

THE RESURRECTED JESUS IS AN IMMORTAL HUMAN (NOT AN INTANGIBLE SPIRIT)

The teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses and the Bible Student groups that Jesus was resurrected as an intangible spirit creature is based mainly on an incorrect understanding of 1 Peter 3:18 which will be examined later in this study. Furthermore, it is argued that Jesus' post-resurrection appearances were as a spirit who could materialize a flesh body. Yet any supposed disposal of Jesus' actual dead body is contrary to the biblical description of his resurrection and subsequent events. This incorrect belief in resurrection as a spirit is supported by the speculative proposal that angels have the ability to materialize flesh bodies. However, such a concept is nowhere described or implied in the Scriptures. Furthermore, the scriptural evidence that the resurrected Jesus is a human who is now immortal and whose body has been glorified is overwhelming.

MISUNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE APPEARING OF ANGELS

In the following example there is no mention of any change in the substance of the angel but rather it was the eyes (perhaps mental blindness, see Insight Volume 1, p. 343) of the beholder that had to be opened to see the angel:

❖ “The ass saw the angel...then Jehovah **opened Balaam's eyes**” (*Num. 22:23, 31*).

EXAMPLE OF MENTAL BLINDNESS

❖ “Jehovah **opened [Elisha's] servant's eyes** and he saw...chariots ... Elisha went on to pray to Jehovah and say: ‘Please, strike this nation with blindness’” (*2 Kings 6:17, 18*).

Yet these Syrian soldiers could still see to follow Elisha. This indicates that it was most probably some form of mental blindness.

NO NEED FOR MATERIALIZATION

Although angels were seen as “men” in the Hebrew Scriptures, they were never called *sons of man*, but were only similar in appearance. They were only manlike as Gabriel is described in **Daniel 8:15**:

- “...one who looked like a man” NASU, NJB.
- “...someone in appearance like an able-bodied man” NWT.
- “...a *manlike* figure stood before me” NAB.

Although Gabriel is later called *a man* (Dan. 9:21) he is clearly only *manlike* and is revealed in Luke 1:26 as an angel. So angels had manlike bodies. Therefore they did not need to materialise human bodies, otherwise, for example, the children of the rebellious angels, the Nephilim, of Genesis 6 would have *been normal* rather than having been the violent giant abnormal hybrids that they, in fact, were. Additionally, angels are sometimes depicted as in ‘*dazzling or shining clothing*’ (Luke 24:4, Acts 10:30). At other times they are described simply as men (Gen. 18:2) evidently indicating that they have in some way modified their appearance at these times. But this does not mean that they have at all changed their substance as in the teaching of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WBTS).

NOTE: The shining face of Moses and that of Jesus and with clothes “as white as light” (Luke 17:2) at the transfiguration were only single event demonstrations of God's glory.

JESUS WAS DESCRIBED AS HUMAN AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

Throughout the Scriptures, each time an angel is described as a man or manlike it is clear from the context or the parallel accounts, in the case of the gospels, that an angel is in view. However, in the case of Jesus there is no context indicating him to be an angel in the statements that he is a man after

his resurrection. Even in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 where “*the Lord will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice and with God’s trumpet...*” it does **not say that the Lord is an archangel**; but rather this phrase is either a metaphorical description of the power of Jesus’ voice when he returns or it concerns the literal voice of an accompanying archangel, indicated by the fact that “the Lord descends **with...**” i.e. being accompanied by an archangel who makes a commanding call and blows God’s trumpet.

Nevertheless a metaphorical description of the power of Jesus’ voice e.g. like the roar of a lion is possible because three point phrases were commonly used by Bible writers for emphasis and intensification. So the phrase “*with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice and with God’s trumpet*” works the same way. This would then indicate that Jesus will come with great power and authority as is stated in other Scriptures (Matt 24:30, 31). Factually, Jesus cannot be an archangel for the reasons stated in Hebrews 1 and the further reasons given in Volume One STUDY 12.

However, if one says that by Jesus’ coming with an archangel’s voice means that he must be an archangel, then one must also say that his coming with the blast of God’s trumpet must make him God!

So the following texts show that after his resurrection Jesus is clearly human, although glorified having had his physical body changed to be indestructible and immortal:

- ❖ “There is one mediator...**a man** Christ Jesus” (1Tim. 2:5).
- ❖ “...Jesus...**a man** having been attested to you” (Acts 2:22 UBS). Also Acts 13:38.
- ❖ “...resurrection is also through a **man**” (1 Cor. 15:21).
- ❖ “...he [*God*] has set a day...to judge the inhabited earth by **a man** whom he has appointed” (Acts 17:31).

