

The Death of Jesus



In contrast to the Gospel accounts that Jesus died by crucifixion, Acts 5:30 in the NIV reads, "you killed him by **hanging him on a tree**" [KJV: "**slew and hanged on a tree**"].

According to this wording, Jesus either suffered **death by hanging** (NIV), or people **killed him by stabbing** (刺傷) and then **hung him on a tree** to humiliate him (KJV).



Peter and the other apostles also testify that Jesus was executed by hanging. As live witnesses giving testimony in court would do, Peter says elsewhere, "**They put him to death by hanging him on a tree**" (Acts 10:39).

Galatians 3:13 makes it clear that "**the body of Jesus was hung on a tree in order to place him under a curse.**" In line with the command of Deuteronomy 21:22–23—"If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day... because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse"—it appears that someone killed Jesus, then hung him up to disgrace him, and had him buried that evening. All four Gospels record that Jesus died and was buried **on the day of his execution.**

All the Gospels report that, at the moment Jesus was seized, a disciple (Simon Peter, John 18:10) cut off the ear of the high priest's servant with a sword. This suggests there was **knife-play on both sides.** At that moment, it seems Jesus was killed and the disciples all fled. The Synoptics all say the disciples fled when Jesus was arrested; one is led to wonder whether they ran because Jesus was killed **during** the sword fight at the scene.

Mark adds: "A young man, wearing nothing but a linen cloth, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving the cloth behind" (Mark 14:51–52). The "young man" is the author himself, describing his panicked flight and his later regret.

Just before the supposed crucifixion, Jesus prays, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

But when the crucifixion is said to be carried out, Jesus cries, "Eli, Eli, lama

sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). This is a verbatim borrowing from Psalm 22:1—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

That Jesus is portrayed as calmly accepting death in prayer **before** the crucifixion in Matthew and Mark, and then as **voicing complaint** to God **at** the crucifixion, raises the suspicion that the subsequent stories—after the swordplay at the arrest—were later additions by different hands.

It is standard scholarship that the **earliest text of Mark** lacked the resurrection narrative (everything after 16:8—or even chapter 16 as a whole). From the above, one may infer that the Jesus story originally ended with his death at the moment of the sword fight—at Matt 26:56, Mark 14:52, and Luke 23:53—and that all later material was **subsequently added**.

In fact, those sentenced to crucifixion **rarely** died that same day; they often hung for several days. Because the next day was the Passover Sabbath, all procedures related to the execution would have had to be **completed that day**. If so, the Gospel claim that Jesus underwent a full crucifixion that day carries a strong likelihood of **fabrication**.



In Luke, before dying by crucifixion, Jesus converses with the two criminals crucified with him and finally says, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46), showing no complaint but a calm acceptance of death. This appears to be an attempt to resolve the inconsistency in Matthew and Mark regarding Jesus' attitude toward death—by adding the miracle of healing the high priest's servant's ear, thereby averting death at the arrest scene, and by fabricating a trial-based crucifixion to legitimize the narrative.

In the end, it is most reasonable to conclude that the early Gospel story **ended** with Jesus' death in the sword fight when they came to arrest him, and that everything thereafter was **added later**.