

## TIME SERIES NO.7

# DEATH

## AN ABC Classics MONOGRAPH

### A TIME TO DIE NO.7

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### INTRODUCING THE SERIES

*“Christianity and Time” is a Westgate desktop series viewing matters important to everybody from the perspective of life today and the prospect of Christ’s imminent return. The distinctive of the series is its prophetic stance.*

*The series is patently practical and essentially steers through the issues with scripture as its compass. The topics are Armageddon (1), The time of Creation(2), Time to Rise again(3), Time to avoid Hell (4), Time and Climate(5), Time to Debt(6), Time to Die(7), Time for Church (8), (9), Time to reach Heaven (10), Time to save Israel (11), Time for Jesus(12) Time to*

*Love(13), Time to judge Nations(14), Time to judge nations (14), Time of the End(15), Time for God(Trinity)(16) Time to be holy(17) Time to remember Sodom(18) Time to Choose (19)The material is set out in sections while each study can be read in an hour the biblical material is researched enough to be of reference value.*

***These** studies do not demur to hold up traditional theology or science theory or new moral mores to the light of scripture. There is a time ahead when the Lord will demand thorough root and branch change from the entire creation. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night amid normalcy but leaving the world unrecognizable in its wake. Momentous events lie ahead if we are to take the Lord's words about "great tribulation" seriously and factor in what we read in the Apocalypse about a third of life being wiped out in earth wide disaster. Our own lives we hold very dear and though death comes to us all- we eat healthily and exercise adequately and try to sleep properly to preserve what health we have and as year go by we realize more and more our patent mortality. Having stood by numerous open graves as a Christian minister and brought to bear the comfortable words of scripture I write on this theme to do likewise for the wider constituency.*

***I commend** this 7th Study which by no means stalls at death but moves beyond the expiry of the final breath*

*to what we have to help us see beyond death itself. I have found the statement of Hebrews 12.22 “We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect” one which is bent towards urging a morally perfect afterlife as opposed to the real intent which is to urge a completion of the Spiritual Body with all its soulish and neo-physical facets. For those who find themselves bound by loyalty to await the veriest detail of reconstitution of the dust-carbon body I have given what considerable proof scripture affords of my understanding though having fielded so many queries of the style “Will we know one another?” I suspect a very considerable number of people have concluded that deep and wide differences will emerge in our Spiritual Body. For some a form of sleeping or half-life is understood in the immediate - with this idea I have fallen out of sympathy.*

***J**u my approach I find myself agreeing readily with Professor Tom Wright on the matter of “transformed physicality”. For my own part as I see it the bodies of those who die in the Lord will be suited for the heavens and the new order of things which succeeds this passing world.*

*Series author **Bob Coffey** [Westgate Study Library]*

## **PREFACE**

I commend this short paper to the Christian constituency. It is not just designed to be thought provoking but to represent the teaching of the bible on the subject of what lies in store for saints who cross the river of death.

There is a high cost to dying - thousands of pounds pass hands. Many a soul finds a pauper's grave. None escapes the oracle of death.

It was Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book "On Death and Dying"(Macmillan 1991) who adapted the stages of grief in this way:

1. shock or denial
2. anger(turned outward)
3. depression (anger turned inward)
4. bargaining
5. sadness
6. resolution and acceptance.

Along with the loss of a dear friend or relative after terminal illness or suddenly a form of depression may set in which is temporary. In this connection the subject will find sleep patterns altered, appetite poor, get up and go diminished and it may be marked by frequent bouts of crying and feelings of hopelessness and even physical symptoms. Part of this third stage of grieving is guilt – the sort that blames oneself for events out with one's control – a type of false guilt which may blend in certain cases where due caré was wanting with authentic guilt. Even before that stage is

arrived at the subject may blame God as supreme for what has happened. A very good counter to this way of reacting is to begin to understand what happens in death according to the bible.

## **WHAT OF THE BODY - THESIS AND ANTITHESIS**

Let's start with a thesis and an antithesis. The believer at death falls **asleep** in Christ and His Spirit is in a mode of union with Christ whilst as in the case of the apostles thousands of years elapse till body and spirit come together at the return of the LORD. That is the thesis popularised within Protestant Orthodox thinking which has not varied much to the right or left for hundreds of years. The antithesis is that at death the believer awakes in a "body from heaven" as surely prepared as the place where we shall dwell in glory. The apostle Paul states the latter concept briefly but categorically in 1 Corinthians 15.38 saying "God gives that which is quickened a body as it has pleased Him" in what is *a consequential and dynamic sequel* to death itself.

