

Bible Cosmology 303B:

Immortality, Consciousness, Hell, Universal Salvation



biblestudying.net

Brian K. McPherson and Scott McPherson

Copyright 2016

More than One Kind of Death

Now that we've established the connection between spirit and life, we need to turn our attention to the other end of the spectrum. In a very real sense, the focal issue at the center of all these related topics is the concept of death. So, a basic question emerges. What does the Bible mean by the term "death?"

As a matter of proper protocol, it is important to establish clear terms. In particular, it is of fundamental importance to recognize that at least on a conceptual level it is possible to distinguish between the death of the physical body on one hand and what might be termed "spiritual death" on the other. With regard to the death of the physical body itself, there is little controversy, except of course regarding its impact upon the subsequent status of the spirit or of the soul. But setting aside the impact on the spirit or on the soul for the moment, all parties in the debate will likely readily agree on a basic description of what physical death is. Although the causes for death are many (ranging from the degradation of aging to disease to sudden traumatic injury, etc.), physical death is the point when the body's metabolic or other critical processes cease from normal function to such a degree that the mind's ability for conscious interaction through the body stops, the body becomes inanimate, and the body (if it not already utterly destroyed by the cause of death) begins the gradual process of decomposition, which will ultimately utterly dismantle the bodily form until there is nothing left of it.

Spiritual death on the other hand is a matter of some debate in modern Christian theology. Does it entail the end of existence of the spirit or of the soul? Or, perhaps merely the cessation of consciousness? Maybe it is the separation of the spirit or the soul from the decomposing physical body. Or, maybe it simply denotes the separation of a sinner from a saving relationship with God? Perhaps some combination of two or more of these options is possible. Or, perhaps in the end, the accumulated evidence and rational argument will demonstrate that physical death and spiritual death are one and the same, that the spirit or the soul ceases to exist at the same point in time when the body dies and begins to decompose – a single, all-encompassing death, the total end of a human existence on every level.

We have already seen clear statements from Christ in Matthew 10:28 which make it impossible to conclude that the death of the soul necessarily accompanies or is caused by the death of the body. So, at this point, we have both a scriptural and conceptual basis for distinguishing between the death of the body and the death of the spirit or the death of the soul. And further support for this conclusion remains ahead.

In order to avoid confusion as we proceed, it will be necessary to use terms that responsibly identify the specific concept that is under discussion at any given point in time. For this purpose, when necessary throughout this paper we will use the phrase “physical death” when discussing questions related to the status of physical body and we will use the term “spiritual death” when discussing questions related to the status of the spirit and the soul. The use of these distinguishing terms is not intended to presuppose a conclusion in which the two concepts are distinct. But biblical passages might contain fine details requiring careful consideration. It would not be fair to presumptuously or casually lump all biblical commentary into the simple, indiscriminant category “death,” without first considering if a more refined designation of these concepts is intended by the biblical authors (or even by ourselves). Only by keeping our conceptual terms distinct we will have an educated and responsible discussion and clearly identify when a biblical text is intending to describe something that happens to the body, to the soul, to the spirit, or perhaps all of the above together.

Introduction: More Than One Kind of Resurrection

Just as it is necessary to identify the possibility that there might be two different kinds of death in the bible (physical and spiritual), it is also important to discuss the idea of resurrection on a similar level. To be specific, scripture describes two different kinds of resurrection. One entails a simple restoration to mortal life after physical death. The word “mortal life” is critical here. In this type of resurrection, the person who is restored to bodily life remains mortal after they are resurrected. Their body is alive again, but it remains mortal. They can and will experience the death of their physical body a second time. Whether from natural causes like disease or old age or from accidents or violence, etc., they will experience physical death again within the confines of a normal human lifespan (which generally speaking is 100 years or less). For that reason, we might refer to this as mortal resurrection. One other item worth noting about mortal resurrections is that the person raised is always recently deceased, usually in terms of a matter of days at the most, rather than a person who has been dead for weeks, months, years, etc., etc.

We will establish the scriptural evidence for mortal resurrection momentarily. But for now, we should take a moment to describe the second type of resurrection.

The second type of resurrection entails not only a restoration to life in a physical body but in this case the process of resurrection also transforms that physical body itself from its previous mortal condition to an immortal condition

comparable to that of the angels. Because those persons who experience this second kind of resurrection become immortal as a result of it, we might call this immortal resurrection. In contrast to examples of persons who receive mortal resurrection, we would expect that those who receive immortal resurrection will never again experience the death of their physical bodies. This is because their bodies are no longer capable of death, rather they are immortal. The scriptural evidence for this type of resurrection will also be discussed below.

In addition, the concept of immortal resurrection raises a question that is critical to the various doctrines under examination in this study. Apart from God, can any being really be absolutely unable to ever cease to exist? Here there are simply two possibilities, yes or no. For the sake of convenience and clarity, we will refer to the affirmative position as “irrevocable immortality” and the negative position as “revocable immortality.”

The term “irrevocable immortality” denotes the idea that there are other immortal beings other than God and that the nature of their immortality precludes them from ceasing to exist at any point in the future. (Of course, this does not mean that such beings are uncreated or that they always existed. It simply means that God either created them as immortal or endowed them with immortality through immortal resurrection.) Conversely, the term “revocable mortality” denotes the idea that there are other immortal beings other than God and that God not only can but will rescind their immortality in some cases and cause them to utterly cease to exist.

At this point, it would probably be helpful to take this discussion out of the abstract. Consider angels for example. A little later on in this study, we will see scripture describe angels as beings who are not susceptible to death. But does that mean it is impossible for even God to bring an end to their existence? Perhaps they are immortal strictly in the sense that they have enduring longevity and are not susceptible to aging, sickness, and injury. If God can end angels’ existence, then we might think of their immortality as limited, at least in contrast to God’s immortality. But, if God can end an angel’s existence, then whatever immortality they previously enjoyed is subject to being revoked by God. In other words, it would be a revocable immortality.

Consequently, one task that lies ahead is to determine what scripture has to say about the extent of angelic immortality as well as the extent to which resurrected humans may be similar to or differ from angels with respect to the nature of their immortality. However, there is one other critical point to make with regard to such questions.

At times, it may be tempting to address questions like these in terms of what God can or cannot do? Or to put it another way, if angels or resurrected humans are irrevocably immortal, would such a notion inherently place limits on God’s power, as if to say God is utterly incapable of ending their existence? When issues are framed in this way, there is a reasonable inclination to reach a conclusion that preserves God’s power and ability. In short, in order to preserve God’s

omnipotence, we may feel compelled to conclude that God must be able to end the existence of angels or resurrected humans.

But as it turns out, framing questions strictly in terms of whether God can or cannot do something is shortsighted. It is neither logically necessary nor reliable to frame issues in these terms. There are many things that we might conclude God could do, if he wanted, yet will not do. For instance, could God rewind time and make it so that he never created and the universe never existed? Does God have the capacity to rewind time and make it so that Jesus never came and died to atone for men's sins? And, if we feel compelled to answer "yes" to such questions in order to preserve God's omnipotence, would that in turn force us to conclude that God will indeed reverse time and make it so the universe never existed or Jesus never came to atone for sin? Conversely, if we conclude that God will never reverse time to undo creation or the atoning work of Christ Jesus, then are we inherently placing limits on God's power and saying God is utterly incapable of such things?

We could also consider a more familiar example, one that we find in scripture. In Luke 4:27 Jesus states that there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha but none of those Israelite lepers were cleansed. What are we to make of the fact that a miraculous healing did not happen for those Israelite lepers? That God utterly lacked the ability to heal them? Of course not. Just because a miracle does not happen in a given circumstance, it does not mean God is not capable of performing a miracle. Likewise, scripture sometimes records that wicked men reign over the kingdoms of the world. But just because wicked men sometimes rule does not mean God is incapable of removing them from power.

Obviously, our point here is not to imply that we should put limits on God's omnipotence. To the contrary, our point is that we don't have to. There is no need to frame questions solely in terms of God's power. Moreover, the outcome of doing so can be greatly misleading. Ultimately, the fact is that the absence of an event doesn't prove God is incapable of bringing an event to pass. Nor does God's ability to do a thing demonstrate that God will ever do such a thing. In short, there is no necessarily logical connection to the ability to do a thing and the necessary occurrence or absence of a thing. Any responsible approach to a question must consider the possibility that God may have the power to do something and yet determine not to do it. But such a consideration turns the focus to what scripture reveals about God's intentions toward his creation, which requires research and analysis to reach an answer. And in this light, we can see the real advantage of framing any question strictly in terms of its impact on God's power. Such an approach allows a single, overriding principle like omniscience to provide a sweeping answer to a question without the need for careful research and often with tenuous reasoning.

Consequently, we will address the question regarding whether immortality is revocable or irrevocable, not as a question about God's ability, but as a question of what God has said about his decisions and intentions regarding his creation. In simpler terms, the real question is not whether God can do a thing, but what God

himself has declared about these matters. Or more specifically in the case of our current study, what has God said about the qualities he has decided to give created things? Do God's statements in the bible indicate that he has decided to bestow an irrevocable immortality on angels or men? Has he stated that once he bestows immortality, he will not revoke it? Or, do statements God makes in the bible indicate that God not only can but will indeed revoke the immortality he has bestowed on some creatures? Put another way, do the terms, contrasts, correlations, and descriptions God provides in the bible indicate that he has bestowed an immortality on some beings that is not revocable or will not be revoked?

Up to this point, we have described the concepts of mortal and immortal resurrection and highlighted some potential logical pitfalls as well as how to avoid them. With the course of our investigation now properly framed, we will move on to examine the scriptural evidence for both types of resurrection, mortal and immortal. Assessing these matters is critical to our study because it fundamentally relates to questions about the possible death or cessation of spirits or the souls whose bodies have been resurrected to immortality. If the bible does not describe immortality as revocable, then there are clear implications regarding cessation of existence for beings which have been endowed with an immortal body.

Scriptural Evidence for Mortal Resurrection

In this section, we will establish the scriptural evidence for the first type of resurrection, which we have called "mortal resurrection." As stated earlier, this type of resurrection is defined as resurrection to a mortal body that within a normal human lifespan will inevitably die again from normal or natural causes such as old age, disease, or injury, etc.

Here we might take a moment to highlight another critical conceptual distinction. As we will see, scripture not only distinguishes between mortal and immortal resurrection, but it also distinguishes between individual resurrections that occur at different points over history and the concept of a general resurrection involving a mass of mankind simultaneously. Moreover, the type of resurrection is linked to the number of people being resurrected as well as the timing of the event. As we will see, the individual resurrections recorded in the bible are mortal resurrections and they occur at various points in history. But when the bible refers to a mass resurrection of many people at once, immortal resurrection is in view. In addition, general resurrections coincide with other significant, prophetic events regarding the Messiah and his redemptive work.

In addition, mortal resurrection is the first type that occurs in history. But more importantly, mortal resurrections are recorded as a rarity. Only a relatively small number of people experience this type of resurrection over the course of scriptural (and human) history. There are two pieces of evidence that demonstrate the rarity of mortal resurrection. Number one, the fact that individual resurrections are so infrequent in the biblical record itself testifies to the rarity of mortal resurrections.

And number two, the Book of Hebrews asserts a general rule that will establish the rare and exceptional nature of mortal resurrections. Once we have established the general rule, we will then move on to specific passages recording the exceptions to it. Below are the relevant verses from Hebrews 9.

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. **23** It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. **24** For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: **25** **Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;** **26** **For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once** in the end of the world hath he **appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.** **27** **And as (2596) (3745) it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:** **28** **So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;** and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

First, in this passage the author of Hebrews is discussing the prophetic relationship between Christ's sacrificial death and the sacrifices at the tabernacle and Temple under Law of Moses. In the midst of describing the parallels between these sacrifices, the author notes in verse 25 that under the Law of Moses the high priests entered into the most holy place of the Temple with the blood of animals once every year for many generations spanning hundreds of years. The result was that under Moses' Law there were many, many sacrifices carried out over a long period of history. But what about Christ? Would the parallel between his sacrifice and the Mosaic sacrifices require Christ to suffer and die many times? No, the author clearly concludes. Instead, the author repeats three times in verse 25, 26, and 28 that Christ did not "offer himself often" but only "once."

Second, what reason does the author draw upon to help support this distinction between Christ and the Mosaic sacrifices? In verse 27, the author asserts the axiom that, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this" to face "the judgment." This axiom is the pivotal statement demonstrating the necessity for mortal resurrections to be rare.

Third, we should pay particular attention to the tiny English word "as" in this phrase from verse 27. This one, small English word is a translation of two words from the original Greek. The first Greek word is "kata" (Strong's Number 2596), which means "down from, through out, according to, toward, or along." The second Greek word is "hosos" (Strong's Number 3745), which means "as great as, as far as, how much, how many, whoever." These words only appear together two other times in the Bible, both in Hebrews. Both times they are likewise used to introduce a principle or fact that substantiates a particular notion.

Number one, in Hebrews 3:1-6 the author asserts that his audience ought to be attentive to Jesus as their Apostle and High Priest. In verse 3, he supports this

assertion with the phrase “he who builds a house has more honor than the house.” And in verse 6, he explains that we “we are Christ’s house.” In other words, because we are Christ’s house, Christ has authority over us. Therefore, we ought to pay attention to Christ. And “kata hosos” is the Greek phrase used to introduce the rationale for this conclusion.

Number two, Hebrews 7:19-22 asserts that Jesus presides over “a better testament” than the covenant of Moses, which verse 19 states, “made nothing perfect.” In the intervening verses, the author supports his claim regarding the superiority of Jesus’ ministry over Moses’ law. In this case, his particular line of argument stems from the fact that Jesus was made a priest by means of an oath from God while the Levites of Moses’ Law were not made priests by means of an oath. God’s oath makes Jesus’ ministry more authoritative. And once again, the author uses the Greek phrase “kata hosos” when introducing the explanation for his conclusion.

This brings us back to Hebrews 9:27, where we see “kata hosos” before the phrase “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” The use of “kata hosos” here tells us that the author intends verse 27 as an explanation for why Jesus only sacrificed himself once instead of multiple times over the course of history. Based on the argument outlined by the author of Hebrews, Jesus did not die multiple times because God has ordained the rule that in general men are to live and die only once before God’s judgment. This tells us something about the importance of the principle that God has ordained for men to die one time. Its veracity was regarded as so well-established and widely known that the author of Hebrews could appeal to it without qualification in order to explain why Jesus only had to die once. This in turn undergirds the fact that mortal resurrection is a rare occurrence. It is conceivable that over the course of history God might allow a relatively small number of exceptions to this ordained rule, but not a large number.

(For the sake of fairness to our overall study, it should be noted that this rule does not necessarily rule out the possibility of men dying a second time or ceasing to exist after the Judgment. It only argues against repeated physical deaths before the Judgment. Therefore, this verse does not directly rule out the possibility that human existence can be utterly ended either at physical death or at the Judgment itself.)

Having established a general rule against mortal resurrection from Hebrews 9, it is necessary to demonstrate the existence of exceptions to it. Moreover, it will also be necessary to discuss the evidence that these are indeed restorations to mortal existence, not resurrections to immortality.

Below are six biblical accounts recording individual resurrections. Two are from the Old Testament period (1 Kings 17, 2 Kings 13). And five are from the New Testament (Matthew 11, Mark 5, Luke 8, Luke 17, and John 11). (It should be noted that Matthew 11 is simply the assertion that Jesus had on occasion raised

the dead, such as we see in Mark 5, Luke 17, and John 11. Consequently, Matthew 11 does not record the occurrence of any specific resurrection.)

1 Kings 17:17 And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. 24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

2 Kings 13:20 And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. 21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

Matthew 11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, **the dead are raised up**, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Mark 5:35 While he yet spake, **there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead:** why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 **As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.** 37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38 **And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue,** and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39 **And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.** 40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41 **And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.** 42 **And straightway the damsel arose, and walked;** for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; **and commanded that something should be given her to eat.**

Luke 8:49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, **Thy daughter is dead;** trouble not the Master. **50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered** him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and **she shall be made whole.** **51** And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. **52** And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. **53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.** **54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.** **55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway:** and he commanded to give her meat.

Luke 17:11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. **12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother,** and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. **13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.** **14** And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And **he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.** **15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother...****22 Then Jesus answering said unto them,** Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, **the dead are raised,** to the poor the gospel is preached.