The WBTS’ answer to these texts is that Jesus was only **called** a man after his resurrection because that is how he was known when alive on earth. However, this is not sound reasoning and **implies that the Bible is less than accurate in its statements**. As an example, when in Lystra, the apostles Barnabas and Paul corrected the incorrect view of the crowd that they were gods that had become human, saying “*we are also humans*” (Acts 14:11, 15). Furthermore, the WBTS teaching would mean that both Paul and Peter were misleading their listeners and readers if in reality Jesus had returned to being the archangel Michael, and such WBTS reasoning flies in the face of the statement that Jesus is “the last Adam” after resurrection and so must remain in his ‘kind’ because the phrase “the first **man** Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) *implies that “the last Adam” is also a human after resurrection* - albeit glorified.

NO HUMAN CAME FROM HEAVEN IN THE PAST

First Corinthians 15:47 is often wrongly used to prove a literal pre-existence of Jesus. (Please see Volume One, STUDIES 10-17). This verse states that:

- ❖ “The second **man** (Gk *anthropos*) is *out of heaven*” (1 Cor. 15:47).

Please note that the verse concerns a “man”- a human. Yet, the Scriptures never teach that in the 1st century, a **man** (*anthropos*) – a human Jesus came from heaven. This is because humans never literally come from heaven. However, they can “come from heaven” in the sense of originating with God. Nevertheless, verse 47 is shown to be anticipatory because the context of “*we shall bear the image of the heavenly one*” in verse 49 indicates that the event of verse 47 will occur at Jesus’ *parousia* (return) when the first resurrection occurs so that Christians can “*bear the image of the heavenly one.*” This event will reveal an immortal ‘**man**’ **mark two** – “the last Adam.” The following texts also demonstrate that, in Jesus’ case, a human body is what was resurrected, but one that was now glorified and immortal.

JESUS’ OWN BODY WAS RESURRECTED

JESUS’ BODY WAS NOT DISINTEGRATED BY GOD

In his statements to a crowd Peter applied the words of *Psalms 16:9* to Jesus as if Jesus was saying:

- ❖ "...even **my flesh** will reside in hope" (*Acts 2:26*).

So how could Jesus' **flesh** reside in hope if it were not going to be resurrected, but be disintegrated by God as taught by the WBTS? Yet in Acts Peter goes on to show that Jesus' body would not be destroyed when he said:

- ❖ "...nor did **his flesh** see corruption" (*Acts 2:31*).
- ❖ "...**he whom God raised up** did not see corruption ('undergo decay' NASB)" (*Acts 13:37*).

These texts refer to the complete person of Jesus. He cannot exist apart from his body - his flesh. In fact flesh in this instance, refers to Jesus' literal body and if his body had been purposely disintegrated or destroyed by God, in any way at all, then his flesh would have seen corruption. The result is the same whether by slow decay or immediate destruction. The teaching that God must have destroyed Jesus' dead body because he was resurrected as a spirit is not to be found in Scripture.

NOTE: What part of God's purpose would have been served for Jehovah to have waited three days before resurrecting Jesus if the physical body was now of no consequence because it had been destroyed by God?

JESUS WAS STILL TANGIBLE AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

Long after the resurrection of Jesus, in about 61 C.E., Paul could say:

- ❖ "...in him [*Jesus*] all the fullness of the divine quality *dwells bodily*" (*Col. 2:9*).
This shows that Jesus has a real physical body since his resurrection, because the term "bodily" had no connotation of anything intangible. Also there is no statement anywhere in the Bible that anyone could materialize a body, but rather:
- ❖ "God granted him to become manifest...to us who **ate and drank with him** [*Jesus*] after his rising from the dead" (*Acts 10:40, 41*).

This text does not mean that Jesus was invisible and then literally materialised in front of the disciples, but rather that he 'appeared' or 'moved into their sight' just as any other tangible solid-bodied human would. This is what a plain reading of these words means as verified when Jesus said:

- ❖ "It is **I myself**, touch me and see, for **a spirit** does not have flesh and bones as you see I have"
(Luke 24:39)

On this point the 2nd century Christian Ignatius is quoted as referencing Jesus' words in Luke 24:39 when he said:

...that he (Jesus) was **in the flesh even after the resurrection**; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: 'Take hold of me; *handle me* and see that I am not a **disembodied demon**.'