## **SYNTHESIS**

The question that must be left till later is whether there can be any synthesis of these two concepts. I will not attempt a synthesis but afford scriptural teaching with which you may find yourself in

agreement of a limited or general sort or contrariwise in dispute.

## **BURIAL OR CREMATION**

The preference for cremation has reached 42% in the United States where it costs much less—two and a half thousand dollars as opposed to seven and three quarters for burial. As a recent edition of Time magazine reports there is a plain coffin or cardboard container supplied. There is a tag put on the body and a metal disc inside the vessel for ashes. Both carry a number answering to paperwork. Crematoria have stained glass windows and marble floors and in the UK have memorial gardens answering to the American light filled columbium.

The whole idea of the body being dissolved in 1,800F temperature is somewhat forbidding as opposed to the traditional burial and just now a third alternative of water based cremation (alkaline hydrosis) is coming in. Job who as an ancient faced the normal decomposition process stoically recognized in that instance “though worms destroy my body in and without my flesh shall I see God.” The text there assures us that whatever changes to “this flesh” in its final form I shall have flesh divinely perfected. To that extent the disposal of the earthly remains has become very matter of fact. The most dignified form was invented by the Egyptians who perfected embalming and so Joseph’s body was embalmed. As

to preferences in the USA Billy Graham's statement that there is nothing forbidding cremation in the bible increased its take up in the American bible belt. In the predominantly Black states of Missouri and Alabama there are the lowest Cremation figures-16%; from Dakota in the North to Texas in the south to New York in the East and Georgia in the South East with the Carolinas the figure is 30% with Indiana Kentucky and a West Virginia at 20% along with Arkansas In California Idaho Wyoming New Mexico and Florida it is 50% and in Washington Oregon and Nevada 74%. In the Mormon stronghold of Utah cremation is from 10-20%. Both Jews(excepting some progressives) and Moslems forbid cremation.

## **A SERIES OF RELATED SCRIPTURES**

1. Paul says "To depart and to be with Christ is very far better" "much more excellent". Paul is not given to disembodiment according to his argument from the seed process. Even evil spirits cast out of their hosts pass through dry and unwelcome places until they find re-embodiment (Luke 11.24). The cynic might urge that man subsisting with spirit and soul but no body is in a better state but we are not compelled to take such a position by scripture.

2. The shorter catechism quotes Hebrews 12.23 in favour of the long term residence of spirits in heaven pending re-union with their bodies at the time of the

return of Christ and the trumpet call of God. The narrow use of the word “perfect” in this context which theologians restrict to “moral or spiritual perfectness” is unwarranted. The word “τελος” in itself admits of no such restricted application for it was used of “completion” - of “a full grown man” and of persons “mature enough to be married”. The word sits well with that “actual completion” which is wholeness of perfection and suiting to the eternal state and circumstances of life which we shall encounter in heaven.

3. A text that might become a trip-wire for the antithesis is “they without us should not be made perfect”. What is being said in these words from Hebrews 11.40? The expression is not a forward thrust towards the rapture and return of Christ. It is a thrust backward to the prophetic witnesses of the Old Testament who were not raised from the Sheol of the departed or Abraham’s bosom to the Paradise of God till the time of Christ’s resurrection.

4. “We shall not **run ahead** of those who sleep!” [1Thessalonians 4.15]. That accords fully with the antithesis and Paul is making clear in these words that those who remain till the LORD returns will join in **the second lap** of the runners who have previously died and gone to glory and returned with the LORD in the air. There is no demand to make a case for the



Dante like eruption of bodies from the earth at this time. Scripture speaks plainly “If we believe Jesus rose even so them also which sleep in Jesus **will God bring with him**” Paul is adamant that those who are in a *κοιμew* [*felicitous union of heightened joy not the “iron sleep” of death*] relationship of close union with Christ in Glory are coming back from heaven not rising out of the graves.