John 11:1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) **3** Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. **4** When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. **5** Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. **6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place** where he was. **7** Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. **8** His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? **9** Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. **10** But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. **11** These things said he: and **after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.** **12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.** **13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.** **14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.** **15** And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. **16** Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. **17** Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. **18** Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: **19** And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. **20** Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was

coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21 **Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.** 22 **But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.** 23 **Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.** 24 **Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.** 25 **Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:** 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? 27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. 28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. 29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. 31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. 32 **Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.** 33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34 **And said, Where have ye laid him?** They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37 **And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?** 38 **Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave.** It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. **Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.** 40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41 **Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.** 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 **And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.** 44 **And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.** **Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go...**12:1 **Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.** 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but **Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him...**9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see **Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead...**17 **The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.**

As we can see, although rare there are clearly instances in both the Old and New Testament in which individuals died but were raised back to life. We can also see that in all of the cases recorded above, the individual that is raised back to life was only recently deceased. They are resurrected only a matter of hours or days after death not weeks, months, or years, etc.

The question is: Were they raised back to mortal life to die again at some later date (within a normal human lifespan), or were they raised with an immortal body of some sort? Two factors argue here for the conclusion that they were raised back to mortal life and would die again of normal causes within a matter of decades (thereby constituting exceptions to the general rule in Hebrews 9:27).

First, the texts of these passages present these individuals as resuming their normal life on earth. This is plainly evident in several of the passages (1 Kings 17, Luke 8, Luke 17, John 11-12) in which the resurrected individuals are given back to their family. In particular, 1 Kings 17 and Luke 17 both involve the resurrection of the son of a widow. The whole point of restoring life to the son is to help his widowed mother. If the resurrected sons were simply to be whisked away to a heavenly existence rather than resuming their normal earthly life, there would have been no point in resurrecting them. In heaven, they would still be unavailable to help their widowed mothers who remain behind on earth. But since these sons were resurrected to resume their normal, earthly life, we must ask whether they would die a second time after living out a normal lifespan or whether they were immortal as a result of being resurrected. If they do not die a second time at some later date within a normal human lifespan, they would still be around wondering the earth today, which is problematic. Or, we would need to hypothesize that they are carried off to heaven at some point, which is equally problematic because it has to be fabricated without scriptural attestation. Simply put, scripture never indicates that these resurrected individuals are later whisked away to heaven. Given that the purpose of their individual resurrection is to enable them to resume their natural, earthly life with their families, the most natural and least problematic conclusion is that they resume mortal life, finish their normal lifespan, and then die once more from natural, typical causes.

Second, while other individuals are recorded as rising from the dead prior to Jesus, Jesus' resurrection is depicted in the New Testament as unique and preeminent. The New Testament does not fail to explain why or how. Instead, scripture clearly tells us that Jesus' resurrection was unique because Jesus Christ was not just raised back to mortal life, only to later die again after a normal human lifespan. To the contrary, as he was resurrected his body was transformed from a lifeless corpse to an immortal, spiritual body which would never die again. (Incidentally, the fact that Jesus will never die again is established by passages such as Revelation 1:18). Scripture will also describe this process as a metaphorical mirror image to the death of Adam, which introduced the process of physical death to the experience of sinful man. We will examine scriptural evidence on this point in a little while below along with a further examination regarding the death of Adam as discussed in the texts of early Genesis. But the important implication is that if these earlier historic resurrections entailed a resurrection to immortality, then Jesus would not be the first. Nor would it be Jesus' resurrection that introduced immortality to mankind. Instead, some other, earlier resurrected individual would be the first to introduce the resurrection of immortality to the world of men.

For both these reasons, we must conclude not only that there were a limited number of exceptions to the general rule of Hebrews 9:27, but also that there is indeed a type of resurrection that entails merely being restored to normal, mortal life only to die a second time at some later date after a normal human lifespan.

With that established, we can now move forward to discuss in detail the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the biblical concept of a resurrection that transforms the body into an immortal form. The lingering question of whether this immortality has some limit or whether it will later be revoked by God will also remain on the horizon. But our examination of immortal resurrection will once again provide additional evidence that life is an inherent property of spirit.

Scriptural Evidence for Immortal Resurrection: Historical and Basic Biblical Evidence

In recent sections, we've asserted that there are two kinds of resurrection, mortal and immortal. In our last segment, we not only established the evidence for mortal resurrection, but we also discussed the fact that mortal resurrections are rare, happen to only one individual at a time, and involve individuals who are recently deceased. We have also promised to discuss the Jewish belief in a general resurrection in which a mass of mankind is resurrected in a simultaneous event and to provide evidence that general resurrection is a resurrection to immortality.

First, let's establish Jewish belief in a general resurrection. In the two quotes below from Encyclopedia Britannica, we see the notion of a resurrection of a mass of mankind all at once in the descriptions of the Jewish believe that "the good and the wicked would be resurrected" and "the hope of the resurrection with both the righteous and the unrighteous." The second quote even describes that "after" this resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous there will be "a judgment" by God. And, when commenting on an extra-biblical Jewish text known as "The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," Britannica states that "there is an expectation of a universal resurrection at the advent of the Messiah." As we noted earlier, in scripture general resurrection coincides with other significant, prophetic events regarding the Messiah.

"Death, The cultural background, Judaism - Both the good and the wicked would be resurrected. According to their deserts, some would be granted "everlasting life," others consigned to an existence of "shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2)." – <http://www.britannica.com/science/death/The-cultural-background#toc22186>

"Resurrection (Religion) - The expectation of the resurrection of the dead is found in several biblical works. In the Book of Ezekiel, there is an anticipation that the righteous Israelites will rise from the dead. The Book of Daniel further developed the hope of resurrection with both the righteous and unrighteous Israelites being raised from the dead, after which will occur a judgment, with the righteous participating in an eternal messianic kingdom and the

unrighteous being excluded. In some intertestamental literature, such as The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, there is **an expectation of a universal resurrection at the advent of the Messiah.**" – <http://www.britannica.com/topic/resurrection-religion>

In addition to the summaries articulated by Encyclopedia Britannica, Christian Apologist Dr. William Lane Craig also affirms the Jewish belief in general resurrection. In the book "Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction," Dr. Craig discusses the evidence in favor of Jesus' resurrection and on page 182 he notes that "Jewish beliefs about the afterlife precluded anyone's rising from the dead before the general resurrection at the end of the world." On pages 183-184, he goes on to say that "Jewish hope in the resurrection of the dead was invariably a corporate and eschatological hope. The resurrection of all the righteous dead would take place after God had brought the world as we know it to an end."

In fact, on the same page Dr. Craig goes on to quote German Lutheran theologian Joachim Jeremias regarding the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection. Below is the relevant excerpt from Jeremias.

"Surveying the Jewish literature, Joachim Jeremias concluded: ...**Nowhere does one find in the literature anything comparable to the resurrection of Jesus. Certainly resurrections of the dead were known, but these always concerned resuscitations, the return to the earthly life. In no place in the later Judaic literature does it concern a resurrection to δόξα [glory] as an event of history.**" – *(brackets in original)* Joachim Jeremias as quoted by Dr. William Lane Craig, Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Fiction, page 184

Of course, not every Jewish religious group believed in resurrection. In fact, by the time of Christ's first advent in the first century AD, the two most prominent religious groups in Israel had opposite views on the resurrection of the dead. Below we have included an excerpt from Encyclopedia Britannica along with the text of Acts 23:8. Both texts describe the beliefs of two different Jewish sects, one called the Sadducees and the other called the Pharisees. As we can see, the Sadducees rejected the notion of the resurrection of the dead, but the Pharisees affirmed it.

"**Sadducee, Jewish sect - The Sadducees and Pharisees were in constant conflict with each other**, not only over numerous details of ritual and the Law but most importantly over the content and extent of God's revelation to the Jewish people. **The Sadducees** refused to go beyond the written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and thus, **unlike the Pharisees, denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, and the existence of angelic spirits.**" - <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Sadducee>

Acts 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

So, even though not all Israelites believed in the resurrection, nevertheless belief in the resurrection was a common view among the Jewish people and was the position held by one of the main sects of Judaism. Consequently, these scholarly quotes confirm our three assertions.

First, they confirm that Jewish people believed in the concept of general resurrection that involved the simultaneous resurrection of a mass of mankind that would occur in association with the Messiah and divine judgment at the end of the age.

Second, they confirm that resurrections prior to Jesus were mortal resurrections. They entailed a restoration to mortal life here on earth, rejoining loved ones and resuming normal activities. In the quote above from Dr. Craig, this concept is reflected in the characterization of such resurrections as “resuscitations” that involved “the return to the earthly life.”

And third, they confirm that Jesus’ resurrection was distinct from all previous resurrections. We see this reflected in the last sentence of the excerpt from Joachim Jeremias where he infers that Jesus’ resurrection is a unique “event of history” because it is “a resurrection to “δόξα,” which is spelled “doxa” when transliterated into English. As Dr. Craig’s excerpt notes, “doxa” means “glory.” We have come across “doxa” already in our study, when we saw it was the New Testament equivalent to the Hebrew word “kabod,” which is used in reference to God’s often exceedingly bright body throughout Old Testament texts. At the time, we also demonstrated that “doxa” is used repeatedly in New Testament passages like Philippians 3:20-21, Hebrews 2:9, Romans 8:11-30, and 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 to describe the resurrected body of Jesus Christ and the saints. Moreover, verses 52-54 of 1 Corinthians 15 go on to affirm that the “glorious” resurrected body is immortal and incorruptible. The mention of “doxa” by Jeremias and quoted by Craig clearly demonstrates that both Jeremias and Dr. Craig were aware that “doxa” as a reference to the immortal, resurrected body. Consequently, the fact that Jeremias and Dr. Craig use “doxa” to describe Jesus’s resurrection corroborates our assertion that Jesus’ resurrection was distinct from previous resurrections specifically because Jesus was resurrected to immortality, not simply resuscitated to mortal life.

But beyond the confirmation provided by these reference sources, we can also delve into scripture to demonstrate not only that Christ was resurrected immortal, but also that through Christ the general resurrection of the dead at the end of the world will also be an immortal resurrection. We have touched on this fact intermittently earlier, but now we will collect all the relevant passages together so we can examine the concept more fully. In particular, we will focus on the concept of immortality as discussed in these passages in order to help determine if immortality is described as revocable or irrevocable in scripture. Let’s start with some general facts about immortal resurrection.

If we survey the New Testament, we will find many occurrences of phrases like “everlasting life” and “eternal life.” In fact, passages like Daniel 12:2 demonstrate that such phrases are not exclusive to the New Testament.

Daniel 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting (05769) life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Incidentally, it is important to note that Daniel 12:2 attests to the ancient Jewish belief that not only the saints will be resurrected, but the wicked also. We see this in the phrase “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting (05769) life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” We will return to this point later on.

For now, it is important to note that in passages like this one in Daniel, the English translation uses the term “everlasting,” which not only conveys a sense of longevity, but unending immortality. However, the important factor is whether the underlying Hebrew word likewise conveys the basic concept of “forever.” We will have more to say later on regarding the meaning of such critical Hebrew and Greek words. But for now, we will simply note that the Hebrew word translated as “everlasting” in Daniel 12:2 does not necessarily have to convey “forever,” but can merely convey the idea of a “long time.” This can be seen in the definition below.

05769 owlam

from 05956; n m; [BDB-761b] {See TWOT on 1631 @@ "1631a" }

AV-ever 272, everlasting 63, old 22, perpetual 22, evermore 15, never 13, time 6, ancient 5, world 4, always 3, alway 2, long 2, more 2, never + 0408 2, misc 6; 439

1) long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world

1a) ancient time, **long time** (of past)

1b) (of future)

1b1) for ever, always

1b2) continuous existence, perpetual

1b3) everlasting, indefinite or unending future, eternity

Consequently, since the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary itself requires some examination, it is important to take a closer look at the relevant passages to examine specific details that describe immortal resurrection.

First, Hebrews 11 speaks directly about a “better resurrection.”

Hebrews 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that **they might obtain a better (2909) resurrection.**

There are several items worth noting here.

Number one, the text specifically compares this “better resurrection” to examples of women who received “their dead raised back to life again.” In our previous segment, we specifically examined examples in which widows received sons back from the dead in passages like 1 Kings 17 and Luke 17. As we noted, the details of those passages confirmed that they entailed restoration to mortal life.

Number two, notice that the second half of the verse the author of Hebrew contrasts those who were raised to life in the first half of the verse with those who were “tortured” and were not delivered. Rather than deliverance from physical affliction, this second group endured affliction without deliverance hoping to “obtain” this “better resurrection.”

Number three, the term “better” is translated from the Greek word “kraitton” (Strong’s Number 2909), which means “more useful, more advantageous, more excellent.”

Consequently, although Hebrews does not specify for us that this “better resurrection” is a resurrection to immortality, it does confirm that there is another type of resurrection in scripture beyond just restoration to mortal life. The fact that this second type of resurrection must be “better” than mortal life at least fits with an immortal resurrection, if not indirectly implying it.

Second, Colossians 1 and Romans 8 both describe Jesus as the “firstborn.” Colossians 1:15 calls Christ the “firstborn of every creature.” And verse 18 calls him the “firstborn from the dead.”

Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: **13** Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of **his dear Son:** **14** In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: **15** Who is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of every creature:** **16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. **18** And **he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.**

It should be noted that the concept of the “firstborn” can convey the idea of rank, not necessarily chronological order. For example, in Numbers 8:17-18 God explains that because he killed every firstborn of Egypt all the firstborn of Israel belong to him. However, God goes on to state that he has chosen the Levites as the firstborn. Of course, the Levites were not born first in chronological order. Instead, this passage denotes that God was giving them priestly authority. Similarly, Deuteronomy 21:15-16 prohibits a man from designating a younger son as “firstborn” with regard to inheriting their father’s property. No father can literally change the birth order of his children. The point is that the term “firstborn” can denote rank among the heirs, even in disregard for birth order.

This idea of rank is also reflected in the tail end of Colossians 1:17, which refers to Christ having “preeminence.”

On this point, it should be noted that when it comes to resurrection, we have already seen that Lazarus and others experienced resurrection before Christ. Christ was certainly not chronologically first in order of all resurrections. However, no one prior to Christ had ever been resurrected to immortality with a glorious body. They were raised back to mortal life, resumed life with their families, and then ultimately died a second time within a normal human lifespan.

But do these considerations indicate that the use of this term “firstborn” in Colossians refers only to Christ’s rank? To help answer this question, we turn to Romans 8, where we again find the term “firstborn.”

Third, Romans 8 actually has a lot of information about resurrection, but we’ll start in verse 29 where we find Jesus described as “the firstborn among many brothers.” We’ve already examined this passage of Romans 8 earlier during our discussion of the term “glory” in connection to God’s body, but here we will focus on this passage specifically as proof that Jesus’ introduces immortal resurrection.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to **them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.** **29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.** **30** Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, **them he also glorified.**

Number one, Paul doesn’t just stop by calling Jesus’ the firstborn in verse 29. Verse 29 actually uses the phrase “conformed to the image” of Christ. This phrase refers to Christ as providing a “likeness” or pattern that others will be conformed to share. Notice also that Paul refers to those who will be “conformed” to Christ’s “image” as his “brothers.” In verse 30, Paul goes on to explain that the end result of conforming others to Christ is that they will be “also glorified.” Consequently, this passage notes that Christ was glorified and others will likewise be glorified just as Christ was. The Greek word for “glory” here is “doxa,” which we have already examined in our study and found that it is a reference to the sometimes exceedingly bright substance of God’s body.

If we back up a few verses earlier, Romans 8 will provide details that give us the explicit meaning of the term “glory.”

Romans 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. **16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:** **17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.** **18** For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with

the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity (3153), not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (5356) into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Number two, notice that verses 15, 16, and 17 all refer to the saints as “children of God.” Verses 17 even refers to the saints as “joint-heirs with Christ” and concludes that we will be “also glorified together” with Christ. Verse 19 refers to the saints “the sons of God.” There is an obvious, inextricable link between the idea of saints as “children of God” and the terms “firstborn” and “brothers” that we find in verse 29. They all denote the idea of Christ Jesus as the Son of God and the saints also becoming sons of God through Christ. (This idea is also expressed in other passages like John 1:12 which states regarding Jesus that “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”)

Number three, verses 21 and 23 demonstrate that the phrase “glory” refers to immortality, and more specifically, to the body being made immortal. Verse 21 describes how the saints (and eventually all creation) will be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” This verse tells us that “glory” is defined as liberty from corruption. The Greek word for “corruption” here is “phthora” (Strong’s Number 5356), which we’ve already seen means “corruption, destruction, perishing.” In other words, the glory that the children of God share through Christ entails freedom from “corruption, destruction, perishing.” And we know this refers to the transformation of the body to an immortal state because verse 23 describes this process as “the adoption” and “the redemption of our body.”

