

## FOR WHOM AND WHEN IS THE RESURRECTION?

The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses teaches that those of the class of anointed Christians are resurrected in the first resurrection and each one is raised with an immortal spirit, non-human, intangible body; whereas those of the non-anointed Christians will be resurrected during the Millennium in the general resurrection and be raised with mortal physical human bodies.

So the purpose of this study is to show that there is only one literal resurrection **of Christians** who will, in that "first resurrection," each be given a glorious, immortal, spiritual (not spirit), tangible body that is fully human. The study will further demonstrate from the Scriptures that the second resurrection will occur after the Millennium and will involve all the non-Christian "**rest of the dead**" **of mankind** who will each be raised with a "natural" mortal body. But first we must consider Jesus' use of resurrection terms for the spiritual revival of individuals.

### THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION OF LIVING PERSONS

Jesus used the fact of a literal physical resurrection as a metaphor for those who would need to be revived spiritually when he said:

- ❖ "The hour is coming, and it is **now** here, when **the dead** will hear the voice of the Son of God and those *who have given heed* ('having heard' KIT) **will live**" (*John 5:25*).

Following on from the statement that any person who believes "*has passed over from death to life*" (verse 24), Jesus went on to show that some once spiritually dead but literally living persons who have had a change of heart, **will live** in the age to come because they hear Jesus' voice. So spiritual resurrections were occurring throughout Jesus' life on earth and continue to occur.

### THE PROMISE OF A PHYSICAL RESURRECTION

The Hebrew Scriptures first introduce the concept of physical resurrection when Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice to Jehovah (Gen. 22:1-3 and Heb. 11:17-19). Later Job, Isaiah, and Daniel all spoke of the physical resurrection in the following texts:

- ❖ "If an able-bodied man dies can he live again?...I shall wait, Until **my relief** ("renewal" ESV) comes" (*Job 14:14*).
- ❖ "Your dead ones will live. A corpse of mine—they will rise up. Awake and cry out joyfully, **YOU residents in the dust!** For your dew is as the dew of mallows, and the earth itself will let even those impotent in death drop [in birth]" (*Isa. 26:19*).
- ❖ "And there will be **many** of those **asleep** in the ground of dust who will **wake up**, these to indefinitely lasting life, and those (*the others* NASB) to reproaches and to indefinitely lasting abhorrence (*contempt* ESV)" (*Dan. 12:2*).

Also throughout the Christian Greek Scriptures the writers speak of "...the resurrection **from** the dead" and "...the resurrection **of** the dead." (Please see Luke 20:35; Acts 24:21; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 21, 42). The relevant Greek words used are *anastasis* and *egeiro*. *Anastasis* means literally "to make to stand up" and *egeiro* means "to awaken or raise up" and when in combination with the phrase "*from the dead*" these words are translated as *resurrect/ resurrection/resurrected* so that a dead person is brought back to life. This may be a coming to life in a 'natural' mortal body, as with Lazarus and others in the Bible record, or with an immortal body as we shall comment on shortly.

### RESURRECTION IS FROM "THE SLEEP OF DEATH"

Notice that Isaiah and Daniel use the term "sleep" as a metaphor for the condition of the dead from which they will one day "wake up." The Psalmist and other writers give the same picture:

- ❖ "I will sleep the **sleep** of death." (*Ps. 13:3 NASB*).
- ❖ "...if Christ has not been raised up...also those also who **fell asleep** [in death] in union with Christ perished" (*1 Cor. 15:17, 18*).

### NOT A RESURRECTION TO HEAVEN

However, there are no passages or texts in the Scriptures which speak of a resurrection to intangible spirit life in heaven. This teaching is only arrived at by the making of certain incorrect assumptions. *Please see* STUDY 12 THE 144,000 DO NOT GO TO HEAVEN.

Even Jesus, as "*the beginning, the firstborn from the dead*" (Col. 1:17), was resurrected on earth and not to heaven. Of course, after 40 days he did ascend to Jehovah's right hand in heaven so that he could function as High Priest. However, he never promised his followers a resurrection to heaven.

### THE RESURRECTION WILL BE UNIVERSAL

After speaking of those who would be spiritually revived Jesus spoke of those who would experience a literal physical resurrection that would be all encompassing when he said:

- ❖ "...an hour is coming, in which **all who are in the memorial tombs** (Gk *mnemoneion*) will hear his voice and come out; those who did **good things** to [1] a resurrection of *life*, those who practiced **vile things** to [2] a resurrection of *judgment*" (*John 5:28, 29*).

