

The Documentation-Expectation Test

Matthew’s Earthquake, Raised Saints, and the Evidential Weight of Public Silence

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Central claim

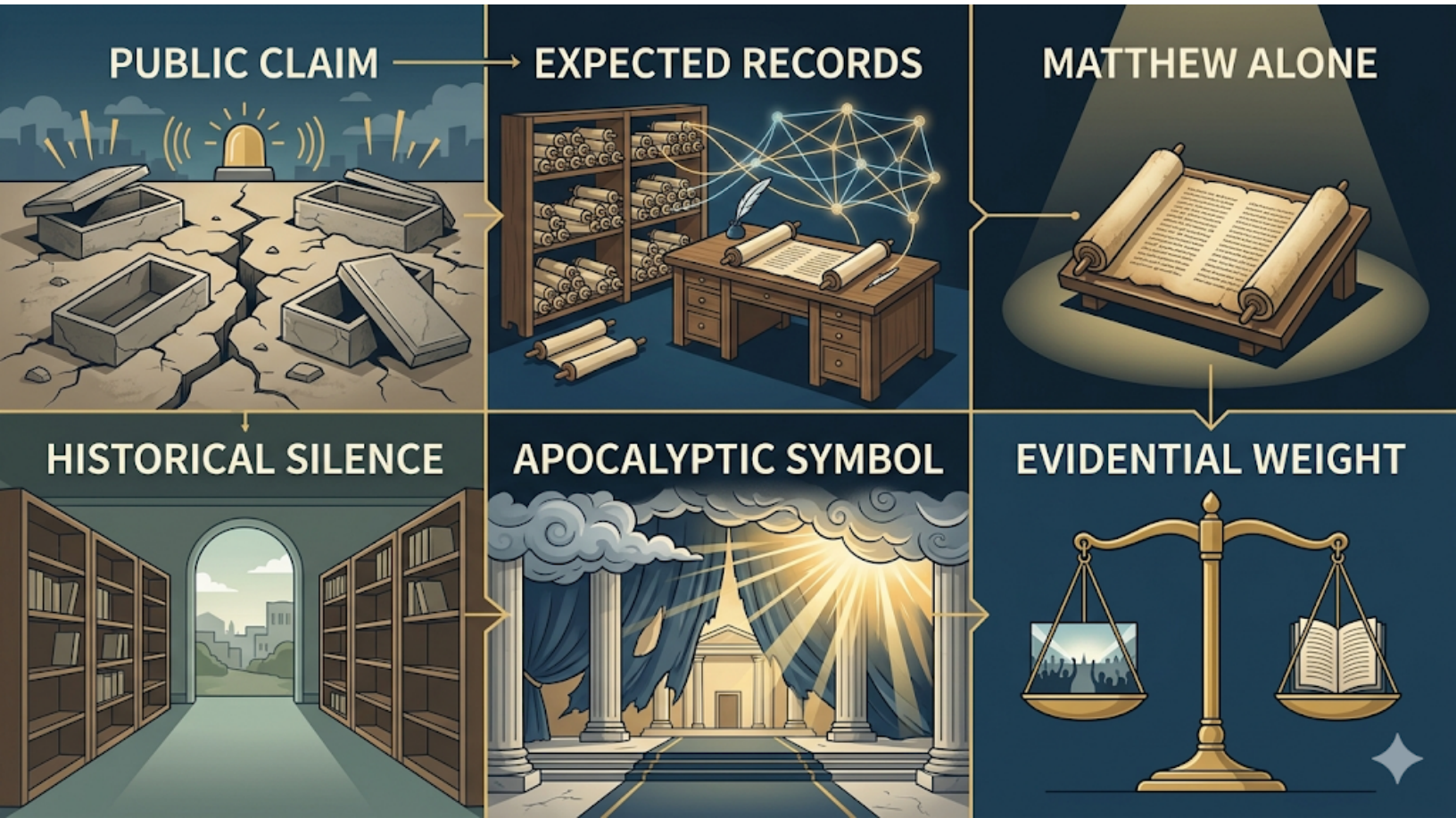
If Matthew 27:51–53 reports a literal public appearance by many returned dead in Jerusalem, some independent or downstream trace is more likely than if the scene is primarily literary-apocalyptic. The surviving record is selective and dependent, so silence cannot prove non-occurrence; nevertheless, Matthew’s isolation, the missing Christian use of an apparent apologetic windfall, and the passage’s scriptural grammar jointly favor the literary-apocalyptic reading. The passage may retain theological meaning, but it should not count as independently corroborated public history without a concrete explanation of the missing trace.