#### 4. RESURRECTION WITH EFFECT FOR CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS

In Acts 24.15 Paul as a Pharisee told Felix “I succour or content myself that there is “soon destined to be” *μελλειν* a resurrection of the just and indeed also of the unjust”

We need now to review the idea of “resurrection” as it pertains to saints! A further thesis and antithesis has to be considered. “Does resurrection happen for Christians when the LORD comes” or have believers already experienced life in their new spiritual bodies? First let’s take the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus to which Paul referred in writing to Timothy. These men argued that “**the Resurrection is past already!**” and that overthrew both faith and hope among believers. What did these men mean? They clearly meant that the long awaited calling of men either to stand united to Christ in heaven or to stand before God and give answer to the judge of all was now past

and that no moral scruples applied any longer to how life was lived. They also were drilling others to believe that they had no hope of resurrection. The learned *Professor Dr. Donald Guthrie* whom I had the pleasure to meet in a Scottish theological forum argues in loco that Paul is teaching that **spiritualising** the resurrection denies the faith. That in itself is correct though it is not in my view the matter of Paul's concern - which is that the actual opportunity to share in the resurrection is supposed to have gone for ever. Paul argues clearly on the basis of Christ's resurrection in 1Corinthians 15.13, 14ff. that any and all future **resurrection of saints is bodily** and assured and indeed the bodily resurrection of the wicked to judgment is an established future fact recorded by John in the Apocalypse 20.11 and implied in the text "Every knee shall bow". But note how Paul continues to explain ...

(1) "Christ has become the first fruits of those who **have been sleeping**". The risen Christ in fact was accompanied by a significant sortie - the first tranche of the awakened ones - whose bodies accompanied him into the glorious city as Matthew records. They do not await embodiment! [Matthew 27.52 "Many of the bodies of the saints arose"]

(2) Christ is become the first fruits of them that "slept" or "have slept." Observe the regular use of the

**perfect** as opposed to **present** tense verb in respect of those who die!

(3) As really and instantly as death passed on man in Adam so resurrection has come immediately into effect for the living Christian who is “risen with Christ” and lives as if in heaven. Likewise the Christian who passes to glory obtains **“that body which is from heaven”** [2Corinthians 5.2] and is not simply to be described as resuscitated or subsisting but as “completed”.

(4) When did Paul hope to be completed? The apostle answers, “Neither am I already perfect...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling or upward call of God in Christ Jesus” [Philippians 3.14]. He adds “Our conversation is in heaven from whence we (**who are alive and remain**) look for the Saviour who on that occasion shall change the “lowly bodies of (living) believers” to be “like his own glorious body” according to **His once for all energetic working** according to which **he has once for all placed all things under His authority** (in His glorious resurrection). This mighty energy and power is without limit and has no restriction of time or season. Paul was expecting this change as we all do even as he lived. This is not a statement about the Church’s long-haul wait but its setting is within the first generation of Christians. The following clause

comes into play when we view extended time and the suspension of Christ's coming into generations.

(5) "In Christ shall all be made alive?" [1Corinthians 15.52] This statement seems to favour the thesis that all must wait for new bodies till the last trumpet. However when one reads further scripture says (a) "Christ the first fruits... (b) **Every man in his own order**...(c) afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." The harvest image amalgamates with a military image intimating a first evidential gathering of saints who accompanied Christ to Glory after which many others **in a series of victory parades going into glory** [*Greek ταγματι*] and finally the sequel of those that remain when Christ comes". Paul is strongly putting the point "But...every man in his own order or battalion." In favour of the "progressive" scriptural doctrine of the resurrection we have Jesus words "I am the Resurrection and the life". We have his taking of the first ταγμα of believers with Him to glory and we have this detailed argument of the apostle Paul. The translations of saints in the Apocalypse to which I refer below would appear substantially to confirm this approach.

(6) Paul's argument in 1Corinthians 15.14 through 16 is not in favour of "long soul sleep" or in his own case "a multi millennial wait" but rather an instantaneous "standing again" for he plainly states "we are false

witnesses “if the dead are not rising again”. This “standing again” [*αναστασις*] isn’t some long delayed blessing.

(7) “God is giving” or “was giving” to each seed its own body **according to His will**. This is in sync with the words of David in Psalm 139.15-16 “Your eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” The “spermaton” of our lives is precisely known in its perfect state by the LORD who is the true creator of the body and the gene chain that ensures our new body is under His authority. In this is the guarantee of a new and perfect body for the believer. Thus in glory and through all eternity we shall have a Spirit a soul and a body and be fully human.

