

In the Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Greg Stafford takes up the familiar defense of subjects having to do with the use and pronunciation of the divine name, the identity of the biblical God Jah and of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as issues and questions having to do with salvation, God's sovereignty and mankind's "free will." This edition also contains discussions of several controversial issues, including questions related to abortion, a person's sexual orientation, and regarding uses of blood.

Most significantly, this book puts forth not only a defense of some the biblical teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, but it also further introduces the Christian Witnesses of Jah, Jehovah's Witnesses who reject human traditions when these can be shown to contradict what is based on the best available reasons. Thus, a call is made to all Jehovah's Witnesses, to all Christians, indeed, to "every breathing thing" to bear witness to and to praise the biblical God Jah, and to acknowledge what can be shown to be true for good reasons about Jesus of Nazareth.—Psalm 150:6; Isaiah 29:13; 43:10, 12; Acts 18:24-28; Galatians 1:10; Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6.

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GREG STAFFORD is also the author of *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses* and of various articles and debates on biblical Christianity and the history and the beliefs of the Watchtower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses. He is a Christian Witness of Jah, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who rejects traditions and beliefs that are not based on the best available evidence.



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AND CRITICS

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GREG STAFFORD



Murrieta, California

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Mailing address:

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## *“The Temple of His Body”*

In John 2:19-21 we read: “In answer Jesus said to them: ‘Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Therefore the Jews said: ‘This temple was built in forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?’ But he was talking about the temple of his body.” This account is used by some to prove that Jesus rose from the dead in the same body in which he died, and that he possesses this same body in heaven today. According to Ron Rhodes, in John 2:19-21 Jesus said here that “He would be raised from the dead bodily, not as a spirit creature.”<sup>1</sup>

It is true that Jesus spoke of rising from the dead in a “body,” but is this body the same *human* body that he had when he died? Is this what John 2:19-21 teaches? What else does the Bible say about Jesus’ resurrection body? In this chapter I will answer these and other questions about Jesus’ resurrection body, as I present and defend the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses concerning Jesus’ resurrection body. References in this chapter to “resurrection” or to a “resurrection body,” unless otherwise indicated, refer to the resurrection of those who will rule as “kings” with Jesus according to numerous NT texts (for example, Luke 12:32; John 14:2-3; 1 Corinthians 4:8; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 1:6; 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:9-10; 14:1-3). The Bible calls this the “first resurrection,” where those raised to life will be “priests of God and of the Christ, and rule with him for the thousand years.”—Revelation 20:4-6.

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1993), page 188.

## Jesus' Body

***The biblical teaching.*** Jehovah's Witnesses believe and teach that Jesus of Nazareth was raised to life in a body. But *in what kind of body* was Jesus raised? This question really is not new at all. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 15:35 Paul represents several questions people during his time were asking, including (with underlining added): "How are the dead to be raised up? Yes, with what sort of body are they coming?" In the case of Jesus, is the body in which he was raised the exact same body he had during his human life and at the time of his death?

As noted previously, some who answer yes to the last question in the preceding paragraph would cite John 2:19-21 as evidence in support of their belief. But it should be pointed out that far from being evidence in support of such a view, John 2:19-21 is actually evidence that Jesus was *not* raised to life in a human body (though he certainly appeared in one [see discussion below]). The reasons for my view will be provided after I first examine several NT texts that are directly related to what we read about in John 2:19-21. For example, consider Mark 14:55-58:

Meantime the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they were not finding any. Many, indeed, were giving false witness against him, but their testimonies were not in agreement. Also, certain ones were rising and bearing false witness against him, saying: "We heard him [Jesus] say, 'I will throw down this temple that was made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands.'" [Underlining added.]

After Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane he was taken before the Sanhedrin. Several witnesses were then brought forth who falsely accused Jesus of threatening to tear down the literal temple in Jerusalem, when in fact Jesus was really talking about "the temple of his body" (John 2:21). But in one of the false witnesses' testimony we are given a bit more insight about what Jesus likely, actually said.

Though the Jews misunderstood what Jesus *meant* by "tear down this temple and in three days I will raise it up," they did not

falsely represented what Jesus *said*. If their representation of what Jesus said was true, in spite of their false witness about the literal temple, then the body Jesus said would be raised was not the same body that was ‘torn down.’ The body Jesus had when he was put to death was a body “made with hands.” But the body Jesus was given by God after being raised up was “another [ἄλλον, *allon*] not made with hands,” according to Mark 14:58.