Preview:

Public claim	Expected implication	Observed pressure	Rational conclusion
Many raised persons appeared to many in Jerusalem.	At least some suited channel should preserve or use the event.	Matthew stands alone; later traces depend on Matthew, and geology reaches only a broadly dated quake.	The pattern favors literary-apocalyptic signification over literal civic reportage, defeasibly.

The test concerns the raised-saints scene, not the truth of Christianity or even the occurrence of an earthquake. Each silence must be discounted for access, motive, dependence, and preservation.

Visual preview:



The map moves from a public claim to expected records, Matthew’s documentary isolation, an apocalyptic-symbol alternative, and evidential weighing. It is a heuristic rather than a verdict: the channels are incomplete and partly dependent, so the force lies in the calibrated comparison, not in silence alone.

Abstract

Matthew 27:51–53 reports an earthquake, opened tombs, the raising of many saints, and their appearance to many in Jerusalem. If the last of these is literal public history, it is not a private miracle claim but a socially visible event involving recognizable dead persons. This paper asks whether the event's documentary isolation should reduce confidence in that reading. Its answer is yes, but only through a channel-sensitive comparison: an absence matters when the missing trace would be more probable if the event occurred than under a relevant rival.

The inquiry separates the earthquake from the raised saints, discounts dependent sources, and evaluates the other Gospels, Paul, Acts, Josephus, later Christian reception, and geological evidence according to access, salience, incentive, survival, and independence. No single silence is decisive. Together, however, Matthew's unique report, the lack of early downstream use of an obvious resurrection argument, and the passage's dense scriptural-apocalyptic grammar are more expected if the scene functions primarily as literary-apocalyptic signification than if many formerly dead persons appeared publicly in Jerusalem. A broadly dated early-first-century seismic disturbance, even if accepted, does not corroborate tomb openings or postmortem appearances.

The conclusion is comparative and defeasible. It does not assign a zero prior to miracles, prove the event impossible, settle Matthew's complete authorial intention, or discredit the wider resurrection claim. It does place a burden on the literal-public reading: specify which trace channels should have existed, why their combined silence remains unsurprising, and why a scene preserved by Matthew alone may nevertheless be used as public historical evidence.

Keywords: Matthew 27; raised saints; earthquake; argument from silence; evidence of absence; apocalyptic; historical method

1. The Claim Under Test

Matthew's passion narrative reports a cluster of signs at Jesus' death. The temple veil tears, the earth shakes, rocks split, tombs open, and many bodies of deceased saints are raised. After Jesus' resurrection, they enter the holy city and appear to many. The centurion and those with him then respond to what they have seen. The sequence is brief, but a literal reading makes an extraordinary public claim.

The present target is narrow. Call the *literal-public hypothesis* the claim that many formerly dead persons physically emerged and were seen by many people in historical Jerusalem in connection with Jesus' death and resurrection. This is not the same as the claim that an earthquake occurred. It is not the same as the claim that Jesus rose. It is not the same as the claim that Matthew intended to express theological truth. Keeping these questions separate prevents a geological observation, a literary insight, or a general defense of miracle testimony from being silently transferred to the raised saints.

The relevant comparator is an event-level *literary-apocalyptic hypothesis*: Matthew's scene uses scriptural and apocalyptic motifs to depict the theological significance of Jesus' death without reporting a civic mass appearance by returned dead persons. This alternative need not accuse Matthew of fraud. Ancient narrative can present cosmic and eschatological meaning through a scene whose function is not modern reportage. Nor does symbolic force require that every detail be fictive. The comparison concerns what best explains this particular public-scene claim and its evidential footprint.

Four questions are therefore distinct:

1. What did Matthew's audience understand the scene to mean?
2. Did Matthew intend every described occurrence as ordinary public history?
3. Did the raised-saints appearance occur as described?
4. May the scene be used today as independently supported public evidence?

Exegesis bears heavily on the first two; historical reasoning bears on the latter two. Major commentaries display the passage’s difficulty and the range of possible readings (Brown, 1994; Davies & Allison, 1997; France, 2007; Luz, 2005). The documentation-expectation test does not pretend to replace that work. It asks what should follow in the record if the literal-public hypothesis is true.

