

# The Resurrection of the Wicked

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

The Pharisees constituted the “straitest” sect of the Jewish religion in the time of Christ (Acts 26:5), but they were not without their own theological flaws. For one thing, they denied that the wicked dead would be raised from the grave.

In his discussion of the Pharisees, the Jewish historian Josephus declared that the Pharisees “believe that souls have an immortal vigor in them,” and that there will be eternal rewards and punishments for both the obedient and disobedient, corresponding to how one has lived upon the earth — whether “virtuously or viciously.” But only the righteous “shall have the power to revive and live again,” i.e., be raised from the dead (*Antiquities* 18.1.3).

The Sadducees, of course, denied the resurrection of the body outright (Mt. 22:23; Acts 23:8).

## Biblical Evidence

To the contrary, the scriptures teach there shall be a resurrection of both classes. Five examples of testimony should be sufficient to make the point.

### Daniel’s Prophecy

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

The term “sleep” has to do with the disposition of the body (not the soul) during the state of death. In this case, both those destined to “everlasting life,” and those who will suffer “shame and everlasting contempt,” are to “awake.”

The significance of “awake” clearly is that of a resurrection of the body. There is no way this passage can be taken seriously and one fail to acknowledge there will be a general resurrection of both the faithful and the unfaithful.

### Testimony of Christ

Christ himself declared:

“Marvel not at this: for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment [damnation—KJV]” (Jn. 5:28-29).

The Savior foretells a universal resurrection.

All are to be raised at the same hour, and that event specifically will involve those who enter into life, as well as those who are to encounter judgment, signifying “the last judgment, the damnation of the wicked” (Thayer, 362).

This is eternal estrangement from the Creator.

Add to this the fact that Christ warned:

“And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt. 10:28).

A significant point about this passage, from our current perspective, is the fact that Christ speaks of “hell” ( [gehenna](#) ) as the eternal abode of the wicked with its “unquenchable fire.”

In that connection, the Lord refers to the condemned as having both body and soul, along with hands, feet, and eyes (Mk. 9:43-48).

### Paul’s Defense of the Gospel

In a defense of the Christian Way before certain Jewish dignitaries, Paul set from this proposition:

“But this I confess unto you, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:14-15).

Again, it is perfectly transparent that the “unjust” will be resurrected from the grave.

### John’s Final Message of Hope

In the twentieth chapter of Revelation there is a record of John’s vision on Patmos. He sweeps forward to the day of Judgment. In connection with that event, the apostle writes that

“[T]he sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:13).

The distinction drawn between “death” and “Hades” reveals that both the bodies and souls of every person were in view.

### The Righteous are Emphasized

Though the resurrection of the lost is obviously a solid teaching of the scriptures, the Bible student must admit that there is far less emphasis on the raising of the damned than there is on the resurrection of the saved.

For example, the resurrection of God’s faithful people is treated in one entire chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, with considerable supplementation as well in 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.

But this imbalance of material is actually to be expected.

The entire thrust of the Bible is one emphasizing the joy, peace, contentment, and everlasting reward in serving the Creator. The fate of human rebels is but a tragic appendage to the otherwise beautiful purpose of a loving God.

### The Essence of a Resurrection

There is one important observation to be made before proceeding further. The term “resurrection” is translated from the Greek word *anastasis*. It is derived from two roots — *ana*, “up,” and *histemi*, “to cause to stand.”

A resurrection, therefore, is the rising up of that which has been laid down. The body that dies and is laid to rest (or burned, drowned, etc.) will be the same body in identity that comes forth again.

Of course the resurrected body will be of a different essence, as Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 15:42ff — though in that context he particularly focuses on the resurrection of the believer’s body.

Two points are important to keep in mind. First, each body will retain its own individuality (“each seed a body of its own” — 1 Cor. 15:38).

Second, there will be an identity continuum between the old body and the new body. Otherwise, the term “resurrection” becomes meaningless.