Clearly Ignatius believed in the actual **same body physical resurrection** of Jesus as were all biblical resurrections e.g. Lazarus' being raised physically. The fact that the disciples thought they saw a **demonic manifestation**,—a spirit of a demon (*see Luke 4:33 KIT*), does not detract from Jesus' words showing that he was real and solid-bodied. The use of the term *disembodied* by Ignatius is probably a reference to 'the manifestation' [*the spirit*]. However, the disciples simply mistook the solid but glorified bodied Jesus for an intangible manifestation of a demon until he showed them who he was. They had done a similar thing before when Jesus had walked on water in the dark and they had mistaken him for an apparition [*phantom*] (Matt. 14:26). So if Jesus had been a spirit and he had materialized then, by his words, he would have been deceiving his disciples. In fact, Thomas had emphatically stated:

- ❖ "Unless I see in his hands **the print of the nails** and stick my finger into the print of the nails and stick my hand into his side, I will not believe ... Next he [*Jesus*] said to Thomas: Put your finger in here, and see my hands, take your hand and stick it in my side, and stop being unbelieving"
(John 20:25b, 27)

So if Jesus had really been an intangible spirit then he would have been further deceiving his disciples, because the wounds on this different body would not have been the actual wounds caused by the Romans. It would all have been a fabrication.

A TEMPLE NOT MADE WITH HANDS?

It has wrongly been argued that in John 2:21-22 the body that Jesus spoke about was not his same body. However, we must examine what Jesus actually said in contrast to the statements of false witnesses:

- ❖ “In answer Jesus said to them: “*Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” Therefore the Jews said: “This temple was built in forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was talking about the **temple of his body**. When, though, he was **raised up** from the dead, his disciples called to mind that he used to say this; and they believed the Scripture and the saying that Jesus said” (*John 2:19-22*).

Yet in **Mark 14:57, 58** the *false witnesses* said:

- ❖ “We heard him say, ‘**I** will throw down **this temple** that was **made with hands** and in three days I will build **another not made with hands.**’”

So the argument is made that Jesus would have another body, a non-human body, one *not made with hands*. However, Jesus’ actual words in John 2 were: “*Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” He did not say ‘**I** will throw it down.’ He spoke of **them** breaking it down. Neither did he mention a temple *not made by hands* let alone a *body* not made with hands. If we allow the assumption that Mark added a detail of something that was actually said by Jesus, but was never later recorded by John, then we must ask:

1) *According to the Scriptures can humans ever have a non-human body?*

The following Scriptures illustrate the continuity of the Christian’s body in relation to resurrection:

- ❖ “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just one grain; but if it dies, it then bears much fruit” (*John 12:24, 25*).
- ❖ “You do not sow the body, but a bare grain...but God gives it a body...to each one of **the seeds its own body**” (*1 Cor. 15:37, 38*).

So these verses show the continuity from grain (*seed*) to plant; and therefore the continuity from the dead mortal (*natural*) human body to the alive immortal (*spiritual*) human body of the Christian (1 Cor. 15:46). In terms of the Genesis ‘*kinds*’ humans always remain humans.

THE REFASHIONING OF THE SAME HUMAN BODY

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, Christians are:

- ❖ “...awaiting the release by ransom **of the body**” (*Rom. 8:23 KIT not “release from” as in the NWT*).

NOTE: The Greek and most other translations render the phrase in *Roans 8:23*: “as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption **of our bodies.**”

It will be a change in our bodies which takes place according to Paul:

- ❖ “We shall not all fall asleep [in death], but **we** (*the living*) shall all be **changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, during the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the *dead will be raised up incorruptible*, and **we** shall **be changed**” (*1 Cor. 15:52*).

There is nothing in any Bible text to indicate that it will be a change into a non-human body but it will be a changing from mortal to immortal because:

- ❖ “[Jesus] will **refashion our humiliated body** to be conformed to his glorious body...” (*Phil. 3:21*).

- ❖ “He [*God*] that raised up Jesus from the dead will also *make your mortal bodies alive* through his spirit...” (*Rom. 8:11*).

These verses show that it is not our receiving of a completely different body, but that it will be our *mortal humiliated body* that will be changed (*not exchanged*), refashioned, redeemed and made alive. How this will be accomplished for the dead at resurrection time the Scriptures do not say. Nevertheless, all resurrections in the Scripture record are of individuals whose *own body* was made alive. Because the above demonstrates that Christians will be changed from mortal to immortal with no disconnection from their bodies, **the same must have been true of Jesus at his resurrection:**

- ❖ “It is **I myself**, *touch me* and see, for a spirit does not have *flesh and bones* as you see I have” (*Luke 24:39*).