(8) The full change **of the entire church on earth** awaits the last trump. The putting on of incorruption and immortality need not await. The victory that Paul announces in 1 Corinthians 15.57 is one which God is currently giving to Christians. The prophecies of Isaiah 25.8 and Hosea 13.14 expect a day **when millennial joy and long life will be the reality world wide**. It is essential that this mortal will have endued itself” with immortality or “will have assumed” immortality and likewise the corruptible incorruption.

It is not satisfactory to take this as a reference of Paul to himself. The words refer to the way in which human life will be lived from the time of the return of Christ. Those who have experienced “change” at death and those who have experienced “change” at the coming of Christ and those who experience “change” in the new era of the millennium when the obedient will live on with Christ and live holy besides in the era then to come are all in mind.

## 5. GLORIOUS BODIES LIVING IN A MORE GLORIOUS REALM

Let us now proceed beyond Paul to the material we have in the Apocalypse. Chapters 5-19.10 cover a short latter day period of Great Tribulation on earth.

### (1) THE ELDERS (24 IN ALL)

“Twenty four elders fall down and worship the LORD” (**Revelation 5.14**). This group of leaders of the saints in heaven may indeed in part represent the church but scholars view them as also representing the Old Testament people of God in glory.

### (2) THOSE WHO ESCAPED TRIBULATION

A massive group of believers who came from the face of Great Tribulation are serving the LORD in heaven (**Revelation 7.15**) and they are never more to experience “hunger or thirst or sunburn” according to

Isaiah 49.10. But they will walk by water fountains and they will have their tears wiped away.

### **(3)THE TWO WITNESSES ARE TRANSLATED**

Subsequent to the home going of the tribulation martyrs the two martyr witnesses of **Revelation 11** are seen to rise within days of their death and go straight into heaven assuming their immortal bodies. They stood on their feet and rose from the ground and ascended in response to the LORD'S "Come up thither".

### **(4)144,000 SANCTIFIED JEWS**

Further along still in **Revelation 14** we are made aware of the 144,000 Jews who were translated singing in heaven –who sang to the accompaniment of harpers. This is the most fascinating picture of corporeal and corporate life in heaven and involves music and instruments of music.

## **6.SYMBOLISTS AND LITERALISTS CONFUSE THE ISSUE**

In a mild but firm gesture **in favour of what John saw and what scripture says** I prefer to dismiss both those who deal out a hermeneutical pack of symbols when they grapple with the Apocalypse and also those who would have all the aspects of "linen" and "horses" and "harps" to entail what they entail on

earth - i.e. flax dams and stables and craft and design studios. To put a period to the interminable contest lets say “a plague on both your houses.” In the eternal state time as sequence does not need to cease and the form of life Christ heralded as “not flesh *and* blood” seems curious but we have to stick with **reality** as God affirms it.

### **(a) CLOTHED UPON AFTER DEATH AS THE RISEN CHRIST WAS CLOTHED**

We do not ask what Jesus wore in the upper room but we must assume he was clothed. He was buried in clothing heavy with spikenard and other substances. As he was clothed so we shall be clothed. When the LORD blessed his disciples on Olivet he was clothed and in this clothing He ascended from their presence. This was the **reality**. The scripture describes a young man at the tomb and angel messengers also –all in white garments. That is not to say that heaven is bulging with clothing manufacturers. The clothing may as easily appear as the fish for breakfast on the beach in Galilee or the bread which the 5000 ate or the wine at the marriage feast in Cana. It is in such categories we must train our mind to think when we face the Apocalypse.

So in the **19<sup>th</sup> chapter** we read of a great voice calling “Hallelujah Salvation Glory Honour Power to the LORD our God. These who declare the praise of God know exactly what is taking place on earth. At the



18<sup>th</sup> verse the bride of Christ presents in “fine linen.” The bodies of those in heaven are clad by the LORD - “white robes are given to them.” This is not symbol- this is not earth linen - these robes are not of earthly manufacture - this is **full reality** - this is perfect clothing.

