

Did the Crucifixion Happen? Overwhelming Historical Evidence Showing Jesus' Crucifixion

I. Overview

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ represents a fact that virtually every expert concedes. This overwhelming consensus rests upon more than a dozen Christian and non-Christian sources, thus explaining why modern scholars across the full spectrum (evangelicals, radicals, and even atheists) overwhelmingly agree upon this historical fact.

II. Multiple Historical Sources Confirm Jesus' Crucifixion

Both Christian and non-Christian sources converge upon the historical fact that Pontius Pilate condemned Jesus to crucifixion during the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

A. Non-Christian Sources Corroborate the Crucifixion

Both Jewish and Roman historians explicitly document the crucifixion of Jesus on the order of Pontius Pilate.

- Josephus (Jewish Historian, AD 37/38 to after AD 100). “And when **Pilate**, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, **condemned [Jesus] to the cross**, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so.”¹
- Tacitus (Roman Historian, about AD 56 – 120). “The founder of this name, Christ, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate.”²

B. Christian Sources Report the Crucifixion

Multiple independent passages of the New Testament establish the crucifixion as a historical fact. A few examples include the following:

- All Four Gospels & Acts. Matthew 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:33-49; John 19:16-30; Acts 2:22-23, 4:10, 5:30 (NASB).
- Paul's Epistles. See, e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:23; Philippians 2:8 (NASB).

¹ John Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 1, p. 1:61 (1991) (revised text deleting likely Christian additions: (1) “if indeed one should call him a man,” (2) “He was the Messiah,” and (3) “For he appeared to them on the third day, living again, just as the divine prophets had spoken of these and countless other wondrous things about him”); see also Robert Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, p. 83 (2000) (with Greek text and revised translation); James Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism*, p. 95 (1988) citing translation by Shlomo Pines, *An Arabic Version of Testimonium Flavianum and Its Implications* (1971) (“Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die”).

² Robert Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, pp. 41-42 (2000); see also John Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Vol. 1, p. 1:89-90 (1991) (“passage is obviously genuine” as “the very anti-Christian tone of the text makes Christian origin almost impossible”).

III. Experts Overwhelmingly Agree That Jesus Was Crucified

Based upon the overwhelming historical evidence, scholars across the spectrum (from evangelical to skeptical) concede the crucifixion as a historical fact.

A. Nearly All Scholars Agree upon the Crucifixion as a Fact

- Gary Habermas. “[T]he vast majority of critical scholars who have studied this material also agree that Jesus’s crucifixion is a historical event due to the reasons such as those we just raised earlier.”³
- Justin Bass. “Even though [1 Corinthians 15:3] does not mention crucifixion specifically, 99 percent of scholars agree this refers to Jesus’ crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.”⁴
- Benjamin Shaw. “These lines of evidence have convinced virtually all scholars across a wide theological spectrum that Jesus’ death is a historical fact.”⁵

B. Skeptical Scholars Concede the Historical Fact of the Crucifixion

- Gerd Lüdemann (atheist scholar). “[T]he fact of the death of Jesus as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.”⁶
- John Dominic Crossan (radical scholar). “That [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can be.”⁷
- Bart Ehrman (atheist professor). “The most certain element of the tradition about Jesus is that he was crucified on the orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate. The crucifixion is independently attested in a wide array of sources is not the sort of thing that believers would want to make up about the person proclaimed to be the powerful Son of God (see box 5.1).”⁸
- Pinchas Lapide (Jewish scholar). “[T]he death of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross . . . may be considered historically certain, both according to statements of the evangelists which are basically in agreement, and also from non-Christian sources”⁹

³ Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 343 (2024) (highlight added).

⁴ Justin Bass, *The Bedrock of Christianity*, p. 96 (2020) (highlight added).

⁵ Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 133 (2024) (highlight added).

⁶ Gerd Lüdemann with Alf Özen, *What Really Happened to Jesus*, p. 17 (1995) quoted in Gary Habermas, *On the Resurrection: Evidences*, p. 345 (2024) (highlight added).

⁷ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, p. 145 (1994) quoted in Benjamin Shaw, *Trustworthy*, p. 133 (2024) (highlight added).

⁸ Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament*, p. 256 (2004); see also Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?* p. 163 (2012) (“That Jesus died by crucifixion is almost universally attested in our sources, early and late”) (highlight added).

⁹ Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, p. 32 (2002) (highlight added).

- Jesus Seminar (rejecting > 80% of New Testament). “There was a person named Jesus, who was executed by the authorities during the prefecture of Pontius Pilate (26-36 C.E.).”¹⁰

IV. Conclusion

Based on this record, both the Christian and non-Christian sources fully establish the crucifixion as a historical fact upon which the experts overwhelmingly agree.

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¹⁰ Robert Funk & The Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus*, p. 567 (1998) (rated as “high level of confidence”) (highlight added).