

THE CROSS IN THE GOSPEL AND THE QUR'AN

by Iskander Jadeed

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ISLAM

I. THE CROSS IN THE GOSPEL AND IN THE QUR'AN

II. OUR PROOFS OF THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

1. THE PROPHECIES

2. THE STATEMENTS OF CHRIST

3. THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

4. THE SIGNS WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE DEATH OF CHRIST

5. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

6. THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

7. THE TESTIMONY OF PILATE, THE ROMAN GOVERNOR

8. THE SYMBOL OF THE CROSS

9. THE TESTIMONY OF TIME AND CHRISTIAN CONTINUANCE

10. THE TESTIMONY OF THE JEWISH TALMUD

III. WHY WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED?

1. THE NEED OF SALVATION

[2. THE PROOF OR REASON](#)

[3. ATONEMENT MEETS THE DEMANDS OF LAW](#)

[4. ATONEMENT MEETS MAN'S MORAL NEED](#)

[5. GOD'S PLAN FOR ATONEMENT](#)

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ISLAM

[back to Contents](#)

This subject, arouses controversy among Muslims more than any other. Though the Qur'an mentions the death of Christ before His ascension to heaven, Islamic scholars disagree over the interpretation of the word 'inni mutawaffeeka' (translated 'gathering thee') in Sura Al Imran 3:55. Some say the word does not indicate 'death', while others affirm that Christ did actually die. There are many versions of this, ascribed to eminent Muslim schools, on interpretations of scholars such as Al-Tabari and Al-Zamakhshari, and others.

Some say the word means:

- 1) **Sleep..** Al-Muthanna relates 'I was told by Ishaq (as reported to him by Abd Allah Ibn Jaafar and Al-Rabia) that 'inni mutawaffeeka' means a death of sleep, and God raised Him to His sleep.'
- 2) **Fulfilment, or completion** - by Ali Ibn Suhail and Domra Ibn Rabia and Ibn Shuthab, and Matar al-Waraq, who say it means 'I, God, gather you from the world, but not by death.'
- 3) **Grasping, or taking possession of** - by Yunis who says 'Ibn Wahab and Ibn Zeid have told us that 'inni mutawaffeeka' signifies 'I grasp - take possession - of you... He has not died and will not die until He kills the Anti-Christ. Then He will die.'
- 4) Abu Jaafar al-Tabari, ascribing it to tradition from Muhammad said, "Isa (Jesus), the Son of Mary, will descend and kill the Anti-Christ, then remain on earth for a while (time not stated), and then He will die and Muslims will bless Him."

The group which maintains that the word means real death also has many interpretations of the story.

1) Al-Muthanna says, quoting Abd Allah Ibn Salih and Muawiheh, and Ali Ibn Abbas, that 'inni mutawaffeeka' means 'I cause you to die.'

2) From Ibn Hamid, as told him by Salma and Ibn Ishaq, and Wahab Ibn Munabbih, 'God caused Isa, Son of Mary, to die three hours and then raised Him.' (Jamia al-Bayan 3:289-292).

The interpretation of al-Imam al-Razi, from which we quote the following verses states that when God said, "O Jesus! Lo! I am gathering Thee and causing Thee to ascend unto Me", God was specifically exalting Him. Firstly, 'inni mutawaffeeka' - by raising Him, and another verse ascribed to Jesus says, "When Thou tookest Me, Thou wast a Watcher over them," that is, guarding Him.

Commentators differ over these two verses in two ways. Some accept the verses literally and others see hidden meanings in them.

The first say 'mutawaffeeka' means 'your life is fulfilled, so I (God) will take you, and not permit them (that is - the Jews) to kill you, but I will raise you to heaven and appoint you among my angels, and I will protect you so that they will not be able to kill you.'