The additional description of “not made with hands” exactly matches the language used by Paul regarding the resurrection body, namely, “a house not made with hands, everlasting in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul’s description is made in direct comparison with the present, “earthly tent.” Matthew’s record of the testimony of the false witness does not mention anything about ‘another temple not made with hands’ (Matthew 26:61). So it is possible that Mark simply added these words to the testimony of the false witnesses because the added description more accurately reflected “the sense in which he and his fellow-Christians understood Christ’s saying.”<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that the witnesses accurately represented the entirety of Jesus’ words, but falsely applied what he said to the literal temple in Jerusalem rather than to “the temple of his body.” Either way, the description the false witnesses give of the “temple” Jesus spoke of matches what we read about the resurrection body of Christians in the NT.

**“A house not made with hands.”** How, then, can anyone know whether the testimony of the “false witnesses” concerning what Jesus *said* is correct, particularly when we know that *their understanding* of what he said was false? As noted in the previous paragraph, there is a particular NT text which describes the resurrection body in basically the exact same way that we find the false witnesses of Mark 14:56-58 presenting Jesus’ description of the body that would be raised. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-3 we are told the following about the resurrection body (with underlining added):

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan,

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<sup>2</sup> Marcus Dods, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1979), page 442.

longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked [NASB].

The description the apostle Paul gives to the resurrection body here matches perfectly with the body Jesus is said to have been given (Mark 14:58). If they are the same type of body, that is, one “not made with hands,” then Jesus was not raised in the very same body in which he died. As I will discuss further below, Jesus could still take the body in which he died and present it to God or even materialize it and use it as the NT teaches he did at times (see next section). But like the resurrection bodies of those to whom Paul wrote, Jesus was raised and given a body “not made with hands.” That is why in John 2:21 we do not read, ‘He was talking about the temple of his *physical* body.’ We are only told that Jesus spoke of “the temple of his body.” The “body” Jesus had before he died was “made with hands.” The “body” in which he was raised was one “not made with hands.”

Paul also described the resurrection body as “from heaven.” In contrast, our “earthly tent” is in the likeness of the first man, Adam, who was made from the dust (Genesis 2:7). Thus, Jesus’ followers likely understood his words in John 2:19-21 to mean that he would “destroy the Temple that is made with hands, and in three days he will build another, not made with hands [footnote refers to Mark 14:58].”<sup>3</sup> Elements of this same understanding can be found in the writings of others who lived after the death of the apostles. Consider the words of Cyprian (c. 205—258 CE) who when referring to Jesus’ words in John 2:19 wrote: “Also in the Gospel the Lord says: ... ‘After three days another shall be raised up without hands.’”<sup>4</sup>

The body “made with hands” is clearly much different from the body that is “from heaven.” Paul also wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:1 that this “earthly house” (the present physical body) would be “dissolved” (NWT), “demolished” (Barclay), or “destroyed” (NIV). This shows the complete separation from the house “made with

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<sup>3</sup> Lucius Nereparampil, *Destroy This Temple: An Exegetico-Theological Study on the Meaning of Jesus’ Temple-Logion in John 2:19* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978), page 87.

<sup>4</sup> *The Treatise of Cyprian*, ANF 5, page 511, testimony 15 (emphasis added).

hands” to the one “not made with hands,” for the latter house is described further as “*everlasting* in the heavens.” Having this new “house” also does not appear to limit the owner’s ability to take on the same form that was “dissolved,” especially if we are discussing the Lord Jesus of Nazareth (and, of course, I am). In the next section I will discuss several appearances of Jesus since his resurrection, and what these appearances tell us about the “kind of body” he has in heaven today.

## Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

“*A spirit does not have flesh and bones.*” In Luke 24 several of Jesus’ post resurrection appearances to his disciples are recorded. During the last of these, Jesus appears suddenly to his disciples as they are discussing one of his earlier appearances. When Jesus appears before them the account tells us that the disciples “were terrified, and had imagined they beheld a spirit” (Luke 24:37). But what is it in this account that would have caused them to think that they were seeing a spirit? Also, if it was Jesus whom they saw, then why were they frightened of him? Or did they believe that an evil, *demonic* spirit was trying to trick them?

To help answer these questions, I will first examine the word “spirit” (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) as it is used elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke. Note the following (with underlining added to each verse):

**Luke 4:33:** Now in the synagogue there was a man with a spirit [*pneuma*], an unclean demon [*daimonion*].

**Luke 8:29:** (For he had been ordering the unclean spirit [*pneuma*] to come out of the man. For over a long time it had held him fast, and he was repeatedly bound with chains and fetters under guard, but he would burst the bonds and be driven by the demon [*daimonion*] into the lonely places.)

**Luke 9:39:** And, look! a spirit [*pneuma*] takes him, and suddenly he cries out, and it throws him into convulsions with foam, and it scarcely withdraws from him after bruising him.