There is no contextual reason to imagine that the word "**all**" is not in the absolute sense. It means all who are in their graves, indicating all who have ever lived and died. Here, as in many of his parables, Jesus separates all people into only two groups; "those who did **good things**" and "those who practiced **vile things**." Paul also separates all people into just two groups when he says in **Acts 24:15**: "...there is going to be a resurrection of [1] the righteous and [2] the unrighteous." This parallels the two destinies of resurrected ones described in Daniel 12:2, and Paul uses the term "the righteous" as meaning those who are approved by Jehovah because they are true Christians and have proved themselves worthy of receiving everlasting life. So the term "the unrighteous" means those who are not true Christians having "practiced **vile things**." This category must, of necessity, include **all** those who have practiced the most heinous of crimes against others **and without repentance**.

NOTE: The Scriptures never teach that there will be universal salvation – commonly called universalism (*Please see* Volume 2, STUDY 8).

### ANSWERING THE ARGUMENT AGAINST A UNIVERSAL RESURRECTION

**1.** It is argued that, because the word "memorial tombs" in **John 5:28** implies that it will be only those in God's memory who will be resurrected and some are not remembered by God (see texts below), and so apostates to the JW religion and those who have been horrendously wicked e.g. Stalin, Hitler etc will never be resurrected.

**RESPONSE:** This is, in itself, a very weak and misguided argument because "memorial tombs" are called such so that the dead person will be remembered by their relatives even if the person has been very wicked. Even unmarked graves are called "memorial tombs" in the Scriptures (Luke 11:44). Simply being called "memorial tombs" is for the benefit of humans and not for God and so it has nothing to do with anyone's future resurrection and therefore does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that "all" would be resurrected.

**2.** It is also argued that those destroyed can never be resurrected because:

- ❖ "They [*other masters vs. 13*] are dead; they will not live. *Impotent in death* [Heb. **Rephaim** meaning "**shadowy ones**"], **they will not rise up**. Therefore you have turned your attention that you might **annihilate** them and destroy all mention of them" (*Isa. 26:14*).

**RESPONSE:** It is noted by professors of linguistics that *Rephaim* is a particularly difficult term to translate and is typically rendered as “the departed spirits” or “the shades” or “dead ones” in most translations. However, this does not refer to the pagan teaching that, at death, a person’s spirit separates from his body. This is shown in verse 19 because it is impossible that “*the earth will bring [disembodied spirits] to birth.*” It simply means that those particular individuals - these “other masters” - have ceased their oppressive rulership of Israel and are now more like an ineffective shadow because they are dead.

At first glance it may appear that these ones will never come to life again when the resurrection occurs. However, the understanding of this passage is according to its context of poetic language and not directly that of future resurrection. So the phrase “will not rise up” because they are dead concerns these “other masters” as never coming back to life so that they might return to power over Israel back then. So the Amplified Bible expresses the passage as:

- ❖ “O Lord, our God, other masters besides You have ruled over us, but we will acknowledge and mention Your name only. They [the former tyrant masters] are dead, **they shall not live and reappear; they are powerless ghosts (*Rephaim*), they shall not rise and come back.** Therefore You have visited and **made an end of them** and caused every memory of them [every trace of their supremacy] to perish” (*Isa. 26:13, 14 Amplified Bible*).

This harmonizes with the fact that in verse 19 “*the earth will bring the shades (*Rephaim*) to birth*” i.e. these “dead ones” or “shadows” will be resurrected:

- ❖ “Your dead ones [*sons of Israel*] will live. A corpse of mine – they will rise up. Awake and cry out joyfully, you residents in the dust! For your dew is as the dew of mallows, and the *earth itself will let even those impotent in death* [Heb. *Rephaim* - “*shadowy ones*”], drop [in birth].” Or literally: ‘cast forth, in the sense of bring to birth, cause to come alive’ (*Isa. 26:19*).

So verse 14 is not saying that these “former tyrant masters” (primarily the Assyrians) will never be remembered again by God so as to be in “the resurrection of the unrighteous” but rather these words are an encouragement for Israel at that time to cease fearing the return of “those masters” and to forget them and their harsh rulership because, being dead, they will never return to trouble Israel again – they are just mere shadows now. So this text also does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that “all” would be resurrected and as confirmed by Paul when he speaks of “the righteous and the unrighteous.”