If this were by materialization then Jesus would have been deceiving his disciples. The teaching that Jesus was given a non-human alien body and that Christians will be given non-human bodies is based on the concept that *you* can be separated from your *body* and transferred into another body of a different type (non-human). This is the pagan Greek dualist belief of the Gnostics, rather than the biblical holistic belief. To translate Romans 8:23 as “releasing **from** the body”, as the NWT does, is plainly dualistic Gnosticism; unless the intention is to interpret it according to Romans 7:24 where Paul asks: “who will rescue me from the *body undergoing this death*.” So he is not asking to be given a non-human body, but to be no longer “*a slave to sin’s law*” (*verse 25*). The NLT renders Romans 8:23: “we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.” The following Scriptures give examples showing that redemption is also from *sheol* or death but never from one’s body:

- ❖ “God will redeem **my soul** from the hand of sheol” (*Ps. 49:15*) *i.e. not from one’s body*.
- ❖ “I shall redeem **them** from death” (*Hosea 13:14*)” *i.e. not from their bodies*.

2) *What is meant by the phrase “not made by hands” which also appears in 2 Corinthians 5:1* which says:

- ❖ “...we are to have a building from God, a house **not made with hands**.”

Clearly, from the foregoing, there is continuity between the natural and the spiritual body. In line with 1 Corinthians 15 the statement in 2 Corinthians 5:1 simply contrasts the temporary nature of a tent as the *before* bodily state *i.e.* weak, perishable and mortal that *does not last* as received through Adam and the permanent building as the *after* bodily state as a gift from God and therefore “**not made with hands**” which *lasts forever* having “*put on incorruption and immortality*.” However, the *Word Biblical Commentary*, states that:

This permanent dwelling, this spiritual body, is one that is *ajceiropoivhton*, “made without hands”. To say that this new house was made without hands is not to negate that God created man (*Gen 2:7*). It is to say that the tent is of the earth and that there is both a need (*1 Cor 15:22*) and a desire (*5:8*) for something else, wholly from God

According to 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54 the corruptible/mortal nature will put on an incorruptible/immortal nature. This is similar to clothing oneself with an overcoat rather than having a completely different body. So if the Mark 14:57, 58 description did apply to Jesus’ body (*which it may not have because it was said by false witnesses*) it, too, may be making the same contrast and is in no way a reference to becoming non-human. Of course, the bodily contrast from mortal to immortal is dramatic, as in the difference between a seed grain and the final plant.

THE RETURN OF JESUS WILL BE AS A MAN

According to the *Theological Dictionary of N.T Words* and the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* the term *Son of Man* = The representative **Human**. So the term “Son of Man” means a human and this term is applied to Jesus at his return as he says:

- ❖ “...they will see **the Son of Man** coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory”
(*Matt. 24:30*).
- ❖ “You will see **the Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven” (*Mark 14:62*).

Hence, Jesus, in returning as **the Son of Man** – a human, must have been resurrected as a human.

MISAPPLIED TEXTS

The key texts that Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Bible Student groups rely on in their attempt to prove that Jesus was not resurrected as an immortal human are: 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:46 and 50; and 2 Corinthians 5:16. Also 1 Timothy 6:14-16 is used in an attempt to prove that Jesus could never return to the earth.

1 Peter 3:18: “...put to death in [the] flesh, made alive *in* [the] spirit.”

However, this verse does not say ‘made alive as a spirit,’ but rather it means, in basic terms, **put to death in weakness** (as a mortal) **made alive in power** (as an immortal) because “spirit” basically means power (Luke 1:35). It is unscriptural to speak of spirit substance. This comes from pagan Greek thinking. A similar phrase is in 1 Timothy 3:16: “*He was...declared righteous (or ‘vindicated’) in spirit*” as meaning “vindicated in power.” 1 Corinthians 15:42, 43 describes the dead who are resurrected as being “*sown in weakness...raised up in power*” (verse 44). The same contrast is being made here in 1 Peter 3:18 with reference to Jesus which does not say ‘*as a spirit*,’ as if to speak of Jesus’ substance, but rather that he was no longer a weak, perishable, mortal (1 Cor. 15:43, 44). He is no longer “*flesh and blood*” metaphorically (verse 50 *i.e. weak, mortal and subject to corruption*). He now has a glorified powerful, imperishable, immortal body which can be touched (Luke 24:39) and can eat (verse 43). It is a body that has been changed (1 Cor. 15:51) **not exchanged for another**. Therefore, Jesus has a *tangible, visible* human body that can apparently defy the laws of nature. However, he is not disembodied with a supposed ability to materialize. This concept is nowhere described in the Scriptures and, in fact, comes from pagan Greek philosophy. His is a body that is motivated and sustained by spirit (*God’s power*) as is shown regarding glorified Christians:

- ❖ “He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also make your **mortal bodies** alive through His spirit that resides in you” (*Rom. 8:11*).

