

The bodies of many dead people s were suddenly thrown from their tombs at the violent earthquake that occurred at Jesus' death ([Matthew 27:51-53](#)). It is commonly thought that these people were resurrected. Were the bodies of these saints resurrected?



Does [Matthew 27:51-53](#) describe a resurrection?

“At that moment the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, and the rocks were split. The tombs broke open, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised, After Jesus’ resurrection, when they had come out of the tombs, they entered the holy city and appeared to many people” ([Matthew 27:51-53 BSB](#)).

There are many Biblical problems with the common claim that a resurrection and appearances of deceased servants of God is described in [Matthew 27:51-53](#). We’ll examine and analyze them one at a time.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

First of all, there was an earthquake powerful enough to ‘split rocks’. An earthquake this powerful can also break open burial tombs and thrust the dead bodies out of them, without a resurrection taking place.

Second, why does text say, “**the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised**”? Why doesn’t it just say, “many *saints* were resurrected”? For example, when the Bible refers to resurrected people, it says, “*He* has been resurrected . . . *He* has been raised” (Matthew 28:6 HCSB). “A large crowd . . . came . . . to see *Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead*” (John 12:10 NIV). The descriptions, *He* and *Lazarus*, rather than *bodies*, indicate that the *person*, but not the same body, was resurrected. *Bodies* were *raised*, that is, cast out of their tombs, but not resurrected, at Matthew 27:51-53.

Third, why would people who were resurrected mid-afternoon Friday just outside Jerusalem, wait until Sunday morning to enter the city? By comparison, after Jesus resurrected a girl who hadn’t been dead very long, “**He said that some food should be given her to eat**” (Mark 5:43 NIV).

It doesn’t make any sense that a bunch of resurrected people would just hang around their tombs without food or water for about a day and a half, and then, all of a sudden walk into Jerusalem en masse!

GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS – GIVES EVIDENCE AGAINST RESURRECTION

Neuter Plurals with Singular Verbs: In ancient Greek grammar, a neuter plural subject frequently takes a singular verb. However, when plural actions (like “going” or “appearing”) are described later in the narrative, the text shifts to plural masculine verbs. The neuter plural subject, “bodies”, indicates they were not alive, but were dead bodies that were tossed out of their tombs by the earthquake.

The Subject-Pronoun Shift: In Matthew 27:53, the text says “coming out of the tombs *after his resurrection, they went...*”. The Greek word for “coming out” is a plural masculine participle, while “bodies” is neuter. This grammatical mismatch means that “they” refers to living people. This is a key point: *The subject-pronoun shift means that the two uses of “THEY” refer, not to the dead bodies cast out of the tombs by the earthquake, BUT TO*

LIVING PEOPLE WHO WERE PASSING THROUGH THE TOMBS AFTER JESUS' RESURRECTION.

“Egeiro”: This is the Greek word translated “raised” in [Matthew 27:52](#), not the Greek word “*anastasin*”, used elsewhere, and translated as “resurrection” ([Matthew 22:23](#); [Luke 20:27](#); [John 11:25](#); [Acts 17:18](#); [23:6,8](#); [24:15](#)), or “resurrected” ([Acts 2:32](#)). “Egeiro” doesn’t always describe resurrection, but also means, “lifted up”, etc. The context determines the meaning. Here are some scriptural examples of some of the other uses of “*egeiro*” :

“What man . . . wil not take hold of it and lift it out” ([Matthew 12:11 LSB](#)).

“”Jesus . . . touched them and said, ‘Get up’” ([Matthew 17:7 LSB](#)).

“Yahweh God . . . raised up a horn of salvation for us” ([Luke 1:69 LSB margin](#)).

“Jesus . . . got up from supper” ([John 13:4 LSB](#)).

“The Scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘I raised you up for this very purpose’” ([Romans 9:17 NIV](#)).

The scriptural evidence is strong that “*egeiro*”, “raised”, doesn’t always mean resurrected. [Matthew 27:51-53](#) is one of these cases.