3. It is further argued that some will never wake up in the resurrection because God says:

- ❖ “...I shall set their banquets and I will make them drunk, in order that they may exult; and they **must sleep an indefinitely lasting sleep**, from which they will **not wake up**,” is the utterance of Jehovah .... And I will make her princes and her wise ones, her governors and her deputy rulers and her mighty men drunk, and they must **sleep an indefinitely lasting sleep**, from which they will not wake up” (*Jer. 51:39, 57*).

**RESPONSE:** This is a clear allusion to Belshazzar’s feast on the very night Babylon fell to Cyrus. Although “sleep” is often used as a metaphor for being dead it also obviously refers generally to literal sleep. So the “**indefinitely lasting sleep**, from which [Belshazzar and his princes etc.] will **not wake up**,” has nothing to do with resurrection, but simply that in falling asleep in their drunken stupor, after all their bragging, they would not wake up because they would be slain (Dan 5:30). And this is what happened when Cyrus’ soldiers broke into Babylon and yet Belshazzar and co. did not even know that Babylon’s walls had been breached. So again this text also does not contradict the pattern Jesus established that “all,” would be resurrected and Paul’s statement that it would “*be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous.*”

“THE REST OF THE DEAD”

By using the term *all* Jesus refers to the complete resurrection in contrast to Daniel’s *many* of the

first resurrection. Then Jesus goes on to show that the two different categories of resurrected people must include everybody. Everyone must be either righteous or unrighteous, indicating that **everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected**. This information eradicates the need for the eight changes made by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses on the question of whether or not the "men of Sodom," noted in Matthew 10:15, will be resurrected because, in fact, all will be resurrected. The key difference is whether a person is resurrected to mortality or to immortality and secondly that there are two times of resurrection separated by the Millennium as shown in the book of Revelation:

## THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE RESURRECTION "OF LIFE" and "OF JUDGMENT"

### *THE TWO RESURRECTION EVENTS*

Paul sought to "attain to the earlier resurrection **from** the dead." (*Phil. 3:11*) and he later stated that "...there is going to be a resurrection of [1] *the righteous* and [2] *the unrighteous*" (*Acts 24:15*). This harmonizes with what was said in Daniel 12: 2 and by Jesus in John 5 and later in the Revelation:

- ❖ "[1] The first resurrection... [2] *The rest of the dead* did *not come to life until* the thousand years **were ended**." (*Rev. 20:5*). 'First' implies a second resurrection and Luke 14:14 mentions only: "...the resurrection of [1] the righteous ones."

People can only be classified as righteous or unrighteous. Therefore **everyone is resurrected** either immediately before the Millennium in resurrection [1] or after it in resurrection [2]. Because the lake of fire (Gehenna) does not operate until Armageddon (*Rev. 19:20*) every human who has ever lived and died is currently in "the memorial tombs."

In Acts 24:15 Paul focuses on the resurrection in total, that is, both events. Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28, 29 show that there are 2 events of resurrection and **Revelation 20:4, 5** shows that the two events are separated by 1000+ years. The first event occurs at Christ's coming when the Millennium begins. The second event occurs in preparation for the Great White Throne judgment a short while after the Millennium has ended. This is the classical pre-millennial understanding. Amillennialists (those who do not accept a literal 1000 years) and post-millennialists do not accept this scenario. However, the resurrection events were first recorded by Daniel who prophesied that:

- ❖ "...there will be **many** of those asleep in the dust of the ground who will wake up, [1] **these** to indefinitely lasting life and [2] **those** ("*but the others*" NASB) to indefinitely lasting abhorrence." (*Dan. 12:2*).

The view of Jewish commentators Saadia Hagggaon (10<sup>th</sup> century) and Aben Ezra (12<sup>th</sup> century) on this passage was advocated by Bible translator S.P. Tregelles. This resulted in his rendering of verse 2 as:

- "And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; **these** shall be unto everlasting life; **but those**, the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake *at this time*, shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt."

So the **many** who will awake are "*these to everlasting life*." But "*those, the others*" are not included in the many who will awake at that time. Their awakening comes later. This means that the main focus of this verse is on the first resurrection but still noting the second.