NOTES:

- The basic meaning of **spirit** is breath or air in motion and denotes a **dynamic** form of breathing or the natural **power** of the wind. Luke 1:35 puts holy spirit and power in parallel.
- The context of **John 4:24** shows that it should be rendered “God is spirit”= **God is dynamic power** and must be worshipped with dynamic power. This is a metaphor in the same way “*God is love*” and “*God is light*” are metaphors. Therefore, “*God is spirit*” refers to the mediation of God’s active presence on earth. The incorrect rendering “God is a spirit” (as if a reference to His substance) is rare in translations (only in those with a KJV background, but corrected in the NKJV).

1 Corinthians 15:44-49:

“It is sown a *physical* (KIT *soulical* = “*natural*”) body (Gk *soma*), it is raised up a spiritual body. If there is a physical (*natural*) body, there is also a spiritual one. 45 It is even so written: “The first man Adam became a living soul.” The last Adam *became a life-giving spirit*. 46 Nevertheless, *the first is*, not that which is spiritual, but *that which is physical (natural)*, afterward that which is spiritual. 47 The first man is out of the earth and made of dust; the second **man** (Gk *anthropos*) is out of heaven. 48 As the one made of dust [is], so those made of dust [are] also; and as the heavenly one [is], so those who are heavenly [are] also. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one.”

Here the NWT rendering of “*physical*,” although not wrong, is not the clearest choice. This is because the Greek word *psuchikon* means “*soulical*” as in the Kingdom Interlinear and so refers to the “*natural*” mortal body and is so translated in almost all translations. The Greek word for body is *soma* and always refers to materiality, physicality and substance. Almost all commentators take this view. So when 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of “*the spiritual body (soma)*” it is one of materiality, physicality, substance and is fully tangible as demonstrated by Jesus (Luke 24:37-43). This is very different from the pagan Greek concept of intangible disembodied spirits. **Jesus would have, in fact, had to have been disembodied for him to have become embodied by materialization.** Yet everything is material of one sort or another. There is nothing known to be immaterial. *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, pp. 348-9 shows that *all* have bodies, including Jehovah. This produces the contradiction of saying that the resurrected Jesus had a material body and yet he materialized. One option is to say that the so-called angelic spiritual material of Jesus’ new body is capable of reorganizing itself into human substance. This, however, is not materialization but is along the lines of the science fiction concept of shape-shifting and is speculative with no basis in the Scriptures for such a concept.

Verse 46: The phrase “The last Adam *became a life-giving spirit*” means that he became a *life-giving power* i.e. one with life in himself (John 5:26).

But Romans 5:14 says that it is: “...Adam who is a type (Gk *typos*) of the one coming.” So Adam, who should have been the eternal father of mankind, was replaced by Jesus who therefore must always remain human (yet with a glorified body). The term spirit does not refer to bodiless or intangible creatures as is the view of Greek mythology. Spirit has several meanings including the **whole human**. It parallels soul as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 where the phrase “spirit, soul and body” is used to describe the **totality of a person** or a body of people as a unified whole (i.e. not meaning that there are separate parts). Hence, Jesus in his new totality in glory and power is a life-giving person or power because he has power in himself to give life and has been appointed to resurrect the dead.

Verse 47:

“The first man is out of the earth and *made of dust*; the second **man** is *out of heaven*.”

Does “*made of dust*” imply physicality in contrast with “*out of heaven*” implying non-physicality or of spirit substance? Although *made of dust* does speak of the very substance of which humans are made, this is not the point of the contrast. This section of chapter 15 concerns the contrast between *mortal/immortal, perishable/imperishable, and in weakness/in power*. As with most of the Bible’s terminology this verse is not ontological but contrasts the representative first man’s weakness, perishability and mortality with the second representative man’s power, imperishability and immortality. The Jews had a view that there is an *inferior Adam* and a *superior Adam* and John A T. Robinson expressed his view:

That the reference in this passage, as the context shows, is not to Adam and to Jesus Christ as individuals, but to two different ‘bodies’ or **conditions of humanity**, *adam* and *anthropos* being ways, in

Hebrew and Greek, of referring to 'man' with a capital M...The first level of living Paul sees as having been initiated in Adam, the second as having been opened up through Christ...is the life-giving spiritual corporeity ... Thus I believe the contrast in 1 Cor.15:44-49...is between the *soma psychikon* (the natural body) and the *soma pneumatikon* (the spiritual body), the **solidarities or states of humanity**, both of which Jesus shared and both of which we shall share..." *The Human Face of God*, pp. 167-8.

