

Chapter Thirteen

JESUS' DEATH

It was now around midday, and darkness came over the whole land until midafternoon with an eclipse of the sun. The curtain in the sanctuary was torn in two. Jesus uttered a loud cry and said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." After he said this, he expired. The centurion, upon seeing what had happened, gave glory to God by saying, "Surely this was an innocent man."

[Luke 23:44-47]

Almost all Christians believe that Jesus was tortured and then crucified to death. Still, there is a great deal of conjecture and speculation about the last days of Jesus. As mentioned before, some rather radical theories exist regarding the crucifixion, including that someone else was crucified instead, or that Jesus did not die but was in a coma when removed from the cross.

There are no reports of the event from neutral or even hostile sources. For Christians the only source of information on this extremely important event has been the Bible. Even the Gospels are full of contradictions regarding this event.

MATTHEW & MARK

The Gospel of Matthew gives the following account:

The procurator's soldiers took Jesus inside the praetorium and collected the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and wrapped him in a scarlet military cloak. Weaving a crown of thorns they fixed it on his head, and stuck a reed in his right hand. Then they began to mock him by dropping to their knees before him, saying, "All hail, king of the Jews!" They also spat at him. Afterward they took hold of the reed and kept striking him on the head. Finally, when they had finished making a fool of him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucifixion. On their way out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon. This man they pressed into service to carry the cross. Upon arriving at a site called

Golgotha (a name which means Skull Place), they gave him a drink of wine flavored with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among them by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Above his head they put the charge against him in writing: "THIS IS JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS." Two insurgents were crucified along with him, one at his right and one at his left. People going by kept insulting him, tossing their heads and saying: "So you are the one who was going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days! Save yourself, why don't you? Come down off that cross if you are God's Son!" The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, also joined in the jeering: "He saved others but he cannot save himself! So he is the king of Israel! Let's see him come down from that cross and then we will believe in him. He relied on God; let God rescue him now if he wants to. After all, he claimed, 'I am God's Son.' " The insurgents who had been crucified with him kept taunting him in the same way. From noon onward there was darkness over the whole land until midafternoon. Then toward midafternoon Jesus cried out in a loud tone, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

[Matthew 27:27-46]

While the Gospel of John, like Matthew above, narrates that the procurator's soldiers were the ones who took Jesus inside to torture him and crucify him, the Gospel of Mark states that *"the chief priests, with the elders and scribes (that is, the whole Sanhedren) bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate."* Generally, however, Mark's account is similar to that given in Matthew's Gospel.

LUKE

Luke's narration of Jesus' death is significantly different from that of Matthew and Mark. According to Luke, Jesus was sent by Pilate to Herod, then back to Pilate, then he narrates that Jesus delivered a short sermon on route to his crucifixion:

As they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon the Cyrenean who was coming in from the fields. They put a crossbeam on Simon's shoulder for him to carry along behind Jesus. A great crowd of people followed him, including women who beat their breasts and lamented over him. Jesus turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming when they will say, 'Happy are the sterile, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin saying to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' If they

do these things in the green wood, what will happen in the dry?" Two others who were criminals were led along with him to be crucified. When they came to Skull Place, as it was called, they crucified him there and the criminals as well, one on his right and the other on his left. [Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing."]

[Luke 23:26-34]

JOHN'S ACCOUNT

Jesus was led away, and carrying the cross by himself, went out to what is called the Place of the Skull (In Hebrew, Golgotha). There they crucified him, and two others with him: one on either side, Jesus in the middle. Pilate had an inscription placed on the cross which read, JESUS THE NAZOREAN THE KING OF THE JEWS.

[John 19:16-19]

John's report of the events immediately preceding the crucifixion has Jesus carrying the cross himself. The inscription on the cross is quite different here from that in the other Gospels.

There are many other discrepancies among the narrations of Jesus' death. From the Bible alone it is impossible to know what really happened at that time.