**Luke 9:42:** But even as he was approaching, the demon [*daimonion*] dashed him to the ground and violently convulsed him. However, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit [*pneuma*] and healed the boy and delivered him to his father.<sup>5</sup>

From the above examples it is clear that a reference to “a spirit” frequently meant a *demonic* spirit. The fact that the disciples were frightened and had become terrified of Jesus’ appearance also shows that they thought that a demon stood in their midst. Interestingly, Ignatius (who died sometime during Trajan’s reign [98—117 CE]) wrote the following to the Smyrnaeans (3:2): “For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: ‘Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon [οὐκ εἰμι δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον].”<sup>6</sup>

The biblical evidence, in particular from the Gospel of Luke, supports understanding Jesus’ words about not being a “spirit” to mean he was not a demonic spirit. Of course, from the available writings of Ignatius it is clear that while he himself believed in the physical resurrection of Jesus, Smyrnaeans 3:2 shows that Ignatius believed “spirit” in Luke 24:39 meant a demonic spirit, as it does elsewhere in Luke’s Gospel.<sup>7</sup>

***Jesus’ appearance to Mary.*** In Luke 24:39 Jesus reassured his disciples that he was not a demonic spirit whom they should fear. To prove this, he manifested a physical body to those in the room just as angels had done with other humans in the past.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, according to the Bible Jesus materialized different physical bodies on different occasions after his resurrection. For example, after Mary told the two angels in Jesus’ tomb that she did not know where the body of her Lord had been taken, the account in John 20:14-17 tells us:

<sup>5</sup> See Matt 12:43; Mr 1:12, 26; 5:2, 8; 7:25; 9:17, 20, 25; Acts 16:16; 19:15, 16.

<sup>6</sup> J.R. Harmer and J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2d ed., Revised by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). The footnote to this passage reads, “the (now lost) *Gospel According to the Hebrews* and the *Teaching* [or possibly *Preaching*] of Peter are reported to have contained the same (or a very similar) saying.”

<sup>7</sup> Interesting in this light is the fact that Ignatius nowhere comments on or refers to Paul’s discussion of the resurrection body in 1Co 15:35-50 or in 2Co 5:1-8.

<sup>8</sup> Compare Gen 19:1-3 (where in verse 3 we are told that the angels “went to eating”) with Lu 24:42-43, where Jesus also eats with his disciples after his resurrection.

After saying these things, she turned back and viewed Jesus standing, but she did not discern it was Jesus. Jesus said to her: “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” She, imagining it was the gardener, said to him: “Sir, if you have carried him off, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her: “Mary!” Upon turning around, she said to him, in Hebrew: “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher!”) Jesus said to her: “Stop clinging to me. For I have not yet ascended to the Father. But be on your way to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and YOUR Father and to my God and YOUR God’” [underlining added].

Even though Mary “viewed Jesus standing,” she “did not discern it was Jesus.” Why? The only explanation that fits with what we read is that she did not recognize the person standing there as Jesus, at least not based on his physical appearance alone or by the first sound of his voice. Jesus was in a different form, one which Mary mistook as “the gardener.” It was only after Jesus spoke her name a certain way that she responded with recognition. The biblical evidence shows that Jesus was not an evil spirit, but that he could and he did take on different physical forms. The Bible also shows that Jesus had the power to prevent others from learning about his identity.

***“Their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”*** Another occasion where Jesus was not recognized by his disciples is recorded in Luke 24:13-35. Verses 13-16 read: “But, look! on that very day two of them were journeying to a village about seven miles distant from Jerusalem and named Emmaus, and they were conversing with each other over all these things that had come about. Now as they were conversing and discussing, Jesus himself approached and began walking with them; but their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (underlining added). But how were they “kept from recognizing him”? Was it by supernatural power, or because he appeared in a different body?

The account in Luke says that Jesus “approached and began walking with them,” though the disciples were still not able to recognize him. In other accounts where a similar phenomenon occurs (such as in John 20:14-17) it is the *appearance* of Jesus that causes confusion about his identity. It may be, as Albert Barnes

points out, that in Luke's account the eyes of the disciples were kept or "holden" (KJV) in that the disciples simply "did not know who he was."<sup>9</sup> Barnes then further remarks about this account:

It does not appear that there was anything supernatural or miraculous in it; or that God used any power to blind them. It may easily be accounted for without any such supposition, for (1) Jesus appeared *in another form*, (Mark xvi. 12;) i.e. in an appearance different from his usual appearance. (2) They were not *expecting* to see him—indeed they did not suppose that he was alive, and it required the strongest evidence to convince them that he was really risen from the dead.<sup>10</sup>