Number four, if we back up a little further in Romans 8 we find that the entire discussion begins by depicting Christ Jesus as providing the pattern for the resurrection of the saints.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Consequently, Romans 8 and Colossians 1 tell us not only that Jesus introduces a resurrection that delivers the body from corruption, but that the term “firstborn” is applied to Jesus specifically because he was the first to experience this transformative resurrection. We might also note that the use of the phrase “many brethren” in Romans 8:29 also confirms the connection between this immortal resurrection to the general resurrection in which a multitude of mankind is resurrected simultaneously.

Number five, before we move away from Romans, we should also note that Romans 6 provides additional testimony that Jesus is resurrected immortal. Romans 6:9 states that “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” The phrase “death hath no more dominion over him” is clear. It isn’t simply that Jesus won’t die any more, but rather he can’t die any more. Death no longer has any power over Jesus. (Revelation 1:18 likewise states regarding Christ that he is “he that liveth, and was dead” and “is alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of death and hell.”) Therefore, since we know that Jesus’ resurrection provides the pattern for the resurrection of the saints based on Romans 8 and elsewhere, Romans 6 constitutes yet another demonstration that like Christ, the resurrected saints will also be immortal and death will no longer have any power over them.

Fourth, 1 John 3 and Philippians also discuss this transformation of the saints that will make our bodies like Jesus’ glorious, resurrected body. John’s rendition is relatively simple, stating in verse 2 that when Jesus appears, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. **2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and **it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him;** for we shall see him as he is. **3** And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

If 1 John 3 is not explicit enough, we simply need to consider it right alongside Paul’s comments in Philippians 2, where it is clear that Paul has the exact same concept in mind.

Philippians 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: **21** Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. **4:1** Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

Here in Philippians, we see Paul describing how Jesus will come “from heaven” and when that occurs, Jesus will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” Having studied the term “glory,” particularly in Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians, we now know that its usage here in Philippians is intended to denote an immortal state. So, in one verse Paul has once more affirmed that Christ Jesus provides the pattern of immortal resurrection for mankind.

However, these passages from Romans 8, 1 John 3, and Philippians have focused on the saints. But what about the wicked? We know from Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29, Revelation 20:4-7, 10-12, 15 that the wicked will be resurrected. But will they

be resurrected as immortals, or simply restored to a mortal existence? In other words, what type of resurrection will the wicked receive? Answering that question will be the subject of our next segment.

Immortal Resurrection of the Wicked: I Corinthians 15

Now that we've covered some general facts about immortal resurrection, we can move on to establish one important particular point. The wicked dead will be resurrected to immortality just like the saints will. Along the way, we will also learn some additional facts about immortal resurrection in general, including its application to the saints.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul provides a lengthy discourse on both the nature of the resurrected body and the fact that Jesus Christ introduces immortal resurrection. But most importantly, it must be emphasized that here Paul is explicitly stating that all men, not only the saints, will be resurrected by means of Jesus' immortal resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? **13** But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: **14** And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. **15** Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. **16** For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: **17** And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. **18** Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. **19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. **20** But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. **21** For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as (5618) in Adam all (3956) die, even so (3779) in Christ shall all (3956) be made alive.

First, in verse 12 Paul begins by referring to the resurrection of "the dead." In fact, Paul uses the phrase "the dead" four times in verses 12-16. Each time he does it without any qualifying term that would indicate he is talking only about the saints. The simple, general nature of this phrase is apparent. Paul is referring to all that are dead. This is demonstrated in three ways.

Number one, it is not until verse 18 that Paul includes a reference to "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ" which "are perished." At first, it may seem possible that Paul's qualification in verse 18 is retroactive and indicates that all of his previous mentions of "the dead" referred only to the dead in Christ. However, notice the word "also" which Paul uses in verse 18. This is the Greek word "kai" (Strong's Number 2532), which means, "and, also, even" and is translated as also 514 times in the New Testament. But if Paul is saying the saints "also" have perished, this would mean that the saints have "perished" in addition to or as a particular example of another, perhaps larger group. And when we look to the

preceding verses to determine who this other group is, we find verse 16, which says, “if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised also.” Here it is simply not possible that “the dead” in verse 16 refers specifically or only to those who have fallen asleep in Christ. If so, verses 16 would be saying “if those fallen asleep in Christ rise not, then is not Christ raised” and verse 18 would follow “them also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” Verse 18 would be utterly redundant. Instead, it makes more sense if Paul is referring to three parties, “the dead,” “Christ,” and “they also which are fallen asleep in Christ.” In other words, the phrase “the dead” is a general reference to all the dead beyond just those who are dead in Christ. But does this general group include the wicked dead as well, or perhaps just to Old Testament saints who died before Christ? This leads us to our next point.

Number two, verse 22 clearly specifies that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

One, notice that the word “all” occurs twice, once in the phrase “in Adam all die” and again in the phrase “in Christ shall all be made alive.” The Greek word for “all” is “pas” (Strong’s Number 3956), which means “individually: each, every, any, the whole, everyone, all things, everything” or “collectively: some of all types.” The important thing is that it is the same word in both phrases, with regard to dying in Adam and with regard to rising in Christ. The use of this same Greek word in such close proximity in phrases that are obviously designed to parallel each other demonstrates that Paul has the same meaning of “pas” in mind both regarding death in Adam and resurrection in Christ. Consequently, in order to conclude that only some men (the saints) will be resurrected in the pattern of Jesus Christ, which is an immortal resurrection, we would also have to conclude that only some men die in the pattern of Adam. It might at first seem convenient to say that only the wicked die “in Adam,” but that would raise an immediate question. In whom do the saints die, if not in Adam? One plain fact of human history and experience is that both the wicked and the saints die. In fact, saints are not people who have never sinned, but people who have sinned, repented, and been forgiven by God. So, even the saints follow in Adam’s pattern of sin and then death. Paul says this directly in Romans 5:12, which states, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Therefore, since we know that both the wicked and the saints follow Adam in the pattern of death, we know that “all” here refers to literally every man who dies, not merely some men, not merely wicked men. And since Paul uses the same word “all” with regard to death in Adam and resurrection in Christ, we must likewise conclude that the phrase “in Christ shall all be made alive” means that literally every man will be raised in the pattern of Jesus Christ’s resurrection.

Two, Paul’s use of “pas” definitively confirms that the general term “the dead” refers to all men, not just saints of the Old Testament era or saints of the New Testament era. In this context, the general phrase “the dead” refers to every man who has followed in the footsteps of Adam and died. Consequently, the context of

this passage strongly argues against any attempt to reduce Paul's discussion of resurrection in the pattern of Jesus solely to the saints.

Three, it is equally important to note that Paul is also very clear in identifying Jesus Christ's own resurrection as introducing the means and the pattern of the resurrection of all of the dead. In reference to Christ and his resurrection, verse 21 says, "by man came also the resurrection of the dead." And verse 22 explains, "in Christ shall all be made alive" including every man who died "in Adam." So, Paul unavoidably identifies Christ's immortal resurrection as introducing the means and the pattern of resurrecting the wicked, not just the righteous. Verse 21 demands that the wicked must follow the pattern of Christ's resurrection in the same way that all men follow Adam's pattern in death. The specificity of Paul's words in these verses makes it simply impossible for the wicked to be resurrected in any manner that differs from Christ's resurrection.

Number three, verse 23 states that "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

1 Corinthians 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. **22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.** **23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.** **24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.** **25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.** **26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.** **27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.** **28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.**

The term "firstfruits" is an agricultural term and it conveys the idea of being the first among a larger group. Notice also that Paul uses the generic category "the dead" here once again, rather than a more narrow specification such as "the saints" or "the righteous," etc. Such terminology reinforces the idea that Christ's resurrection is the first of a particular kind of resurrection. If the wicked dead are resurrected in a way that differs from Christ's immortal resurrection, then Christ would not be the "firstfruit" of their resurrection. To be more specific, if the wicked dead are resurrected mortal, then the firstfruit of the resurrection of the wicked dead would be Old Testament individuals, such as the son of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17:9-22.

Number four, although we have already discussed the second portion of verse 23, the first portion of verse 23 confirms that Christ is indeed the "firstfruit" or first of a kind of resurrection that includes the wicked dead. Right on the heels of verse 22's statement that, "as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive," verse 23 begins with the phrase "But every man in his own order." The Greek word for "every" is "hekastos" (Strong's Number 1538), which means "each, every." Like

Paul's use of the term "pas," the use of "hekastos" confirms that Paul is discussing the resurrection of every man. But even more telling is the phrase "in his own order." Here we must ask, what order is Paul talking about? There are several points worth noting here.

One, the rest of verse 23 along with verse 24 explains what Paul means by "order." We have already discussed Paul's description of Christ as the "firstfruits," which indicates the first to emerge out of a larger group. So, in the order Paul is discussing, Christ is first in order. We also know from Matthew 27:50-54 that when Jesus rose from the dead, Old Testament saints were also resurrected. So, we might include these Old Testament saints alongside Christ as part of the "firstfruits" or first in the larger group that receives the same immortal resurrection as Christ. It should again be noted that this absolutely cannot include anyone resurrected to a mortal life because, in that case, the "firstfruits" would not be Christ but would instead be individuals resurrected earlier in Old Testament times, such as the son of the widow of Zarephath. Next, as Paul continues to outline the order in which men follow Christ in the pattern of resurrection, Paul uses the phrase, "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" to identify another resurrection at a later point in time. So far, Paul has identified the resurrection of Christ as the first of its kind and now he has identified a resurrection that occurs at Christ's return as the next occurrence of this same kind of resurrection of which Christ is the "firstfruits."

Two, Paul does not stop his outline of the order of resurrections with the resurrection that occurs at Christ's return. Instead, he continues and begins verse 24 with the word "then." The Greek word for "then" is "eita" (Strong's Number 1534), which means, "then, next" or "after that." In fact, "eita" is closely related to the word "epeita" (Strong's Number 1899), which occurs in the phrase "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" in verse 23. "Epeita" is a compound word formed from "eita" and the Greek preposition "epi" (Strong's 1909), meaning "upon" or "at." The relationship between these two words makes it clear that verse 24 is intended to continue the same outline of the order of resurrections that Paul began in verse 23. The timeframe outlined in verse 24 is "the end," which Paul associated as the time "when" Jesus "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father."

Three, is this a separate event that does not include a resurrection but simply comes sometime after the resurrection at Jesus' return? Verses 24-28 demonstrate that there is in fact a resurrection, which occurs at this time when Jesus hands the kingdom over to the Father. Verses 24-25 explain that Jesus must reign and will not hand the kingdom over to God the Father until all his enemies are destroyed. And verse 26 explains that the "last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The final defeat of death certainly indicates that some form of overcoming death will occur at the time when Christ hands the kingdom over to the Father. And in this particular passage, which Paul has devoted to discussing resurrection, the context strongly indicates that this final overcoming of death will entail a resurrection.

Four, from these verses it is clear that “the end” must be distinguished as a different point in time from “Christ’s coming.” The “For he must reign, till” indicates a duration of time transpires between the time when Christ begins to reign and the time when he finishes “putting all enemies under his feet.” Or, in other words, Christ does not accomplish this goal instantly when he begins to reign. Instead, the beginning of Christ’s reign is separated by an interval of time from what Paul refers to here as “the end” and Paul’s language indicates that both of those two separate points in time are accompanied by resurrections patterned after Christ’s own resurrection. Christ’s reign begins when he returns, but verses 24-25 identifies “the end” as the point when, after reigning, Christ brings about one last triumph over death and delivers the kingdom up to the Father.

Number five, we can directly confirm this conclusion from Revelation 20.

One, as we examine Revelation 20 and its relevance to the order of resurrection events listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, it is important to note that the closing verses of Revelation 19 describe the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to conquer the earth and defeat the armies of the false prophet and the antichrist (who is here referred to as “the beast”). We see language pertaining to Jesus’ return in verse 19 which describes him as one riding a white horse coming out of heaven who is called “Faithful and True” and who is coming to judge and make war. Verse 13 identifies this rider as “The Word of God” and verse 15 explains that he is coming to “smite the nations” and “rule them with a rod of iron.” Verse 16 ascribes to him the titles of “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.” Verse 17 describes his coming to make war as “the supper of the great God.” And verses 19-20 describe his victory over the antichrist and the false prophet.

Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: **and his name is called The Word of God.** 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 **And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron:** and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 **And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.** 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto **the supper of the great God;** 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 **And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.** 20 **And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet** that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. **These both were cast alive into a lake of fire**

burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Two, while Revelation 19 concludes with Jesus' return and conquest of the earth, Revelation 20:4 describes those who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus" during the time of the "mark of the beast."

Revelation 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. **2** And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, **3** And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. **4** And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. **5** But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Three, verse 4 also explains that despite being beheaded, these martyrs "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Verse 5 explicitly identifies this as a resurrection when it states, "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." And verse 6 concludes with equal clarity, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" and they "shall reign with him a thousand years." But most importantly, notice the unmistakable declaration that there are two resurrection events here, one which occurs with the saints when Christ returns and begins his reign on the earth and another which occurs after the thousand years are finished. This exactly corresponds to the order of resurrection events laid out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:23-24 in which Paul identifies three resurrections: Christ's resurrection in the first century is the "firstfruits," "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming," and "then cometh the end" when there is a final triumph over death. The phrase "then cometh the end" corresponds to the resurrection after the thousand years have finished in Revelation 20:4-7.

Four, there is one other detail shared by 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 20, which demonstrates that Paul intends the phrase "then cometh the end" to denote a final resurrection event of which Christ's resurrection was the firstfruits. As we noted earlier, Paul defines "the end" as the point when Christ will "have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" according to verse 24. When Revelation 20 describes the resurrection that occurs at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, John specifically places that post-millennial resurrection in the context of God the Father sitting in judgment over men.

Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 **And shall go out to deceive the nations** which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: **and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.** 10 **And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,** where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. 11 **And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.** 12 **And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;** and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** 13 **And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.** 14 And death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. **21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;** and there was no more sea.

Five, here it is essential to prove that Revelation 20:11 has the Father in mind, not Jesus, when it describes this great judgment by “him that sat on the throne.” We see this plainly in Revelation 5:1, 3, 6-7. Revelation 5:1 begins with John describing, “And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” Verse 3 notes that, “no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.” Verses 6-7 go on to explain that, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.” Here, in clear terms, we see the Lamb of God, which is another name for Jesus Christ, taking a book out of the hand of him who sits on the throne in heaven. It is noteworthy that this book, which the Lamb receives, contains detailed information about the future, including the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. We see this in Revelation, when the seals of this book begin to be opened. In Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32, Jesus explains that no one knew the day or hour when Jesus would return, not even Jesus, but only the Father. Likewise, in Acts 1:6-7, after Jesus’ resurrection Jesus’ disciples ask him “wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” And Jesus answers, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Based on such statements, we can conclude that Revelation 5 is depicting the Father, seated on the heavenly throne, giving a book with detailed information about the future to Jesus, which previously no man could have access to. But even more importantly, this establishes that the phrase “him who sits on the throne” is Revelation’s way of referring to the Father and that the use of this phrase in Revelation 20:11 refers to the Father sitting in judgment at the end of the thousand years. (Incidentally, it

should be noted that this judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, which is conducted by the Father at the end of the thousand years, is different from the judgment over which Jesus will preside at the beginning of his thousand-year reign, which is described in Matthew 25:31-46.)

Six, in 1 Corinthians 15:24, Paul's language indicates that there will be another resurrection event at the time of "the end" when Jesus hands judgment over to the Father. And Revelation 20 confirms this is indeed the case. A thousand years after Jesus' return and the resurrection of the saints, there will be a resurrection of "the rest of the dead" when the Father sits in judgment. This comparison between 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 20 leads to two critical points.