The second say 'mutawaffeeka' means 'I cause you to die.' According to Ibn Abbas and Hama Ibn Ishaq it means, 'His enemies, the Jews, were not permitted to kill Him, so God honoured Him by raising Him to heaven.' These also differed in three points:

- 1) Wahab said, "He was dead three hours and then was raised."
- 2) Muhammad Ibn Ishaq said, "He was dead seven hours, then god raised Him to life and took Him to heaven."
- 3) Al-Rabia Ibn Uns said that God caused Him to die when He raised Him to heaven. God says, "The Lord 'gathers' souls at death, and they do not die in their sleep."

So, because of these differences of opinion among Muslim experts and their different interpretations of a verse in the Qur'an about the last moments in the life of Christ any honest seeker after the truth must turn to the record of the Gospel, which needs no interpretation. There is no contradiction in it, with regard to the death of Christ and His resurrection and ascension.

I. THE CROSS IN THE GOSPEL AND IN THE QUR'AN

[back to Contents](#)

In chapter one of his first letter to the Corinthians, verses 2 to 24, the apostle Paul said, "For the Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a

stumbling block to Jews, and folly to Gentiles, but those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God," In the second chapter, verses 1 to 2, he said, "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words of wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

The Gospel which the apostles preached from the dawn of Christianity and which people received and accepted and by which they were saved was the joyful news which Paul summarised in these words in I Corinthians 15:1-4, "Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the Gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures."

Even so, with the passing of some five hundred years after Paul and the spreading of the Gospel in all the world, there were those who objected to this truth saying to the Christians, "You are mistaken in your religion." Maybe these objectors took their ideas from heretics - Jews converted to Christianity, whose fathers were neighbours to those who believed that Christ would (did) not die. We are very indebted to John, one of the writers of the Gospel, who mentions, this matter when he recorded for us the saying of the Pharisees in their dispute with Christ, in John 12:34, "The crowd answered Him, 'We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?'"

Historians mention that this heresy was widespread among the Christians of the Arabian Peninsula, saying that Christ was able to transform Himself from one image (form) to another, and when His enemies came to arrest Him He cast His likeness on to another man who was crucified instead of Him, scorning His enemies.

The passage in the Qur'an about the last days of Christ is in agreement with this story and opposed to the Jewish version. Sura al-Nisa 4:157, 158 states "Their saying, (that is the Jews) 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus the Son of Mary, Allah's Messenger', they slew Him not, nor crucified Him, but it appeared so unto them, and lo! Those who disagree concerning it, are in doubt thereof, they have no knowledge thereof, save pursuit of a conjecture, they slew Him not for certain, but Allah took Him up to Himself."

Clearly we understand from the version of the heretics who clung to Christianity that the Cross, in their estimation, was not an historical event or a doctrine of redemption, but a symbol or a sign as the star which guided the Magi to the cradle of the Child in Bethlehem or as the appearance of a dove in which the Holy Spirit appeared coming to Christ at His baptism in the Jordan. But the heavy cross on which Christ was hanged, which is the altar of redemption where the Lamb of God was sacrificed to take away the sin of the world was of no importance to them! They rejected the truth which Paul proclaimed to the nations in Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us; for it is written 'Cursed be everyone who hangs on a

tree, that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Perhaps the strangest objection to the cross is found in the counterfeit Gospel attributed to John but written by the heretics. There is no doubt Muslims inherited this aversion to the cross from those heretics who were scattered about in Arabia, which is the cradle of Islam. It is regrettable that Muslim theologians disagree on the matter of how another took the place of Christ and many stories have arisen about it. One is that when the Jews determined to kill Christ, God took Him to heaven. Their leaders feared a rising of the people against themselves and took and killed a man crucifying Him, and deceived the people saying He was Christ (Isa). Another says that God cast Christ's likeness on to another man, who died instead of Him.

This story has many versions:

- 1) A Jew named Judas entered a house where Christ was with the purpose of arresting Him, but did not find Him. God caused the likeness of Christ (Isa) to be on him and when he came out of the house people thought he was Isa and took him and crucified him.
- 2) The Jews, when they arrested Isa, set over Him a watchman, but Isa was taken up to God by a miracle and God caused Isa's likeness to rest on the watchman, whom they took and crucified while he cried out "I am not Isa."
- 3) One of Jesus' (Isa's) friends was promised Paradise and volunteered to die instead of Him. God caused him to resemble Isa and he was taken and crucified but Isa was taken up to heaven.
- 4) One of Isa's followers betrayed Him (that is, Judas) and came to the Jews to guide them to Him, and went with them to take Him. God caused him to appear like Isa and he was taken and crucified.