***The empty tomb.*** There is no question the NT teaches that Jesus materialized different physical bodies, which is why at times he was recognized and why at times he was not recognized. But what, then, happened to the body in which Jesus died? Charles Venn Pilcher offers the following explanation: "What was the connection between the earthly Body of the Lord and His Risen Body? We most certainly believe in the Empty Grave. The earthly Body must have been dissolved or changed."<sup>11</sup> Regardless of what natural or supernatural processes Jah may have allowed or caused relative to Jesus' body, we know from the NT that God would not allow his "flesh" to "see corruption" (Acts 2:31; 13:36-37). Thus, before Jesus' body decomposed on its own it would have been removed from the tomb. But was it "removed" because God raised up his Son in the same body in which he died, or because God or Jesus took the body from the tomb in some other way?

In the book of Hebrews Chapter 10, verse 10, we learn that Jesus offered his body in sacrifice to his God for the sanctification

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<sup>9</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, one volume ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1962), page 257.

<sup>10</sup> Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, page 257. It should be pointed out that Mr 16:12 is part of the longer ending of Mark's Gospel and, though it has support from a variety of ancient witnesses (including A and D), it is lacking in some important ones (including  $\aleph$  and B). Still, even if it is not original the manuscripts supporting the longer reading show that it was believed fairly early on in the Gospel tradition that Jesus had appeared after his resurrection in "another form."

<sup>11</sup> Charles Venn Pilcher, *The Hereafter in Jewish and Christian Thought With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Resurrection* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1940), page 160.

of those who trust in him. Indeed, the “body” Jesus offered in sacrifice to God was the same body God “prepared” for him (Hebrews 10:5). If God accepted the offering of Jesus’ body, then God has it. Though in one of his post-resurrection appearances Jesus did have wound marks resembling those he received when he was executed at Golgotha, at other times (discussed above) he did not manifest these same wound marks, or the same body, or even speak with the same voice. Jesus presented his original wounds to Thomas to prove that the one whom others had seen was in fact Jesus of Nazareth (John 20:19-27<sup>12</sup>). If he had simply continued to use other forms unlike the one in which he lived and died, then Thomas may have continued doubting and that was not the intent behind Jesus’ manifestation to him.

On another occasion (Luke 24:30) two of Jesus’ disciples stopped to have a meal with him, but his true identity was unknown to them at the time. The account mentions that the two disciples saw Jesus break the bread and hand it to them. Only when Jesus performed the act of breaking the bread did they recognize him, perhaps because of the familiar manner in which he had broken and distributed bread previously (compare Matthew 14:19; 15:36; Luke 22:19). Yet, in this account the disciples must have seen Jesus’ hands (that is, if they saw him break the bread), but they do not mention anything about his having wound marks that would identify him as Jesus of Nazareth. This suggests that the body Jesus had at this time was again *not* the same body in which he died.

***Jesus’ spiritual body.*** There are good reasons for believing that while Jesus can materialize any physical form he chooses, he does not have one particular human form in which he at all times exists. In fact, the Bible teaches that the body which Jesus has in heaven is nothing at all like the body he had while he was on the earth. Consider the following description of the risen Jesus by his beloved apostle, John:

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<sup>12</sup> Note that in verse 19, though the doors were locked, Jesus appeared suddenly in the room. This suggests that as a spirit being Jesus entered the room, then he took on a human form and appeared in that form to those in the room.

**Revelation 1:12-16**

And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me, and, having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands someone like a son of man, clothed with a garment that reached down to the feet, and girded at the breasts with a golden girdle. Moreover, his head and his hair were white as white wool, as snow, and his eyes as a fiery flame; and his feet were like fine copper when glowing in a furnace; and his voice was as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth a sharp, long two-edged sword was protruding, and his countenance was as the sun when it shines in its power.

Here we have a clear description of what Jesus' heavenly body looks like to humans. Jesus' "head" and his "hair" are said to be "white as wool, as snow, and his eyes as a fiery flame." His feet are "like fine copper when glowing in a furnace" and "his voice was the sound of many waters." Finally, his "countenance was as the sun when it shines in its power." This is a far cry from the human forms Jesus took on after his resurrection!

Revelation 2:18 also describes the heavenly Jesus in similar terms, where it says he has "eyes like a fiery flame, and his feet are like fine copper." These descriptions are also very similar to the angel in Revelation 10:1, whose "face was as the sun, and his feet were as fiery pillars." It is little wonder, then, that the apostle Paul refers to Jesus as 'not a man' in Galatians 1:12.