First, John's language confirms that Paul's use of the phrase "the dead" throughout 1 Corinthians is meant as a general reference to all dead men, including the wicked. The fact is, John does the exact same thing in Revelation 20:5-6 when he refers to resurrection of "the rest of the dead" in contrast to the resurrection of those who are "blessed and holy." For both Paul and John, phrases like "the dead" or "the rest of the dead" were meant to refer to all dead men, not strictly the saints. Consequently, in 1 Corinthians 15 when Paul describes that "the dead" are resurrected in the pattern of Christ's resurrection with Christ being the "firstfruits" of the same resurrection "the dead" receive, we know Paul is talking about all dead men.

Second, John specifically includes the wicked in his description of the final resurrection at the end of the thousand years. Revelation 20:12 says that John "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." And chapter 15 explains that this group of resurrected dead includes those who were "not found written in the book of life" and who are "cast into the lake of fire." And yet, Paul has included this final resurrection at the end of the thousand years as part of the "order" in which "every man" will be resurrection "in Christ" and of which Christ's resurrection is the "firstfruits" or first of the kind. In the context of 1 Corinthians 15, this final resurrection which includes the wicked has Christ as it's "firstfruits" and has Christ providing it's means and pattern just as much as the resurrection of "they that are Christ's at his coming." If Christ's resurrection was to immortality and the saints resurrection follows that same pattern of immortal resurrection, then the phrases "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" and "every man in his own order" demand that all men, including the wicked, will also follow the pattern of resurrection exhibited and provided "in Christ."

Number six, now that we have established that 1 Corinthians 15:23-24 include the resurrection of the wicked at the end of Christ's millennial reign, we can return to some important descriptions that Paul provides regarding their resurrection. It is important to keep in mind that we have already established five facts which prove that Paul's use of the general term "the dead" necessarily includes the wicked. First, we examined Paul's use of the word "also" in the phrase "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ" in verse 18. As stated earlier, the inclusion of the word "also" in verse 18 designates a distinction between the saints "which have fallen asleep in Christ" and the general term "the dead," which Paul has used five times

prior to verse 18. In other words, the saints are being mentioned “in addition” to or as a specific example of the larger category of “the dead” that Paul has already repeatedly been referring to since verse 12. Second, this is demonstrated by Paul’s use of the same Greek word “pas” in verse 22 when he says that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Third, there is also Paul’s use of the Greek word “hekastos” for “every man” in verse 24. Fourth, Paul’s explanation that “every man” will be resurrected in a certain order of resurrection events of which Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits, or first of its kind. And fifth, Paul’s use of language in verse 24 referring to the final defeat of death at “the end” of the millennium when the Father sits in judgment, which we know includes a resurrection of the wicked according to Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15.

In light of this established definition for the term “the dead,” several points are worth noting as we return to 1 Corinthians 15.

One, as mentioned earlier, in verses 23-28 Paul describes the ultimate victory over death that occurs at the end of Christ’s millennial reign. As we continue in 1 Corinthians 15, we continue to find Paul using the general term “the dead,” including in verse 29. He does not switch to any narrower or more specific reference to the saints.

Two, in verse 35 Paul continues to employ this general reference to all of “the dead” when he asks the question “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”

At first glance, the English word “come” may invoke imagery of the saints returning with Christ. But the Greek word translated as “come” is “erchomai” (Strong’s Number 2064), which does not in any way necessitate the idea of “returning” or “coming back.” While the Online Bible Greek Lexicon notes that “erchomai” can mean “to come” in the sense of persons “coming from one place to another,” the lexicon notes that “erchomai” is used “both of persons arriving and of those returning” and specifically includes “to go” among the proper definitions of “erchomai.” In other words, verse 35 could easily be translated as “with what body do they go forth” in the sense of going forth from the grave. Moreover, the lexicon also states that “erchomai” can instead convey the idea of “to appear” or “make one’s appearance” in the sense of “coming before the public.” The lexicon goes on to describe that “erchomai” is used metaphorically to convey “arise.” Consequently, it is also reasonable to translate verse 35 as “with what body do they appear?” or even “with what body do they arise?” So, whether translating “erchomai” as “to go” or “to arise,” there is simply no basis for insisting that “erchomai” here refers to the idea of “returning” and especially not in the specific sense of the saints returning to the earth with Christ. In other words, “erchomai” provides no warrant to interpret verse 35 in reference to the saints alone.

Next and more importantly, in verse 36 and onward Paul answer to this question about what the bodies that “the dead” will be like when they are resurrected. In verses 36-41, Paul gives a series of everyday examples to help his audience

understand the “bodies” that “the dead” will have when resurrected. It is important to note that he starts in verses 36-38 with the example of a seed sown into the ground in contrast to the grain that sprouts forth from the seed. This is critical to the question of whether the wicked dead will receive mortal or immortal resurrection. The seed is put in the ground, but it does not sprout as a seed. Instead, it is transformed into grain. Since we have established that the phrase “the dead” includes the wicked dead in the final resurrection at the end of the millennium, the analogy to seeds and grains demonstrates that the resurrected body they receive cannot be the same in form or quality as the body which died.

In addition, in verse 42, Paul continues to refer to “the dead” as a general group when he states, “so also is the resurrection of the dead.” In verses 43-49, Paul goes on to use specific terms to describe the bodies that “the dead” in general will receive “in Christ” through the resurrection, regardless of where they are in the “order” or resurrections of which Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruit. In verses 43 he says that their bodies are “sown in dishonor” and “sown in weakness,” but “raised in glory” and “raised in power.” In verses 44-46, he says their bodies are “sown a natural body” but “raised a spiritual body.”

Moreover, in verses 45-49 Paul continues to hold Adam as providing the pattern for the mortal body of men and Christ as providing the pattern for the immortal body of men. In verse 45, Paul states, “The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” This phrase again compares Adam and Christ as archetypes for all men, just as he did in verse 23 with the phrase, “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” In fact, verse 47 clearly demonstrates that verse 45 is intended in reference to the body of Adam in comparison to the immortal, resurrected body of Christ. Just as verse 45 used the phrase “the first man Adam,” verse 47 begins with the term “the first man” and explains that “The first man is of the earth, earthy.” This is a clear reference back to Genesis 2, which describes how God formed Adam’s body from the soil of the earth. So, we know that verses 45-47 are describing the mortal body of Adam and the immortal body of the resurrected Jesus. But more importantly, verse 47 concludes that “the second man is the Lord from heaven” and verse 48 goes on to explain that “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Once again, we can see that these terms “earthy” and “heavenly” are clearly descriptions of the characteristics of the body of Adam and the resurrected, immortal body of Jesus. And verse 49 declares, “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

In conclusion, spanning from verses 12-49, Paul has continued to focus his discussion on the general category of “the dead,” not the saints. And when Paul asks “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” in verse 35, we must understand that all of the descriptive phrases regarding the bodies of the dead necessarily apply equally to the wicked dead who are resurrected as part of the last resurrection event that occurs at the end of the Christ’s millennial reign. And in verses 36-49, Paul has described the bodies of “the dead” in general, including the resurrection of the wicked dead at the end of the millennium as

different in form and quality from the bodies that died (just as grain differs from the seed that is put in the ground), as “glorious,” as “powerful,” as “spiritual bodies,” as no longer “earthy” as Adam’s body was, but as “bearing the image” or pattern exhibited by Christ’s “heavenly body” which occurred when Christ was himself resurrected and became the “firstfruits” of the series of resurrection that occur afterward. In other words, these are not just descriptions of the resurrected bodies of the saints, but of “the dead” in general with the saints included as one specific group within the larger category of “the dead.”

In fact, Paul does not turn to focus specifically on the saints until verses 50-54, where we see the key identifying phrase “inherit the kingdom of God.” Because of Paul’s use of the phrase “inherit the kingdom of God” in verse 50, Paul’s use of the terms “incorruptible” and “immortal” in verses 52-54 cannot, strictly speaking, be viewed as directly describing the wicked. To be clear, this does not rule out that the same characteristics might be true for the wicked when they are resurrected. It simply prevents us from citing verses 52-54 as proof regarding the immortality and incorruptibility of the wicked, given that Paul has by that point narrowed his focus to comment on the saints in particular. However, it is also the case that since Paul does not narrow his focus to the saints until verse 50, there is no textual basis to insist that Paul is talking only about the saints in verses 12-49 or to overturn the five proofs that we have offered from 1 Corinthians 15:12-49 that Paul is using the generic term “the dead” to refer to “all men” who have died in Adam, including the wicked who are resurrected at the end of Christ’s millennial reign when the Father sits in judgment. In short, verses 12-49 describe even the resurrection of the wicked dead as resulting in bodies that are transformed from their previous earthy, mortal bodies and are instead “glorious,” “powerful,” “spiritual,” and “heavenly” bodies that “bear the image” of the resurrected body of Jesus Christ, who is the firstfruits (or first of the kind) of their resurrection.

Ultimately, passages such as Colossians 1, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 John 3, and Philippians 3 all prove that there is such a thing as immortal resurrection, that Christ Jesus is the first in all of mortal creation to experience that immortal resurrection, that Christ Jesus’ resurrection introduces the mechanism and the pattern for the transformation of the body to the immortal state, and that this immortal resurrection will be applied to all mankind at one time, every man in the appointed order for resurrection starting with a massive resurrection of Old Testament saints that occurred when Christ himself was resurrected, followed by the resurrection of those who have died as Christians when Christ returns to start his millennial reign, and finally completed by the general resurrection at the end of the millennium when Christ hands judgment over to the Father, which is a resurrection that includes the wicked as well. Along the way, we have proven that general resurrection at the end of the millennium at the final judgment by the Father is also an immortal resurrection of which Jesus’ own resurrection was the “firstfruits,” or first of its kind.

Immortal Resurrection of the Wicked: Indirect Evidence from Luke 20 and Immortality of Angels

There is one last set of passages that we need to examine on this topic before we move ahead. Romans 8, Philippians 3, and 1 Corinthians 15 have all described the resurrected body as immortal. But the origin of that teaching comes from Jesus Christ himself. In fact, Jesus himself is quite direct and explicit on this point, even more so than Paul. Moreover, these passages will also provide further evidence associating immortal resurrection with general resurrection. We find Jesus' teaching on immortal resurrection in Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 20.

Matthew 22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 **Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.** 29 **Jesus answered and said unto them,** Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 **For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as (5613) the angels (32) of God in heaven.**

Mark 12:18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 **In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them?** for the seven had her to wife. 24 **And Jesus answering said unto them,** Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25 **For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as (5613) the angels (32) which are in heaven.**

Luke 20:27 Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, 28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. 32 Last of all the woman died also. 33 **Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she?** for seven had her to wife. 34 **And Jesus answering said unto them,** The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: 35 **But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36 Neither (3777) (1063) can**

(1410) (5736) they die (599) (5629) any more (2089): for they are equal unto the angels (2465); and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Several foundational items are worth noting from these three gospel texts.

First, it is apparent from comparing these passages that they all record the same interaction between Jesus and some members of the Jewish religious sect known as the Sadducees. In an earlier section, we noted that unlike their counterparts the Pharisees, the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection. Consequently, it is no surprise to find that each of these Gospel accounts begins by stating that the Sadducees challenge the very idea of resurrection itself. (Of course, we're not suggesting that they challenged the idea of immortal resurrection in particular. The reality is that they denied any form of resurrection for the dead. As such, their comments would apply equally to any concept of bodily resurrection, mortal or immortal.)

Second, from the Sadducee's question it is clear they are talking about a Jewish belief in a general resurrection of the mass of mankind at the end of the age. We can see this in the heart of their challenge.

Number one, in their hypothetical scenario, the same woman married seven brothers. The dilemma they envision necessarily involves all seven brothers and the woman being resurrected at the same time. What cause would the Sadducees have to suggest all seven of the brothers and the wife would be raised to life at the same time unless they were participating in a massive resurrection of the dead? It's not like the Sadducees were proposing that only these particular people would be resurrected at the same time while the rest of mankind remained dead.

Number two, consider the way that the Sadducees refer to this hypothetical event that will bring all eight of these people back to life. They ask Jesus, "in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be?" Consider the phrase, "in the resurrection." The simple and iconic nature of the title "the resurrection" conveys its prolific status as a concept and as a general event experienced by all.

Therefore, we can see that Jesus and the Sadducees are not discussing the occurrence of rare, individual resurrections scattered over the course of history, but instead they are discussing a mass resurrection of men at one time. And the Sadducees' challenge to Jesus is predicated on the notion that, as both William Lane Craig and Joachim Jeremias have stated, many Jews in Jesus' day (including Jesus himself) affirmed the doctrine that there would be a massive, simultaneous resurrection of mankind at some point in the future. Because these passages discuss a general resurrection, they will allow us to further confirm that general resurrection is an immortal resurrection.

Third, as we examine the details of this passage, we notice that Luke's account contains a peculiar phrase that we do not find explicitly in Matthew or Mark. In all three accounts, Jesus explains that resurrected men and women "neither marry,

nor are given in marriage” and that they are “as the angels.” However, in Luke’s account, the similarity between the resurrected and angels is not limited solely to the fact that they do not marry. According to Luke’s account, Jesus had something more in mind. In verse 36, Jesus describes the resurrected, saying, “neither can they die any more.” This is an astonishing declaration from Jesus. Not only are the resurrected similar to angels, but the similarity to angels specifically includes that they can no longer die.

Fourth, we need to take a closer look at the particulars of this comparison to angels. It is noteworthy that although Matthew and Mark’s accounts do not include the phrase “neither can they die any more,” they do include the assertion that the resurrected are “as the angels.” The English word “as” is a translation of the Greek word “hos” (Strong’s Number 5613), which means “like,” as can be seen in the lexicon entry below.

5613 hos

probably from comparative from 3739; adv; { See TDNT 856 }
AV-as 342, when 42, how 18, as it were 20, about 14, misc 56; 492
1) as, like, even as, etc.

The use of “hos” in both Matthew and Mark’s accounts is interesting for two reasons.

Number one, based on the vocabulary it is quite clear from all three texts that Jesus is actually comparing resurrected humans to angels. While Matthew and Mark may not directly expound on the full extent of that similarity, the fact that all three accounts contain the comparison to angels tells us something important. It tells us that all three authors themselves understood that this comparison to angels was important for comprehending what happens to men during the particular type of resurrection that Jesus is describing here. This becomes all the more clear when we consider that Matthew and Mark (and Jesus himself for that matter) could have stopped after simply saying that the resurrected do not participate in marriage without mentioning angels at all. Furthermore, a comparison to angels is not necessary in order to answer the Sadducees’ question about marriage. Nor is it clear why someone who doubts the veracity of the resurrection would necessarily accept a comparison to angels as a refutation of their beliefs – especially since the Sadducees didn’t believe in angels (Acts 23:8). The fact that the comparison to angels is not necessitated by the Sadducees’ challenge itself implies that the comparison to angels may have been necessitated for some other, larger reason. Perhaps Jesus found this comparison was in order to provide a more complete picture of his teaching on the future resurrection of the dead.

Number two, it is interesting to note the slightly different Greek wording used by Luke when asserting the similarity between resurrected men and angels. While Matthew and Mark simply use the Greek word “hos” to convey that resurrected men are like angels, Luke actually uses the compound Greek word, “isaggelos” (Strong’s Number 2465). “Isaggelos” is a combination of the word “aggelos”

(Strong's Number 32), which is the common New Testament word for "angels," and "isos" (Strong's Number 2470), which means "equal, in quantity or quality." It's very unlikely that Jesus would choose to refute the Sadducees argument against resurrection by stating that there will be the same number of resurrected people as there are angels. Given the context, Jesus is no doubt explaining that angels and resurrected people are similar in quality and this similar quality is what explains why resurrected human beings no longer die. Given the particulars of these texts, there is simply no other way to understand Jesus' teaching. The future, general resurrection will make humans immortal in quality like the angels. And this leads us to the next point.

Fourth, we also need to dissect the first part of verse 36, which says "Neither can they die." The English word "neither" is translated from the Greek words "oute" and "gar." The Greek word "oute" (Strong's Number 3777) means, "neither, and not." "Gar" (Strong's Number 1063) is a conjunction meaning "for." According to Thayer's Lexicon, "gar" is properly a particle of affirmation and conclusion, denoting *truly therefore, verily as the case stands.* Thayer's goes on to state that when used with regard to "some previous declaration" it can have "explicative force" and convey something along the lines of the phrase, "the fact is." But the interesting part of this phrase is that the English word "can" is not simply an interpolation inserted by the English translators. It's actually a direct translation of the Greek word "dunamai" (Strong's Number 1410), which means "to be able to do something" or "power by virtue of one's own ability." In short, Jesus is not simply saying that resurrected humans won't die or generally don't die. He is saying that they are incapable of dying. They can't die. They lack the ability to die. Or, to translate Jesus more directly words, "truly the fact is they no longer have the capacity to die."