The narrow burden

A critic need not prove that miracles never occur. A defender need not prove that every ancient event was multiply recorded. The question is whether this event’s alleged publicity makes the observed documentary pattern more expected under literal public occurrence or under literary-apocalyptic composition.

2. When Silence Becomes Evidence

The slogan “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” is sometimes wise and sometimes false. If a sought trace would rarely survive even when an event occurred, non-detection says little. If the trace would probably be observed, non-detection counts against the event. Sober’s likelihood analysis supplies the basic logic: the direction and strength of negative evidence depend on how probable the observation is under competing hypotheses (Sober, 2009).

Historical sources are imperfect detectors. An event must occur, be noticed, be interpreted as worth reporting, enter a transmissible form, survive copying and loss, and become accessible to us. Failure at any stage can erase a true event. That chain makes ancient silence weaker than silence from a complete modern registry. It does not make every ancient silence evidentially inert.

For each possible trace channel, five questions matter:

Table 1: The documentation-expectation test. A missing trace matters only after its channel is specified.

Factor	Question	Why it matters
Access	Was the author or community positioned to receive the report?	A distant or earlier writer may be a poor detector even for a public event.
Salience	Would this event have stood out within that channel’s interests?	Many returned dead in Jerusalem are more memorable than an ordinary tremor.
Incentive	Would the channel benefit from preserving, using, contesting, or suppressing it?	Christian proclamation and hostile polemic create different but relevant motives.
Preservation	How much of the channel survives, and in what form?	Missing archives and selective copying lower expected recovery.
Independence	Does the trace arise separately, or merely repeat Matthew?	Several dependent retellings do not equal several witnesses.

These questions block two shortcuts. First, listing silent authors does not create a cumulative case unless each had meaningful access and the absences add information. Philo, for example, is not a standing reporter for every Judean event around 30 CE. Tacitus and Pliny wrote in different contexts and for different purposes. Their silence should not be advertised as though each were an independent Jerusalem archive. Second, finding a later mention does not automatically supply independent attestation. A church writer who knows Matthew may preserve Matthew’s story rather than a separate memory.

The important distinction is between *no record survives* and *no record ever existed*. We directly observe only the first. Inference to the second requires assumptions about transmission and preservation. Early Christian

writings circulated through uneven networks, and the surviving corpus is a fraction of what communities produced (Gamble, 1995). Any defensible argument must carry that loss inside the comparison rather than invoking it only when a favored claim is challenged.

3. Why Matthew's Wording Raises the Expectation

The literal-public hypothesis itself generates the documentation pressure. The event is plural: many bodies are raised. It is located in the holy city rather than an unspecified private room. It includes appearances to many. These features imply observers, recognition, social interaction, and consequences beyond one author's vision.

The narrative leaves ordinary questions unanswered. Who were the saints? How were they recognized? Were their tombs known? What happened after their appearances? Did families, priests, or authorities respond? A writer may omit such details for literary economy, but under a literal-public reading the events would not cease when Matthew's sentence ends. Multiple returned dead would create downstream stories, disputes, and practical questions.

The timing is also conspicuous. The tombs open and the saints are raised at Jesus' death, yet they enter the city only after his resurrection. Archer argues that this interval follows Matthew's theological use of Ezekiel 37: Jesus' death raises the saints, while Jesus' resurrection governs their entrance (Archer, 2022). That proposal is evidence of narrative design, not by itself evidence against historicity. It nevertheless shows why the passage cannot be evaluated as a bare incident report detached from its literary architecture.

The language sits inside a recognizable scriptural field. Isaiah 26:19 speaks of the dead rising. Ezekiel 37 joins an earthquake-like disturbance, opened graves, restored bodies, and entry into Israel's land. Daniel 12:2 anticipates sleepers awakening. Zechariah 14 links an earthquake, Jerusalem, and the coming of holy ones. Apocalyptic literature regularly compresses cosmic, terrestrial, and eschatological scenes to interpret decisive events (Collins, 2016).