## **(b) IMMORTALS TIME TRAVEL AND CONVEYANCING?**

Many Christians who love God’s creatures so much often ask such questions as “Will there be pets in heaven?” Bible teachers generally respond cynically with such replies as “If there are cats they will be white cats?” or agnostically “We shall have to wait and see!” However we are told frequently in the bible that God is the “Lord of hosts.” We speak of warring angels and we are well aware that the Apocalypse tells of war in heaven. That is absolute **reality**. The fact is that all armies travel and the battle scenes of time and eternity involve movement. We are not to think of the heavenly host as supplied with “tanks” and “armoured vehicles” of a prestigious type. They do not require “slings” and “assault equipment” or even “body armour” as the Romans might have possessed. They travel as the LORD designed they should – and their means of conveyance is described variously as “white horses” and “chariots and horsemen of Israel”. Heaven’s armies in this instance are conveyed on beautiful creatures which both Elijah

and John saw if in different manners - creatures which owed nothing to the stud farms of the earth. The Apocalypse sees the “linen-clad” armies of heaven ride out on “white horses” to the defeat of the Anti-Christ and beast on the earth. This is not an isolated case for in 2 Kings 6. 15-17 Elisha and his servant saw God’s horses and chariots. Again in 2 Kings 2.11-12 Elijah mounted a celebrated chariot and was carried to glory and Elisha witnessed the scene. **Had you been a bystander you would have had incredible difficulty convincing either prophet that such creatures and vehicles did not exist - indeed you would be dismissed out of hand.** You and I would be foolish to dismiss a **reality** of which we read of in scripture because we have not seen it with our own eyes. No-one can be faulted for daring to believe there are life forms in heaven of which we have not the least comprehension aside from scriptural witness.

### **(c) MUSICIANS IN GLORY!**

Man shall never cease to be a singer. We sing on earth and we shall sing in heaven. Moreover we delight to use instrumental music. This capability and facility it appears shall also be available to us in glory. We are told in the Apocalypse 14.2 and 15.2 that “harpists will harp” and sing. They will be present on the sea of glass that is by the throne of God

There are other glimpses of heaven in this great book but what we have is convincing and emphatic of the miraculous and yet actual. Some call these symbols and some call them literal facts. I believe they are “**new reality**”. Our world is a world of shadows. Our supposed *hard reality* is but a creation in infant plasticine by comparison with the **new realities of heaven**.

#### **(d) THE PARADISE OF GOD-A VERY GREEN WORLD**

There has to be colour in heaven - there is a rainbow - and as we all know light refracts. Besides the ethereal music: there is the glorious scenery; the sublime light, the indescribable reality that Paul who was caught up to Paradise experienced. One thing we are not precisely taught but might assume as possible is that those thus fitted for heaven may visit the millennial earth. We are however sure that they are prepared for **an eternal “new heaven and earth”** in which the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven is the central focus of the presence of God. “Waters” “trees” “fruit” “seasons” “no pain” “no lamentation” “tears - yes” “gates” “precious stones” “gold” “glass” “no night” “books” “leaves on the trees” “no sun” “no moon” - these are just some of **the realities** we shall enjoy in glory - these would be some of our favourite things that all shall share in heaven - but best of all Christ will be there and saints we have loved so long.

## 7.HOW AND WHEN ARE THE DEAD RAISED?

Paul said "someone will ask this question - *so lets answer it (italics mine).*"

"With what body do they come?" **1 Corinthians 15 55.**

(1) The first fruits resurrection men at the tomb were seen and they were clad in shining robes.

(2) Christ Himself appeared in a number of forms. It is not to be taken that this is a miraculous characteristic to be gifted to glorified saints. Yet shall we be **directly dependent on Christ** for our new body. The genetic code of our life in so far as it is needed is in God's book - **Psalms 103 14 Ps 139.16.**

God does not **clone us** from some parts of the present body.

(3) We shall be clothed upon as above - by Christ the Resurrection and the Life.

(4) We do not sow the body in death that we reap in life. We cannot depend upon it that what we have now is what we shall always have. The belly and meat digesting system will change - **1Corinthians 6.13**

God gives us a body "as HE wills" so that imperfections are not going to be repeated and the genetic string is not going to dictate long repeated faults. Reproductive organs change **Luke 20.35**

cf.No.1

(5) We shall enjoy spring like life. A "**first-fruits resurrection man**" at the tomb was described as a "young man" **Mark 16.5**. Eternal life is **ZOE life**-spring like - at its best

(6) It will not be flesh with blood cf. **1Cor. 15.50** Nevertheless it must be in the image and human form of Christ but as to its **substantial constitution** we know that "**we shall be like Him**".**Phil.3.21**

In paragraph 8 below there are some further details.