The International Critical Commentary notes that "from heaven" (*ex ouranou*) refers to the Second Advent." Also H.A.W. Meyer says that the phrase *ex ouranou* is used of "heavenly derivation" and applies to the glorification of the body of Christ. This glorification originated from heaven or, in other words, it was a work of God.

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1 Corinthians 15:50:

"...flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, neither does corruption inherit incorruption."

The phrase *flesh and blood* is being used figuratively. It represents the natural mortal body described as existing in *corruption*. This is not a reference to the body's physicality as if to contrast it with the "*spiritual body*." This means, as expressed in the NJB:

❖ "...mere *human nature* cannot inherit the kingdom of God: **what is perishable** cannot inherit what is imperishable" i.e. the Kingdom.

So "**flesh and blood**" (*mere human nature*) is perishable, which means also that it is weak and mortal. What is required to inherit the Kingdom is a body that is not perishable. Verse 53 describes how:

❖ "...this which is corruptible **must put on** incorruption, and this which is mortal **must put on** immortality."

This highlights the "*change*" from perishability of the body to imperishability of the same body (verses 52, 53) so that now it is immortal, powerful and glorious. Only in this sense does it become a new body. There is no indication here of an exchange so as to be *a spirit* in the pagan Greek sense of intangibility or of any special *spirit substance* e.g. according to the interlinear:

❖ "You are not in flesh but in spirit, if spirit of God is dwelling in you" (*Rom. 8:9 KIT*).

This shows that, in this present life, being "*not in flesh*" does not mean that one is not physical.

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2 Corinthians 5:16:

"Consequently from now on we know no man according to the flesh. Even if we have *known Christ according to the flesh*, certainly we now *know him so no more*."

Here *flesh* does not refer to human substance or essence as if Christ would never again be seen physically as taught by the WBTS, but refers to worldly sinful human standards as shown by most of the general translations:

NIV 2011 renders it: "So from now on we regard no one **from a worldly point of view**. Though we once regarded Christ *in this way*, we do so no longer." Even though we have known Christ from such a human point of view

REB renders it: "With us **worldly standards** have ceased to count in our estimate of anyone; *even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ*, they do so no longer."

"...even if we were once *familiar with Christ according to human standards*..." (*NJB*).

"Even though we used to know Christ **by human standards**..." (*CEB*).

“There was a time when we evaluated Christ **by human standards...**” (BARCLAY).

“If we did think of Christ from **a human point of view**” (GWT).

“Even though we have known Christ from such **a human point of view**” (NET Bible).

“At one time we thought of Christ merely from **a human point of view**” (NLT).

Evidently these translators have correctly grasped the meaning of the Greek phrase *kata sarx* as not meaning ‘according to human substance’ but ‘according **to a worldly or human point of view or standards**. Hence, this verse cannot be used to say that Jesus will never be seen again.

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1 Timothy 6:14-16 is the text used by the WBTS in an attempt to prove that Jesus will never return to the earth:

“...until the **manifestation** (Gk *epiphania*) of our Lord Jesus Christ. This [manifestation] the happy and *only Potentate* **will show** in its own appointed times, [he] the king of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords, the one **alone having immortality**, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom **not one of men** has seen or **can see**.”

The WBTS teaching is that Jesus is the “*only Potentate.....whom not one of men can see*” and so he could not have been resurrected as a human. This application lends support to the Jehovah’s Witnesses teaching that Jesus will never return to the earth. Because Jesus is called “*Lord of lords and King of kings*” in Revelation 19:16 the WBTS application may seem feasible. However, all other translations render 1 Timothy 6:14-16 in such a way that **it is God who is the “Only Potentate.”** Also most Bible commentators make this same application to God. Why?

- Jesus must visibly appear because that is the meaning of the Greek word **epiphania** (noun) = **an appearing** or manifestation. Any appearing must be *visible* because the Potentate **will show** this “manifestation” of Jesus.
- The NIV notes state that: “Just as Jesus’ first coming occurred at the precise time that God wanted (Gal. 4:4), so also his second coming will be at God’s appointed time.” So it is Jehovah who is the Potentate who “**will show**” the manifestation of Jesus “in its own appointed times.”
- On a number of occasions things applied to Jehovah in the Hebrew Scriptures are applied to Jesus in the Christian Scriptures e.g. Psalm 102/Hebrews 1:10. Because Jesus is God’s representative he functions and has the same prerogatives as God and therefore bears some of the same titles. So it is no surprise if Jehovah’s title of “*King of Kings and Lord of lords*” (Deut. 10:17, Dan. 2:47) is later applied to Jesus in the future scenario of Revelation. (Please see Volume 1, STUDY 6 concerning divine titles).
- Although Jesus was resurrected as an immortal it is a **derived** immortality i.e. he didn’t have the ability to become immortal. God gave immortality to him; whereas God alone has underived immortality.
- After Jesus was resurrected over 500 disciples saw him; but it is only God whom “*not one of men has seen or can see*.”
- A careful reading of this passage in context shows that “*the only Potentate*” refers to Jehovah.
- The Scriptures show that Jesus does not forever stay in heaven e.g. “*whom heaven must hold within itself until the times of restoration of all things*” (Acts 3:21). It is this appearance of Jesus that God **will show** in its own appointed times “*that He may send Jesus*” (Acts 3:21).

