

## **Crucifixion of Jesus Christ – FACT or MYTH ?**

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Dr Johnson also obtained a Diploma in Journalism and has published papers on Information Systems, Gospel articles and pamphlets. His main interest and passion is personal evangelism and has written and distributed many Christian messages as tracts with a heartfelt desire to reach the lost in India.

During his childhood he saw a vision of lightning of God but as yet has not fully realised its implication. In 1972 February 12th Dr. Johnson received Jesus as his personal saviour in a public meeting and developed a desire to preach the gospel and organise small prayer meetings in different places.

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## **Crucifixion of Jesus Christ – FACT or MYTH ?**

Christianity has spread all over the world through the triumphant victory of crucifixion. Teachings of Christ resembled in the sacrifice of His life as a sinless for sinful. Son of God appeared in this world as an ordinary man through Virgin Mary, lived as a man without any guilt of sin. He was not against any Roman law even then Roman government had punished him as a nasty criminal. Roman authorities were not able to prove any crime in his life; even then, they punished him because of the pressure of the Pharisees and Jewish leaders. We may ask why this cruel punishment happened in this universe for an innocent shepherd. He claimed that He is the Son of God and the light of this light of the world. Is it a human intervention or the plan of the almighty in His intervention?

Jesus Christ has so much love for us that he died in our place and so that we do not have to bear the punishment for our sin, his death is counted to be our death in the eyes of God. And because of this, every Christian is an ambassador of God's reconciliation message to all people. God will no longer hold your sins against you if you accept as valid for you this offering for sin, accomplished in the death of Jesus the Christ and accept him as your personal saviour

Crucifixion was the fulfilment of the prophecies of the prophets who have predicted long back. From a historical standpoint, the New Testament is the reliable testimony of the companions of Jesus as to what they personally observed of the events of His life, of the character of His life, and what they heard Him teach. Being Jesus' close companions for three years, they are the best witnesses of what occurred in Jesus' life

For proving the crucifixion aspects, we need to turn out attention to the prophecies and Gospels in Bible. The four Gospel accounts in the New Testament were written by either disciples of Jesus or the companions of Jesus' disciples who had access to the very earliest written materials concerning Jesus and the people who were intimately acquainted with Jesus.

### **Prophecies from Old Testament**

In 700 B.C. Isaiah prophesied that his own people the Jews would reject him. He was 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, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. Isaiah 53 (3).

Isaiah 53:5-10 states: "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. ...."

500 years before the birth of Jesus, Zechariah prophesied the betrayal for thirty pieces of silver. 'Then I said to them if it is agreeable to you, give me my wages, and if not, refrain so they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. It is happened .His own disciple Iscariot Judah betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Zechariah 12:10:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced;..."

King David also prophesied long time prior to the birth of Jesus. 'Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who are my bread, has lifted up his heel against me'.

David as a prophet in his psalms 1000 years before Jesus predicted details of the death of the Messiah. Psalm 22:16-18 states:

"For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me. They divide my garments among them, and my clothing for lots."

Daniel, 400 years before Jesus, stated this concerning the Messiah in Daniel 9:26:

"Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing..."

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?

### **Prophecies from New Testament**

"He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." [Matthew 27:41-49]

This fact has been reported by St John as ‘He came to His own, His own did not receive Him John1

St Luke says ‘And they all cried out at once, saying, Away with this man and release to us Barabbas’.

### **Jesus' own predictions of His death by crucifixion.**

Jesus predicted His own death many times. The Gospels record Him predicting His death on at least 21 separate occasions. Many of these predictions record the details of His death; that He would die in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover celebration, suffer at the hands of the chief priests, and be killed by crucifixion. Here is a list of the references where Jesus predicts His own death listed by separate occasion:

**Matthew 12:39-40, 16:4, 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22**

Matthew 27:33-50, Mark 15:22-37, Luke 23:33-46,  
John 19:16-30

Same manner there were number of prophecies by different prophets reported in the old testament of the Bible and all things happened at the time of crucifixion. Jesus was executed by crucifixion under the order of Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator.

### **Partakers of Jesus Crucifixion**

The Roman authorities: The Romans, as the ruling authority in Palestine at this time, were legally responsible for Jesus' death. Pontius Pilate, the governor, decreed His death after a series of religious and civil trials.

John 19:33-34

The Jewish authorities: The Jews were morally responsible for Jesus' death. They rejected Him as their Messiah and plotted and succeeded in having Him executed by the Romans. They made sure Jesus was dead and that their schemes had succeeded.

Matthew 27:41-43, 62-66;

Sin of Humankind: Due to the sins done by the creation of God, he wanted to save them from the fruit of sin; death and he gave his only begotten son to die on the cross so that we may be saved.