Fifth, verse 36 includes the phrase "any more," which is also of critical importance to our investigation. The underlying Greek is a single word, "eti" (Strong's Number 2089), which means, "yet, still, no longer, no more, of a thing which went on formerly, whereas a different state of things exists or has begun to exist." Although this word can convey other nuances, the context here makes it plain that Jesus intends to convey the idea of "a thing which went on formerly" but has now ceased. After all, the entire discussion is predicated on the undeniable fact that in the present time men die. And in answering the Sadducees' question, Jesus is speaking of a different state at a future point in time. Consequently, the contrast here between our current mortal state and the state of the resurrected must be one in which we cannot die "any more." The inherent nature of the contrast between the past condition and the future condition provides another strong piece of evidence against the possibility that this immortality is revocable. If it is possible for men to die after attaining this resurrected condition, then Jesus could not have said "neither can they die any more." Even if the means of their death is narrowed to only direct action from God himself, they would still be able to die and the statement would be untrue.

We should also take a few moments to discuss the impact that these three gospel passages have on the larger issue of resurrection and immortal resurrection in particular.

First, Jesus has affirmed our assertions that there is such a thing as general resurrection. (In fact, we have seen that there are, in fact, three “general” or mass resurrections in scripture. The first occurred when Jesus Christ himself was resurrected to immortality three days after his crucifixion. We have also discussed Matthew 27:50-54, which attests that the saints of the Old Testament period were resurrected also at this same time. (Other passages, which potentially contain references to the resurrection of Old Testament saints at the time of Jesus’ resurrection, include Ephesians 4:8-10 and Colossians 2:15.) Paul has described this as “the firstfruits” (or first of its kind) of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:22-24. Then, the second general (or mass) resurrection will be a resurrection of the saints alone when Christ Jesus’ returns. We have seen this in Revelation 20:4-7 already, as well as in 1 Corinthians 15:23. (It is also mentioned in detail in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). And finally, the third general (or mass) resurrection will occur at the end of Jesus’ millennial reign, a thousand years after Jesus’ return and the resurrection of the saints who died between Jesus’ resurrection and his return. We have seen this specifically in Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15, which explicitly includes the wicked dead, although it is also indicated in 1 Corinthians 15:24. It should also be noted that passages such as Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29, which plainly affirm the resurrection of the wicked, require the inclusion of the wicked in resurrection at the final judgment at the end of the millennium, because otherwise there is no time when Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29 are fulfilled.

Second, the importance of this statement from Jesus in Luke 20 cannot be overlooked. This statement from Jesus is foundational to the entire New Testament’s view on the immortality of the resurrection. Jesus’ statements unavoidably clarify that biblical immortality is not just a matter of being ageless and unsusceptible to death by sickness. Jesus is literally saying that the resurrected are no longer capable of dying. And he makes that statement in an utterly unqualified manner, not in a parable, but in the middle of a public debate with an opposing party that is looking for every opportunity to find a flaw in his reasoning and doctrine. In such a setting, the fact that he makes such an unqualified statement describing immortality in such absolute terms demonstrates that there are no qualifications and immortality is not revocable. Consequently, to suggest that immortality is revocable in any sense requires supplying qualifications that are not only absent from Jesus’ statement but in conflict with that statement. As such, the notion that immortality is revocable remains a theory that runs contrary to the actual details supplied by scripture.

Third, we have also learned from Jesus that the immortality that men receive from this resurrection is equivalent to the immortality that angels have. Consequently, all of the evidence that immortality is irrevocable also applies equally to angels as it does to resurrected humans. Neither angels nor resurrected men are able to be killed.

Fourth, we now have two lines of proof that the cessation of a human being cannot be brought about by means of destroying their spirit. Our first proof for this resulted from the fact that life is an inherent property of spirit. Our second proof results from Jesus' declaration that resurrected humans and angels are incapable of dying. Because passages like 1 Corinthians 15 describe the immortal body as a "spiritual body" and Jesus's comments in Luke describe the resurrected bodies of the saints as literally lacking the ability to die, the "spiritual body" that the saints have in the resurrection is immortal by virtue of being comprised of spirit, which constitutes yet another proof that spirit has life as an inherent property and is also inherently unyielding to destruction. Consequently, as we noted earlier when discussing life as an inherent property of spirit, the only remaining theoretical possibility for ending the existence of a human being would be for God to remove the spirit in a way that effectively reversed the creation of Adam as recorded in Genesis 2.

Fifth, an astute observer will quickly note that Jesus' comments regarding the resurrection here in Luke 20 pertain specifically to the saints. To be clear, in the accounts in Matthew 22 and Mark 12, Jesus simply refers to "the resurrection" without using any qualifying language that would narrow the application of his comments to the saints alone. However, neither Matthew nor Mark includes language comparing resurrected men to immortal angels. But because Luke's account does contain language that focusses on the saints specifically, does that mean Jesus' comments about immortality are absolutely exclusive to the saints? Let's look again at the text from Luke.

Luke 20:34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: **35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,** neither marry, nor are given in marriage: **36 Neither (3777) (1063) can (1410) (5736) they die (599) (5629) any more (2089): for they are equal unto the angels (2465);** and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

Number one, the only indication of exclusivity can be found in verse 35, where we see the phrase "they which shall be accounted worthy." This idea of being "counted worthy" suggests that the description which follows is not true for those who are not counted worthy. In other words, Jesus is about to describe something that is exclusively true for those who are "worthy." But exactly what is it that is true only for those who are worthy? That is the key question.

Number two, for the sake of clarity, it must be stated that Luke 20 does not directly describe the immortality of resurrected wicked men. Because Jesus specifically specifies those who are "counted worthy" his comments must be understood as focusing on the saints in particular. Consequently, it would be inaccurate to cite Luke 20:36 as though it were a direct statement about the wicked. However, even though Jesus' statements cannot be interpreted as directly describing the wicked, it is possible that the passage might provide some indirect evidence that could infer or corroborate the immortality of the wicked in

conjunction with other evidences. This is simply a difference between direct and indirect evidence.

Number three, we must be careful not to interpret a true statement about one particular group or category as an inherent denial that the same thing might also be true for other groups or categories. For example, if we say, “animals die,” that does not infer that only animals die. If we say, “the righteous die,” that does not mean the wicked do not die. When Psalm 73:121, “the ungodly prosper” and “increase in riches,” does that mean that the wicked exclusively prosper and become rich, but not the righteous? What do we do with men like Joseph of Arimathaea, who Matthew 27:57-59, Mark 15:43, and Luke 23:50 describe as “a rich man,” as “Jesus’ disciple,” as “waiting for the kingdom of God,” and as “a good man, and a just” man? In the case of Luke 20:35-36, if Jesus simply declares that the saints will be resurrected immortal, on its own that kind of positive statement about the saints would not rule out the possibility that the wicked would also be resurrected to immortality. Whether or not Luke 20:35-36 prohibits the immortality of the wicked entirely depends on exactly how Jesus’ phrases this statement.

Number four, although it might be easy to overlook the important factor in Luke 20:35-36 is actually the phrase “to obtain that world.” Imagine if the phrase “that world” were absent from Jesus’ statement. Imagine that when we read Luke 20:35-36, Jesus instead simply said, “they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels.” As we can see, without the phrase “that world,” Jesus’ statement here would be true for literally everyone who “obtains the resurrection from the dead.” We must also keep in mind that Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29, and Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15 all plainly state that the wicked will be resurrected. And since Daniel 12, John 5, and Revelation 20 clearly affirm that the wicked will obtain resurrection, then in order to reconcile scripture, we would be forced to conclude that the phrase “counted worthy” includes the wicked, not just the righteous. However, it simply doesn’t make sense to use the phrase “counted worthy” to refer to literally everyone. After all, if everyone qualifies, even the wicked, then in what sense is it appropriate to use a term like “worthy” in the first place? This is where the phrase “that world” becomes important.

Number five, when we look closely at Luke 20:35-36, we see that Jesus isn’t just describing those who are “counted worthy” of resurrection from the dead, but instead he is describing those who are “counted worthy” to obtain two things: “that world” and “the resurrection of the dead.” There are several important points here.

One, the phrase “that world” may seem ambiguous in English, but in Greek the word for “world” is “aion” (Strong’s Number 165), which can convey anything from “for ever” and “eternity” to simply a finite “period of time” or “age.”

Two, even more interesting is the word “worthy,” which is translated from the Greek word “kataxioo” (Strong’s Number 2661). “Kataxioo” occurs only four times in the New Testament, including here in Luke 20:35. One of the other occurrences of “kataxioo” is in 2 Thessalonians 1:5, where it is specifically used in reference to being “counted worthy” to inherit and participate in future “the kingdom of God,” which the early Christians hoped for.

2Thessalonians 1:5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that **ye may be counted worthy (2661) of the kingdom of God**, for which ye also suffer:

Three, we have already examined Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15 which explicitly delineate that the saints, and the saints alone, will be resurrected at the start of Jesus’ thousand-year reign while “the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” according to Revelation 20:7. So, we have this period of one thousand years which the saints alone will be resurrected to participate in. This lines up perfectly with Jesus’ statement in Luke 20:35-36 regarding, “they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.” The “age” that Jesus is describing is the thousand-year reign of Christ. Among all the dead, only the saints will be deemed worthy to be resurrected and obtain that age.

Four, our analysis of Jesus’ words in Luke 20 demonstrates that the phrase “accounted worthy” is definitely meant in an exclusive way that pertains only to the saints. However, it is equally clear that Jesus is coupling two things together as exclusively for the saints: resurrection to immortality and participating in his thousand-year reign. Because Jesus couples these two items together, there is no way to know and no basis to insist that both items separately are exclusive to the saints. In other words, neither logic nor grammar demands that immortal resurrection is exclusive to the saints, only that the coupling together or immortal resurrection and participation in the thousand-year reign as a unit are exclusive to the saints.

To demonstrate the lack of logical and grammatical necessity, let’s consider a few illustrations. For example, consider the statement, “Certain states in America have the death penalty in which the law requires that those who commit capital crimes must die.” This statement contains a qualifier denoted by the phrase “those who commit capital crimes.” The implication, of course, is that such criminals are an exception to the general rule. Not everyone living in those states will be put to death by the state. Likewise, another implication is that those who meet this qualification will be put to death “early” by the state, before they would have otherwise died. But the statement does not in any way prohibit the possibility that other people who have not met this qualification will die eventually in due course. It is the coupling together of death and the particular timing of that death, which constitute the exception. Or for another example, consider the statement, “Those students with good grades and good attendance will get to go home early at noon on the last day of the semester.” Here again, we find a statement involving qualification to be an exception to a general rule. Only “good students with good

attendance” will be “counted worthy” to go home early. But neither the qualification nor the exclusive nature of this arrangement indicate that the rest of the students (those with poor grades and poor attendance) will never go home. Again, it is the coupling together of their departure from school and the timing of that departure, which constitutes the exception. The same is true regarding the logic and the grammar of Jesus’ statement in Luke 20:35-36.

As we can see, Jesus’ language in Luke 20:35-36 doesn’t rule out the possibility that the rest of the dead, including the wicked, might eventually be resurrected immortal any more than the capital punishment prohibits the eventual death of law-abiding citizens or a “good student” reward program prevents even the worst students from going home eventually. Jesus’ statement merely focuses on the saints without having any necessary implications for the wicked dead. In short, by focusing on the saints Luke 20 attests to the fact that there is such a thing as immortal resurrection, but it does not directly affirm or disprove the possibility that the wicked dead will eventually resurrected to immortality at the end of Jesus’ thousand-year reign. Consequently, there is nothing in the text of Luke 20:35-36 that is inconsistent with the evidence for the immortal resurrection of the wicked, which we have established from 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 20.

Number six, although Luke 20:35-36 does not directly describe the immortal resurrection of the wicked because it is exclusively focused on the saints, these verses do provide indirect evidence which can be coupled with other evidences to “triangulate” another line of evidence that the wicked will be resurrected. We use the word “triangulate” but in reality, this proof involves four points of evidence.

One, as we have seen, Jesus’ describes angels as immortal in Luke 20:35-36. Two, in Matthew 25:41, Jesus explains that wicked men will be sent “into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” This tells us two things. Immortal angels will be sent into fires that also endure forever. And also, it tells us the very important fact that wicked men are assigned to share the same punishment as immortal, wicked angels. Three, we know that when the saints are resurrected, they are made immortal like angels. And four, Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29 tell us that the wicked will indeed be resurrected and Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15 specifically reveals that the wicked will be resurrected before being thrown into this fire where the wicked angels are punished. The only piece of the puzzle that is not directly attested to in these passages is that the wicked will be resurrected specifically as immortal. But we know that the saints are immortal like angels when resurrected, that the wicked are resurrected, and that the wicked are assigned to a place of punishment that was made for wicked immortal angels. These facts strongly suggest that the resurrection of the wicked will likewise render them immortal and equal to angels so that they can suffer the same punishment as the wicked angels. Moreover, when we include Paul’s language from 1 Corinthians, in which Paul attests that Christ’s resurrection to immortality is the “firstfruits” or first of its kind, for the resurrection of “all men,” there really isn’t any piece of the puzzle that is missing. We have every piece of positive evidence directly attested to in scripture that would be necessary to conclude that the wicked will be resurrected immortal after Jesus’ thousand-year reign.

In a short while, we will examine scriptural evidence showing that the removal of spirit does not result in the cessation of human existence. But for now, we have one last piece of the picture to put into place with regard to the extent to which God will bestow immortality on his creation. The evidence outlined in our next section will ultimately culminate in yet another proof that the wicked will also be raised immortal.

Immortal Resurrection of the Wicked: Immortality and the Rest of Creation

In our study of the concept of immortality in the New Testament, there is one curious component that we have yet to examine in depth. In fact, two of the passages we've already examined have mentioned this component. At the core of this concept is the phrase "all in all." We see this phrase in 1 Corinthians 15:28.

1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. 27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. 28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

First, notice that in 1 Corinthians 15 the phrase "God may be all in all" in verse 28 appears in direct connection to the phrase "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," which appears in verse 26. Verse 27 expands on the defeat of death by describing how "all things," not just death, will be put under Jesus' feet. And verse 28 concludes the same thought by saying that "when all things shall be subdued unto him" then God will be "all in all." By connecting the defeat of death to God becoming "all in all," these three verses have given us a strong indication of what Paul means by the idea of God being "all in all." In short, God will be "all in all" when there is no more death. The phrase "all in all" denotes a point in history when God will bestow all creation with immortality, not just the saints.

Romans 8 actually comments explicitly on this doctrine.

Romans 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity (3153), not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (5356) into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Second, the English use of the word "creature" throughout this passage may partially obscure Paul's meaning, specifically his reference to the whole of

creation. The Greek word translated as “creature” is “ktisis” (Strong’s Number 2937). In English, the word “creature” typically conveys the idea of an individual living thing, whether man or animal. In the New Testament, “ktisis” can at times refer to individual Christians, but in scripture “ktisis” is also used to refer to creation as a whole. We see this in Mark 10:6 and 13:19 where Jesus uses the phrase, “the beginning of the creation.” We see the same phrase used in 2 Peter 3:4 and Revelation 3:14, where “ktisis” is clearly being used to discuss the entire universe that God has created, not merely one individual creature. In fact, in verse 20 of Romans 8 “ktisis” is actually translated as “creation” rather than as “creature.” The fact that “creation” is actually a better interpretation of Paul’s meaning here in Romans 8 is also proven by verse 23, which includes the phrase “and not only they, but our selves also.” The contrast between “they” and “ourselves” is pivotal. The pronoun “they” is used to refer back Paul’s mention of “the whole creation” in verse 22, which says that “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” In other words, when Paul used “ktisis” in verses 19-22, he was not referring to individual Christians, which is why Paul has to specifically include Christians in addition to creation in verse 23. For these reasons, it is best to interpret Romans 8 as referring to the whole of creation every time that “ktisis” appears, despite the potentially misleading English translation “creature.”

