

## Historical documentation of the resurrection

There are **no surviving Roman or non-Jewish ancient sources that explicitly say**,  
“*Jesus was seen alive after His death.*”

However — and this is important — there **ARE** early **non-Christian** sources that:

1. **Acknowledge Jesus was crucified,**
2. **Acknowledge His followers believed He appeared alive,**
3. **Acknowledge the explosive rise of Christianity built on that belief,**
4. **Acknowledge that Christians were willing to die for this claim,**
5. **Report that the tomb was claimed to be empty,**
6. **Record that Christians worshiped Jesus as a living divine figure** within decades of His death.

Historically, that’s significant because Romans and Greeks *did not* invent stories of resurrected Jewish peasants — they *only* recorded what Christians insisted had happened.

Below is the complete list of relevant extra-biblical sources.

## 1. Tacitus (Roman historian, c. AD 56–120)

### Annals 15.44

Tacitus confirms:

- Jesus existed
- He was executed under Pontius Pilate
- His followers believed He lived on after death
- The Christian movement exploded in Rome shortly afterward

Tacitus calls Christianity a “*pernicious superstition*” that “*broke out once more*” after Jesus’s execution — implying the movement revived immediately **after His death**, which aligns with the resurrection claims.

Historian note: Tacitus **does not affirm the resurrection**, but he confirms that Christians’ belief in the risen Christ was so strong that Rome considered it dangerous and unstoppable.

## 2. Josephus (Jewish historian, c. AD 37–100)

There are **two passages**:

### A. Testimonium Flavianum (Antiquities 18.3.3)

Even after removing obvious later Christian edits, most scholars agree Josephus recorded:

- Jesus was a real man
- He was crucified under Pilate
- His disciples “**did not abandon him**”
- They “**reported he appeared to them alive**” → *this is the key line in the generally accepted reconstructed version*

### B. The James Passage (Antiquities 20.9.1)

Josephus mentions:

- “James, **the brother of Jesus who was called Christ**”

This establishes Jesus as a historical figure and explains why Christians honored Him — because they believed He rose.

## 3. Pliny the Younger (Roman governor, AD 61–113)

### Letter to Emperor Trajan, AD 112

Pliny reports Christians:

- Worshiped Jesus **as a living God**
- Met weekly before dawn to sing hymns **to Christ as to a deity**

This is less than 80 years after the crucifixion.

This is significant because:

Romans did not worship dead Jewish rabbis — they worshiped living divine beings. The fact that Christians worshiped Jesus strongly implies they believed He was **alive**.

## 4. Suetonius (Roman historian, c. AD 69–140)

### Lives of the Caesars (Claudius 25)

Mentions unrest in Rome caused by followers of “Chrestus” (widely accepted as Christ).

This confirms:

- The Christian movement reached Rome very early
- It was based on a figure believed to be living and active

## 5. Lucian of Samosata (Greek satirist, AD 120–180)

### The Passing of Peregrinus

Lucian mocks Christians for worshiping:

“a crucified sage” whom they believe “**still lives.**”

This is a hostile pagan writer — but he confirms:

- Christians were convinced Jesus was alive after death
- This belief was central and non-negotiable

## 6. Mara bar Serapion (Syriac Stoic philosopher, c. AD 73–100+)

In a letter to his son, Mara writes that:

- The Jews executed their “wise king”
- But he “**lives on**” in the teachings he left behind

Some interpret “lives on” metaphorically, but:

- It shows that even non-Christians recognized **Jesus was believed to be alive**.

## 7. The Jewish Talmud (Later rabbinic writings)

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a) acknowledges:

- Jesus lived
- He was executed
- His followers continued to believe in Him afterward

This indirectly supports:

- The belief in resurrection appearances
- The persistence of the movement after a humiliating death

## Summary: What the Evidence Shows

There is **no Roman eyewitness account of seeing Jesus alive**, because such a person would have become a Christian.

**BUT** every major non-Christian source agrees:

- 1 Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate.**
- 2 His disciples firmly believed He appeared to them alive.**
- 3 This belief spread explosively throughout the empire.**
- 4 Christians worshiped Jesus as a living divine being.**
- 5 Critics and enemies never produced a body.**
- 6 No ancient source claims He remained dead or that His body was recovered.**

## Historical documentation of the resurrection

So while Romans/Jews don't confirm the resurrection event itself, they **absolutely confirm the resurrection beliefs**, which:

- arose instantly after His death,
- transformed cowards into martyrs,
- turned a defeated Jewish movement into a global phenomenon.

Historians consider this extremely powerful evidence.