Only a few of the commentators of the Qur'an agree upon this story. **Al-Jalalan** in his interpretation of the Qur'anic phrase "it appeared so unto them" (*Shubbiha lahum*) says that Allah caused the likeness of Isa to be upon the dead man and they thought he was Isa, and they killed and crucified him. The phrase "those who disagree and are in doubt about Him" (that is, about Isa, regarding His death) - means that when some of them saw the dead man they said, "The face is the face of Isa, but the body is not His body." Others said "It is He." (Commentary of al-Jalalan, page 135)

Al-Baidawi said, "It is related that a group of Jews captured Isa and His mother and He cursed them and they were changed into apes and pigs! The Jews met together to kill Him but God told Him He would take Him to heaven. He said to His friends, 'Who is ready to take my likeness upon him and be killed and crucified and enter Paradise?' One of them responded and God cast the likeness of Isa upon him and he was killed and crucified."

Al-Zamakhshari said, "The words 'it appeared so unto them' mean they imagined it to be so or they presumed that they killed and crucified Him - so He is dead and not alive. But He is alive because God took Him to Himself."

There is no doubt that this variety of versions resulted from the lack of clear wording in the Qur'an with regard to the last days of Christ's human life on earth. This disparity opened the door to many differences and opposing opinions. It was inevitable that a scrupulous scholar such as the Imam Fakhred Din al-Razi should refute this story absolutely. In his comment on Sura Al Imran 3:55, "Oh, Isa, Son of Mary, lo! I am gathering Thee unto Me and causing Thee to ascend to Me," he explained the matter of the transfer of Christ's likeness to another man in a variety of ways:

- 1) If it is perishable to assert that God casts the resemblance of one person on to another, then the door is open to calumny and in time to subtle reasoning and in the end invalidates prophecies.
- 2) God supported Him (Isa) with His Holy Spirit. Was He in this case not able to do so? He (Isa) was able to raise the dead, and so was He not able to protect Himself?
- 3) God was able to rescue Him by raising Him to heaven. So what use was it to cause another to bear His likeness?
- 4) By so doing - that is by causing another to resemble Him - they were made to believe that this other was Isa, although he was not. This was a deception and not in keeping with the wisdom of God.
- 5) The majority of Christians from East to West witnessed to His being crucified with their intense love of Christ and extreme zeal for His cause. Therefore, if we deny this, we discredit the historicity of events and thus we discredit the prophecy of Muhammad and Isa and the rest of the prophets.
- 6) The logical (normal) thing would be that the "other man" would be able to defend himself and say he was not Isa and that is what he would have done.

As he did not do so, we understand the matter was not as reported. If the sayings of the Qur'an do repudiate the crucifixion of Christ, they certainly do not repudiate His death before He was taken to heaven. When we consider the close of Christ's life as seen (depicted) in the Qur'an we find three texts which confirm His death and two which state that He was killed.

1. **Sura al-Maryam 19:33** - "Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive." In this verse is a clear confession that Christ became incarnate and died and was raised from the dead in the form of a prophecy and based on a miracle. It agrees with the text of the Gospel in spirit and word.

2. **Sura Al Imran 3:55** - "When God said, "Oh Jesus, Son of Mary, lo! I am gathering Thee and causing Thee to ascend to Me and I am cleansing Thee of those who disbelieve, and I am setting those who follow Thee above those who disbelieve until the day of Resurrection."

3. **Sura al-Ma'ida 5:116,117** - "When Allah saith, 'Oh Jesus, Son of Mary, did thou not say unto mankind, "Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?" He said, "Be glorified... I spake unto them only that which Thou commandest me... and when Thou tookest me, Thou was the Watcher over them."

