Was Jesus Crucified?

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The Quran denies the event that the Bible places at the very center of His mission: His death on the cross. Since this question is about a real event in history, we can examine it carefully and respectfully.

> **Quran 4:157** “And [for] their saying, “Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh.” And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them.”

This verse was recited roughly six hundred years after the events it describes, in Arabia, far from Jerusalem. It gives no names, no eyewitnesses, and no explanation of who was made to resemble Jesus. Muslim commentators themselves have offered several conflicting theories. On the other side stand eyewitness accounts written within the lifetime of those who were there.

1. The eyewitnesses say He died

All four Gospels describe Jesus’ arrest, trial before Pontius Pilate, crucifixion, death, and burial. John, who stood at the cross (John 19:26), records His final words:

> **John 19:30** “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”

Paul, writing to the church in Corinth within about twenty five years of the event, passed on a summary that he himself had received earlier:

> **1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4** “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,”

Jesus also predicted His death again and again. “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). If He was not killed, then the prophet himself was mistaken.

2. The prophets foretold it

Centuries before Jesus, the Hebrew prophets described a suffering Servant who would die for the sins of others.

> **Isaiah 53:5** “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.”

> **Psalm 22:16 and 18** “They pierced My hands and My feet; ... They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”

The Great Isaiah Scroll found among the Dead Sea Scrolls is dated to roughly the second century before Christ, so these words were written long before the crucifixion and cannot have been added afterward.

3. Historians outside the Bible agree

The crucifixion is one of the best attested facts of ancient history, recorded even by writers who had no sympathy for Christians.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote around AD 116 that “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” (*Annals* 15.44).

Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote around AD 93 that “Pilate ... had condemned him to the cross” (*Antiquities* 18.3.3). Scholars believe some phrases in this passage were added later by copyists, but most accept that Josephus did mention Jesus and His execution under Pilate.

Lucian of Samosata, a second century Greek satirist, mocked Christians for worshiping “the man who was crucified in Palestine.” The Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a) also records that Jesus was “hanged” on the eve of Passover.

Friends and enemies, Christians, Jews, and Romans all agree. The only dissent comes centuries later.

4. A troubling question

If God made another man look like Jesus, then God deliberately caused Mary, the disciples, and the whole world to believe a falsehood, and allowed the Christian faith to be founded on a deception He Himself created. Would the God of truth do that? Interestingly, the Quran also has Jesus say:

> **Quran 19:33** “And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive.”

Why the cross matters

The cross is not a defeat. It is God’s answer to our sin. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And He did not stay dead. He rose on the third day, and He offers forgiveness to everyone who turns from sin and trusts Him.

An invitation

We share this because we care about you. The Injil you are told to honor announces good news: God Himself has made a way for sinners to be forgiven. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Read the Gospel of John for yourself, and ask the God of Abraham to show you the truth about Jesus.