The descriptions of Jesus' heavenly body in Revelation 1 and 2 also have several striking similarities with other spirit beings described elsewhere in the Bible. For example, in Ezekiel 1:7, 13 the cherubs are described as "gleaming as with the glow of burnished copper," and "like burning coals of fire." Even their sound is similar to Jesus' voice, in that they both sound like "vast waters, like the sound of the Almighty" (Ezekiel 1:24). In Ezekiel 40:3 an angel is described as "like the appearance of copper." In Daniel 10:6 the eyes, the body, and the voice of the angel who appeared to Daniel is described in terms similar to how Jesus and the cherubs in Ezekiel are described:

And his body was like chryso-lite, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like fiery torches, and his arms and the place of his feet were like the sight of burnished copper, and the sound of his words was like the sound of a crowd [NWT, underlining added].

Thus, there are good reasons for believing that when Paul writes that Jesus “became a life-giving spirit,” he meant that Jesus has the same type of body other spirits are said to have, namely, a heavenly body “not made with hands” (1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 5:1). This type of body is unknown to humans, other than by the descriptions given by those who saw what they wrote about. None of these descriptions, not even of the heavenly Jesus, involve real flesh, blood, or bone. Indeed, after Jesus appeared to Saul from heaven (Acts 9:1-16), Saul (now Paul) referred back to this occasion and stated truthfully (with underlining added): “Paul, an apostle, neither from men nor through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him up from the dead.”—Galatians 1:1.

During the biblical periods there are other, similar descriptions for spirit beings in ancient Jewish literature associated with the Bible. For example, in the Apocalypse of Abraham (late first to early second centuries CE) the appearance of the body of the angel Yahoel is said to be “like chrysolite,” and the “hair of his head like snow” (11:1-3). In the late first century BCE to early first century CE work Joseph and Aseneth, an angelic figure believed to be Michael is described as having a face “like lightning,” eyes “like sunlight,” hair “like a flame of fire,” and hands and feet that are “like iron from the fire” (14:9). In the Apocalypse of Zephaniah 6:11-15 (dated to between the first century BCE and the second century CE), Zephaniah is said to have seen “a great angel” whose face shines “like the rays of the sun in its glory” and whose feet are “like bronze which is melted in a fire.”<sup>13</sup>

My point in citing these non-biblical references is to show that the descriptions given for spirit beings are consistent with the

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<sup>13</sup> These and other texts are presented and discussed in greater detail by Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the angels: Angelology and the christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pages 53-61.

biblical description of the same type of heavenly beings, one of whom is the risen Jesus. Based on what we read in the Bible, Jesus does not have his human body in heaven, but he can take on any human form he chooses when he comes to the earth, even the one in which he died if he chooses to do so (John 20:27). But Jesus no longer has the body in which he died. Descriptions of his resurrection body in the Bible prove this, as do other texts which make a clear distinction between living in the flesh and being raised to life as a spirit. Such biblical texts, along with the meaning of the NT word for “body,” will be the basis for the discussion in the next section.

## “A Life-Giving Spirit”

***Does soma always denote materiality?*** In his book, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, Robert H. Gundry argues that the Greek word *soma* (often translated as “body”) has a purely physical meaning. In Gundry’s view, the use of *soma* in texts such as 1 Corinthians 15:44 “in and of itself implies materiality.”<sup>14</sup> What, though, are we to make of the adjective πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*, “spiritual”)? If the use of *soma* itself “implies materiality,” how is a *soma* “spiritual”? Gundry takes “spiritual” to mean “a physical body renovated by the Spirit of Christ and therefore suited to heavenly immortality.”<sup>15</sup> But could it be that “spiritual” in 1 Corinthians 15:44 instead has to do with the *kind of body* under discussion, that is, with the “sort of body” the resurrected ones are “coming”?

Gundry’s view is based in large part on the assumption that *soma* always denotes materiality. While in the Bible (both in the Greek OT and NT) it is true that *soma* often refers to a physical body, this is because the majority of persons referenced in the Bible are physical, human persons! J.A. Ziesler has shown, in contradiction to Gundry’s view, that while *soma* often does have a purely physical reference it also has a more-than-physical

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<sup>14</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, repr. 1987), page 166.

<sup>15</sup> Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, pages 165-166.

meaning in several LXX texts. Thus, Ziesler maintains that Gundry’s thesis “cannot be accepted as it stands.”<sup>16</sup>

Because of this, Ziesler believes we “cannot rule out the possibility of [a more-than-physical meaning] in Paul also.”<sup>17</sup> There is, in fact, no basis upon which to conclude that “body” always denotes a material body. Indeed, it is clear from Paul’s discussion of the resurrection body in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 that there are *many* different kinds of ‘bodies.’