### *THE TWO EVENTS OF THE RESURRECTION ARE SEPARATED BY 1000 + YEARS*

There are no contextual issues in Revelation 20:4, 5 and all pre-millennial commentators view this as a reference to the two parts of the resurrection. "*The rest of the dead*" are those of Revelation 20:12-15 who stand before the great white throne "*as soon as the thousand years have been ended*." Paul explains the order of this "coming to life":

- ❖ "...so also in the Christ all will be made alive. But each one in his own rank (order) *Christ the first-fruits*, **afterward** those who *belong to the Christ* during ('at' see 1 Thessalonians 3:13) **his presence (coming)**. **Next** *the end*, when he hands over the Kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government...For he must rule as king until [God] has put all enemies under his feet. As the *last enemy, death* is brought to nothing" (1 Cor. 15:22-26).

The fact that "*those who belong to the Christ*" (Christians), are resurrected at the time of Jesus' arrival excludes "*the rest of the dead*" until "*the end*." So the destruction of death (1 Cor.15: 26) at **the end** of the Millennium corresponds to "*the rest of the dead coming to life*" in Revelation 20:5, 11-15 before "*death and Hades are hurled into the lake of fire*" (verse 14). This separation of the two parts of the resurrection was recognized by 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christians as noted in the Dialog with Trypho:

There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and thereafter the general and eternal resurrection of all men would take place.

### THE RESURRECTION BODY GRANTED TO ALL CHRISTIANS

*Christians are those* "...who are **seeking** glory and honour and incorruptibleness (*immortality* NAB)" (Rom. 2:7) and are "...earnestly desiring *to put on* the [dwelling house] **from** heaven" (2 Cor. 5:2). This means that God is the provider of the spiritual body which Christians will receive at the beginning of the Millennium:

#### *THE CHRISTIAN'S MORTAL BODY WILL BE CHANGED TO BE IMMORTAL*

*In his detailed description of the first resurrection Paul informs us that our body:*

- ❖ "...is raised up in incorruption, raised up in glory and power ... raised up a **spiritual body**" and "this which is mortal must put on immortality..." (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 53).

*This is our own body that is refashioned to be an incorruptible, immortal but tangible human body in just the same way as for Jesus (Luke 24:36-43) because he:*

- ❖ "**will refashion** our humiliated body to be conformed to his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21).

*Similarly God* "...will make **your mortal bodies** alive through his spirit that resides in you"

*(Rom. 8:11).*

#### *THE SPIRITUAL BODY IS TANGIBLE*

*The NWT follows the trend of several versions (REB, NRSV, and Barclay's) which render the Greek phrase "soma psychikos" as "physical body":*

- ❖ "It is sown a **physical** body (Gk *soma psychikos*), it is raised up a **spiritual** body (Gk *soma pneumatichos*)" (1 Cor. 15:44 NWT).

However, *soma psychikos* means "the **natural** body" or "**soulical** body" even though it is physical. So most other translations render it as "natural" so that the real contrast is between a natural body and a supernatural body according to Paul's descriptions of it, and not between what is tangible and what is intangible:

KIT: "It is being sown body **soulical**, it is being raised up body spiritual."

Rotherham: "It is sown a body of the soul, it is raised a body of the spirit."

UBS: "It is sown a **natural** body, it is raised a spiritual body."

Most translations translate *soma psychikos* as "the **natural** body."

In its usage of the NWT rendering of "**physical** body" in 1 Corinthians 15 the Governing Body and others have given the impression that the "spiritual body" will not be tangible so as to comply with its

teaching on this issue. However, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 is contrasting the mortal, natural body that is weak and perishable with the immortal, spiritual body that is powerful and imperishable i.e. supernatural. So this passage is not about tangibility or physicality. The Bible's use of the word spiritual is not always associated with things that are intangible as is shown in **1 Corinthians 2:15** where Paul says: "*However, the **spiritual man** indeed examines all things.*" Yet the spiritual man is obviously a tangible physical person but guided by holy spirit, and so indicating that the spiritual body is also physical and tangible but directed, ruled and dominated by holy spirit. Also note Paul's comment that Christians:

❖ "...are **not in flesh** but in spirit, if spirit of God is dwelling in you" (*Rom. 8:9 KIT*).  
*This shows that being "not in flesh," in this present life, doesn't mean that one is not a tangible person.*

#### *THE FIRST AND SECOND RESURRECTIONS ARE LITERAL AND PHYSICAL*

Both the first and second resurrections are literal and physical. We note that when there are two of something shown to be 'first' and 'second' they are of the same character e.g. "*the first man is out of the earth and made of dust, the second man is out of heaven*" (1 Cor. 14:47) and so showing that Jesus was a man just like Adam - they are of the same nature. So, too, with the second death as real death just as is the first death – they are of the same nature. With reference to the Catholic understanding of the resurrection arrangement in Revelation 20 Dean Alford wrote:

As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain *psuchai ezesan* [souls came to life] at the first, and the rest of the *nekroi ezesan* [dead came to life] only at the end of a specified period after the first, ...If in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first...