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Galatians 1:1:

“Paul, an apostle, neither from men nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father...”

Some take this text to mean that Jesus cannot now be human. However, Paul was here discussing the need to assert his authority with the Galatians; so he was demonstrating that he was not commissioned by any Jewish High Council or council of the apostles at Jerusalem — a mere human authority — but by divine **authority of God as represented by the exalted Christ**. Paul’s calling was not a common one but an extraordinary call from heaven. This was not about Christ in terms of his physical make-up (see commentaries) but his authorization of Paul. Jesus is clearly shown in the rest of the Scriptures to be part of humanity even in his exalted position. In the Scriptures the terms *flesh* (*Gk sarx*), *spirit*, and *soul*, do not always refer to what someone is made of i.e. their substance, but rather to different aspects of human nature, the whole person. The distinction is ethical rather than ontological (essence, substance). The basic meaning of **flesh**, as used figuratively, is *human character in its weakness and mortality*.

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JESUS’ POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

If someone is not immediately recognized it does not automatically mean that they have become intangible or disembodied or that they have reappeared in different bodies (an idea that comes from Greek mythology and used in science fiction). The “**spiritual body**” of 1 Corinthians 15:42, 44 is immortal, imperishable, raised in glory and power. It is, however a tangible body of substance e. g:

❖ “However the **spiritual man** indeed examines all things” (*1 Cor. 2:15*).

The spiritual man is obviously a tangible physical person but guided by holy spirit rather than his natural impulses; and so indicating that the ‘*spiritual body*’ is also physical and tangible but ruled, dominated and directed by holy spirit.

THROUGH THEIR OWN MENTAL BLINDNESS SOME DISCIPLES DID NOT RECOGNIZE JESUS

❖ “...**their eyes** were prevented from recognizing him” (*Luke 24:16*).

❖ “After Jesus broke the bread **their eyes** were fully opened and they recognized him” (*Luke 24:31*).

❖ “...relating...how he became known to them **in** (not ‘**by**’ as in NWT) the breaking of the bread”
(*Luke 24:35 KIT*).

The WBTS has used the NWT in its attempt to prove that Jesus materialized in different bodies. However, no translation has the word ‘*by*’. Most translations have **in**. NJB has **at**. NIV has **when**. NLT has “**as he was**.” This text simply links **the timing** of their recognizing him with the breaking of the bread, not that it was the **manner** in which he broke it that enabled them to recognize him.

THROUGH PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES SOME DISCIPLES DID NOT RECOGNIZE JESUS

❖ “...she [*Mary*] did not discern it was Jesus” (*John 20:14, 15*). Verse 1 states: “*she came early to the tomb while there was still darkness*.”

Also that she was **weeping** (verse 13), she was **not expecting** to see Jesus in the near future and, no doubt, his glorified **immortal appearance** would be significantly different to his dreadfully torn up appearance at his execution. There is no reason here to suppose that Jesus materialized a different body. There are plenty of natural factors to have prevented Mary from discerning that it was Jesus.

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- ❖ "...Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples, (the NWT words 'of course' are not in the Greek text) did not discern that it was Jesus." *verse 4 says "just as it was getting to be morning" i.e. not much light. Verse 7 tells us that John recognized that "it is the Lord! Hence Peter upon hearing that it is the Lord..." (John 21:4).*

So Peter still hadn't seen Jesus but John had. Probably the **distance** out from the shore and the **reduced light** would prevent them from discerning that it was Jesus until the one perhaps with the better eyesight [*John*] recognized him as the dawn broke. Again there is no logical reason to suppose a materialisation into a different body.

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- ❖ "Not one of the disciples had the courage to inquire of him 'who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord" (*John 21:12*).

Perhaps it was his glorified appearance that made them unsure.

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- ❖ "...the doors were locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst" (*John 20:19*).

There may be a natural explanation for this. But more likely the glorified body is not subject to the laws of nature. However, this still does not require materialization. Even in the natural body miraculous things happened such as with Jesus' walking on water and Philip's being snatched away to Ashdod (Acts 8:39, 40).