Some of these discrepancies can be understood by the fact that Jesus' contemporaries had different understandings of his death. Willi Marx sen clearly points this out (see *JESUS AND EASTER*, Abingdon Press, 1990. pp. 54-55):

It cannot be disputed that different circles in early Christianity held to different understandings of the death of Jesus. In the material of the Synoptic tradition there is the thought that the death of Jesus was a consequence of his activity. Jesus is portrayed there as one who by his activities risked persecution, and even death. He is not, however, portrayed as one who had wanted his own death, or even as one who had understood it as a vicarious or atoning death. The idea of the death of Jesus as an "atonement" is foreign to the material of the Synoptic tradition (although it was later inserted at two places, Mark 10:45 and 14:24). Rather, Jesus dies because he hazarded death in the way he carried on his activity.

In the formulas and especially in Paul's letters, the understanding of Jesus' death as an atonement is evident. Historically and theologically this idea has been of greater significance, yet it is only one understanding of the death of Jesus.

The fact remains that from the Bible alone we can not get a clear picture of what actually happened.

QURAN'S MATHEMATICALLY CODED ACCOUNT

Fortunately, with the discovery of mathematically authenticated scripture, we have a reliable reference that enables us to sift through the various narrations of this event.

The account of Jesus' death in the Quran is startling. It states: "*they never killed Jesus; they never crucified him; they were only made to think that they did.*" :

*They claimed that they killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of God. In fact, they never killed him; they never crucified him; they were only made to think that they did. Indeed, those who speculate about him are full of doubt about their own accounts; they are never sure. They only conjecture. What is absolutely certain is: **they never killed him. Instead, God raised him to Him.** God is Almighty, Most Wise.*

[Quran 4:157-158]

Undoubtedly, this Quranic narration represents a new and profound account of the death of Jesus. It is bound to shock most people, so some explanation is in order.

The Quran consistently talks about the 'real person,' i.e., the soul, when talking about anyone. The Quran differentiates between two human entities: a temporary entity, the body, and an eternal entity which is 'the person.' The temporary entity is considered a shell or a garment worn by the lasting entity. The Quran does not regard this temporary shell as 'the person.'

The importance of the body, or the person's outer shell, is in serving the real person by effecting sufficient growth and development of the soul in preparation for the real, eternal life (of the Hereafter). If we look upon one's body as a wild horse, one attains the required growth and development by taming and controlling the whims of this horse. At the end of one's predetermined interim in this life, one sheds the shell and moves on towards the eternal Hereafter; the body's role ends.

Thus, when the Quran states that "*they never crucified Jesus; they never killed him,*" the word "*him*" here refers to the real Jesus, not his body.

The body may be present somewhere, but the person may or may not be present with it. People who are familiar with 'out-of-body experiences' know that the body is nothing more than a garment or a physical vehicle for the soul. In out-of-body experiences, the intellect remains with the person, not with the body. Those who practice out-of-body (or astral projection) experiments often describe the body as just laying there like an inanimate object.

The Quran explains clearly that Jesus, the real person, was 'raised to God' prior to any torture or crucifixion. Those who believed that they were torturing or crucifying Jesus were in fact dealing with Jesus' body, an empty shell devoid of feelings and knowledge.

Being 'raised to God' indicates another important fact—that the righteous go directly to heaven, and do not wait for the Day of Resurrection to attain Paradise:

THE RIGHTEOUS DO NOT DIE; when their lives on this earth come to the predetermined end, the angel of death simply invites them to leave their earthly bodies and move on to Heaven, the same Paradise where Adam and Eve once lived. Heaven has been in existence since Adam and Eve. We learn from 89:27-30 that God invites the believers' souls: "Enter My Paradise."

The above quote is from an article written by Dr. Rashad Khalifa, the discoverer of the Quran's mathematical code (*SUBMITTERS PERSPECTIVE*, Masjid Tucson, Feb., 1990). He continues:

As far as people on earth are concerned, the righteous "die." People do not realize that the righteous simply leave their bodies, and move on to Paradise....The righteous go to Paradise, while their friends and relatives are still living on earth. Like going to Hawaii and waiting for us there.