Although the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society presents the reverse of the Catholic interpretation, the principle of what Alford says still applies – if one resurrection is literal then so is the other. Furthermore, Revelation 20:4, 5 speaks of those who will have already experienced the first resurrection and are shown in verse 1 as sitting on thrones because:

❖ "...they **came to life** and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years (the **rest of the dead** did not **come to life** until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection"  
*(Rev. 20:4, 5).*

However, the phrase "*come to life*" clearly refers to literal **tangible resurrection** when the thousand years are ended and not simply being declared righteous. The phrase refers just as much to resurrection for "the **rest of the dead**" as it does for those of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection who "**came to life**" (verse 4). In Matthew 9:18 the same phrase is used by the synagogue ruler with reference to his daughter's resurrection when he said to Jesus: "*Come and lay your hand upon her and **she will come to life.***" It is also used by Jesus, in John 11:25, of any faithful person when he said: "*Even though he dies, [he] **will come to life.***" Furthermore, Romans 14:9 states that "*Christ died and **came to life again.***" These are all clear references to resurrection. So this phrase in Revelation 20 cannot possibly mean *being declared righteous* as the end result of a so-called growing to perfection in a progressively *coming to life* as is stated in the Watchtower's *Revelation* book p. 290. Otherwise this would contradict the teaching that those who rule with Christ "came to life" (vs. 4) in a real resurrection.

#### *WHAT ABOUT 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50?*

❖ "...**flesh and blood** cannot inherit God's Kingdom, neither does **corruption** inherit incorruption"  
*(1 Cor. 15:50).*

In this text Paul uses the phrase *flesh and blood* figuratively so it represents the natural **mortal** body described as *corruption*. This is not a reference to the body's physicality as if to contrast it with the *spiritual body*. Being not *flesh and blood* means the absence of natural limitations and sinful inclinations. The NJB expresses the fact that:

- "...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* (mortal human nature) is perishable and weak. What is required to inherit the Kingdom is a body that is not perishable. So **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/corruptibility of the body to imperishability of the same body (verses 52, 53), so that now it is immortal, powerful and glorious. There is no indication here of an exchange so as to be *a spirit* in the pagan Greek sense of intangibility. Furthermore, the promise of immortality spoken of by Paul means exactly the same as the "everlasting life" which Jesus offered his earliest and future disciples.

#### JUST AS ANGELS CANNOT DIE, SO RESURRECTION IS TO IMMORTALITY

*Jehovah's Witnesses teach that angels do not have immortality and so this next verse is not mentioned in the Insight volumes under the subject of angels or any related subjects:*

- ❖ "...those who have been counted worthy...neither marry nor are given in marriage... **neither** can they (*resurrected ones*) **die anymore**, for they are like **the angels**" (*Luke 20:35, 36*).

Yet, Jesus makes the connection that, unlike mortals who need to reproduce their kind, *immortal beings do not need to procreate*. This, therefore, removes the need for marriage. The phrase "**neither...die anymore**" is the same in meaning as the phrase "**dies no more**" in Romans 6:9 with **reference to Jesus** and where it is acknowledged that Jesus is now immortal and so indicating that the angels, too, are immortal. However, for the angels as well as for Christians this is a **derived or granted immortality** because, as with Jesus, it was granted to them by Jehovah. So for angels this quality of deathlessness can be removed by God *for disobedience* as must be the case with Satan and the other fallen angels.

#### "THE FIRST RESURRECTION" IS FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

Because there are not two classes of true Christians (please see STUDY 10) all whom God approves as true Christians will be in the first resurrection. Jesus focused specifically on the first resurrection event when he said: "*You will be repaid at the resurrection **of the righteous ones***" (*Luke 14:14*) and again when reassuring Martha concerning *Lazarus* that:

- ❖ "...he will rise again on *the last day*. Jesus said to her. 'I am the resurrection and the life. **He that exercises faith in me**, even though he dies, will come to life'" (*John 11:24, 25*).