4. **Sura al-Baqara 2:87** - "And verily We gave unto Moses the Scripture, and we caused a train of messengers to follow after him, and we gave unto Jesus, Son of Mary, clear proofs, and we supported Him with the Holy Spirit. It is ever so, that when there cometh unto you a messenger (from Allah) with that which you desire not, you grow arrogant, and some you disbelieve, and some you slay." The word 'slay' here is not unclear and can only be translated as 'killing'. If the Qur'an does not mention how the killing of Christ took place, the Gospel is the original and only source on this subject.

5. **Sura Al Imran 3:183** - "They say, that is the Jews, 'Lo, God hath charged us that we believe not in any messenger until he bring us an offering which fire, from heaven, shall devour.' Say to them, 'O Muhammad, messengers came unto you before me with miracles, and with that miracle which you describe. Why then did you slay them? Answer that if you are truthful."

If we examine the stories of the Qur'an, we find that the only messenger who came from God with an offering was Christ. Sura al- Ma'ida 5:114 says, "Jesus, Son of Mary, said, 'O God, our Lord, send down for us a table spread with food from heaven, that it may be a feast for us, ... and a sign from Thee. Give us sustenance for Thou art the best of sustainers."

Now let us return to the saying in Sura al-Nisa, "They slew him not, nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them." This was an effort to remove those adhering to the letter of the word, from the prison of the letter, to the wide liberty of the Spirit. We do not need anything other than the texts of the Gospel to bring out the truth. This recourse to expedience makes it necessary for us to find out the purpose of the Jewish leaders in killing Christ, and this has been made clear to us by John in his account of the Gospel, when he said in John 11:47-50, "So the chief priests and Pharisees gathered the council and said, 'What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let Him go on thus everyone will believe in Him and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation!' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year said to them, 'You know nothing at all, you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."

Indeed, when they hung Him upon the cross and He died and was put in the tomb and the door was sealed with Pilate's seal, they rejoiced greatly thinking that they were finally

saved from His teaching and signs and hoping that His cruel death was enough to prevent His followers from any further activity. But the winds of the divine will carried the ships of Jewish determination whither they did not wish; for His strong atoning death upon the cross before long attracted to Him thousands and thousands. What was prophesied of Him came true, as in John 12:32, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

In the same way miracles continued through the apostles, according to the power which He gave them. The Bible tells us in Acts 19:11-12, "And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and evil spirits came out of them."

So we can accept the verse of the Qur'an as a testimony against them, the unbelievers, when it says, "Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof, save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew Him not for certain." He arose the third day, and during the forty days after that appeared many times to His disciples, then ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God in keeping with the Qur'an's saying, "Lo! I am gathering Thee and causing Thee to ascend unto Me."

II. OUR PROOFS OF THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

[*back to Contents*](#)

There are a great many and it is not within the scope of this booklet to mention them all in detail. The following are a few :

1. THE PROPHECIES

[*back to Contents*](#)

There are many prophecies in the Bible pointing to the atoning death of Christ on the cross, all of which were literally fulfilled.

Prophecy - the selling of Christ for thirty pieces of silver.

Zechariah 11:12, "Then I said to them, 'If it seems right to you, give me my wages, but if not, keep them'. And they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver."

Fulfilment - Matthew 26:14, "Then one of the twelve who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver."

Prophecy - The buying of the Potter's field with the money.

Zechariah 11:13, "Then the Lord said to me, 'Cast it into the treasury: the lordly price at which I was paid off by them. So I took the thirty shekels and cast them into the treasury in the house of the Lord."

Fulfilment - Matthew 27:3-8, "When Judas, His betrayer, saw that He was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.' They said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' And throwing down the pieces of silver in the Temple he departed and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury since they are blood money.' So they took council and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Therefore the field has been called the Field of Blood to this day."

Prophecy - the mocking and crucifixion.

Psalms 22:16-18, "Dogs are round about me; a company of evil doers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet; I can count all my bones; they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, for my raiment they cast lots."

Fulfilment - Matthew 27:39-42, "Those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the Temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God come down from the cross.' So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him saying, 'He saved others, He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe Him.'"

