Text: Various
Title: The Fact and Meaning of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ
Truth: Turn your eyes to Jesus, the One who died for you.
Date/Location: Good Friday 4/3/2026 at FBC

Introduction

In this message, I intend to help strengthen your faith in Jesus, and to challenge you to faithfulness to Him who died for you.

I. The Fact of the Crucifixion

Most historians, even those not religious, accept that Jesus was crucified by the Romans. This is supported by various sources including the New Testament documents, and the historical context of the time. Here are the main ones:

A. **Philo** wrote about the Romans crucifying Jews in Alexandria as a form of entertainment and that the Roman governor allowed the bodies of crucified people to be removed from the cross earlier than usual if a festival or holy day was upcoming.

B. The Jewish historian **Josephus** wrote of the crucifixion of Jesus by Pilate, and that the Christians believed that Jesus later rose from the dead. This passage is debated but seems sound.

C. **Tacitus** (c. AD 56–117), the chief Roman historian to mention Jesus's death, recorded that "Christus...suffered the extreme penalty under the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate."

D. **Lucian of Samosata** (c. AD 125–180), a Greek rhetorician, observed that Christians worshipped "the man who was crucified in Palestine for introducing this new cult into the world."

E. **Thallus**, a Roman historian writing around AD 52, appears to be the earliest pagan reference, known through later citations discussing phenomena during the crucifixion. According to secondary quotation by Julius Africanus (the original source document is not available), he wrote: "On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down." This

points out non-Christian awareness of what happened, and his attempt not to dismiss it but to explain it as a solar eclipse (which is impossible during the full moon which Passover always is around) strengthens the testimony that it actually did occur.

F. **Mara bar Serapion**, in a Syriac manuscript dated after AD 73, referenced the execution of Jesus as the wise King.

G. Even the **Jewish Talmud** contains a passage about the crucifixion. The Talmud is the record of the oral Jewish tradition or law (Mishnah) accompanied by the further commentaries (Gemara). In the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a, it says, "On the eve of the Passover, Yeshu [the Nasarean] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of the Passover." The passage also speaks about the custom of offering a pain-killing drink to those condemned to death, based on Proverbs 31:6, which confirms Matt. 27:34.

H. Scholar **Bart Ehrman**, no friend to conservative Christians, notes that crucifixion is "almost universally attested in our sources, early and late," and he gives thirteen distinct sources.

I. The agreement of these sources—pagan, Jewish, and Christian—assures us that the crucifixion is one of the most historically secure and widely accepted facts about Jesus. Its truth is beyond any reasonable doubt. And tonight we read one of the four historical documents that recorded it. I hope your confidence is renewed in this event despite the constant attacks against the Christian faith.

II. The Meaning of the Crucifixion

A. At the cross, we see both the dreadful hatred of man and the omnipotent love of God. We see a terrible episode of torture. Remember, it happened. It is a fact. On the physical level, on the human level, on the earthly level, this was a devious and devastating kind of punishment with almost unimaginable

suffering. It was fitting for the worst kind of crimes, which collectively as a race we have done.

But in the same act we see the love of God, including the tender forgiveness of Christ when He asked the Father to forgive those who were ignorantly murdering Him. After teaching us to forgive (Mat. 6:14-15, 18:35), He did so Himself. We also see the love of God toward humanity in general—John 3:16.

B. We can learn about the meaning of the cross by thinking about what Jesus said there, in particular His final word: tetelestai, in Greek τετέλεσται. It occurs only twice in the New Testament—John 19:28 and 30.

Lexically, it comes from the verb τελέω which means to finish, complete, accomplish, fulfill, carry out, pay what is due.

Grammatically, the verb is a perfect passive indicative. It expresses a state of reality or fact (indicative). The passive indicates that whatever "it" is that is finished did not accomplish itself but was accomplished by another agent, in this case Jesus. The perfect tense shows us that it has both a completed piece to it along with an ongoing result.

1. The word was used on legal documents, bills, letters, receipts, tax bills, etc.
2. Receipts were introduced with the word to indicate that the bill was completely paid and could not become "unpaid." It was finished. The debt was settled.
3. Servants would use the word after the completion of their assigned tasks to report to their master that they were done.
4. I read that priests would examine a sacrificial animal and if the lamb was without fault, they would say the word "Tetelestai!" All done!

C. In verse John says that Jesus knew all things were now accomplished. In verse 30, "It" is finished. What are the "all things" and "it" that we are talking about?

1. Jesus came for a specific time and purpose to die and be glorified – John 12:23-24, 27; 17:1. Before that hour, no one could take him prematurely (John 7:30, 8:20).

2. Jesus came for the purpose of preaching the kingdom of God (Mark 1:38).

3. Jesus came to love His own in the world (John 13:1) and then depart and be with the Father.

4. Jesus came to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mat. 20:28).

5. I speculate that some "internal details" between the Father and the Son, unrevealed to us, were to be transacted in Jesus's earthly sojourn and particularly in His death. I say that because the depth of the cross seems impossible to fathom and understand completely. These had to be completed as well.

6. He was delivered up "because of our offenses" (Rom. 4:25) The "finishing" of the wages of our offenses was accomplished at the cross (Rom. 6:23).

7. A long list of theological accomplishments can be added here. Jesus's purpose in coming was to achieve **reconciliation** between God and sinners, **friendship** with God, **victory** over the evil one and death and sin, spiritual **deliverance** from bondage to sin, **justification**, and **adoption**. Those things are all "finished" as well. Not all applied to the sinner as of the moment of the cross, but provided for and available for when God applies salvation to each one who believes.

8. All of the Godward and manward facets or features of redemption are finished. "Finished" is a single word, but it is loaded with meaning.

D. Jesus died for your sins. It is finished. He paid the debt you owed. It is finished. He became your substitute. That is finished as well. He became a curse for you because "cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10, 13). It is finished. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust—also finished. He conquered death to give you life.

It is done. He emancipated His people from slavery to sin. That's done too. He became the lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. You can complete the thought yourself. He did what we are spiritually and physically unable to do ourselves—to be righteous and also pay the debt that our sins create. Thank God it is finished.

Conclusion

Romans 10:9-10 is a kind of top-level summary of how you can positively respond to what the Lord has done for you. Confess that Jesus is Lord and believe truly that God raised Jesus from the dead. He had to be dead to be raised, of course, and that was due to the crucifixion. We do not just "pretend" believe that Jesus rose from the dead. We really believe it. We really believe that He was crucified and died a bloody and terrible death for our sins. We really believe that we need that, and we see evidence aplenty for it.

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