

Resurrection Sunday

April 5, 2026

How can we be sure the NT Gospel accounts are accurate and reliable? How can we be sure that the resurrection accounts are verifiable, and not just some wishful thinking written down ages after the fact, and turned into a cult following? Actually, there are multiple ways to verify the historical accuracy of the Gospels, and today we are looking at just three.

Proximity

Christian scholars, and skeptic scholars alike, agree that the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were penned somewhere in the AD 60's, with John perhaps being a decade later. If Jesus were crucified AD 33, that means the accounts of His death and resurrection would have been published a mere three decades later.

If I wrote a biography of a person that lived, and died, thirty years ago, and I said that He came back from the dead, and I saw him, it would either be preposterous, or it would be true. There would be no middle ground. That short of a length of time gives more than adequate opportunity to refute and disprove. Instead, the Christian Way gained momentum and cultural traction to the extent that the entire populated world had been "Christianized" within 200 years.

How likely is it that thousands of people would have willingly given their lives to martyrdom for something they knew to be a lie?

People

One way to verify an historical account is to name people involved in a specific manner, so that the account could be verified by external sources.

Matthew 27:32; Luke 23:26 Simon, of Cyrene

Mark 15:21 "...Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus..."

Within 30 years of the event, this person could easily be identified and verified, by his hometown and his sons' names.

Matthew 27:57 "... a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph..."

Luke 23:50,51 "...Joseph, a council member, a good and just man... from Arimathea..."

Mark 15:43 "Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member..."

John 19:38 "...Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly..."

How simple would it have been to locate, within 30 years, a wealthy man, of good reputation, who was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, who lived in Arimathea, whose name was Joseph, who had been a secret follower of Jesus, and who had appeared before Pilate to ask the body of Jesus?

Problem

The detractors, the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests, never denied that the body of Jesus was nowhere to be found.

John 19:31-37 The Jews, the Roman soldiers, and the Apostle John were convinced that Jesus was dead.

Mark 15:43-46 The centurion believed Jesus was dead, and Pilate believed Jesus was dead, and Joseph of Arimathea believed Jesus was dead.

Matthew 28:6 "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Matthew 28:11-15 The chief priests admitted there was no body, and all Jerusalem knew that there was no body. They bribed the Roman soldiers to say they were asleep on the watch (a transgression punishable by execution, we know from ancient historians).

Christianity would have been easy to eradicate, if they had just produced the body of Jesus. But they couldn't, because death had been conquered and the tomb was empty.

James 2:21,22; Hebrews 11:17-19 Abraham's conviction of the resurrection is what produced the good work whereby he was justified before men.

Our testimony before men is secured by a manner of life that stems from our conviction of the resurrection.