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- ❖ "...he appeared in another [*different KIT*] form" (*Mark 16:12*).

Some commentaries indicate that this was his resurrected form (his glorified body) and not in various forms.

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- ❖ "God granted him to become manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses appointed before-hand by God, to us who ate and drank with him after his rising from the dead" (*Acts 10:40, 41*).

In Acts 1:3, 4 it is indicated that Jesus spent most of his post-resurrection time instructing his disciples about the kingdom and eating with them **through** (Gk *dia*) 40 days. Why would he spend time elsewhere? Perhaps this was all done where there were no outsiders that might see him; and yet this does not require that he be invisible. In fact *the ideal human*, "the Son of Man," *was later seen in vision in heaven*:

- ❖ "...he [*Stephen*] said: 'Look I behold the heavens opened up and **the Son of Man** standing at God's right hand'" (*Acts 7:56*).

IS THE VALUE OF JESUS' SACRIFICE LOST IF HE, IN HIS ORIGINAL BODY, IS RESURRECTED

- ❖ "I surrender my **soul** (life) in behalf of the sheep ... I surrender my soul, in order that I may *receive it again* ... I have authority to surrender it, and I have authority to receive it again. The commandment on this I received from my Father" (*John 10:15, 17, 18*).

If we say that this is only Jesus' physical life that he surrenders then clearly it is his physical life that he *receives again* by means of resurrection. To say that he would not have his own body would be an artificial distinction not described in the Bible where life is always associated with the same body, as it is in all resurrections. The Scriptures use many terms in reference to Jesus' sacrifice – death, blood, life, himself, as well as body, as in the following examples:

- ❖ "...a **death** has occurred for their release by ransom" (*Heb. 9:15*).
- ❖ "...unless **blood** is poured out no forgiveness takes place" (*Heb. 9:22*).

- ❖ "...he poured out his **soul** (*life*) to the very death" (*Isa. 53:12*).
- ❖ "We have the release by ransom through the **blood** of that one" (*Eph. 1:7*).
- ❖ "...delivered...with precious **blood**, even Christ's" (*1 Peter 1:18, 19*).
- ❖ "...gave **himself** for us that he might deliver us" (*Titus 2:14*).

Therefore, it was his life (*as represented by his blood*) that was sacrificed for mankind not just his body as if it were something separate from his life. It was his death that paid for our sins. When Paul stated at Hebrews 10:8, that Jesus "*had a body prepared for him*" and "*we have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time*" in verse 10, it clearly meant that his whole person, which after being sacrificed, was brought back to life as his same body just as with all previous resurrections (but now glorified). The body was prepared when Jesus was conceived and it obviously came with its life. Paul was certainly not trying to separate Jesus from his life. It was a living person, not a dead body that was the sacrifice. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any indication that Jehovah destroyed the dead body of Jesus.

SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURAL POINTS

1. JESUS DIDN'T MATERIALIZE

Because it was the eyes of the beholder that had to be opened to see certain angels, there is no indication in the Scriptures that angels materialized. Therefore, such a concept gives no basis to imagine that after his resurrection Jesus **materialized** from an intangible spirit body:

- ❖ "The ass saw the angel...then Jehovah **opened Balaam's eyes**" (*Num. 22:23, 31*).
- ❖ "...**the** [*disciples*] **eyes** were prevented from recognizing him ... After Jesus broke the bread **their eyes** were fully opened and they recognized him" (*Luke 24:16, 31*).

2. JESUS' OWN BODY WAS NOT DESTROYED BUT RESURRECTED

- ❖ "...even **my flesh** will reside in hope ... nor did **his flesh** see corruption" (*Acts 2:26, 31*).

3. HE WAS NOT AN INTANGIBLE SPIRIT

It would have been deceptive of Jesus to display the scars on his hands and side if they were not in the actual body which experienced such wounds:

- ❖ "It is **I myself**, touch me and see, for **a spirit** does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (*Luke 24:39*).

The phrase "made alive *in* [the] spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18) does not say 'as a spirit,' but means "made alive **in power**."

4. HE IS CALLED "A MAN" AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

There are a half dozen Scriptures which show that Jesus is termed "a man" after his resurrection, thereby showing that he was fully human, albeit immortal and incorruptible:

- ❖ "...he [*God*] has set a day...to judge the inhabited earth by **a man** whom he has appointed" (*Acts 17:31*)

5. THE RETURN OF JESUS WILL BE AS A HUMAN

- ❖ "...they will see **the Son of Man** (*always defined as human*) coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (*Matt. 24:30*).

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