(7) Will we know one another? We will do better - we will quickly get to know our fellows from every age and most certainly we shall know each other. There need not be "Emmaus Road" recognition difficulties. Our eyes will be enabled - **we shall know fully as we are fully known.1Cor13.12**. The most intimate and excellent aids to recognition are the eyes and the voice. We shall "see" Jesus and we shall hear his "well done". These faculties will be prepared for eternity and will be sharper than ever here.

(8) What happens between the "first fruits" and the "trumpet call"? Are those who die in the LORD to be considered disembodied? Are they "of the first fruits" or are they "of the last day of harvest"? The Hebrew of John 6.54 "I will raise him up at the last day" may read "in the house of the last day" or "through" the last day. Paul argues that we already share in the life of Christ by union with him-Colossians 3.1. He further says "your life has now been hidden with Christ in God" This "hidden-ness" (Greek

κρυπτος) like that of the setting stars is not merely a "disappearance" from this earthly scene but a manifestation in spring like life in heaven. Paul continues "When Christ who is our life has been manifested then **you will have been manifested** with HIM in glory "(Colossians 3.4). The tense shows Paul is coupling the future of the Colossians with that of saints that will fall asleep not because he fails as a watchman but because he understands the season of evangelism is to be long. Again in **1 Thessalonians 5.10** Paul says "Whether we are watching vigilantly or fall asleep **we will live together** with HIM." For further scripture on the nature of this life I refer you to file 8 of my study on "The Eternal State"

## **8. THE SUBSTANCE-SOME FACTS WE POSSESS**

**1.** We know it to be foolish to think that **the bare grain** we sow will be what we reap. **1Cor 15.37** Paul writes "When you sow you do not plant that body that shall be".

**2.** We know what we are now must undergo change- however painless- should Christ appear to take his church home by voice of command **1 Thessalonians 4.16** we also know that we shall "all" be changed- **1Cor 15 51-52**

3. We do not know fully what "change" means but it involves **the atomic or even sub-atomic structure** of matter which forms our bodies is almost inevitable-if flesh and blood is not to inherit eternal life. The whole nature of substance and reality as it shall be is seen for its difficulty in the appearance of Christ within a room the doors of which were locked and in the case of his multiple appearances which we would call materialising. Cf. **1 Corinthians 15 51-52 and 2 Corinthians 3.18 for further study.**

4. We know that God gives the resurrection body and it is as "He **has** willed" ETHELESE-there is an "already in keeping nature" about the plan for you.

5. We know that "to each is given its own body". The word is SPERMATON-thus the distinctives of parentage -or **your origins at conception**-are wonderfully and gloriously preserved in **the act of God in resurrection** by which the Lord rebuilds your frame just as He built it "curiously" in the womb in the **process of gestation. Psalm 139.15**

6. We know from the Spirit speaking through David that the bone structure and strength of our body AZAM was known to God when we were "made to be allowed to go back to earth." There are things which inspire both reverence and terror about our creation. NORAOTH There is that which is "extraordinary"

"distinct/separate" " difficult (in our own eyes)" and "wonderful" in what we become. That embryonic "rolling together" GALAM was "seen by God's eyes" **Psalm 139 15**. He knows the process-preserves the mathematical "string" of huge detail in HIS book- **before** they -"the body details" and "days(of conception birth death and resurrection)" **had been formed"** YUTZARU.

7. We know that God had foreseen better for us than the OT saints were being provided in full or receiving as they departed this life in Sheol of the departed. He who led captivity captive **Ephesians 4.7 & Psalm 68.18** from the "nether world" **κατωτερα Ephesians 4.9** gifted men with the hope of "heaven" after what was called the "harrowing of hell"-the "spear-point" of "Spirit victory" of Christ in all realms. That is linked to the "**having been made perfect"** τελειωθωσιν (aor. pass) of **Hebrews 11.40**

## 9. RESURRECTION EXPLORED BIBLICALLY

The two volumes of Dr. Wright's [Recently appointed to the chair of N.T. studies at St. Andrews university] that deal with the "resurrection issue" fundamentally are "The New Testament People of God" and "The Resurrection of the Son of God". The professor and former Bishop of Durham has worked indefatigably



on a mammoth project seriously coloured by a notion of the **"renewed earth"** brought into service simultaneously with **"an act of trumpet call resurrection"**. Professor Wright's work seems not to deal adequately with the **standing again** or **completion** of any saint or **any (already implemented) application of CHRIST'S victory over mortality and corruption** in the current life of heavenly saints.