Scholars disagree about the exact literary mechanism. Troxel argues that Matthew shaped the sequence to climax in the centurion's acclamation and draws attention to a possible Mosaic-era motif in 1 Enoch (Troxel, 2002). Waters reads the saints through apocalyptic temporal and spatial collapse rather than as a simple report located in ordinary chronological time (Waters, 2003). Wuthrich develops a figurative reading of the passion signs, while Archer explains the time gap through Matthew's theological sequencing (Archer, 2022; Wuthrich, 2010). These accounts are not interchangeable, and their disagreement prevents an easy claim of exegetical consensus. Their convergence is narrower: the scene has substantial literary-apocalyptic resources that can explain features a literal chronicle leaves puzzling.

4. A Channel-by-Channel Ledger

The strongest case is cumulative but discounted. It should not multiply every silence as though the sources were independent coin tosses. Mark, Matthew, and Luke are literarily related; Luke and Acts share an author; later Christian texts may depend on canonical Matthew. The ledger below therefore records contribution and limitation together.

The ledger's most important correction is that the external pagan or Jewish channel is not the strongest one. The internal Christian channel is. Paul, Luke-Acts, and the other Gospel narratives do not need to mention every event. Yet they are interested in signs, public testimony, Jerusalem, and resurrection. An event described as many raised persons appearing to many would be unusually usable within those interests.

Synoptic dependence complicates but does not erase the point. On the common view that Matthew used Mark, Matthew added the earthquake and saints to a Markan passion sequence that already contained the torn veil. Luke's omission is not an independent eyewitness denial. It is nevertheless evidence about transmission

and use: another resurrection-affirming author who drew on related passion tradition did not preserve Matthew's addition. John represents a different literary stream but is also highly selective. These are not three equal tests, yet the pattern remains informative (France, 2007; Goodacre, 2001).

Table 2: Trace channels for a literal public appearance of many raised saints.

Channel	Why a trace might be expected	Observed record	Weight and limit
Mark, Luke, and John	Passion and resurrection narratives could use a public mass appearance.	Only Matthew reports the raised saints.	Moderate; dependence, differing aims, and selectivity reduce it.
Paul's letters	First Corinthians 15 gathers witnesses and argues for general resurrection.	Paul names appearances of Jesus, but not Matthew's saints.	Moderate; the topic fits, but Paul may not know the tradition.
Luke-Acts	Public signs and Jerusalem resurrection defense are central.	Neither volume uses the episode.	Moderate; Luke and Acts count as one channel, not two.
Josephus	Judean history includes quakes, prophets, disorder, and portents.	No independent raised-saints tradition appears.	Low to moderate; Josephus is selective, later, and no registry.
Later Christian reception	A public windfall could enter preaching, polemic, names, or local memory.	Later discussion largely interprets Matthew.	Moderate; loss and dependence on Matthew reduce it.
Dead Sea geology	A regional quake may disturb dated sediment.	One study tentatively dates a disturbance to 31 CE, plus or minus five years.	Quake evidence only; it does not attest tombs or raised persons.

5. The Missing Apologetic Windfall

The raised saints would be more than a curiosity within early Christian reasoning. They would connect Jesus' death with the promised resurrection of others and place multiple appearances in Jerusalem. That is precisely the kind of bridge later defenders seek when arguing that resurrection proclamation was public rather than private.

Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 is the sharpest case. He recites appearances of Jesus to named leaders, a group of more than five hundred, all the apostles, and himself; he then argues from Jesus' resurrection to the resurrection of believers. The omission of Matthew's saints does not prove Paul rejected the story. Matthew was probably composed later, and Paul may never have encountered its underlying tradition. The evidential point is narrower: the earliest surviving extended Christian resurrection argument gives no sign of possessing this apparent windfall.

Acts creates similar pressure. Its Jerusalem speeches repeatedly appeal to public knowledge, signs, witnesses, and fulfillment. If residents had recently encountered many identifiable returned dead, the event would fit the work's apologetic aims. But Acts is not independent of Luke, and literary selection remains real. Its silence should therefore increase the cumulative pressure without being counted as a second author in addition to Luke.

The pattern matters because it combines relevance with incentive. A hostile chronicler might ignore a Christian claim. A Christian advocate could have strong reason to preserve it. Appeals to general source loss explain missing pages; they do less to explain why no independent downstream use becomes visible in the early material that did survive.

This is not an argument that a true event must become popular. Reports can disappear. Groups can fail to recognize useful evidence. The point is comparative: repeated non-use is more expected when Matthew's scene is a literary-theological construction internal to his narrative than when it was a known civic event available to the movement's earliest public defense.

