



Early Evidence of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

The first two centuries after Christ's death provide numerous references affirming the death and crucifixion of Jesus. These references come from a diverse array of sources, including historical texts, religious writings, and early Christian authors.

New Testament Texts

1. The Gospels

- **Matthew 27:32–56**: Describes the crucifixion of Jesus, detailing events such as Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross and Jesus' final moments on the cross. “And they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull)...”
- **Mark 15:21–41**: Offers a narrative of the crucifixion, emphasizing the mockery Jesus faced and his eventual death. “And they crucified him...”
- **Luke 23:26–49**: Provides an account of the crucifixion, highlighting Jesus' interactions with the two criminals crucified alongside him. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
- **John 19:16–37**: Details the crucifixion, including Jesus' dialogue with his mother and the disciple whom he loved, and the piercing of his side. “When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son.’”

1. The Epistles

- **1 Corinthians 1:23**: Paul refers to the crucifixion, emphasizing it as a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. “But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...”

- **1 Corinthians 15:3–4**: Paul affirms that Christ died for sins, was buried, and raised on the third day. “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...”
- **Galatians 3:13**: Mentions Christ being "cursed" as he hung on a tree, an allusion to crucifixion. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...”

Early Christian Writings

1. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–108 AD)

In his letters, Ignatius frequently refers to the crucifixion. For example, in the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, he asserts that Jesus truly suffered and was crucified under Pontius Pilate. “**He was truly nailed up in the flesh for our sakes** under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch...”

2. Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 AD)

In his *First Apology*, Justin refers to the crucifixion of Jesus as a historical event, arguing for its significance in Christian theology. “**For they proclaimed our Christ to have been crucified**, and to have ascended to heaven...”

3. Irenaeus (c. 130–202 AD)

In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus discusses the crucifixion, emphasizing its importance in salvation history. “**...by his cross, he triumphed over those who opposed him...**”

4. Phlegon of Tralles (c. 80–140 AD)

Phlegon is quoted by Origen regarding the crucifixion and the events around it.

“And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign **Jesus appears to have been crucified**, and the great earthquakes which then took place... “ (Origen Against Celsus, Book 2, Chapter 33

5. **Gospel of Peter** (2nd century AD) - Apocryphal and considered of interest only

This apocryphal text provides a narrative of the crucifixion. “And they brought two malefactors, and **they crucified the Lord between them...**”

Non-Christian Sources

1. **Tacitus** (c. 56–120 AD)

In the *Annals* (Book 15, Chapter 44), Tacitus mentions the execution of Christus (Christ) during the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate. “Christus, from whom the name had its origin, **suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius** at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate...”

2. **Josephus** (c. 37–100 AD)

In *Antiquities of the Jews* (Book 18, Chapter 3), Josephus refers to Jesus' crucifixion, though the authenticity of this passage (Testimonium Flavianum) is debated due to possible later Christian interpolation. “...Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, **had condemned him to the cross...**”

3. **Mara bar Serapian** (c. 70 AD AD)

In the Syriac Manuscript, Mara bar Serapian speaks of the Jews killing their “wise king,” which is said to be Jesus whose teachings persisted.. “**Or the Jews by murdering their wise king?**...After that their kingdom was abolished. God rightly avenged these men... The wise king...Lived on in the teachings he enacted” (Syriac Manuscript, Additional 14,658 (British Museum)

4. **Lucian of Samosata** (c. 125–180 AD)

In *The Passing of Peregrinus*, Lucian mocks Christians for worshipping a man who was crucified in Palestine. “...**the man who was crucified in Palestine** because he introduced this new cult into the world...”

5. **Babylonian Talmud** (c. 3rd–5th century AD, with earlier sources)

References in the Talmud discuss the execution of Jesus, though details differ from Christian accounts. “**On the eve of Passover, Yeshu was hanged...**”

Conclusion

These references from both Christian and non-Christian sources across the first two centuries CE collectively affirm that Jesus died by crucifixion. They demonstrate a consistent narrative that has been integral to Christian doctrine since its earliest days, as well as recognized and recorded by contemporary historians and writers.