### **Moments of Jesus before Death**

Jesus brought his disciples to partake in the Last Supper. At this meal, he instituted the Eucharist. Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and was trailed before the Sanhedrin at night and he was taken to Pilate in the morning. Two robbers were crucified along with Jesus. Only one robber reviles Jesus and the other believes Him. Jesus tells the robber who believed that he would be with him in paradise that day. Here fulfilled another prophecy 'And He was numbered with the transgressors'. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled which the prophet spoke. 'They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots'. Then Jesus said, 'Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do, And they divided His garments and cast lots.' Same day it was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was torn in two. In the Last Jesus cried out with a loud voice, He said 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the

first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead. They did not break His legs. For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.' A centurion saw this agony and he glorified God saying 'Certainly this was righteous'. The whole crowd who came together to those place, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.

Why we say the crucifixion of Jesus is Christ is a fact? The answer is very simple and reliable. The four gospels that proclaim the life and work of Jesus Christ is recorded the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the same contrast and with good description. The archaeological discoveries from Egypt and surrounding places give much evidence of the reliability of these gospels. And also the scrolls discovered from the Dead Sea have verified the accuracy of the Bible. Moreover the disciple once betrayed, Peter says in his epistles 'we did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eyewitness of His majesty'. Another disciple of Jesus, John says 'That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.'

### **Historical & Medical Evidence**

The weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death.

### Non-Jewish and non-Christian sources:

a) Tacitus, a Roman historian, in his Annals, c. AD 115, describes the Roman Emperor Nero's actions after the great fire of Rome, c. AD 64:

"...Nero fabricated scapegoats-and punished...Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus."

b) Lucian, Greek satirist, 2 AD, alludes to Christ:

"...the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world.... Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they were all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws."

### 2. Jewish sources:

a) Josephus, Jewish historian (AD 37-100) wrote of Jesus:

"At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders."

b) The Jewish Talmud (AD 200 -AD 500):

"On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu (of Nazareth) and the herald went before him for forty days saying (Yeshu of Nazareth) is going to be stoned in that he hath practiced sorcery and beguiled and led astray Israel. Let everyone knowing aught in his defence come and plead for him. But they found naught in his defence and hanged him on the eve of Passover." (7)

### **Proofs of Resurrection**

Jesus died for our sins and God resurrected him. The Bible talks about Jesus' resurrection, and records that witnesses either learned that Jesus had risen, or observed Jesus alive after his resurrection. These included:

The women/disciples who visited the tomb on Sunday morning:

Mark 16: A man told three women: Mary Magdalene, Salome and Mary the mother of James that Jesus had risen.

Matthew 28: An angel told two women: Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary," that Jesus had risen. Later, they met Jesus near the tomb.

Luke 24: Four or more women: Mary the mother of James, Joanna and at least one other woman went to the tomb and found it empty. Two men told them that Jesus had risen.

John 20: Mary Magdalene, alone went to the tomb and was told by two angels that Jesus had risen. Later, she met Jesus, originally mistaking him for the gardener.

Acts 9:3: The disembodied voice of Jesus appeared to Paul. See also 1 Corinthians 15:8

## **Purpose of Jesus Death & Resurrection**

- **To make us righteous before God**

In older days before the days of Christ, for the cleansing of sin, people used to a lot of animal sacrifices. The sacrifice of an animal represents the removal of the guilt. By Jesus death on the cross, our sins, guilt and evil behaviour were removed. Jesus lived a life of righteousness. He came as a man, lived as a man, died as a man, underwent all sufferings except he didn't have sin.

- **To grant us a new life**

Jesus resurrected for us on the third day and thus the death in the cross became a symbol of victory. He is a victorious and living Saviour. He fulfilled His promise to give the eternal life to His disciples. After his resurrection he was taken to heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit as our guide and we will be able to bear good fruits to him.

- **To lead a victorious life and an eternal life.**

When we do sin, we will become slaves of Satan. When we do God's will and obey his commandments, we will be able to overcome sin and lead a victorious life. After our death, when Jesus comes again, he will give us eternal life.

### **Expectation of Jesus about a Christ's follower**

- Jesus washed away our sins by dying on the cross for us and his resurrection gave us righteousness and eternal life. It is our duty to believe in the word of God and accept Jesus and our personal saviour and be a witness for him. We have to accept the salvation which is given as a gift

- With Jesus we will be able to win over temptations of sin and become strong in Jesus. We have to read the Bible daily and pray every day and grow with Jesus Christ. God will grant us the gift of Holy Spirit who will always be with us and guard and guide us.

All available sources recognise Jesus' death by crucifixion as fact. It is a fulfilment of the God's plan to save the humanity from committed sin of Adam and Eve. Even today people are experiencing through faith because of that it is only a fact and not a myth.