6. What Josephus and the Portent Tradition Show

Josephus is useful only if handled modestly. He is not a complete ledger of Judea. He wrote decades after the alleged event, selected material for literary and political purposes, and had no duty to report every local occurrence. His silence alone carries little weight.

What his works do show is that ancient historiography could preserve reports of earthquakes, prophetic disturbances, prodigies, and portents. Josephus narrates an earthquake during Herod's reign and collects ominous signs associated with Jerusalem's fall; in the latter passage he even distinguishes how crowds and learned interpreters read the same reported prodigy (Josephus, 1987), especially *Antiquities* 15.121–147 and *War* 6.288–300. These narratives are not modern verified incident reports. They demonstrate that strangeness or theological interpretation did not automatically disqualify an event from historical memory.

That comparison supports a bounded claim. If multiple recognized dead persons appeared publicly in Jerusalem, the event had features ancient writers and communities sometimes preserved: prodigy, civic disruption, disputed meaning, and theological consequence. It does not follow that Josephus personally would have heard or recorded it. The relevant datum is the failure of any independent Judean line known to us, not the silence of one named author treated as omniscient.

The same restraint applies to claims about Roman writers. Tacitus and Pliny are not strong detectors for this episode. Adding their names can make the surviving archive look denser than it is. A disciplined cumulative case is stronger when it drops weak channels rather than inflating their number.

7. The Earthquake Must Be Kept Separate

Matthew mentions an earthquake at Jesus' death and another at the empty tomb. Geological research has therefore attracted apologetic attention. Williams, Schwab, and Brauer identify a disturbed sediment layer in Dead Sea cores and tentatively date an early-first-century seismic event to 31 CE with an uncertainty of about five years (Williams et al., 2012). That result is worth taking seriously, but its evidential job is limited.

First, a date range spanning several years cannot identify one day or one textual episode. Second, sediment disturbance near the Dead Sea does not by itself establish the location, magnitude, or social perception described in Matthew. Third, even a crucifixion-period earthquake would corroborate only seismic activity. It would not corroborate opened tombs, raised bodies, recognition, entry into Jerusalem, or appearances to many.

This separation matters because bundled narratives invite bundled confirmation. Suppose an earthquake occurred in the relevant decade. That may modestly increase the plausibility of Matthew drawing on a remembered tremor. It does not license the inference that every event attached to the earthquake occurred. A historical report can combine remembered environment, scriptural imagery, and theological construction.

Conversely, rejecting a claimed geological match does not show that no earthquake occurred. Ancient seismic records are incomplete too. The documentation-expectation argument stands chiefly on the raised-saints claim, whose expected human and textual consequences differ from those of an earthquake.

The corroboration rule

Evidence for one component of a compound story supports only that component unless an additional bridge is supplied. A broadly dated earthquake is not evidence for opened tombs or public appearances by returned dead persons.

8. The Literary-Apocalyptic Comparator

The rival hypothesis must explain more than silence. It should also make sense of the passage's positive features. Matthew's cluster does so through scriptural resonance: the torn veil, shaking earth, split rocks, opened graves, awakened saints, holy city, and centurion's confession turn Jesus' death into an eschatological threshold.

Brown, Davies and Allison, Luz, and France differ in detail but situate the passage inside Matthew's theological narration rather than treating it as an isolated chronicle entry (Brown, 1994; Davies & Allison, 1997; France, 2007; Luz, 2005). Troxel's Matthean-creation proposal, Waters's apocalyptic-apostrophe reading, Wuthrich's figurative analysis, and Archer's account of the saints' delayed exit show that literary structure can explain otherwise awkward details (Archer, 2022; Troxel, 2002; Waters, 2003; Wüthrich, 2010).

Literary explanation is not a synonym for falsehood. A writer can use apocalyptic language to interpret an event believed to be historical. The event-level hypotheses can overlap at the level of authorial meaning: Matthew might intend both theological symbolism and public occurrence. But overlap does not dissolve the historical burden. If the raised persons appeared publicly, the literal component still predicts downstream consequences. Symbolic meaning cannot be used to lower the documentation expectation while literal occurrence is simultaneously used as public evidence.

Table 3: The interpretive fork and the evidential price of each route.