Prophecy - His astonishment that the Father forsook Him.

Psalms 22:1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?"

Fulfilment - Matthew 27:46, "About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'"

Prophecy - they gave Him vinegar to drink.

Psalms 69:21, "For my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Fulfilment - John 19:28, "After this, Jesus knowing that all was now finished said, to fulfil the Scripture, 'I thirst.' ...so they put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it to His mouth."

Prophecy - soldiers divided His clothes by lot.

Psalms 22:18, "They divided my garments among them and for my raiment they cast lots."

Fulfilment - John 19:23, "When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took His garments and made four parts, one for each soldier, also His tunic."

Prophecy - His bones were not broken.

Psalm 34:20, "He keeps all His bones, not one of them is broken."

Fulfilment - John 19:32, "The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Him, but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs."

Prophecy - pierced by a spear

Zechariah 12:10, "When they look on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him."

Fulfilment - John 19:34, "One of the soldiers pierced His side, with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water."

Prophecy - His death with the wicked, but honoured also.

Isaiah 53:9, "They made His grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death."

Fulfilment - Matthew 27:57-60, "When it was evening, there came a rich man, from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. and Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own tomb, and rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and departed."

2. THE STATEMENTS OF CHRIST

[*back to Contents*](#)

Many times Christ explained to His disciples that His work of salvation necessitated His death on the cross. The most outstanding occasion comes in His farewell message, which He spoke to them on the night of His betrayal. In it He went again over the wonder of the Gospel. The following are some of His special pronouncements about His death on the cross to redeem humanity.

Matthew 16:21, "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 17:22, "As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered unto the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.' And they were greatly distressed,"

Matthew 26:1-2, "When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.'"

Mark 8:31, "He began to teach them that 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 9:31, "For He was teaching His disciples and saying to them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and when He is killed, after three days He will rise.'"

Mark 10:32-34, "And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them, and they were amazed and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again He began to tell them what was to happen to Him, saying, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles, and they will mock Him and spit upon Him and scourge Him and kill Him; and after three days He will rise.'"

Luke 9:22, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised."

John 3:13-14, "No one has ascended into heaven but He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

3. THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

[*back to Contents*](#)

All who read the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles notice that the doctrines which they preached and spread abroad in all the world were based on the message of Christ crucified for the sins of the world. What follows, is a gleaning from the words of the apostles who after preaching this message wrote it, guided by the Holy Spirit, for our instruction. Acts 2:22-23, "Men of Israel hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God, with mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know - this Jesus delivered up according to the Will and Plan and the Foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised Him up..."

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."

John the Apostle said in 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin."

Read also Acts 2:36; Romans 6:5 and 6; 1 Corinthians 1:17-18; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 1 Corinthians 2:1-2;

2 Corinthians 13:3-4; Galatians 3:13; Philippians 2:5-8; and Hebrews 12:2.

4. THE SIGNS WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE DEATH OF CHRIST

[*back to Contents*](#)

Matthew, the writer of the Gospel, tells us that when Jesus yielded up His Spirit, the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook and the graves were opened. Matthew 27:50-54, "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion, and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

There were outward signs in nature, the elements were moved and because of them men's spirits were stirred, so that the Roman Centurion, a heathen, responsible for carrying out the death sentence on Christ, and others with him, were astonished and believed in the One crucified, saying, "Of a truth, this was the Son of God." This unique phenomenon had not been seen, neither before nor after any man's death.

5. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

[*back to Contents*](#)

This wonderful event was fulfilled in keeping with the word of Christ to the Pharisees and the scribes, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up the third day." Indeed, at dawn on the third day, the first day of the week, the greatest miracle of all time took place. The Lord of glory rose from among the dead. Heaven itself proclaimed this wonderful event. Before dawn came a great earthquake, as God's angel descended from heaven and rolled away the huge stone from the door of the tomb. His appearance was as lightning, and the guards, charged by Pilate to safeguard the tomb, shook with terror. This watch was put because the chief priests had circulated the story that Jesus' disciples planned to steal His body, or hide it away saying that He had risen.