Evidently anyone with faith in Jesus will experience the same resurrection as Lazarus will i.e. the first resurrection.

#### THE FIRST RESURRECTION OCCURS WHEN JESUS RETURNS

*It will be when Jesus returns from heaven immediately prior to the beginning of the Millennium that the first resurrection of all Christians will occur:*

- ❖ "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call., and **those who are dead in union with Christ** will rise **first**" (*1 Thess. 4:16*).

- ❖ "...so also in the Christ all will be made alive. But each one in his own rank (order): *Christ the first-fruits*, afterward **those who belong to the Christ** during ('at' see 1 Thess. 3:13) his presence (coming)." (1 Cor. 15:22-26). NOTE: Jesus' *parousia* is yet future. Please see STUDY 4.

#### IT IS AN EARLIER AND BETTER RESURRECTION

Not only did Paul, in **Philippians 3:11**, call the first resurrection "the earlier resurrection **from** the dead" because it will be the first, but the writer to the Hebrews calls it "**a better** resurrection." (Heb. 11:35). So in what way will it be better? F.F. Bruce discusses this on p. 326 of *The Epistle to the Hebrews* where he says:

The resurrection to which they looked forward was "better" than that to which the boys of Zarephath and Shunem had been raised by Elijah and Elisha. Those boys were restored to mortal life, and in due course died...

So the first resurrection is better because the Christian will receive immortal, imperishable life, whereas those of the past, like Lazarus, regained only their normal mortal lives and those in the resurrection after the end of the Millennium also will receive only their mortal life.

#### ABRAHAM AND THE MEN OF OLD WILL ATTAIN THE FIRST RESURRECTION

Because these faithful ones prior to Jesus' time were Messianists in looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, they are retrospectively Christians in just the same way as are the faithful ones since Messiah's first coming. The key factors are that:

1. "...now they (*from Abel onward*) are reaching out for a better [place], that is **One belonging to heaven** (*a place that originates with God*) ..." (Heb. 11:16).

NOTE: The phrase "**belonging to**" is not in the Greek. Similar to KIT the UBS Interlinear reads "that is to say, a heavenly one."

2. "...they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain **the better resurrection.**" (Heb. 11:35).

This better resurrection, as shown above, is "the first resurrection" of Revelation 20:5, 6 which is "the resurrection of the righteous ones" (Luke 14:14).

3. "...all these did **not get** [the fulfilment of the] **promise**, as God foresaw something better for us, in order that they may not be made perfect **apart from us.**" (Heb. 11:39, 40).

So these righteous ones who lived before Christ will attain **the better** (the first) **resurrection** and will "*not be made perfect **apart from us** (all Christians are anointed).*" So they will be resurrected at the same time as all other Christians (1 Thess. 4:17) and not in a so-called general resurrection during the Millennium.

#### THERE IS NO CUT OFF POINT AFTER JOHN THE BAPTIST

*The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society teaches that the first resurrection applies only to those who became Christians after the time of John the Baptist. This is based on what Jesus said about John's greatness:*

- ❖ "I tell you, Among those born of women there is none greater than John; but a person that is a lesser one in the kingdom of God is greater than he is" (Luke 7:28 also Matt. 11:11).

However, this statement relates to John as a mortal as compared to '*a lesser one in the kingdom*' who would be immortal. It is comparing John's situation *at that time* with those in the future kingdom. It

clearly does not mean that John and faithful ones before him would not participate in the first resurrection and so be members of the kingdom. He surely will be among the:

- ❖ "...many [who will] recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heaven." (*Matt. 8:11*).

#### THE SECOND RESURRECTION IS OF THOSE OF MANKIND WHO DIED AS UNBELIEVERS

"**The first resurrection**" (**Rev. 20:5, 6**) *implies a second resurrection. The second is often termed 'the general resurrection' and does not involve true Christians but will occur after the thousand years have ended.*

#### CAN THE SECOND RESURRECTION OCCUR DURING THE MILLENNIUM?

*The second resurrection cannot occur during the Millennium because: "It is reserved for men to die once...but after this a **judgment**" (Heb. 9:27) and this judgment is at the Great White Throne **after the Millennium has ended:***

- ❖ "Now as soon as the **thousand years have been ended** ... the rest of the dead did *not come to life until* the thousand years **were ended** ... I saw a great white throne...and the *dead were judged.*" (*Rev. 20:5, 7, 11, 12*).