Question	Literal public occurrence	Literary-apocalyptic scene
Core reading	Many returned dead appeared to many in historical Jerusalem.	The scene dramatizes eschatological meaning without a civic mass appearance.
Expected footprint	Some independent or downstream human trace is reasonably likely.	Isolation within Matthew and dependence in later reception are unsurprising.
Main strength	Takes the surface public language as event description.	Explains scriptural density, temporal compression, anonymity, and documentary isolation together.
Main cost	Must explain why a conspicuous Christian and civic windfall left no independent surviving line.	Cannot use the scene itself as independently corroborated public historical evidence.
Live possibility	Source loss, limited circulation, or unusual divine purpose may reduce expected traces.	Matthew may still intend theological truth and may incorporate remembered historical material.

The fork prevents a common evidential oscillation. When documentary pressure arises, the episode cannot become pure apocalyptic imagery and therefore exempt from ordinary trace expectations; when apologetic value is desired, it cannot immediately become public historical confirmation. A hybrid reading is coherent, but each component must pay its own evidential cost.

9. Strong Replies and Their Costs

9.1 The sources were lost

Most ancient sources were lost, and this reply deserves real weight. It reduces every documentary expectation. But a useful lost-source defense must identify a channel: a local report, family tradition, administrative note, Christian testimony, or hostile polemic. It must then explain not only why the initial record disappeared but why no independent downstream use entered the materials that survive. General loss is a background fact; it is not a tailored explanation of every missing trace.

9.2 The other authors selected different material

They did. No Gospel is exhaustive, and Paul writes letters rather than a biography. Selection weakens each silence. Yet selection has degrees of plausibility. Omitting an ordinary healing is easier to explain than omitting many raised persons appearing to many in Jerusalem when resurrection witness is the topic. The reply remains possible, but it must say why the event was irrelevant to each channel that seems suited to it.

9.3 The appearances were limited or ambiguous

Perhaps “many” was a small group, the saints were unknown, the appearances were visionary, or the event occurred among a closed circle. Such proposals lower expected documentation. They also narrow the literal-public claim. A defense cannot preserve Matthew’s apparent public scope when drawing apologetic force and then privatize the event when facing missing records.

9.4 Testimony was suppressed

Authorities or opponents might have suppressed reports. Suppression is historically possible, but it is not automatically silence-producing. Controversy can generate hostile memory, rebuttal, legal action, or internal repetition. A suppression account needs evidence about who controlled which channels and why the Christian movement itself failed to preserve an independent reply.

9.5 Matthew’s testimony is enough

One source can report a true event. Multiple attestation is not a logical requirement. A defender may therefore rest the case on Matthew’s credibility, genre, and access. That move is honest, but it changes the public claim: the event is then singly attested, not independently corroborated by its alleged publicity. The documentation-expectation test does not make single attestation worthless; it identifies the additional burden created by this particular claim’s scale.

9.6 Miracles must not be excluded in advance

Agreed. The test assigns no zero prior to miracles. Philosophical critiques of categorical Humean exclusions show why testimony and background assumptions must be evaluated rather than dismissed by definition (Earman, 2000). Historical defenses of Jesus’ resurrection likewise argue that miracle hypotheses should enter comparison rather than be ruled out before inquiry (Licona, 2010). Nothing here depends on methodological exclusion. Even a high prior for divine action leaves the conditional question intact: if many raised persons appeared publicly, how expected is the surviving trace pattern?

9.7 A specified deity might prefer hiddenness

A Christian God-concept could include reasons for allowing the event while preventing a durable public trace. This preserves logical possibility. It also weakens the claim that the episode supplies public evidence. An auxiliary purpose that predicts any documentary outcome can protect the event from disconfirmation, but it cannot then use favorable traces as straightforward confirmation without an independently motivated account of when disclosure should occur.

10. What the Evidence Warrants

The paper's conclusion is not produced by counting silent names. It arises from a structured comparison.

First, the literal-public hypothesis describes an event with unusually high human salience: many returned dead, many appearances, and Jerusalem as setting. Second, the channels most suited to preserving or using such an event are internal Christian ones, and the earliest surviving resurrection argument and related Jerusalem proclamation do not show independent possession of it. Third, later reception is largely text-dependent rather than an independent memory line. Fourth, the geological evidence, at most, bears on a broadly dated earthquake rather than on the saints. Fifth, the passage's scriptural and apocalyptic structure independently supplies a reason to expect a dramatic scene without civic consequences.