The comment of REINECKER on Hebrews 11.40 is that it represents the Semitic idea of final success and the ending of corruption- a time when death will be harmless. For the Christian passing to be with Christ **this is so**-in the millennium this is so **to a great extent**-but Paul is arguing that death is **the last enemy** and will be **finally destroyed** 1Cor 15.26 at the end of the millennium with the advent of the "new heaven and earth" as referred to in 1Corinthians 15 27-28.

**1. Did Christians use ANASTASIS as innovative thinkers and cheerfully speak of a concrete event when they spoke of "Resurrection"?** This is by Professor Wright's admission "the" question of his book. Over against the issue he defines ANASTASIS as "standing again"- so far so good. We need to ask the further questions as to where and when human beings are biblically to be understood to "rise" or "stand again".

(a) Are the saints in heaven "risen"?

(b) Do those who stand before the LORD rejoice as risen ones?

(c) Are they clothed upon?

There are various answers possible.

**First**, the "Risen believers who appeared bodily to many" **are already "risen"** in the full sense of that word".

**Second**, the men who appeared at the tomb are neither angels nor uncertain disciples **but "risen ones"**

**Third**, the Hebrew writer(**Hebrews 11**) speaks of 16 named persons and also the prophets and other unnamed martyrs and says that in their death "they were not receiving the promise" of resurrection but dwelt in Sheol. However the Resurrection must have had immediate effect for the Hebrew saints for Jesus said "Many will come from the east and the west and **take their places on the couches (of the feast) with Abraham Isaac and Jacob** in the kingdom of heaven".

**All of these persons we would surely consent are not to die again-and they are incorruptible.** So those participating in "Life" or in the first fruits resurrection have enjoyment of **the better thing** God foresaw-they have been made complete. This very completion introduces a great cloud of witnesses-the former saints "stand in their lot". (**Hebrews 12.1**)

We have to grant that LAZARUS WAS RAISED but we need to understand that THOSE RAISED AFTER

HIS RESURRECTION were raised to  
INCORRUPTION and IMMORTALITY.

2. *Professor Wright* quite properly challenges *Coakley* who characterises Jewish views as "fuzzy" and **Paul's view as "non-bodily"**. Paul does indeed teach "bodily resurrection" but as I have argued strenuously the body is not that "bare grain" which is sown. 1Cor15.37. It is not *γυμνον κοκκον* but the "gifted body" of God's providing - modelled on the approved body of Christ for incorruptibility and preserving the *σπερματα* or genetic regulators without defilement 1Cor 15.38 with added glory 1Cor 15.41 and suited to abiding in the heavenlies" 1Cor 15.39-40.

3. Professor Wright in his "shooting at the sun" analogy argues that we are like the young archer whose arrows would not reach the sun but who fired at the sun's reflection in a lake and split the sun in two. Like him we have cracked the issue of a "hard science" historically provable event. In search of a post - enlightenment proof he finds himself facing *Pannenberg's* view that we must await an analogy in the final resurrection of those in Christ and the view of *Troeltsch* that the only analogy historians can present is that of their experience - which is subjective. But surely the point is that **no analogy is needed**. Analogies are the trade of Philosophers and it is

simply used to attempt to throw a bridge over between history and theology. For any Christian whether theologian or historian the scriptural narratives under the Holy Spirit are regulative and sufficient through faith.

1. We have the example of Christ who is risen.
2. We have the men at the tomb in risen form
3. We have the first fruits resurrection of Matthew 27.53

The enlivened scriptural witness to these events is sufficient to faith.

4. The John 21 narrative is examined under the theme "New Day" and the unasked question ""Who are you?" is said to be posed because the apostles knew two things-first they knew "the body of Christ would not decay" and they knew it was "this same Jesus". This continuity and discontinuity as Professor Wright calls them were both present. The argument is valid. Further as to the matter of continuity and non-continuity some further understandings are yielded by scripture –see File 8 of my document on “The eternal state” Paragraphs 7-8.

5. Resurrection in Tom Wright’s definition is termed "**transformed physicality**. The apostle Paul most assuredly says, "We shall be changed"; however he calls our bodies "**Spiritual bodies**" **1Corinthians 15.54**. Our present bodies operating within a three

dimensional world in the eternal dimension will centre on their relationship to God in Christ and not to this old earth but they will be designed for the "new heaven and earth" which **replaces** this one. They are to be **real bodies** where the continuity is built on the spirit and soul and the perfection of the SPERMATA or familial continuity which God first wove into our lives and of which HE alone is the guarantor at our departure.