There is no statement in the Scriptures from which it could be inferred that the second resurrection will be occurring during the Millennium in contradiction of Revelation 20.

NOTE: The phrase 'for all time' in Hebrews 9:27 in the NWT is not in the Greek or in any translation.

#### A RESURRECTION TO MORTAL LIFE

Those categorized by Daniel, Jesus and Paul as "the unrighteous," "*who practiced vile things,*" and who will wake up to "reproaches and indefinitely lasting abhorrence" are given a resurrection of judgment as mortals. Their characteristics bring them "*disgrace and everlasting (age-during Young's) contempt*" at their judgement. These "reproaches" do not last forever because the Hebrew word does not always mean *eternal* but *age-lasting*. This resurrection to mortality in "the natural" body is the very same as that which Lazarus received from Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and was limited so that Lazarus eventually died.

This is not to say that such a person in the second resurrection cannot later be granted immortality. This is because the second resurrection is for the purpose of judging them and not for an instantaneous condemnation of them. So we are told that:

- ❖ "...the dead were **judged out of those things written in the scrolls** according to their deeds. And the sea gave up those dead in it and death and Hades *gave up those dead in them,* and they were judged individually according to their deeds. And **death and Hades were hurled** into the lake of fire .... **whoever was not found written** in the book of life was hurled into the lake of fire" (*Rev. 20:12-15*).

Their judgement is not only according to their deeds prior to death, but according to their response to whatever is set out in "the scrolls." So whether they are thrown into the lake of fire or not will depend on their response and deeds according to those scrolls and implies that there will be some in this latter resurrection who will be written in the book of life.

#### ARE THEY TO BE INSTANTLY CONDEMNED?

This is not a resurrection to *damnation* as the KJV wrongly translates the Greek, but is to judgment, which may hand down either a favourable or an unfavourable verdict. So those given a favourable

verdict will not be destroyed in the lake of fire. This is strongly implied by the fact that those deserving of such second death after the Millennium are described as:

- ❖ “the **cowards** and those **without faith** and those who are **disgusting** in their filth and **murderers** and **fornicators** and those **practicing spiritism** and **idolaters** and all the **liars**, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This means the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

So of those who are in the second resurrection it will only be gross sinners i.e. those in the above categories, including all who reject God and his arrangements, who are to be thrown into the lake of fire.

By more distant implication it appears that those who are given a favourable verdict would be granted immortality because in the *ultimate “new heaven and new earth”* kingdom “*there will no longer be any death*” (Rev. 21:4). The certainty is that this judgment will be just and merciful allowing resurrected ones time to adjust to all that they will then learn before a decision is made concerning their future.

### THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE SECOND DEATH

This lake is shown to come into operation on two occasions, which are:

**a. AFTER THE BEAST'S DEFEAT BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM**

- ❖ “And **the wild beast** was caught, along with it **the false prophet**...while still alive they both were hurled into the lake of fire...” (Rev. 19:20).
- ❖ “...those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus...these will pay the penalty of *destruction of the coming age*, away from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

**b. AFTER THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT**

- ❖ “...as soon as the thousand years have been ended ... **the Devil** was hurled into the lake of fire ... a great white throne...the dead were judged...And **death and Hades** were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second death...**whoever was not found written** in the book of life was hurled into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:7, 10, 13-15).

*It will not be all who are in the second resurrection who are thrown into the lake of fire.*

**Jude 7** does not disrupt this pattern of events:

“So too Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them...are placed before [us] as a [warning] **example** by undergoing the *judicial punishment* of **everlasting fire**.”

Does this mean that these men were, at that time, destroyed forever? No, because the Greek phrase for **everlasting fire** actually means **fire of the coming age**. That fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was not everlasting but similar to the supernatural punishment which God will first inflict at the return of Christ. Hence, Sodom and Gomorrah’s fire was a type of that total destruction yet to come. Additionally, the destruction of these cities by fire cannot preclude a **resurrection for the people** of those cities because of Jesus’ words that:

- ❖ “It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah *on judgment day* than for that city [*any city that fails to show hospitality to Jesus’ disciples*]” (Matt. 10:15).