**“With what sort of body?”** One of the two questions Paul answers in 1 Corinthians 15 is (according to verse 35), “with what sort of body are they [the dead] coming?” Thus, the resurrection body may be of more than one *kind*, or “sort” (Greek: ποίω, *poio*). That is why in answering the question Paul writes that there are different kinds of fleshly bodies (verse 39), and even the planetary bodies of the heavens differ in terms of their radiance and glory (verses 40-41). Also, the bodies in which we were born are said to be different from the bodies in which those resurrected would live. But the language Paul uses to differentiate these two kinds of bodies is such that the second one cannot have *any* remnants of physicality, and in 1 Corinthians 15:47-49 he argues that these ‘bodies’ differ in terms of their composition:

The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven [RSV].

Gundry, however, believes “the term *choikos*, ‘earthy, dusty’, here stresses mortality due to earthy origin (*ek ges*, [‘from the earth’]) rather than substance as such, for its counterpart *epouranios* (‘heavenly’) has nothing to do with substance and is

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<sup>16</sup> J.A Ziesler, “ΣΩΜΑ in the Septuagint,” *NovT* 27 (1983), pages 133-145.

<sup>17</sup> Ziesler, “ΣΩΜΑ in the Septuagint,” page 145. On page 145 of his article, note 31, Ziesler suggests that Gundry’s view cannot be sustained in Rom 6:6, 7:24, 8:10, 13, 23, 1Co 6:16, 2Co 10:10, and that in Php 3:21, Rom 12:1, and in 1Co 15:44 his view is “highly improbable.”

defined by the phrase *ex ouranou* ('from heaven'; vv. 47-49)."<sup>18</sup> But the expressions "out of the earth" and "earthy, dusty," *do* speak of the composition of the body! So do the expressions "out of heaven" and "heavenly"! The fact that they modify *anthropos* ("man") is because Paul is using examples of two men known to history to help define by example (in verses 44-45) what is a "physical body" (Adam's "out of the earth" body) and what is a "spiritual body" (the body Jesus was raised to life in as a "spirit"), which body is "out of heaven."

Does the Bible tell us anything more about what it means for a body to be "heavenly," or "out of heaven"? Paul uses similar language to describe the resurrection body in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 5:2 Paul uses the same characterization he uses in 1 Corinthians 15:47, namely, *ex ouranou* (English: "out of heaven"). But he goes even further, speaking of this body as one "not made with hands," just as Jesus is said to have described his resurrection body in Mark 14:58. Paul elsewhere defines "not made with hands" as "not of this creation."—Hebrews 9:11.

As I also noted earlier in this chapter, Paul speaks of the physical body as one that is "dissolved," in contrast to the "building from God" which is spoken of as "everlasting in the heavens." These descriptions and differences directly relate to the composition of the bodies under discussion. From this it is clear that the physical body is dissolved and replaced by God with a body that is "in the heavens." Thus, there is no sense in which the fundamental composition of our present physical bodies (which are "of this creation") and the resurrection body that is "not made with hands" are the same. They are clearly different.

***"Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom."*** Additional evidence that the spiritual body spoken of by Paul and described in other parts of the Bible does not have any remnants of human physicality is found in 1 Corinthians 15:50. Here Paul further defines the resurrection body in terms of its composition by speaking of that which the spiritual body is *not*. Paul writes, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, neither does

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<sup>18</sup> Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, page 166.

corruption inherit incorruption.” While this reference to “flesh and blood” seems to be clearly a reference to humanity’s physical composition, Gundry believes this description “does not imply immateriality of the resurrected body.” Rather, Gundry believes that “the phrase ‘flesh and blood’ connotes the present body’s weakness and perishability.”<sup>19</sup> But Gundry has no good reasons for his conclusion.

In addition to 1 Corinthians 15:50, the expression “flesh and blood” is used four other times in the NT (Matthew 16:17; Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12; Hebrews 2:14). In each of these other four instances, the expression refers simply to human beings. Indeed, three of the five times it is used in the NT it is in contrast to spirit beings (Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Ephesians 6:12)! Any reference to a human being’s physicality also implies the “weakness and perishability” that belongs to our bodies. But the expression “flesh and blood” itself is used simply as a reference to human beings, with human bodies. Thus, the “flesh and blood” physical (human) body is “from the earth,” and it is in direct contrast with the spiritual body “out of heaven,” which is “not made with hands.” When the first tent is dissolved it “returns to the dust” (Genesis 3:19; Job 34:15; Psalm 90:3; Ecclesiastes 3:20), while the second body is “everlasting in the heavens.”—2 Corinthians 5:1.