On the glorious morning a group of women came to the tomb bringing with them spices to anoint the body of Jesus as a last respect. The first to arrive was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James. When they found the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb, and the tomb empty they were astonished. While they were questioning an angel of God appeared and told them not to be afraid. Matthew 28:1-7, "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, went to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake, and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards trembled, and became as dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come - see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see Him. Lo, I have told you."

And Matthew 28:9-10 say, "And behold Jesus met them and said, 'Hail.' And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'"

This is what happened at the resurrection. It was written in the Gospel by the inspiration of God and no one who believes the Word of God dare deny it. If they do so, it is as if they allege that God and all the angels and Christ were in agreement to deceive people.

6. THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY

[*back to Contents*](#)

The death of Christ on the Cross is confirmed by the early historians, heathen and Jewish. They have written about it very clearly.

- 1) Tacitus, the historian, a heathen, in the year 55 AD wrote in his huge volume detailed passages about the crucifixion of Christ and His sufferings.
- 2) Josephus, the Jew, born a few years after the crucifixion, wrote the history of his people in twenty volumes, and gave in his writings a detailed account of the crucifixion of Christ, as ordered by Pilate.
- 3) Lucien, (100 AD) an outstanding Greek historian, wrote of the death of Christ and about the Christians. As he was an adherent to Epicurean philosophy, he could not understand the faith of Christians and their readiness to die for Christ. In his writings he ridiculed their belief in the immortality of the soul and their longing for heaven. He looked on them as a deceived people, clinging to uncertainties after death rather than living for the present. One of the significant allusions to the subject of Christ in His writings is this, "The Christians continue to worship that great man who was crucified in Palestine because He brought a new religion to the world."

7. THE TESTIMONY OF PILATE, THE ROMAN GOVERNOR

[*back to Contents*](#)

This tyrant sent to Tiberius Caesar a full report of the crucifixion of Christ, His burial, His rising from the dead and this report is among Roman records. It was one of the documents with which the Christian scholar Tertullian supported his famous defence of the Christians.

8. THE SYMBOL OF THE CROSS

[*back to Contents*](#)

This is a material proof no one can deny, for every religion has its distinguishing emblem, such as the six-pointed star of the Jews and the crescent of the Muslims. The sign of the cross was known from the earliest era of Christianity. The early Christians carved it on the graves of the dead and in the catacombs where they used to meet in times of persecution.

9. THE TESTIMONY OF TIME AND CHRISTIAN CONTINUANCE

[*back to Contents*](#)

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper which reminded them of the death of Christ on the cross, is a living testimony throughout the passing ages that Christ died by crucifixion. Certainly this rite, which Christ instituted on the night He was betrayed, and which He commanded His disciples to observe, is a continual reminder of His atoning death and a strong proof which is impossible to contradict. The apostles kept this divine precept and committed it to the church from the beginning, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "this is My body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me! For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.'"

10. THE TESTIMONY OF THE JEWISH TALMUD

[*back to Contents*](#)

It is well known that the Talmud is a holy book in Jewish eyes. It has been collected in huge volumes, which anyone interested can see. In the copy published in 1943 in Amsterdam one can read on page 42, this sentence, "Jesus was crucified one day before the Passover. We warned Him for 40 days that He would be killed because He was a magician and planned to deceive Israel with His delusions. Whoever wished to do so was asked to defend Him, and when none did, He was crucified on the eve of the Passover. Does anyone dare to defend Him? Was He not a stirrer up of evil? It is said in the prophets, Deuteronomy 13:8, "To a person such as this, do not listen, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you conceal him, but you shall kill him."

III. WHY WAS CHRIST CRUCIFIED

[*back to Contents*](#)

We often hear this question asked, especially in these days. There is a clear answer to it in the Christian creed of faith - "It was for us humans and for our salvation He came down from heaven and was born of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary. He became a man and was crucified for us in the days of Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven."