Third, we have already examined Romans 8 multiple times. We know from our previous discussions that this passage is discussing immortality because of verses 21-23, which describes how Christ will liberate the saints “from the bondage to corruption” when they receive “the adoption,” which is “the redemption of our body.” We have also noted that the Greek word for “corruption” is “phthora” (Strong’s Number 5356), which means, “destruction, perishing.” Now that we know the English word “creature” refers to “creation,” we can also see these verses testify that not only the saints, but all creation will ultimately enjoy this same freedom from corruption.

Fourth, we find additional evidence regarding the transformation of creation in verses 21-22, which state that part of creation “was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” From this declaration, two intriguing questions arise. What is this “vanity” to which creation was subjected? Who subjected it and why?

In a previous segment of this study, we identified that “vanity” is virtually synonymous with “corruption.” Number one, the phrase “subject to vanity” is intended as a conceptual parallel to the similar phrase “bondage to corruption,” which appears in the very next verse. Number two, just as the Greek “phthora” refers to “destruction” or “perishing,” likewise the Greek word for “vanity” is “mataiotes” (Strong’s Number 3153), which can refer to “devoid of truth” or “perverseness” or “frailty” and “want of vigor.” Number three, we also noted that the same person who subjected creation to “vanity” also offers creation hope of deliverance from corruption. Since God is the one who offers such a redeeming

hope, God must have subjected the creation to such vanity. But Romans 1:18-32 tells us that God created the world in such a way that knowledge of truth was evident in creation. Consequently, since God is responsible for this “vanity” in creation, “vanity” cannot refer to “perverseness” or “devoid of truth.” It must refer to “frailty” and “lack of vigor,” which is exactly why it is susceptible to corruption.

(For clarity, it is important to note that Paul’s comments about creation being subjected to corruption or mortality must be taken to refer to part of creation, not all of creation. Certainly, the earth and all life on earth is subject to this corruption and mortality. This is the focus of Paul’s remarks. However, scripture indicates that certain parts of the heavens were created impervious to corruption just like the angelic beings that dwell there were created immortal. In fact, the bible uses the term “heavens” to refer to several parts of creation, including the sky and atmosphere, space where stars and planets reside, and specifically the place where God himself resides along with the angels. Of these three aspects of creation, it is the abode of God that scripture particularly regards as impervious to corruption.)

Consequently, although the phrase “all in all” does not appear in this text, Romans 8 is discussing the point when all creation will be freed from mortality, death, and destruction, just as 1 Corinthians 15:26-28 is.

Fifth, Ephesians contains similar language. Chapter 1 even begins with a discussion of “adoption” and being “children” of God through Jesus Christ, both of which were central topics in Romans 8. We see this language in verse 5.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...

Verse 14 refers to the “earnest of our inheritance” which we have “until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Again, the language is similar to Romans 8, which invoked the imagery of “inheritance” in verse 17 where it described the saints as “joint-heirs with Christ.” Moreover, the word “earnest” is the Greek word “arrabon” (Strong’s Number 728), which means, “money which in purchases is given as a pledge or downpayment that the full amount will subsequently be paid.” In fact, we can see the relationship between the downpayment and the purchased possession in the verse itself. The basic imagery here is one in which a small amount is received at first and then later the full amount. And we see this same imagery employed in Romans 8:23, which states that the saints “have the firstfruits of the Spirit” as we “wait for the adoption,” which is “the redemption of our body.” The fact that both

passages describe this final outcome using the word “redemption” also shows that Ephesians has in mind the transformation of the body through resurrection.

Seventh, in the midst of this discussion about the redemption of our bodies in Ephesians 1, Paul ultimately returns to the phrase “all in all.”

Ephesians 1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, **16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;** **17** That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: **18** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; **that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,** **19** And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, **20** Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, **21** Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: **22** And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, **23** Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The thread begins in verses 15-16, in which Paul describes his prayers for the Ephesians. In verse 18, Paul refers to the “glory of his inheritance in the saints.” Both the terms “glory” and “inheritance” have been used elsewhere to refer to the immortal body, including in Romans 8. In verses 19-20, Paul goes on to refer to the “working” of God’s “mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.” Verse 19 also denotes that this same power that raised Christ from the dead will also be at work “us-ward” or toward us. Verses 21-22 describes all things being placed in subjection under Christ’s authority. And finally, verse 23 identifies the end result of the process as God “filling all in all.” The side-by-side reference to all things being made subject to Christ and God filling “all in all” inform us that the content here is the same as 1 Corinthians 15:26-28, in which Paul associated God being “all in all” with immortality and the final victory over death. But most importantly, the fact that “all in all” refers to God making all things immortal is proven by Ephesians’ association of the phrase “all in all” with the power that raised Christ from the dead and that God will work in us. (As noted earlier, Philippians 3:21 also discusses these same subjects where it says Christ will “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”)

In light of the discussion in Romans 8 as well as the fact that 1 Corinthians 15 and Ephesians 1 use the term “all in all” to refer to God endowing all of creation with a share of immortality, we must pause to make an important clarification. Paul is not advocating for pantheism in these texts and neither are we. Paul is not talking about a process where we all become God, or Gods, or get absorbed into God, or become part of God, or become equal to God, or become indistinguishable from God. He is simply talking about creation being more fully imbued with life-giving

spirit to the point where all of creation itself becomes glorious and no longer yields to corruption and decay. Yet the saints and creation will forever remain inferior to God and distinct from God.

Scripture provides additional specifics about this process through which God will make all creation immortal and incorruptible. We discuss these issues in our Cosmology study, but we will include an abbreviated portion here for reference.

First, in Isaiah 65 and 66, God promises to “create new heavens and a new earth.” Notice that in Isaiah 66, the “new heavens and new earth” are described in verse 22 after multiple descriptions that “the Lord will come with fire” in verses 15-16.

Isaiah 65:17 For, behold, **I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered,** nor come into mind.

Isaiah 66:15 For, **behold, the LORD will come with fire,** and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke **with flames of fire.** **16 For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh:** and the slain of the LORD shall be many... **18 For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.** **19** And I will set a sign among them, **and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations,** *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; **and they shall declare my glory** among the Gentiles... **22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me,** saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. **23** And it shall come to pass, *that* **from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me,** saith the LORD.

Second, Peter picks up on this same concept and provides additional details in his second epistle.

2 Peter 3:10 But **the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away** with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, **the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.** **11** Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, **12** Looking for and hasting unto **the coming of the day of God,** wherein **the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved,** and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? **13** Nevertheless **we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,** wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Number one, verse 10 states that we look for “the day of the Lord” when the “heavens shall pass away” and “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Verse 12 again mentions the “coming of the day of God, where the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved.” But verse 13 concludes that “we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.” This is identical

to Isaiah, especially chapter 66, in which the new heavens and new earth arrive after the fiery destruction of the present heavens and earth on the day of the Lord.

Number two, notice that Peter actually begins this discussion with a lesson from biblical precedent starting in verse 5.

2 Peter 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God **the heavens were of old**, and **the earth** standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby **the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:** 7 But **the heavens and the earth, which are now**, by the same word are kept in store, **reserved unto fire** against **the day of judgment** and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Here Peter describes that the “heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.” This is a reference to God bring forth the dry land from below the water in Genesis 1:9-10. Verse 6 of 2 Peter 3 continues by describing that “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” This verse refers to the destruction that occurred at the time of the Flood of Noah’s day. In verse 7, Peter then contrast “the world that then was” before the Flood that was destroyed by the water with “the heavens and the earth, which are now.” In other words, the present heavens and earth are “new heavens” and a “new earth” compared to the old world that was destroyed by the water. And verse 7 continues to explain that in the same way that the old heavens and earth were destroyed by water, the current heavens and earth are reserved for destruction by fire. This is the same fire that he describes just a few verses later in verses 10-13, resulting in the new heavens and earth.

Number three, one intriguing fact that emerges from this precedent is that the “new heavens” and “new earth” are actually changes or transformations of the earth and heavens, not replacements of them. We live on the same planet earth today that Noah did. The water covered it and then subsided. Noah and his family got off the ark and then repopulated the world. And the same is true for the new heavens and new earth that lie ahead in the future when Christ returns. The fire will come and destroy, resulting in change and renewal. Yet the saints will live here afterward and inherit the transformed earth, just as Noah did after the destruction of the Flood.

Number four, the timing of the new heavens and earth is critical. In verse 10, we see that Peter pinpoints the fiery destruction as occurring when Christ returns as a “thief in the night.” The similar chronological order in Isaiah 66 identifies that Isaiah’s prophecies are fulfilled at this same time, when Christ returns with destroying fire, leaving behind a new heavens and earth in the wake of the destruction.

Third, Revelation 20-21 informs us that one thousand years after Christ's return, there will be another transformation of the heavens and earth. Number one, verses 1-6 describe the onset of a thousand-year reign of Christ along with his saints.

Revelation 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. **2** And **he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,** **3** And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, **that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled:** and after that he must be loosed a little season. **4** And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and **they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** **5** But **the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** This *is* the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and **shall reign with him a thousand years.**

Number two, verse 7 continues by describing those events, which occur after the one thousand years are complete.

Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, **8** And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. **9** And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: **and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.** **10** And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. **11** And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. **14** And death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **15** And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. **21:1** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Most importantly, take note of verse 11, which describes “a great white throne, and him that sat on it.” This verse explains that “the heavens and the earth fled away” from the face of him who sat on the throne. The narrative continues until, just a few verses later, in chapter 21:1 John writes, “And I saw a new heaven and

a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” This is necessarily another transformation of the heavens and earth. However, this transformation occurs one thousand years after Christ returns. And although fire comes down out of heaven here at the end of this one thousand years to destroy God’s enemies in chapter 20:9, it is clearly the face of God on the throne that causes the former heaven and earth to pass away in verse 11, not the fire. And, as noted earlier, is also important to note that this is the face of God the Father in particular from whom the heaven and earth “flee,” not the face of Jesus Christ.

Number three, notice that verse 14 provides another critical timing clue. During this very time that we find a transformation of heaven and earth, “death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire.” This is curious because when 1 Corinthians 15:26-28 mentioned God becoming “all in all,” it identified the timing for that event as coinciding with the destruction of the last enemy, which is death. In fact, although we did not look at it earlier, verse 24-25 of 1 Corinthians 15 state that Christ “must reign” until the defeat of the last enemy but once that is complete, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.” This is exactly what Revelation 20 is depicting as well. Death is defeated. Christ’s thousand-year reign is at an end. And God the Father comes on his throne to judge and rule.

Number four, since Revelation 20 and 1 Corinthians 15 coincide so well, we should also expect that Revelation 20 might likewise provide a reference to God becoming “all in all.” And that is indeed what the “new heaven and new earth” in Revelation 20:11 and 21:1 are describing. When God the Father comes, he will transform the rest of creation, which was previously mortal and corruptible, so that it now shares in his immortal and incorruptible qualities. The mortal and corruptible heaven and earth will be transformed and no longer the way that they were. In short, God will become all and all with regard to immortality and incorruptibility.

Fourth, even the manner in which the Father accomplishes this finds precedent in Jesus’ transformation of the saints.

Number one, we have already examined Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 John 3:1-3 earlier in our study. We previously noted that both passages assert that when Christ returns from heaven, he will transform the mortal saints and resurrect deceased saints, making them both immortal just as Christ is immortal through his own resurrection.

Philippians 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. **2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and **it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him;** for we shall see him as he is. **3** And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Number two, notice in particular that John attributes our transformation to seeing Christ. In fact, Paul comments on the relationship between seeing Jesus and the transformation to immortality in 2 Corinthians 3:18, where he provides an additional detail.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

As we can see, this passage in 2 Corinthians is loaded with familiar New Testament terms that refer to the resurrection or transformation to immortality. We not only see the term “changed” but also the term “glory,” which occurs 3 times in this verse. We also see this change to “glory” attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit at the tail end of the verse, which is similar to Romans 8:11’s declaration that God “who raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Based on these similarities, we can conclude that Paul is describing the resurrection to immortality here in 2 Corinthians 3. But notice that like 1 John 3, Paul explains that this transformation to immortality will not only occur by the power of the Holy Spirit but in conjunction “with open face beholding as in a glass,” or mirror, “the glory of the Lord” so that we are “changed into the same image” effectively from his “glory” to our “glory.” Consequently, both John and Paul agree that the transformation of the saints by Christ Jesus at his coming will occur in part by means of seeing Jesus in his glorious form face to face.

This is strikingly similar to Revelation 20 in which the face of God transforms the rest of creation. In essence, both passages describe physical transformations to immortality by means of a face to face encounter with God. At the start of his thousand-year reign, Christ will exhibit this transformative power to the saints only. But, eventually at the end of the millennium, all of creation will be delivered from the bondage to corruption and decay into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, just as Paul states in Romans 8:21.

Number three, it is important to establish that the reference to the “new heaven and new earth” in Revelation 20 are compatible with the idea of a transformation of the mortal, corruptible parts of creation to an immortal, incorruptible version of themselves. A few paragraphs above, we established the difference between the destruction and transformation of the earth by water in Noah’s day and the destruction and transformation of the earth by fire when Jesus’ returns based on comments from Isaiah and Peter. At that time, we noted that Isaiah and Peter place the fiery destruction and transformation of the earth at Jesus’ return, which

is at the beginning of his thousand-year reign. We also pointed out that Revelation 20 places the renewal of the heavens and earth before the face of God the Father after the thousand years, which is clear in chapter 20:4-7, 11-14 and 21:1. But are Revelation 20:11 and 21:1 describing a destructive renewal process that is incompatible with a simple transformation from a mortal, corruptible condition to an immortal, incorruptible one? There are two factors which answer this question.

One, we should consider the exact phrasing of the text of Revelation 20 and 21. Chapter 21:1 doesn't provide any additional information about how the new heaven and earth come to be. It simply states that John, "saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." This means that the explanation for exactly what happens to the old heaven and earth and how a new heaven and earth comes to be is something that rests entirely on chapter 20:11. However, chapter 20:11 simply states that John saw, "saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." In particular, notice the phrase "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." Based on the precedent from Noah, Isaiah, and Peter, we know that God is not substituting a different set of heavens and earth, as if physically moving an old set and then sliding in a new, alternate or substitute set that has been waiting in the wings. (For more on this, please see our "Bible Cosmology" study, particularly the sections addressing the issue, "Replaced or Restored.") Consequently, based on this precedent, it is unlikely that John actually means to describe "heaven and earth" literally "fleeing" in the sense of moving far away to a different location. So, the question remains. Is this language of "fleeing" necessarily incompatible with transformation?

Two, to answer this question we turn back to a statement made by Paul concerning the transformation of the saints to immortality in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 5:4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Notice in particular, Paul's assertion that the "mortal tabernacle," which is our mortal body, will be "swallowed up of life," or in other words, immortal life. The Greek word for "swallowed up," is "katapino" (Strong Number 2666) means "to swallow down, to devour, or to destroy." We can compare this directly to Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 15, where he describes the "corruptible" and "mortal" body being "changed" to an "incorruptible" and "immortal" version of itself.

1 Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

In other words, in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul is describing the transformation of our bodies effectively as a “devouring” or “destruction” of the mortal version of our bodies by the immortal transformation. The result is that our mortal, corruptible bodies are gone and what remains is simply a transformed, immortal version of them. This is very similar to the sentiment expressed in Revelation, which could alternately be described as a wave of transformation that moves out from the face of God the Father, transforming the mortal, corruptible parts of creation and leaving behind only an immortal, incorruptible version of them.

Ultimately, a comparison to Noah, Isaiah, and Peter reveals that Revelation 20-21 are describing a transformation of the existing heaven and earth, not a replacement by an alternate set of heaven and earth. In addition, the language of 2 Corinthians helps to establish that the terms “fleeing,” “devouring,” or “swallowing up” of mortal, corruptible things simply refers to the transformative process that makes formerly mortal things into immortal versions of themselves. There is nothing in Revelation 20-21’s description of the “new heaven and new earth” that is incompatible with the process of transformation to immortality.

Ultimately, passages like Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15, Ephesians 1, 2 Peter 3, and Revelation 20-21 provide a very clear meaning for the phrase “God will be all in all.” And it’s remarkable how thorough the New Testament understanding of these topics is. Even in itself, that fact is resounding. It tells us that we shouldn’t expect to have to fill in the gaps or speculate, but even when it comes to questions relating to immortality and death, the New Testament authors provided a complete picture for us. And although a proper understanding of the phrase “all in all” does not directly impact questions regarding topics such as conscious existence between death and resurrection or whether wicked men or angels will cease to exist in Hell or after the final judgment described in Revelation 20, it does provide a complete picture of God’s intentions regarding immortality. God’s intention is to bestow immortality universally. And in some small way, this suggests that God’s intention is not to strip creation of immortality so that parts of it cease to exist, but rather to endow it all with immortality so that it will remain forever.