**“Made alive in the spirit.”** There is still more evidence from the NT to show that the earliest Christian teaching concerning Jesus’ resurrection was that he was raised as “a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). This complements well the teaching found in 1 Timothy 3:16, where Paul also wrote, “He [Jesus] was manifested in the body [Greek: *sarx*, ‘flesh’], vindicated in the spirit, seen by angels; who was proclaimed among the nations, believed in throughout the world, glorified in high heaven” (NEB, underlining added). The apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:18 also made a contrast between Jesus’ physical life on earth and his resurrection in the spirit, “Why, even Christ died once for all time concerning sins, a righteous person for unrighteous ones, that he might lead

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<sup>19</sup> Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, page 166.

YOU to God, he being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit.”—NWT, underlining added.

Other Bible translations render the underlined portion of the last sentence in the above paragraph as “made alive by the Spirit” (NIV, underlining added). But the two clauses “in the flesh” and “in the spirit” are antithetical to one another. The words “flesh” and “spirit” are likely datives indicating the mode of existence in which Jesus died (“flesh”) and the existence into which he was “made alive” (“spirit”). The sense for both cannot be “by the flesh” and “by the spirit,” respectively, “because the instrumental idea does not fit σαρκί [Greek: *sarki*, ‘flesh’]; Christ was put to death ‘in the flesh,’ but hardly ‘by the flesh.’”<sup>20</sup>

Disagreeing with Michaels is Greek grammarian Daniel Wallace. Wallace writes that “if 1 Pet 3:18 is a hymnic or liturgical fragment, this can be no objection because of ‘poetic license’: Poetry is replete with examples of grammatical and lexical license, not the least of which is the use of the same morpho-syntactic [grammatical] categories, in parallel lines, with different senses.”<sup>21</sup> This is certainly a possibility, but whether or not this is a hymn of some kind<sup>22</sup> it seems more natural “in such a closely welded phrase” to look for the same use of the dative in both cases.<sup>23</sup> In so doing, it can be argued based on good reasons that Peter makes a contrast “between [Jesus’] earthly existence and his risen state.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1988), page 204. While I do not believe Michaels shares Jehovah's Witnesses' view of this text, he does argue cogently for what I believe is a proper translation. Michaels' statement in reference to 1Co 15:45, to the effect that “a ‘life-giving spirit’ ... no more implies immateriality than does the preceding description of the first Adam as ‘a living soul,’” is not well-reasoned. In 1Co 15:43-44 Paul sets up the following contrast between the physical body and the spiritual body: the first one is “sown in weakness” (that is, it is made “flesh”) and the second one is “raised up in power.” In verse 45 Paul then gives examples of the bodies he is describing, namely, the physical body of Adam and the spiritual body of Jesus. Adam was composed of flesh and blood. Jesus was made a “life-giving spirit.”

<sup>21</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), page 343, note 76.

<sup>22</sup> See William Joseph Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6*, 2d. ed. (Analecta Biblica 23; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), pages 109-120, for a discussion of the literary structure of 1Pe 3:18-4:6.

<sup>23</sup> Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits*, page 141.

<sup>24</sup> Michaels, *1 Peter*, page 204.

1 Peter 3:18 is similar in its grammar to 1 Peter 4:6. The latter reads, “For the Gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God” (NASB, underlining added). While on the earth Jesus was “flesh.” At his resurrection he was “made alive in the spirit.” But who raised Jesus up from the dead? Some believe Jesus raised himself from the dead. Others believe that God the Father resurrected him. In the final section of this chapter, I will consider what the Bible teaches and show how it is consistent with the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

**“I will raise it up.”** When Jesus spoke these words in John 2:19, did he mean he would *raise himself* from the dead? If so, the NT writers (Jesus’ early followers) must not have understood him correctly, because in the NT it is the Father, not the Son, who elsewhere is always credited for having raised Jesus up from the dead.<sup>25</sup> According to the Bible, Jesus is now “living forever and ever” and he has the keys of death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). When Jesus said “I will raise it up” in John 2:19 (in reference to the “temple” that is his “body”), the expression can be understood consistently with what we read in the Bible about the cause of Jesus’ resurrection. Commenting on what Jesus said in John 2:19, H.A.W. Meyer writes:

But the objection disappears if we simply give due weight to the figurative nature of the expression, which rests upon that visible contemplation of the resurrection, according to which the *Subject* that arises, whose resurrection is described as the re-erecting of the destroyed temple, must also be the Subject that erects the temple,—without affecting the further doctrine, which, moreover, does not come under consideration, that the *causa efficiens*, i.e. *the actual revivifying power, is the Father*. Christ receiving His life again from the Father ([John] x. 17) and rising again, Himself raises up by His very resurrection the destroyed temple.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Acts 2:24; 3:15; Rom 4:24; 6:4; 8:11; 1Co 6:14; 2Co 4:14; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:17, 19-20; Col 2:12; 1Th 1:10; 1Pe 1:21.

