was in Galilee and the neighbouring districts of north Palestine, from which he went to Jerusalem, where he was crucified. \textit{(Dictionary of World History)}\textsuperscript{35}

In this chapter we have considered history from outside of the Bible and have seen that it agrees that Jesus was crucified. All historians agree about this. There is no reason to doubt it; it is considered a historical fact.

FAQ

Do historians use the Qur’an to learn the history of Jesus?

No.

I do not think that the Qur’an has any particular insights about the historical Jesus that are to be taken as independent reports by historical scholars. Neither does any other historical scholar that I know (or anyone who works seriously on the historical Jesus). (Bart Ehrman)\textsuperscript{36}

CONCLUSION

In this booklet we have considered the question, *was Jesus crucified?* To answer this question, we first examined nine Islamic interpretations of what the Qur’an means about the crucifixion, and then read the Qur’an for ourselves, allowing it to explain itself. We saw that Jesus being crucified is a valid interpretation, and something that Muslims can, and do believe. It is consistent with the Qur’an in a way that other explanations are not.

Next we saw that the Bible is clear that Jesus was crucified, and so too is history. Therefore, having looked at all the evidence we can conclude that, yes, Jesus was crucified, and it is acceptable for a Muslim to believe this.

Why not read about the Jesus for yourself? I recommend you start with a gospel from the Bible called *Matthew*. It is available in various languages here. [https://biblehub.com/niv/matthew/1.htm](https://biblehub.com/niv/matthew/1.htm)
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