He cites several verses which are well worth examining:

Give good news to those who believe and work righteousness that they will have gardens with flowing streams. When provided with provisions of fruits therein, they will say, "This is what was given to us in the past." They will be given similar provisions, and they will have pure spouses therein. They abide therein forever.

[Quran 2:25]

The indication in this verse is that the righteous are in a place similar to gardens of the Hereafter, with similar provisions. This would certainly be the case if they had been waiting in the Garden of Eden (also called Paradise), until the Day of Resurrection. Coupled with the following verses, that is the clear conclusion:

Do not think that those who are killed in the cause of God are dead; they are alive at their Lord, being provided for.

[Quran 3:169]

Do not say about those who are killed in the cause of God, "They are dead." For they are alive, but you do not perceive.

[Quran 2:154]

(At the time of his death) he was told, "Enter Paradise." He said, "I wish my people (on earth) knew that my Lord has forgiven me and honored me."

[Quran 36:26-27]

In the case of Jesus, all these mathematically coded verses show that God raised the real person, Jesus' soul, leaving his body for the torturers and crucifiers. Thus, they never tortured Jesus. They never crucified him. He was gone long before any torture or crucifixion of his body:

They plotted and schemed, but so did God; God is the best schemer. Thus, God said, "O Jesus, I am putting you to death; raising you to Me, and ridding you of the disbelievers. I will make those who follow you high above those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is the ultimate destiny of all of you. Then I will judge among you concerning your disputes."

[Quran 3:54-55]

It is astonishing to find this phenomenon, the separation of the real person from the still living body, indicated in the New Testament, and even more specifically stated in some apocryphal literature. There is an especially straightforward reference to this phenomenon reported by James Brashler in *THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY* (Harper & Row, 1977).

The Nag Hammadi Library is a collection of ancient documents unearthed at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. They are described as containing "the sacred scriptures of the Gnostic movement that emerged and rapidly grew in the cradle of civilization at the time of Jesus and early Christianity. Its codices are a priceless periscope into the tumultuous world of ideas brewing during one of civilization's great turning points."

James Brashler describes a vision seen by the apostle Peter, in his introduction to the Gnostic *Apocalypse of Peter* (Ibid., p. 339):

The first visionary scene, is depicting the hostile priests and people about to kill Jesus (72,4-9)...The second scene (81,3-14) describes Peter's vision of the crucifixion of Jesus. The accompanying interpretation by Jesus makes a distinction between the external physical form and the living Jesus; the latter stands nearby laughing at his ignorant persecutors.

A clear distinction is thus made in this ancient literature, very close to the time of Jesus, between "the external physical form," i.e., the body of Jesus, and "the living Jesus." According to this narration, the real person of Jesus was unphased by the torturers and persecutors of his soulless body.

Looking at the translation of the *Apocalypse of Peter* itself (Ibid., p. 344), we find the startling vision of Peter:

When he had said those things, I saw him seemingly being seized by them. And I said, "What do I see, O Lord, that it is you yourself whom they take, and that you are grasping me? Or who is this one, glad and laughing, on the tree? And is it another one whose feet and hands they are striking?" The Savior said to me, "He whom you saw on the tree, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is the fleshy part."

[Apocalypse of Peter, VII, 3, 81]

A careful examination of the Gospels of Mark and Luke reveals that Jesus was in fact gone prior to crucifixion. He did not respond to the surrounding chaos. This confirms the

apocryphal account reported in the Nag Hammadi Library, and agrees with the mathematically authenticated account of the Quran:

The chief priests, meanwhile, brought many accusations against Jesus. Pilate interrogated him again: "Surely you have some answer? See how many accusations they are leveling against you." But greatly to Pilate's surprise, Jesus made no further response.