6. The fact that **Josephus Wars 3.8.5** states his and supposedly the OT biblical position is a useful snapshot of traditional Jewish thought but not to be received as biblical theology. *Josephus* says "*Do not you know that those who depart this life according to the law of nature and pay their debt which was received from God when he that lent it us is pleased to require it back again enjoy eternal fame? That their houses and their posterity are sure, that their souls are pure and obedient and to obtain a most holy place in heaven from whence in the revolution of the ages, they are again set into pure bodies.*" **Houses will be possessed by Jews here during the millennium but it does not follow because Josephus stated it as fact that we Christians shall return from heaven to our houses on this earth.** This position is not John 14 compliant nor is it consistent with Revelation 21.1.

The first heaven and the first earth had passed away  
[*απερχομαι* "departed" "died" ceased"]

7. The expression in Ezekiel 43.7 "This is where I will live among the Israelites **forever**" is not an expression I would submit in favour of a restored earth-man's **eternal home**. It is plain that Professor Wright embraces that view. We do need to recognise *m/ al* as an expression very often expressing simply "an age" or as in this case a millennium as *Χρονον* in Greek. The better Hebrew for eternity is d[*w ml al* which is used by Moses Daniel and David.

8. All that is taught concerning the "state of believers at their death" does not affect the issue of the so called "general resurrection" which is better understood as the resurrection of the "spiritually dead" which is a truly "last day" event and is referred to in Apocalypse 20 11-15. In another context the matter of "Judgment" begs to be considered. This involves the separate judgment of "nations" (at the return of Christ) of "saints" (Romans 14.10-12 & 2 Corinthians 5.10-essentially un-timed and not demonstrably a one-off event - nevertheless involving every Christian - Paul says "We "shall" or "must all have appeared" *φανερωθηναι*)-of angels (in a manner undisclosed) and that judgment termed by much secular literature the "last judgment" -a

judgment of the spiritually dead (at the close of the millennium). Unbelievable vagaries of thought surround the matter of biblical teaching on “judgment”

## 10. BRIEF ADDENDUM ON HOW THE CONCEPT OF THE MILLENNIUM AFFECTS THAT OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

The a-millennialist adoption of a renewed earth renovated by fire is most confusing and only follows by denial of the plain sense of scripture amalgamated with the rejection of **long held position of biblical Christianity on our "going to" and "eternal continuance in" heavenly places.**

Paul says "We shall be caught up to encounter our friend the LORD Jesus Christ amid clouds or hosts of the redeemed who have run the race. **So** we shall be **ever** (*παντοτε*) with the LORD. What an apodosis!

**So** is used of **that which we love dearly.**

**So** is used of the way we shall be-with Jesus-with HIS triumphant people **-during HIS life**

**So** is used of **heavenly experience** entire and simple.

**So** is also used of **unbroken and beautiful experience.**

**On residential locale** check the Apocalypse 14.1-5 where the 144,000 "redeemed from the earth" (*ηγορασμενον perfect passive*) "follow the lamb wherever he goes" In the Apocalypse 20.4 the

**martyrs of the tribulation** share Christ's millennial rule. The saints of the rapture (**Apocalypse 20.6**) share that dominion but are not represented as on the earth in **Apocalypse 20.9** which is the (temporary) barracks or quarters of saints of that era engaged in the kingdom's business though ultimately in that city HE *has loved* and where He has set his name (Jerusalem re-founded during the Millennium) they are surrounded and from it are lifted aloft to the New Jerusalem as this earth & its heavens pass away. The vision of the new heavens and earth and the city of God in Apocalypse 21.1 are subject to the LORD'S word in Apocalypse 21.5 "**Behold I am making everything new -you must write for these words are faithful and true. Christ is speaking here of HIS *then* current work of creating the new system. It is such that no earthly woes of this world - neither its curse or its death or throes and pains will enter. You will find by exploration of Isaiah 65-66 and Revelation 20.7-9 with 21.that the interim millennial earth is not utterly freed from the curse or death or sin. It is the heritage of "sons" and those who "conquer" through the lamb. All of this interim in millennial time does not preclude the "melting" of the earth and heavens that are now in accordance with the revelation of Christ to Peter in 2 Peter 3 12-13.**

PRAISE GOD DEATH IS NOT THE END