

# The Crucifixion of Jesus: Christian and Muslim Perspectives

(edited transcription of *Islam vs. Christianity* (Program 4),  
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**Ankerberg:** Welcome to our program. We are having a debate between those representing Islam and those representing orthodox Christianity. We are going to be talking about the topic: The Crucifixion of Jesus—Christian and Muslim Perspectives. The Koran states very clearly on the crucifixion of Jesus, “they said [in Sura 4:157] ‘We killed Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Apostle of God,’ but they killed Him not, nor crucified Him. It was made to appear to them so and those who differ therein are full of doubts with no certain knowledge. They follow only conjecture for assurity. They killed Him not.” So, the Koran clearly teaches that Jesus never was put on the cross. When Christ was not crucified, God made it appear to the Jews that someone was crucified—we’ll talk about who that might be. Finally, the words “God raised Him up to Himself” are taken to mean that Jesus was raised alive to heaven without dying.

Christianity says just the opposite. So, on that, we will start with Dr. Gleason Archer, who will present the case from the Christian position.

**Archer:** Well, in the teaching of Jesus Himself as, for example, in Chapter 16 of the gospel of Matthew where Peter makes the confession that Jesus of Nazareth is none other than the Messiah of God, Jesus commends him for it. Then, he says, beginning with verse 21, “From that time Jesus Christ 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 be raised up on the third day.” In the passage that we quoted earlier in the second chapter of Philippians, you remember that it was stated that He was obedient even unto death, even death on the cross.

In Colossians 2:9 we read, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” It is interesting to observe that even the Unitarian professor of Harvard, Thayer, in his New Testament lexicon states very plainly that the New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ is the same essence and substance as God the Father.

In Psalm 22:16, which we mentioned before, you have the statement, “For dogs have compassed me” and “they have pierced my hands and my feet.” The verb being used there indicates a death by crucifixion, which at that time, that is, back in the days of David, was hardly practiced. So, it is a prophetic statement as to how Christ will die.

In Zechariah 12:10, as Brother Anis has mentioned, the Lord says, “I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look upon me whom they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son.” And as was pointed out “me” quoted from Yahweh is equated with him who is pierced on the cross.

And then in Revelation 1:8, “I am the Alpha and the Omega... I am the First and the Last.” Then later it says, “I became dead and behold I am living unto the ages of the ages.” I think that it is one of the best substantiated facts in all history that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by the government under the inspiration or the encouragement of the Jewish establishment. And therefore, it seems hardly pertinent even to question it if we are going

to value the testimony of history.

**Ankerberg:** Thank you. Our second speaker, representing Islam on the question of the Crucifixion of Jesus—Christian and Muslim Perspectives, is Dr. Jamal Badawi.

**Badawi:** The significance of the crucifixion of Jesus in Christianity is not the same as in Islam. It is central in Christianity, but not in Islam for three reasons: (1) Muslims are taught on the authority of the Koran to believe in, love, respect and honor Jesus: crucifixion or not, that belief will not change; (2) the Koran, even the Bible, sometimes speak about prophets who were killed or dead persons were resurrected to life without any implication of divinity; (3) Muslims do not believe in theories of original sin, necessity of bloodshed for remission of sin or the necessity of the death of the divine in order to forgive the sins of His creatures.

A second observation is that Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified only on the authority of the Koran as John recited, which to them is the word of God. The only aspect about what he translated that it could be translated it was meant to appear to them, or it could also be translated it so appeared to them.

Following is a Muslim response to four common grounds that are usually presented to substantiate the crucifixion of Jesus. The first, that the Old Testament prophesied the crucifixion of Jesus in detail, including even His words on the cross. Two responses: (1) According to scholars, Christian scholars, some of the Old Testament prophecies were taken out of context as they referred either to the general suffering of prophets like Isaiah or to specific events like the suffering of David at the hands of Amalekites in Psalm 22. It is in that context that David was mocked, scorned and said, "God, God why have you forsaken me?" I must note here that according to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, the words "They pierced my hands and feet" did not appear in the ancient Hebrew manuscript.

That it is said that all four gospels speak about the crucifixion of Jesus. How could that be rejected? There are three responses to that. It is well known that many theologians and Christian historians do not agree on the authorship of the gospels—whether the writers were eyewitnesses or not. John might call this liberal theologians, but there is an awful lot of them. (2) The gospels were written after the fact with a view of proving theological positions that were already taken before the gospels were written. And as John Fenton, in his book about St. Matthew, says, Matthew, in particular, was obsessed to prove to the Jews that all prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus.