JESUS WAS THE FIRST PERMANENTLY RESURRECTED, ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

“Now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” ([1 Corinthians 15:20 LSB](#)). Jesus was the first person resurrected to heaven.

“The firstborn from the dead” ([Colossians 1:18 LSB](#)). Jesus was the first person resurrected to heaven.

“We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19-20 LSB).

The scriptures are very clear that Christ was the first one to receive a permanent resurrection. The bodies thrust out of tombs by the earthquake at [Matthew 27:51-53](#) could not be a resurrection, on this basis alone.

THE TYPE AND TIMING OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE FAITHFUL

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44 LSB). Faithful servants of God are resurrected with spiritual bodies, which are invisible, not with fleshly, visible bodies.

“We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16 LSB). About 20 years after Jesus’ death, the apostle Paul writes under divine inspiration that the dead in Christ haven’t yet been resurrected, but would resurrected at the time of Christ’s return..

“And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39-40 LSB). About 30 years after Jesus’ death, the apostle Paul writes under divine inspiration that the faithful Old Testament servants had not yet received their reward of resurrection.

These scriptural facts alone prove that the bodies thrust out of tombs by the earthquake at [Matthew 27:51-53](#) could not have been resurrected.

WHY IS THERE NO MENTION OF THESE ‘RESURRECTED SAINTS’ LATER?

“They were conversing with each other about all the things which had happened . . . one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, ‘Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?’ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to Him, ‘The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a mighty prophet in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people . . . crucified Him . . . it is the third day since these things happened’” (Luke 24:13-21 LSB). On that Sunday afternoon of Jesus’ resurrection day, why was there no mention of any resurrected saints walking around Jerusalem?

“Men, brothers, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day” (Acts 2:29 LSB). Why was David still dead and in his tomb forty days after Jesus’ resurrection? Why wasn’t David “resurrected”?

“When they had brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them. ‘We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.’ But Peter and the other apostles said in reply, ‘ . . . The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the holy Spirit that God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:27-32 NAB). If many saints had recently been resurrected, and showed up in Jerusalem, why isn’t this even mentioned?

“Now if it is being preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:12 NIV). In the long discussion about the resurrection of the dead and various proofs thereof, why is there no mention of any resurrected people from the events described at Matthew 27:51-53?

The reason that the New Testament never mentions any resurrected people from the events described at [Matthew 27:52-53](#) is that no resurrection occurred.

SEISMOLOGICAL AND GEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Fracturing of Rock Tombs: In regions like ancient Judea, dead bodies were frequently placed in rock-cut tombs or sepulchers sealed with rolling stones. Seismologists and geologists analyzing Dead Sea sediment cores discovered evidence of a **Magnitude 5.5 earthquake around 31-33 A.D.** Such a powerful quake fractures limestone, dislodges heavy blocking stones, collapses hillsides, and physically splits graves open, exposing or spilling the corpses inside.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Modern Historical Parallel (Sonson, Colombia, 1962): Commentators and scientific analysts often point to a modern, verified example of this phenomenon. In 1962, a violent earthquake struck the town of **Sonson, Colombia**. The shifting earth, coupled with landslides, completely shattered the local cemetery structures, physically fracturing the graves and thrusting roughly **200 corpses and skeletal remains out onto the surface of the ground**.

Submersion Displacements (Port Royal, Jamaica, 1692): During the massive **1692 Port Royal earthquake**, two-thirds of the city sank directly into the sea. The extreme violent liquefaction and seismic waves physically ruptured the cemetery, thrusting the buried remains—including the grave of the famous privateer [Sir Henry Morgan](#)—completely out of their resting places and washing them into the ocean.

CONCLUSION

There is an abundance of scriptural evidence that the raising up of dead bodies recorded at

Matthew 27:52-53 was not a resurrection, but evidence of the earthquake at Jesus' death (Matthew 27:51). There is also circumstantial seismological, geological, and historical evidence supporting the conclusion that Matthew 27:52-53 does not describe a resurrection of dead people.