<sup>26</sup> H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of John*, trans. William Urwick (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), page 114 (emphasis added).

Meyer refers to John 10:17, which in the NWT reads (along with verse 18): “This is why the Father loves me, because I surrender my soul, in order that I may *receive* it again. No man has taken it away from me, but I surrender it of my own initiative. I have authority to surrender it, and I have authority to *receive* it again. The commandment on this I received from my Father” (emphasis added). Here Jesus says that he would “receive” his life “again” (Greek: *palin*), which shows that he must have received it at least once before from the Father.—Compare Galatians 1:1.

Therefore, when we read John 2:19 and Jesus' words, “I will raise it up,” it really depends on whether we interpret John 2:19 in light of John 10:17-18, or vice versa. Since John 2:19 uses figurative language in other ways (such as using “temple” for “body”), it is possible that Jesus' words in John 2:19 are to be interpreted as Jesus receiving something from someone else but in such a way that he (Jesus) is in some sense responsible for his own resurrection. Indeed, in many Bible translations the Greek word (λαμβάνω, *lambano*) is translated as “take,” while NWT and other Bibles use “receive” or something similar. If we accept “take” rather than “receive” for *lambano* in John 10:17-18, then this is what Jesus taught:

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” [NIV, underlining added].

Not one of the translations where I found *lambano* translated “take” in the first two instances of John 10:17-18, consistently translated the third instance of *lambano* in these two texts also as “take.”<sup>27</sup> The translation of the third instance of *lambano* is always with the sense of “receive.” Jesus “received” the “commandment” from God; he did not “take” the commandment from his Father!

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<sup>27</sup> For example, the NIV, NASB, NAB, KJV, and Goodspeed's translation all render *lambano* as “take” in the first two occurrences of Joh 10:17-18, but they translate the third occurrence in the last sentence of Joh 10:18 as “received.” On the other hand, the NEB, NWT, Rotherham, Weymouth, and others consistently render *lambano* in the sense of ‘receive’ in all three instances.

The third instance of *lambano* therefore provides support for understanding the first two instances similarly, namely, in the sense of ‘receive.’ Regardless of how the first two instances of *lambano* are understood, the third instance supports the teaching that, ultimately, the Father is the one who decides what can or will be allowed to happen, as I will explain in the next chapter.

## Chapter Summary

The Bible teaches that spirits, including angels and the heavenly Jesus, have bodies that are like “copper,” with ‘eyes of fire’ (Ezekiel 40:3; Daniel 10:6; Revelation 1:12-16; 2:18). The Bible also explicitly states that Jesus was raised as a “life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and that he took on different physical forms when he appeared to his followers, and this included the same form (at least in terms of the wound marks on his hands and on his feet) in which he died (John 20:26-29). However, Jesus is never described in human terms when he appears in his heavenly glory. Indeed, he is described by Paul as not a “man,” which is why what he received (the good news) is also described as “not something human” (Galatians 1:11-12). Jehovah’s Witnesses accept these biblical teachings.

The belief that Jesus today has a body of ‘flesh and bone,’ is not supported by any biblical evidence. There is plenty of evidence to show that Jesus was believed to have appeared in a variety of human forms, *real* human forms, real enough to eat with (Luke 24:36-43). But manifesting different forms while on the earth does not necessarily mean those same forms Jesus took reflect the actual ‘body’ he has in heaven today. Indeed, the evidence shows that spirit beings like the resurrected Jesus are nothing at all like humans in terms of their heavenly bodies’ composition and glory. Jesus and those resurrected after his image have a body “not made with hands” that is “from God,” which is “everlasting in the heavens.” This is in contrast with our present “earthly body,” which like Adam’s body is made of “dust.”—Genesis 2:7; 2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 John 3:2.

At some point, the present human body will be dissolved and if Jah wills it then it will be replaced with a body that bears “the image of the heavenly one” (1 Corinthians 15:49). Jesus was given the authority to “receive” or to “take” back his life, and now he has the authority to raise up from the dead all whom he chooses, which choice Jesus bases on how those who died lived and trusted or believed in him and in his Father (John 5:25-30; Revelation 2:23). But how can we affect our own lives in ways that show our desire to serve Jah in spite of our sinful nature? How do our actions, or the actions of anyone, relate to the will of God? In the next chapter I will discuss these and other related questions as I consider the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and others concerning the knowledge, the freedom, and the sovereignty of the biblical God, Jah.