(To be clear, bestowing immortality on all creation wouldn’t necessarily entail universal salvation. It is entirely possible that wicked men and angels will be granted immortality and enduring existence, but in a state of condemnation, separation, confinement, and perhaps suffering. We will turn our attention to these questions as we continue in our study. For now, it is simply useful to state that affirming a general resurrection and bestowing immortality universally on all creation is not equivalent to affirming universal salvation.)

These facts regarding the transformation of creation lead to two critical points regarding the resurrection of the wicked.

First, initially the suggestion that the wicked will be made immortal may seem extraneous and contrary to expectations. This is due largely to the presumption that granting immortality to the saints is an exception to the general rule in which

most of creation will not possess the trait of immortality or incorruptibility. However, based on Romans 8 and the use of the phrase “all in all” in passages like Ephesians 1 and 1 Corinthians 15, we know that the expected norm is really for all creation to eventually be made immortal and incorruptible. Of course, if the wicked cease to exist when their body dies, then there might not be any more of an expectation for the wicked to be made immortal than a deceased pet dog or cat, for example. But since Revelation 20:4-7, 10-12, 15 as well as John 5:28-29 and Daniel 12:2 demonstrate that the wicked will be resurrected it would be presumptuous to regard them as non-existent at the point in time when all of creation is made immortal. This leads us to our next point.

Second, it is important to note that Revelation 20, which we have examined above, places the resurrection of the wicked right in the very same context as the transformation of the rest of creation to immortality at the face of God the Father. In other words, Revelation places the resurrection of the wicked in the context of immortal transformation. It would be amiss to regard the resurrection of the wicked in scripture as unrelated to immortal transformation. Consequently, in this way, the biblical doctrine that all creation will be made immortal provides additional evidence that the wicked will also be made immortal when they are resurrected at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ.

Immortal Resurrection of the Wicked: God Appointed One Bodily Death as a Punishment for Sin

As mentioned earlier, passages like Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29, and Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15 plainly state that the wicked will be resurrected. So, the only question is whether they will be resurrected with mortal bodies or with immortal bodies. If they are resurrected with mortal bodies, then it is a relatively straightforward deduction that those mortal bodies would cease to exist within some relatively short, finite duration of exposure to the fires of Hell. Of course, this on its own would not necessarily prove that their souls would likewise cease to exist in Hell, especially if there are scriptural indications that disembodied, wicked human souls do continue to consciously exist in Hell for long periods after the death of their mortal bodies. To settle this particular question, a variety of arguments would have to be weighed, including the implications of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 10:28 and Jesus’ parable in Luke 16:19-31, both of which we will discuss later on. However, with regard to the resurrected body of the wicked, we can rule out the possibility of a mortal body based on the New Testament’s statements about the divinely mandated punishment for sin.

First, the New Testament identifies the death of the body as the punishment for sin. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul provides a list of sins that he says were “manifest” and “known” even “from the creation of the world” according to verses 19-20. In verse 32, Paul goes so far as to say that not only were these sins known, but also that those who committed such sins “knew the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.” Here we see a very early statement from Paul that death is the prescribed punishment for sin.

Second, we might ask what Paul means by “death” here. Does Paul mean the death of the body alone? What’s important here is that even if Paul means to include something more than the death of the body (perhaps some concept of spiritual death or even cessation of existence), Paul is at least necessarily including the death of the body as well. In other words, Paul could be referring to the death of the body and something else, but he is certainly referring to the death of the body.

Third, we see the idea that bodily death is the divinely mandated punishment for sin in Romans 6:23, which declares that “the wages of sin is death.” In fact, verses 20-21 of Romans 6 offer more insight. Verse 20 refers to the formerly sinful lifestyles of his Christian audience, saying “when ye the servants of sin.” Then in verse 21, Paul poses a question to his audience, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” Those “shameful” things are clearly their former sins. But notice that Paul is specifically asking about the “fruit” of those sins. At the end of the very same verse, Paul answer his own question about the “fruit” of sin, saying, “for the end of those things is death.” In short, the “fruit” of sin is death. But more importantly, notice that death is the “end” of sinful things and it is the just desert of sin. Likewise, Romans 6:7 openly states that “he that is dead is freed from sin.” Paul continues this same line of thought into chapter 7. In Romans 7:5 Paul once again states that sins “work” to “bring forth fruit unto death,” which reinforces that death is the end result mandated for sin. But if we backtrack to the beginning of chapter 7, we see that in verse 1 Paul asks, “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?” This rhetorical question implies that death is the end of the judicial mandate required for sinners. Romans 8:2 goes on to refer to the “law of sin and death.” Arguably this phrase is a reference to the Law of Moses, which itself prescribed death as a penalty for breaking certain commands. After all, 2 Corinthians 3:7 describes the Law of Moses as “the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones,” which is a reference to the stone tablets upon which Moses’ Law was written. In either case, both testaments affirm that death is the divinely mandated punishment for sin. James 1:15 agrees that “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Fourth, the fact that the wicked need resurrection means that they have already experienced the death of their mortal bodies. And this is critical because it means that particular component of the divinely mandated punishment for sin (the death of the body) has already been carried out upon the wicked. To put it simply, God has mandated that as a matter of divine justice the wicked must die bodily. The wicked do die bodily before the resurrection. So, for God to resurrect them back to mortal bodies just to kill those bodies again would result in God carrying out the same sentence twice even though the wicked have already satisfied that sentence by dying the first time. As Paul has said, “the wages of sin is death.” Will the wicked pay the wage of bodily death twice after having already paid it? Paul describes the death of the body as the “end” of sin, even saying that “he that is dead is freed from sin.” While we reasonably conclude that there may indeed be other aspects of divine punishment for sin beyond just the death of the body,

certainly by the time of their resurrection, the wicked have already paid the required bodily death. But how can death be the “end” of sin if God is going to bring the wicked back just to put them to bodily death a second time? Are we to conclude that the plain meaning of Paul’s axiomatic phrase “the wages of sin is death” was meant to indicate that the wages of sin was to die bodily twice?

Fifth, if the possibility of enduring bodily death more than once is not problematic, then we must wrestle with how the author of Hebrews 9:27 can be so certain that in general “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this to face the judgment.” There are several points worth highlighting here.

Number one, although we might be able to speculate about any number of reasons that might have led the author of Hebrews to believe that God had “appointed” men to die once, if we restrict ourselves to reasons that are biblically available, we must connect the author’s certainty to the numerous ways in both the Old and the New Testament in which God prescribed bodily death as the penalty for sin. In other words, this declaration in Hebrews 9:27 affirms our conclusion that the divinely mandated penalty requires a sinner to die, but with the added specificity from Hebrews that the divinely mandated penalty requires a sinner to die only once.

Number two, notice that Hebrews does not say that God “appointed unto men once to die BEFORE judgment and then a second time AFTER judgment.” Instead, it lists a simple chronology. God has appointed for men to die once and then afterward to face judgment. That is the total of the appointment that God has made regarding sinners, at least as presented here in Hebrews. It says nothing about dying a second time after judgment. Of course, anyone familiar with the book of Revelation might quickly point out the use of the term “second death” in Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 15, and 21:8. However, it must remain an open question at this point whether “second death” means a repeat of physical death or a distinctly different type of death than physical death. We will return to that question later on. But for now, consider what would happen to the author’s argument here in Hebrews if we open up the possibility that Hebrews 9:27 allows for an additional bodily death after facing God in judgment. This leads us to our next point.

Number three, the author’s argument here in Hebrews 9 is to demonstrate that Jesus Christ did not have to endure bodily death more than one time in order to atone for our sins. We see this plainly in verses 25-28.

Hebrews 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

If we interpret verse 27 as if it were open to the possibility of a second bodily death after facing God in judgment, that would unravel the author's intent to establish that Jesus only needed to die one time in order to appease God's judgment against sinners. The author's entire point hinges on this appointment applying equally to Jesus as to all men. If Hebrews 9:27 allows for the possibility that after facing God's judgment men would endure bodily death a second time as punishment for sin, then what assurance would this offer that Jesus' would only need to die once? Instead, it would become equally possible that in order for Jesus' to appease God's judgment of sinners, Jesus himself would endure bodily death once, then face judgment, and then die a second time. In short, the argument that God appointed for men to die once would be useless to assure his audience that Jesus only needed to die once. And that is the very possibility that the author of Hebrew is trying to exclude by his assertion that "it is appointed unto men once to die." The author of Hebrews finds it so absolute that God has appointed for men to die only once that he feels confident that such a principle precludes the entire possibility of Jesus' dying more than once. And if it precludes the possibility of Jesus' dying more than once, then it must also rule out the possibility of men enduring physical death a second time as well.

Ultimately, perhaps this line of evidence on its own is not decisive. Maybe God has actually mandated that an individual has to endure bodily death two times as a punishment for sin. But it seems that at the least, this idea that the wicked would have to suffer bodily death twice as part of the divinely mandated punishment for their sin is contrary to the natural and simple expectation of scriptural statements. And on that note, phrases such as "the wages of sin is death" argue against the idea that the wicked would be raised back into mortal bodies and condemned to endure physical death a second time.

Immortal Resurrection of the Wicked: Mortal Men Cannot See God's Face and Live

In our Trinity study, there is a segment titled, "A Consistent Expectation about Seeing God's Face" in which we examine numerous Old Testament passages and establish that from the earliest times men believed that seeing God face to face would result in death. There are several things worth noting here.

First, the list of individuals involved expressing this expectation includes Abraham's servant Hagar, Jacob, Moses, the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, Gideon, and Samson's father. In Exodus 19:21 as God prepares to descend upon Mount Sinai in the cloud in front of all the people, God commands Moses to "charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish."

Second, Exodus 33-34 is the centerpiece of this Old Testament theme. By this point in time, Moses has seen God "face to face" many times, including during their first encounter in Exodus 3 when Moses was "afraid to look upon God." Yet despite these face to face encounters with God, Moses had not died. But rather

than reject the notion that seeing God face to face would result in death, Moses actually deduces that in all these encounters God must have concealed or withheld his full glory. So in Exodus 33:18, Moses directly petitions God, saying, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.” And in verse 20, God replies and explains, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” The Lord goes on to place Moses in a “clift” within the surrounding rock and cover Moses with his hand while God passes by so that Moses would not see his face. And once God had passed, verse 23 explains, “I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.” Consequently, it is clear that God not only can be seen but was seen face to face by many individuals, but not in his fully glorious form. And it is equally clear that in his fully glorious form, such as exhibited in Exodus 33, seeing God’s face is lethal to mortal men.

Third, the New Testament also affirms this Old Testament principle. To establish this, we must start by retracing what happens to Jesus after his resurrection from the dead.

Number one, after Jesus’ resurrection, in John 20:17 he explains to Mary Magdalene, “I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” In Acts 2:32-33, Peter speaks to the crowds concerning Christ’s resurrection and ascension to the Father, saying, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted.” Acts 7:55 records that Stephen “saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” In verse 56, Stephen declares, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Hebrews 1:3 likewise explains’ when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” And in Revelation 3:21, Jesus promises his followers, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Based on all of these scriptures, we know that after his resurrection, Jesus ascended to God the Father and sat down on the throne of God in heaven. This leads to our next point.

Number two, in 1 Timothy 6:14-16 Paul gives the following description of Jesus Christ after his resurrection and ascension.

1 Timothy 6:14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing **of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto;** whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

One, later on in our study, we will spend some time examining the phrase “Who only hath immortality” in verse 15 and how this phrase was meant to identify that God alone through Jesus Christ is the source of human immortality. Conversely, we will show that this phrase was not intended to suggest that God is the only immortal being. However, for now we focus on another part of this passage.

Two, in verse 16 we see the phrase “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” Earlier in this study, we established how the ancient Jewish perception of the substance of God’s being was that it was exceedingly bright and luminous. Paul is not only reflecting that belief here, but he is also confirming what we have seen in Exodus 33-34. In simple terms, the brightness of God’s full glory, particularly the full glory of God’s face, is so potent that no mortal man can approach it.

Number three, we must establish that it is mortal men in particular that cannot see God’s face. To demonstrate that this refers only to mortal men, consider Jesus words in Matthew 18. When blessing little children, Jesus explains in verse 10, “despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” So, we know that angels are able to behold the face of God the Father in heaven. This should come as no surprise since Jesus himself taught in Luke 20:35-36, that angels are immortal, as we have already seen. Consequently, apparently this “light which no man can approach” is not prohibitive for angels who are able to see the radiant brightness of the face of God the Father.

Fourth, the fact that mortal men cannot stand before the glorious face of God the Father poses a problem for the idea that the wicked are resurrected mortal. Consider the description of the resurrection of the wicked in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. **6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection:** on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and **shall reign with him a thousand years.** **7 And when the thousand years are expired,** Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, **8 And shall go out to deceive the nations ...****10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,** where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. **11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.** **12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;** and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** **13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.** **14 And death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** **15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

There are several critical details from this passage.

Number one, as we can see from verse 5, while the saints are resurrected at the beginning of Jesus’ thousand-year reign, “the rest of the dead” are resurrected after “the thousand years were finished.”

Number two, verses 7-11 then fast-forward to the end of the thousand years at which point John states in verse 11, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.” In an earlier section of this study, we already examined Revelation 5:1-7 and established that this phrase “him that sat on the throne” is Revelation’s way of referring to God the Father. So when we see the phrase “a great white throne, and him that sat on it” here in Revelation 20:11, we know that this is the Father.

Number three, it is also important to take note of the phrase “from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.” The text suggests that his face is so powerful that heaven and earth “flee” from it. Although we have already shown that this word “flee” refers to the transformation of the heaven and earth, John’s use of the word “flee” is certainly meant to convey the sentiment of the inferiority before the face of God. This description makes it very difficult to insist that God the Father is not appearing in his fully glorious form.

Number four, despite the contextual indications that God the Father’s glorious face is being shown openly before all creation, verse 12 immediately states that the dead “stand before God.” This is no doubt the resurrection of the dead that occurs after the thousand years, which was mentioned earlier in verse 5. Moreover, verse 15 demonstrates that this resurrection includes people who are “not found written in the book of life” and who are “cast into the lake of fire.”

Here we arrive at the all-important question. If the wicked dead are raised mortal, how can they stand before the glorious face of God the Father without being killed? Initially, it might be tempting to speculate that perhaps it is the very face of God that destroys the wicked dead, possibly even ending their existence. But such a speculative solution is problematic for two reasons.

First, it is necessary to determine exactly what the mechanism is that destroys the wicked after their resurrection and final judgment. Is it the brightness of the glory of the face of God the Father? Or, is it the flames of the lake of fire?

Number one, 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9 does suggest the possibility of at least one occasion in which the glorious face of God might be the mechanism for destroying the wicked.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: **9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints,** and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

In this passage, the Greek word translated as “presence” is the word “prosopon” (Strong’s Number 4383), which can literally mean, “the face” in the sense of “the

front of the head.” So, this passage could literally be describing the wicked being destroyed by the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

Number two, as it turns out 1 Thessalonians is absolutely not describing the destruction of the wicked at the end of Jesus’ thousand-year reign, which we find in Revelation 20. Paul continues his discussion into chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as **that the day of Christ is at hand.** 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that **man of sin** be revealed, **the son of perdition;** 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that **he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.** 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 **And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.**

One, in verse 8 we find the description that the Lord “shall destroy with the brightness of his coming,” which again could suggest that the luminous glory of the Lord’s face might be the mechanism of destruction.

Two, we should also notice that Paul doesn’t exclusively identify the brightness of Jesus’ coming as the mechanism of destruction. In verse 8, Paul also lists “the spirit of his mouth” as a mechanism by which Jesus will consume his enemies. It is entirely possible that Paul is not actually describing destruction by means of exposure to the bright glory of God’s face. Instead, he may be poetically describing the process by which Jesus will return and the saints will see Jesus’ glorious form face to face (1 John 3:1-3, 2 Corinthians 3:8), Jesus’ will issue a command for the spirit to go forth from him and transform the saints into glorious form as well (1 Thessalonians 4:16, Romans 8:11), at which point the saints will serve as his army to defeat Christ’s enemies (Revelation 19:8, 14). After all, when Paul describes the destruction “from the face of the Lord, and from the glory and his power” in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, he immediately follows that with the phrase “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints,” which is a clear reference to the transformation of the saints to an immortal glorious form after the pattern of the resurrected Christ Jesus.