These strands converge. None entails that the event did not happen. Together they make the observed record more expected under the literary-apocalyptic hypothesis than under the literal-public hypothesis. The inference is strengthened because the comparator explains both absence and positive narrative form. It is weakened by source loss, literary dependence, and uncertainty about ancient reporting practices.

How strong is the result? Stronger than "we have only one source, so it is false"; weaker than a demonstration. It is a defeasible historical judgment that shifts the burden. A literalist can answer by showing that the relevant channels had low access, low motive, or low preservation even for this event, or by producing an independent trace. Merely repeating that ancient evidence is incomplete does not address why the missing footprint is unsurprising in this particular case.

The practical implication is direct. Matthew 27:51–53 may be read as theology, apocalyptic narration, or a singly attested miracle claim. It should not be presented as though its public wording supplies the independent public evidence that the surviving record lacks. Anyone who uses the episode historically should state the trace expected under the literal reading, the evidence actually available, and the auxiliary assumptions needed to bridge the gap.

11. Conclusion

Matthew's raised saints are not under pressure simply because no second author repeats them. They are under pressure because the claim itself is plural, public, located in Jerusalem, and unusually useful to resurrection proclamation. Those features raise the expected trace. The relevant Christian channels do not behave as though they possessed an independent civic memory of the event, while the passage's scriptural-apocalyptic grammar explains its narrative force without predicting such a memory.

The best calibrated conclusion is therefore comparative: the documentary and literary pattern favors a primarily literary-apocalyptic reading over literal public reportage. Ancient source loss prevents certainty, and the argument neither disproves miracles nor decides the wider resurrection question. It does deny the episode a free evidential privilege. Publicity cannot increase a story's apologetic force while leaving its documentation burden unchanged.

The decisive question for the literal reading is not whether a confirming source could have been lost. Of course it could. It is why the total pattern—Matthew alone, no early independent downstream use, no identifying consequences, and a dense apocalyptic narrative function—should be as unsurprising if many returned dead appeared to many in Jerusalem as it is if Matthew constructed a theological scene.

A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

A.1 Ordinary-language reconstruction

- P1.** If many formerly dead persons appeared publicly to many in Jerusalem, then, after allowance for ancient source loss and dependence, at least some independent or downstream trace is more likely than if the scene is primarily literary-apocalyptic.
- P2.** The surviving record contains Matthew's report and later Matthew-dependent reception, but no clear independent trace of the raised-saints appearance in the other early Christian channels or Judean record considered here.
- P3.** The passage's scriptural density, temporal compression, anonymity, and lack of ordinary consequences are positively expected under a literary-apocalyptic reading.
- P4.** Geological evidence for a broadly dated early-first-century earthquake does not corroborate the tomb openings or appearances and therefore does not remove the documentary contrast.
- P5.** Therefore, the combined documentary and literary evidence favors the literary-apocalyptic hypothesis over the literal-public hypothesis for Matthew's raised-saints scene.
- P6.** This conclusion is defeasible: it does not entail that the event was impossible, that Matthew lacked every historical source, that miracles never occur, or that wider Christian resurrection claims are false.

A.2 Symbols

- *H*: many formerly dead persons literally appeared publicly in historical Jerusalem as described.
- *L*: the public raised-saints scene is primarily a literary-apocalyptic construction rather than a civic mass appearance.
- *A*: the observed absence of a clear independent downstream trace beyond Matthew and Matthew-dependent reception.
- *C*: the relevant channel constraints, including access, selectivity, dependence, and preservation.

A.3 Symbolic form

$$\Pr(A \mid L, C) > \Pr(A \mid H, C) \implies \frac{\Pr(A \mid L, C)}{\Pr(A \mid H, C)} > 1.$$

Plain-English annotation. Given the known limits of the surviving channels, the silence we observe is more likely if Matthew's public scene is literary-apocalyptic than if many returned dead actually appeared in Jerusalem. The ratio greater than one means that this silence favors *L* over *H*. It does not show that *H* is impossible or tell us the final probability of either hypothesis without further background judgments.

The implication is deductively valid once the likelihood inequality is granted: an observation favors the hypothesis under which it is more probable. The inequality itself is not deductively established. It is supported by interpretive and historical judgments about publicity, Christian rhetorical incentive, source dependence, preservation, and the passage's literary fit. Those premises remain contestable and revisable. The formalization therefore preserves the body's bounded conclusion: comparative evidential favor, not demonstrative disproof.

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