[Mark 15:3-5]

Herod was extremely pleased to see Jesus. From the reports about him he had wanted to see him, and he was hoping to see him work some miracle. He questioned Jesus at considerable length, but Jesus made no answer. The chief priests and scribes were at hand to accuse him vehemently. Herod and his guards then treated him with contempt and insult....

[Luke 23:8-11]

Putting all these accounts together, this possible picture emerges:

1. The human being consists of two main distinct entities:
 - a. the body, which serves as a mere shell or garment, and
 - b. the soul, which is the real person.
2. In accordance with a predetermined plan, the time came for Jesus to complete his mission as God's messenger to the Children of Israel and as the Messiah. This coincided with the scheme of Jesus' adversaries to crucify him. Just before executing their plot, God's plan was implemented, and Jesus the real person was summoned or "raised to God."
3. Jesus' body was left for his persecutors to torture and crucify; they were dealing with an empty shell devoid of all feelings or understanding.
4. Thus, the Quran's mathematically coded statements that "*they never killed Jesus, they never crucified him; they were led to believe that they did,*" are accurate and proven facts.

MODERN DEMONSTRATION

Rashad Khalifa draws an interesting parallel between what he understands to be the case in Jesus' death, and that of a modern patient who underwent an historical surgical procedure. (See Khalifa's *QURAN THE FINAL TESTAMENT*, Ibid. Appendix 22, p. 667)

On November 25, 1984, William J. Schroeder, from Jasper, Indiana, received an artificial heart at Humana Heart Institute International of Louisville, Kentucky. The *NEW YORK TIMES* of Monday, November 26, 1984 published the following news item:

SURGEONS IMPLANT MECHANICAL PUMP TO REPLACE HEART

LOUISVILLE, KY, Nov 25 -- A 17-member surgical team today removed the diseased heart of a 52-year old man and replaced it with a plastic and metal pump....Dr. Devries leaned over Mr. Schroeder and said, "Everything went well, perfectly."

On Wednesday, December 12, 1984, the 18th day after receiving the artificial heart, Mr. Schroeder was so normal and so alert that when President Reagan talked with him he complained about a delay in sending his Social Security disability check. On the *nineteenth* day, December 13, 1984, the world was told that Mr. Schroeder "suffered a stroke."

What really happened was that Mr. Schroeder, the real person, departed. William J. Schroeder died. His body, the empty shell, continued to function through artificial means. The artificial heart continued to pump, and all other life processes of Mr. Schroeder's body continued to work. Significantly, from that moment on, he never recognized the date, the day or time. The *WASHINGTON POST* of Friday, December 14, 1984 published the following news:

LOUISVILLE, Dec. 13---William J. Schroeder, who became the world's second recipient of an artificial heart 18 days ago, tonight suffered a stroke in his hospital bed as he ate dinner with his wife, doctors reported.... (Dr. A. M.) Lansing replied, "unequivocally, no," when asked if the stroke could have been a result of Schroeder's many activities recently. These included a telephone conversation with President Reagan Wednesday and fast government action earlier today to deliver a Social Security disability check that he had told Reagan was overdue.

At Humana Hospital - Audubon, where the implant took place, Lansing said Schroeder was talking to his wife when "she noticed suddenly he stopped feeding himself and was just holding his food in his right hand." He appeared "drowsy, his eyes rolled back, and he became somewhat limp," Lansing said.

The stroke was not "life threatening," Lansing said. Shortly afterward, Schroeder was somewhat "stuporous" and "not talking intelligently," Lansing said.

In retrospect, it is obvious that William J. Schroeder actually left his body on the nineteenth day (December 13, 1984) after receiving the artificial heart on November 25, 1984. Schroeder was raised to God about 600 days-19 months-before his body finally ceased to function.

According to the Quran, this is precisely what happened to Jesus: he was raised to God before the crucifixion of his empty body:

They claimed that they killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of God. In fact, they never killed him; they never crucified him; they were led to believe that they did.... For sure, they never killed him. Instead, God raised him to Him. God is Almighty, Most Wise.

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