The thrust of this article is to consider the resurrection of the doomed.

### The Resurrected Body of the Wicked

Though it certainly is not a pressing issue, it is a matter of some interest as to the nature of the bodies of those to be raised from the dead to spend eternity — body and soul — in hell.

Let us consider this matter briefly, since the scriptures teach that the resurrected body (of both saved and lost) will bear a just portion of the consequence of the life one has lived upon the earth.

While the Bible does not address this matter in considerable detail, there are descriptions in certain texts that allow a degree of respectful speculation — if pursued in moderation.

## Shame and Contempt

It is in connection with the resurrection of the body that the wicked are said to suffer “shame” and “everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). Exactly what this effect will be, one cannot say precisely. It does seem, however, at least to include the fate of the body.

The Hebrew term for “shame” is *harapot*, signifying “reproaches,” in the sense of being victim of the reproaches of others.

The word “contempt” suggests the idea of, “to repel from oneself,” thus “something abhorrent” (see: Brown, *et al.*, 357, 201; Wood, 318).

These terms do not reflect the notion of attractive creatures! There will be no “handsome hunks” or “glamour girls” in hell. The text paints a nightmare sort of picture. Dante’s *Inferno* does not do justice to the horrid environment.

## Ruined or Destroyed

In Matthew 10:28 Christ spoke of both body and soul being “destroyed” in hell. “Destroyed” is from the term *apollumi*, an intensified verbal form hinting of “utter destruction.”

Annihilationists interpret this as meaning “going out of existence,” but the word does not imply that, as the consultation of a Greek concordance will reveal. Homer employed the term of a city demolished or laid waste (*Iliad* 5.648).

In the New Testament the term might be used of old, cracked wineskins (Mt. 9:17), fading beauty (Jas. 1:11), spoiled food (Jn. 6:27), or a lost sheep (Lk. 15:4).

“The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being” (Vine, 211).

The term clearly seems to indicate that the body of the wicked will reflect a **ruined condition**. The beauty of its earthly design is egregiously diminished, if not extinguished altogether. There is no bodily “redemption” (Rom. 8:23) for the rogue!

One can only imagine how horrible the scenes of hell could be.

## Painful

The resurrected bodies of the unrighteous will be susceptible to pain, together with whatever “conscience” and “memory” torments they will experience (cf. Lk. 16:27-28).

## The Worm Doesn’t Die

By means of a dramatic metaphor, Jesus describes the punishment of hell as a condition “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:48). The term “worm” (*skolex*) denoted that type of worm that preys on dead bodies (Thayer, 580).

In addition, the present tense form of the verb “die” together with the negative “not” demonstrate that the gnawing anguish will neither decrease nor end.

The imagery unquestionably brings the agony of the doomed person’s resurrected body into sharp focus.

## Contrasted With the Righteous

There also are certain conclusions to be drawn in the contrasts between the resurrected just and the unjust. For example, Daniel wrote:

“And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

To this Jesus adds:

“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt. 13:43).

The resplendent bodies of the godly will stand in bold contrast to the ominously dark countenances of the wretched. For the ungodly there will be no “celestial” or “glorified” body (1 Cor. 15:40, 43). And, as noted already, there will be no body “redemption” as affirmed by Paul on behalf of the godly (Rom. 8:23).

How forlorn the lost will be as they contemplate their disenfranchised state, when Christ raises his people to











“fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:21).

## Conclusion

Perhaps this is a question about which you, as a student of God’s word, have wondered, but never have pursued.

Assuredly, it is an issue upon which to reflect seriously as one contemplates the reality of eternity.

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### Works Cited

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Acts 26:5; Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43-48; Acts 24:14-15; Revelation 20:13; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:42; 1 Corinthians 15:38; Matthew 9:17; James 1:11; John 6:27; Luke 15:4; Romans 8:23; Luke 16:27-28; Mark 9:48; Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43; 1 Corinthians 15:40, 43; Philippians 3:21

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