The following are some proofs of the necessity for Christ's atoning death on the Cross:

1. The Need of Salvation

[*back to Contents*](#)

There is no doubt that all men are in need of salvation because sin is found in every human heart. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Isaiah, the prophet, in chapter 53 and verse 6, said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." John, in his first letter, chapter 1, and verses 8-10 said, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins, and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

In the heart of every man there is the awareness that repentance alone cannot remove past sins. There must be a more effective means of obtaining forgiveness; this means that there must be "atonement". Otherwise how can we explain the existence of sacrifices from the beginning of time, and the widespread knowledge of sacrifice among most of the religions of the world.

Is it not because this concept meets the sense of need in the heart of the sinner for atonement for his sin?

2. The Proof of Reason

[*back to Contents*](#)

All read and know that God is holy and that man is sinful. Sin is an insult to the name of God and destructive to man whom God created in His likeness. thus he now deserves the judgement of God. God cannot be just unless he punishes the sinner. Repentance, which is but a return to the place of obedience, cannot bring justification. The honour and justice and holiness of God cannot be satisfied by mere repentance.

3. Atonement Meets the Demands of Law

[*back to Contents*](#)

Divine law cannot renounce its rights to judge, for it says, "The wages of sin is death." It demands the punishment of the offender. A law which lets the offender off is not a just law. The law is the 'public prosecutor' and the public prosecutor cannot relinquish the demand of law that the offender be punished, or he would be discredited as not being an honest upholder of divine justice. In short, the law, divine law, demands punishment of the offender or atonement of his sins. Here our hearts must be filled with praise and thanks that Christ offered this atonement for man; that, as a result, everyone who accepts Him as Saviour obtains, in His Name, forgiveness of sin. The blessing for all humanity is that this atonement of Christ was inclusive and no one can say that Christ did not die for him. how wonderful are the words of Isaiah 53:12, "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great... because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Paul said in Hebrews 5:8-9, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience by what He suffered, and being made perfect He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

4. Atonement Meets Man's Moral Need

[*back to Contents*](#)

It is true that every man has a moral nature and a conscience able to appreciate heights of justice and holiness. If he is dissatisfied with his sin and finds no atonement, he is troubled in spirit and his moral sense is disturbed.

It is agreed that man, in spite of his downfall into a practice of sin, has not had his conscience destroyed. this moral power remains which can discern right from wrong and decides as to punishment or reward.

We can say that this power is an echo of the voice of God who created it and absolutely fitted it to respond to His laws given on Mount Sinai. But, important as it is, conscience cannot save a man from judgement.

It can influence man's leanings towards sin, but it cannot justify him. It believes the law is good, but the law also cannot justify. The law, Paul said, leads us to Christ.

So the voice of conscience demands for us a righteous mediator who atones for our sins. But with all the importance of this truth most people attempt to solve the problem of conscience by doing works of self-righteousness, reckoning that good works are comparable to the mercy of God.

5. God's Plan for Atonement

[*back to Contents*](#)

If there had been no need for atonement, God would not have planned it. Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Also, in John 3:16, Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

In Galatians 4:4, Paul said, "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His son, born of woman, born under the law."

These glorious verses show us that God loved man with a wonderful love, rich in mercy. This love, overflowing with mercy was incarnate in Jesus who gave expression to it by redemption which He completed on the cross that all may know that God is not only holy and just but also is love. Redemption awakens the sinner's conscience and love is the bond which links him to the cross, without which God could not prove His love. So Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

My dear reader, we live in a time full of voices, "Behold the new order and act accordingly." "Here is a new brotherhood. Accept it," "We extend a helping hand." But empty is the voice which leaves out the cross of Christ. Without the cross all "new order" fail, and the "new brotherhood" is a lie and the "helping hand" turns into a hand brandishing weapons.

The mistake of our generation is like that of the Greeks and ancient Jews in their thoughts about the cross, looking on it as foolishness and weakness, insignificant and a stumbling block. In their mistaken estimation they have forgotten to raise the cry for help, or to say, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." They have forgotten the word of wisdom which says in Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."