So the cities were an example and became a proverbial figure for total destruction by God. Jude’s other examples are of the “*angels who forsook their own dwelling place...He has reserved...for the judgment*” and of Israelites coming “*out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those not showing faith.*” Most of these simply died in the wilderness. There are no statements in the Scriptures that these would not get a resurrection. Also, after his giving two of the same examples for punishment, namely, “the angels that sinned” and Sodom and Gomorrah Peter stated that:

- ❖ “The Lord knows how to **keep** *the unrighteous* under punishment **until** the day of judgement”  
(2 Peter 2:9 ESV).

However, as shown earlier the living wicked at the time of Jesus’ return are destroyed and hence are not in the 2<sup>nd</sup> resurrection, having already been thrown into the lake of fire. This includes the Beast and the False Prophet.

## SUMMARY

### 1. THE SPIRITUAL BODY IS TANGIBLE

The NWT of 1 Corinthians 15:44 of “a physical body (Gk. *soma psychikos*)” is translated as “the natural body” in the UBS and in most translations. KIT renders it “body soulical.” So there is no contrast here between “a physical [tangible] body” and a “spiritual [intangible] body.” The contrast is between the mortal, natural body that is weak and perishable with the immortal, spiritual body that is powerful and imperishable. This is not about tangibility.

### 2. THE RESURRECTION BODY IS BASED ON OUR CURRENT BODY

- ❖ “[Christ] who will **refashion our humiliated body** to be conformed to his glorious body”  
(Phil. 3:21).
- ❖ “...will make **your mortal bodies** alive through his spirit...” (Rom. 8:11).

### 3. RESURRECTION IS FROM “THE SLEEP OF DEATH”

- ❖ “I will sleep the **sleep** of death.” (Ps. 13:3 NASB).

### 4. THE RESURRECTION IS UNIVERSAL – BUT IN TWO PARTS

‘First’ (Rev. 20) implies a second resurrection of “the **rest of the dead**” and both resurrections will be of the same nature i.e. tangible as was Jesus:

- ❖ “...**all** who are in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out; those who did **good things** to [1] a resurrection of life, those who practiced **vile things** to [2] a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28, 29).
- ❖ “... a resurrection of [1] *the righteous* and [2] *the unrighteous*” (Acts 24:15).
- ❖ “...**many** of those asleep in the ground of dust who will wake up, these **to indefinitely lasting life**, and those (*the others* NASB) **to reproaches** and to indefinitely lasting abhorrence (*contempt* ESV)” (Dan. 12:2).

### 5. FIRST THE CHRISTIANS - BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM THEN “THE REST OF THE DEAD” - AFTER THE MILLENNIUM

- ❖ “And they **came to life** and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years. ... ( [2] The **rest of the dead** did not come to life **until** the thousand years **were ended**). This is [1] **the first resurrection**” (Rev. 20:4, 5).

The phrase “*come to life*” clearly refers to **physical resurrection** when the thousand years are ended and not simply to being declared righteous. This “*come to life*” means a resurrection just as is the case for those of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection who “*came to life*” (verse 4). In Matthew 9:18 the same phrase is used by the synagogue ruler with reference to his daughter’s resurrection: “*Come and lay your hand upon her and she will come to life.*”

### 6. “THE FIRST RESURRECTION” IS FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

- ❖ “I am the resurrection and the life. **He that exercises faith in me**, even though he dies, will come to life” (John 11:24, 25).

*This life is “everlasting life” in immortality (1 Cor. 15:42ff) so that all true Christians. “...will be repaid at the resurrection of **the righteous ones**” (Luke 14:14).*

7. ABRAHAM AND THE MEN OF OLD WILL ATTAIN THE FIRST RESURRECTION

- ❖ “...they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain **the better resurrection.**” (*Heb. 11:35*).

CONCLUSION

From the above Scriptures it is evident that the first resurrection from “the sleep of death” is of the “spiritual body,” which is not the same as An intangible ‘spirit’ body; but rather it is tangible, so that it will be based on who we are now i.e. human - but granted incorruption (imperishability), immortality and power. This first resurrection will be at the time of Christ’s return and will be of all Christians including those faithful people prior to Christ who anticipated the Messiah. The second resurrection will be to mortality and will occur a thousand years later and concerns all those who died as non-Christians. Unlike the teaching of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses no one except Christ Jesus has yet been resurrected, and when the resurrection does occur it will not be an invisible one.

*By Raymond C. Faircloth*

[www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk](http://www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk)

§