Three, in verse 1 Paul specifically demonstrates that he is talking about events that occur at the time of “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” when the saints are “gathered together unto him.” In verse 2, Paul confirms that he is talking about “the day of Christ,” which is another reference to Jesus’ return. In verses 3-8, Paul goes on to describe the antichrist using the alternate titles “man of sin,” “son of

perdition,” and “that Wicked” who will “sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

Consequently, 1 and 2 Thessalonians cannot support the idea that in Revelation 20 the resurrected wicked might be destroyed by God’s face after Jesus’ thousand-year reign because 1 and 2 Thessalonians are actually describing the destruction of mortal wicked men a thousand years earlier when Jesus’ returns and before the wicked are resurrected. Moreover, it is not entirely certain that 1 and 2 Thessalonians intend to describe the brightness of Jesus’ face as the mechanism for the destruction of the mortal wicked people at the time of Jesus’ return.

Second, when it comes to identifying the mechanism of the destruction of the wicked in Revelation 20, verse 15 of Revelation 20 is itself explicitly clear that, “Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of fire.” Verse 14 explains that the lake of fire “is the second death.” Later on we will identify what scripture means when it refers to the destruction of the wicked in Hell and by the term “second death.” But for now, the important question remains: how can the glorious face of God be the source of the destruction of the wicked in Revelation 20 if the lake of fire is described as the “second death?” If the resurrected wicked are destroyed by the bright glory of face of God the Father, then the lake of fire has nothing to do with “death.” If mortal, the resurrected wicked would be destroyed by the glorious face of God before ever being cast into the lake of fire.

In conclusion, as we can see the resurrected wicked must survive standing before the glorious face of God in the final judgment of Revelation 20:11 in order to be cast into the “lake of fire,” which is itself the “second death.” But how can the wicked survive standing before the glorious face of God if they are mortal? They simply cannot. The only way that the wicked dead could be put to “death” in any sense by the lake of fire is if they survive seeing God’s glorious face, which requires them to be resurrected immortal so that they are like angels, who are able to stand in God’s presence and behold his face.

Immortal Resurrection of the Wicked: Annihilation Undermines Sacred Dignity of God and Man

In this segment, we will discuss how the concept of annihilating a human being undermines the not only the special dignity that God has endowed mankind with, but also God’s own sacred dignity.

Of course, such a statement might raise a related question: wouldn’t tormenting a human being in Hell forever also undermine the special dignity of man and possibly God also? However, it would seem that in order for an eternity in Hell to undermine human dignity, or even God’s divine dignity, it would have to entail unreasonable, torturous punishment. Later on in this study, we will address that issue directly and offer evidence that the perception of pain in Hell is greatly exaggerated, that the amount of pain serves the specific purpose of providing a

necessary degree of constraint, and that in light of such considerations an eternity in Hell is not the monstrosity that people often imagine. And once such issues regarding the pain of Hell are resolved, any semblance of indignity, whether for God or for men, largely dissipates.

With questions related to the pain of Hell set aside for later in this study, we will now turn our attention to the relationship between annihilation, the special dignity that God has bestowed on mankind, and God's own sacred dignity. There are two passages that we want to explore in support of this argument, Genesis 9 and Genesis 4. We'll start with Genesis 9.

Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. 4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. 5 **And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.** 6 **Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.** 7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein. 8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9 **And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.**

There are several important points here from Genesis 9.

First, here in Genesis 9, Noah and his family exit the ark after the Flood and God makes a covenant with them, which we see mentioned in verse 9.

Second, as part of God's instructions, in verses 5-6 God prohibits murder. For our purposes, the really interesting detail is the reason that God gives for why a man cannot and should not kill another man. At the end of verse 6, God declares, "for in the image of God made he man." This is critical. On a basic level, this one statement dispels any notion that God regards killing a man with about as much compunction as a man regards killing an ant. To the contrary, God views individual human beings as images of himself and on that basis, killing a human being is no trivial thing in God's eyes.

Third, Jesus is clear in Matthew 10:28 that men are limited in the amount of harm that we can do to one another.

Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

We will return to examine Matthew 10 again later on in our study, but for now it is important to note that human beings cannot "kill the soul" of another human

being, but only the body. Yet, Genesis 9:6 tells us that we are prohibited from killing one another specifically because man is made in God's image. In other words, for one man to attempt to exterminate another, even to the limited extent that we can do so, is an affront to the dignity of God's own image and likeness.

Fourth, in order to understand the weight of this fact, we should once again consider the words of Hebrew scholar Dr. Benjamin Sommer, which we examined earlier in regard to the creation of man in Genesis 1.

The terms used in Genesis 1.26-27, *demut* and *selem*, then, pertain specifically to the physical contours of God. 68 This becomes especially clear when one views the terms in their ancient Semitic context. They are used to refer to visible, concrete representations of physical objects, as verses such as 2 Kings 16.10, Ezekiel 23.14-15, 1 Samuel 6.4-5, and 2 Chronicles 4.3 make clear. 69... Thus, Gruber paraphrases... Genesis 1.26 plausibly as "like a statue of God." He argues that there is no evidence suggesting we should read these terms as somehow metaphorical and abstract. Rather, Genesis 1.26-7, 5.1, and 9.6 maintain that human beings are a sort of statue of God; it is for this reason that 9.6 insists that their blood should not be shed. 71 – Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, p. 69-70

In the excerpt above, Sommer's analyzes the meaning of the Hebrew terms "demut" and "selem," which are translated as "likeness" and "image" in the phrase "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" in Genesis 1:26. But notice that Sommer goes so far as to conclude that these Hebrew terms are meant to indicate that "human beings are a sort of statue of God" and that "it is for this reason" that Genesis 9:6 prohibits human beings from killing one another. Or to put it another way, God prohibits humans from trying to exterminate one another specifically because in our efforts to kill each other, we are unavoidably doing violence toward the very image of God himself! Imagine how a king would feel if someone vandalized his statue. It's an insult to the king himself. And that is the reason that God prohibits humans from killing one another. In simple terms, the attempt to terminate a human being is to debase and disregard dignity of the Being of God. And if that is true with regard to the limited act of killing the body, it would be even more applicable in a scenario where the entire human being is annihilated.

At this point, we should take a few moments to address some possible objections.

First, it must be noted that even Genesis 9:6 seems to allow some occasions in which men can and should kill one another. Verse 6 begins, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." In particular, the phrase "by man shall his blood be shed," suggests that starting after the Flood, God required human beings to put murderers to death. And, in fact, the Law of Moses we find passages such as Leviticus 24:17 and Numbers 35:30, which explicitly codify that judicial rule for the people of Israel during the times of the Old Testament.

Second, at times scripture describes God himself killing human beings. In 1 Chronicles 21:12-14, for example, God punishes King David with “the sword of the Lord” and kills “seventy thousand men” of Israel. In Numbers 16:28-33, God causes the ground to open up killing Korah and all those with him. Verse 35 of Numbers then records that “there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.” And after the people of Israel complain against Moses and Aaron in verse 41, God tells Moses “Get you up from this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.” Verses 48-49 explain that although the plague was stopped, “fourteen thousand and seven hundred” died. And, of course, there are many other prominent examples including the Flood in Genesis 6-9, and God raining down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:24. Consequently, whether by God’s own hand or by angels acting on his orders, scripture clearly records that God himself does kill men.

In summary, God has not only killed men, but he has commanded men to kill (of which the Law of Moses is perhaps the most extensive example). So, isn’t God doing the very thing that he prohibited in Genesis 9:6 on the grounds that men bear his image? And if God can kill men, despite the fact that they bear his image, wouldn’t that mean God can annihilate men also despite the fact that they bear his image?

First, it is important to keep in mind the difference between the death of the body in contrast to the utter cessation of an individual human’s existence. Men cannot kill the soul, but their effort to kill the human body represents the maximum extent to which they can do violence against the image of God. For that reason, it is an affront to God’s image when men kill each other, even though they are only killing the body. On the other hand, in passages like 1 Chronicles 21, Numbers 16, Genesis 6-9, and Genesis 19, so long as God is only killing the body and not the soul, then God would actually be showing restraint toward those who bear his image. Moreover, the fact that God will resurrect the wicked (Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29, and Revelation 20:4-7, 11-15) means that any act of killing the body on God’s part is only temporary and will be counterbalanced by his intention to restore even that reflection of his image at the resurrection. In short, when men kill each other, they are showing a maximum amount of disregard for God’s image according to Genesis 9:6. But when God puts a man’s body to death, God actually upholds his image so long as the soul of the person survives and God restores their body at the resurrection.

Second, from time to time God changes what he allows in order to suit different, large-scale historical circumstances. Prior to the Flood, men were allowed to eat only fruits and vegetables (Genesis 2:16). After the Flood in Genesis 9:3-4, God allowed Noah and his family to eat meat. In Matthew 19:1-9, Jesus explains to the Pharisees that although Moses permitted them to divorce their wives in an accommodation of the “hardness of their hearts,” yet “from the beginning it was not so.” Jesus cites the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 as proof that God intends for a man and woman to remain joined permanently (until death). We

must understand God's authorization of killing the same way. And this leads us to Genesis 4.

Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 **But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.** 6 **And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?** 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. 8 **And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.** 9 **And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?** And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? 10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; **a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.** 13 **And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.** 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; **and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.** 15 **And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.** 16 **And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.**

There are several points worth noting from Genesis 4.

Number one, here we find the familiar story of Cain and Abel. When God accepts Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's, Cain is angry and kills Abel. When God confronts Cain about this murder in verses 9-12, in verses 13-14 Cain complains, "my punishment is greater than I can bear" and he specifically emphasizes to God that "every one that findeth me shall slay me."

Number two, we can compare God's response to this murder in direct contrast to God's command to Noah in Genesis 9:6. In Genesis 9 that God specifically required men to kill each other only when murder had taken place. Verse 6 states, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." (We also saw this requirement echoed explicitly in Leviticus 24:17 and Numbers 35:30.) Yet, in Genesis 4 when Cain has spilled Abel's blood and murdered him, in verses 15-16, God takes extraordinary, direct steps to prevent anyone from killing Cain in retribution for the murder of Abel,

which is the very retribution that God would later require against murderers in Genesis 9:6.

Number three, rather than killing Cain or allowing others to kill him, in verses 12 and 16 we see that God's punishment for Cain is exile. We cannot interpret God's refusal to kill Cain or God's prohibition against anyone else killing Cain as trivial. Instead, we must regard this as the highest implementation of the principle that God articulates in Genesis 9:6. Although God may have permitted men to execute murderers after the Flood, prior to the Flood that prohibition against killing men because they bear God's image was enforced to the full extent, so that in contrast to Genesis 9:6 even murderers could not be killed.

Number four, Matthew 18:15-20 provides additional support for the notion that execution is a temporary accommodation suited to historic circumstances and that God's ultimate and ideal standard will abolish execution and replace it with exile as the chief form of punishment for sin. In Matthew 18, Jesus gives instructions for church discipline. He invokes the Mosaic requirement for two or three witnesses in order to enact discipline (Deuteronomy 17:6), but instead of capital punishment, Jesus enjoins excommunication as the means of punishment.

Consequently, while God himself does at times put men to death and at other times requires men to put criminals (especially murderers) to death, we must regard this as a temporary accommodation to historic circumstance, which does not represent God's ultimate standard. Just as God's original and ultimate standard for marriage is established in Genesis 2, Genesis 4 establishes that God's original and ultimate standard regarding murder is not to prescribe execution, but to instead exile the guilty party. And just as Jesus' reinstated the standard regarding marriage and divorce in Genesis 2, we can expect that in the culmination of God's plan, we would see a restoration of the complete implementation of the principle in Genesis 9:6 and the punishment of Cain. In other words, when God enacts the ultimate implementation of his standards at the final judgment, we can expect that God himself will not execute nor will he allow others to execute sinners, just as he did not kill Cain nor allow Cain to be killed. To the contrary, he will resurrect even the wicked and exile them, thereby, upholding the sanctity of his own image, rather than debasing his own image by annihilating those who bear that image.

In conclusion, Genesis 9:6 informs us that the basis to prohibit human beings from killing each other is that they bear God's image. For humans to undertake such maximum effort to destroy the image of God is an affront to God, just as much as defacing the statue of a king. Unlike when a man kills another man, when God kills (either directly or through an intermediary), God shows restraint toward mankind who bear his image, so that the souls of men live on even when their bodies are put to death and even by resurrecting the wicked. Furthermore, God's willingness to kill men bodily or allow others to do so as punishment must be regarded as a temporary accommodation that does not reflect God's original or ultimate standard, which is reflected in God's treatment of Cain after the murder of Abel. Like Cain, ultimately God's regard for his own image in man will result

in the resurrection and exile (i.e. separation from his presence) of the wicked rather than God debasing his own image and undermining the integrity and dignity of that image by annihilating those who bear that image in mass numbers.

A Summary of Evidences that the Wicked Will Be Made Immortal

As we close this section, we would like to outline a summary listing of six proofs that the wicked will be resurrected to immortality.

- 1) I Corinthians 15 – Paul asserts that Jesus Christ’s resurrection provides the mechanism and the pattern for the resurrection of “all men” just as much as “in Adam all die” and Paul identifies an historical order of three resurrections, which includes the resurrection of the wicked at the end of Jesus’ thousand-year reign.
- 2) Luke 20 and Matthew 25 – Although Luke 20:35-36 does not directly attest to the immortal resurrection of the wicked, it does complete a picture involving several pieces of evidence, which together strongly indicate the immortal resurrection of the wicked:
 - a. When the righteous are resurrected, they are immortal.
 - b. Angels are immortal.
 - c. The wicked will be resurrected.
 - d. When resurrected, the wicked will be sent to share the final punishment that was prepared specifically for wicked angels.
- 3) 1 Corinthians 15, Ephesians 1, Revelation 20 – The fact that all creation will be made incorruptible and immortal reveals that it is incorrect to view the saints as an exception regarding immortality and the immortal resurrection of the wicked as superfluous. To the contrary, if the wicked were not made immortal, that would be an exception to the rule. Moreover, Revelation 20 places the resurrection of the wicked right in the midst of the transformation of the rest of creation to an immortal state.
- 4) Romans 6 and Hebrews 9 – The divinely mandated punishment for sin is to die once and killing the wicked a second time after resurrection would not only constitute an unwarranted doubling of the divinely-prescribed penalty, but it would also unravel a critical argument raised in Hebrews against the possibility that Jesus would die multiple times to atone for sin.
- 5) Revelation 20 – Both the Old and New Testaments establish that mortal men cannot see the face of God in his glory and live. Angels, however, can see the face of God. The fact that the wicked are resurrected and stand before the face of God in Revelation 20 requires that the wicked must be resurrected immortal.
- 6) Genesis 9 and Genesis 4 – In Genesis 9:6, God prohibits men from killing one another due to the fact that men bear God’s image. Ultimately, for God to utterly end the existence of vast numbers of human beings who bear his image would be an act of unique violence undermining God’s own image.

In addition to the evidences outlined here, one additional proof against the mortal resurrection of the wicked will arise as a result of the next major section of this study, which begins immediately below. The next segment of this study will cover a series of 15 biblical proofs demonstrating the validity of the ancient Jewish view that human beings, including the wicked, continue to consciously exist after the death of the body as they await resurrection. In addition, as we will discuss later in this study, wicked angels and disembodied wicked human spirits are depicted as enduring in Hell for long ages of time prior to the final judgment.

Consequently, the notion that the wicked are resurrected mortal is shown to be futile because, even if the bodies of the wicked were destroyed in Hell, their souls would live on rather than being annihilated. However, since we have not yet examined each of these proofs for the immortality of the soul after the death of the body, we have not listed that as an additional proof at this time. Nevertheless, the proofs outlined here demonstrate why the wicked will not only be resurrected, which scripture plainly states, but that they will also be resurrected immortal. In the course of this study, we will examine how the immortality of the wicked reconciles with the fact that only the righteous are promised eternal life. We will also demonstrate that despite the immortality of the wicked salvation and reconciliation with God are not universal.