Thirdly, the gospel accounts contain several irreconcilable contradiction and inconsistencies and many logical flaws. This is not the time to go into detail, and this casts doubt about what happened and that led a Christian author in a book called History of Dogma to say, for example, that the empty tomb cannot be taken as a historical fact. Actually, many scholars today believe that the crucifixion is more of a statement of theology rather than history.

The third ground: It is said that other writings like ancient Roman and Jewish writings confirm the crucifixion. Many scholars, and I can give you reference of this, found out finally that many of these were forgeries attributed under pagan names. The best example is Josephus who is a Jew and said to have said that Jesus was the Messiah and He came according to the prediction of the Old Testament. That is nothing but a statement of acceptance.

Finally, some say the crucifixion is necessary for salvation. We say no, not necessarily. This is a theological experience that should not dictate historical facts and the idea of dying and rising God is an idea that existed in mythology and legends before Christianity, and was meant to appeal to the Gentile world. Thank you.

**Ankerberg:** We come to Dr. Anis Shorrosh for the first response. And, Anis, the Chris-

tian Church throughout the world for twenty centuries has held a unanimous opinion on the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To this day, there is no dispute among Christians what happened to Jesus. We all believe He was crucified for our sins and raised for our salvation. Why? What are the reasons for this? Even the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestants, all of us agree on those points. What evidence has brought this consensus? What unambiguous testimony can you give that would bring all Christians of all stripes and flavors together on this point?

**Shorrosh:** Let me give you this from Sura chapter 5, verse 116-117 where the statement comes, "I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them and when thou tookest me," and the words here "tookest me" really means, "you have caused me to die." And that is the truth. When you have caused me to die, after that death, then Jesus went up to heaven. The question I have for them is why in the world would Jesus come to earth if He is going to be just another prophet? He came with the purpose to die. He explained that to the disciples. He lived with that in mind. He talked to them about it. And then He arose the third day, just like He said. So, why should I take the word of a man, which is mentioned two or three times, when I have a whole rostrum of evidence that is far in excess of time and space as far as 600 years earlier and more volume to that truth?

**Badawi:** The answer is simple. If Dr. Shorrosh is aware of the intricacies of the Arabic language, you would have known that word in Arabic has a broad meaning, which the original meaning is "fulfill my term." And, that it is used as an allegory for death; only as an allegorical meaning and the rule in the Arabic language that the word should be used in the original meaning unless there is evidence to use it in the allegorical meaning. Even if we take that second assumption as true; even if we were to take it some of the interpretation that God took Jesus somewhere else, and that raised Him unto Himself, the Koran doesn't say raised him alive. But there is also another interpretation that raised his soul. So, in either interpretation still it is a matter of the usage of the Arabic language.

**Ankerberg:** But you have to go with one of those interpretations, and we need evidence for any interpretation. Let's get a response from the other side.

**Shorrosh:** I commend the Muslims for respecting my Savior so much, but they miss the point of why did He come to earth. Remember when Allah said, "O Jesus, lo I am gathering thee." In this passage, they say, "Gathering thee." In this other passage, "I am causing thee to die." And the question is if that word means death, then it means death. Jesus died for our sins, He arose from the grave, and He is coming again. The question I would like to ask then is, why in the world He is coming again? Where do you get the interpretation He is going to die, be buried by Muhammad in Medina? Where do you get that information? It is all made up.

**Morsi:** I have some evidence here from the New Testament from the New Testament itself from the book of Luke in chapter 24 and I want the audience to be the judge of what it means. This is the story when Jesus went to meet His disciples, supposedly after His crucifixion, and He enters the upper chamber and the disciples were terrified for they supposed to have seen a spirit. They thought they had seen a resurrected body. Jesus said to them, "Why are you terrified and why do bad thoughts come to your heart. Come and touch me and handle me and see for yourself for a spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see me have." Therefore, he is proving to them that He is still alive. He did not die on the cross. Then, to show the point. I know that this comes to you as a disappointment, but you can read it for yourself.

**Ankerberg:** Let's get a response on that because one of the people that was there was Peter. In 2 Peter he says, "We did not follow cleverly devised tales." Now, let's talk about that whole thing of when Jesus appeared. Is that what you would come to from the evidence, Dr. Archer?

**Archer:** The point, of course, is that Jesus appeared to them showing that He had risen from the dead, and that He had His resurrection body. Therefore, He had overcome the curse that had come upon the human race because He had paid the penalty in full Himself because He had risen victorious from the grave.