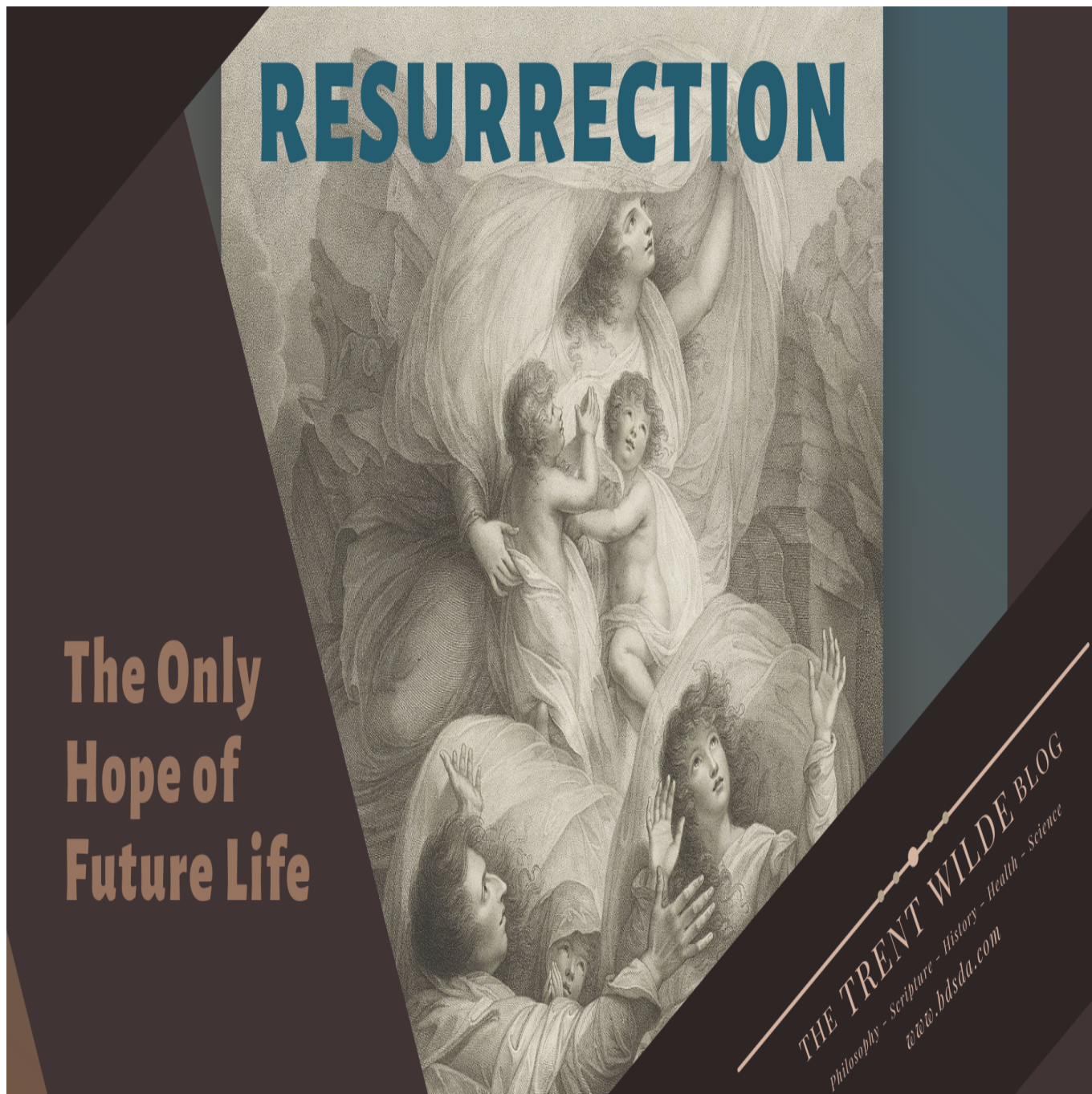


## Resurrection: The Only Hope of Future Life

### Description



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In the past few posts, we've seen that ancient Israelite ideas of death were rooted in their ideas of human nature. Death, to them, consisted neither of "soul wakefulness" nor of "soul sleep" (that is,

if by “soul” you mean what most people mean – a non-physical “self”). Rather, they saw death as the cessation of a person – the end of bodily functions (including thought), and the disassembling of the organized dirt that we *are* into ordinary, unorganized dirt.

With this view of death, there is no automatic afterlife – no inevitable continuance of existence for a person. Yet, a future life is a major theme in the teachings of Jesus and his philosophical predecessors and successors. Enter resurrection! Resurrection is the bodily reinstantiation of people who have died. In other words, dirt we are and to dirt we return, but resurrection is bringing people back from the dirt by physically remaking them.

Consider this famous passage on resurrection:

And many from those sleepers of ground of dirt will wake up;  
some to lives of ineffable time  
and some to disgrace, to repulsion, for ineffable time.

– Daniel 12:2 (NABT)<sup>1</sup>NABT stands for *Not A Bible Translation* – my own translation.

Here, the dead are called “sleepers of ground of dirt” because they, being dirt themselves, have returned to dirt and because sleep is used as a metaphor for death (see Psalm 13:3).

So Daniel is saying that that which died, will be made alive again. And what died? Not an immaterial soul. No! But corporeal bodies – purely material persons. That it is *bodies* that die and *bodies* that are resurrected is plain as plain can be in ancient Jewish literature. But what people often miss is that bodily resurrection is just as plainly spoken of as the *only* hope for a future life. This is an extremely important point because it is altogether inconsistent with the idea that humans have immaterial souls. Such a soul, in consequence of its immateriality would be unaffected by the death of the body. In other words, if our true self, our thinking conscious “I,” is non-physical, neither bodily death nor absence of a subsequent resurrection would pose any threat to continued existence. But Jesus and the apostles taught that just the opposite is true. They taught that without bodily resurrection, we are forever lost.

This is so crucial it’s worth repeating. If we have non-physical souls, the death of the body would not destroy the soul. Bodily death and a lack of a bodily resurrection would thus in no way prevent us from continuing to exist. But, as we’ll see, Jesus and his apostles taught that without bodily resurrection, we are perished. This indicates that they did not believe we have immaterial souls. They believed that we are purely material animals. Our current existence is 100% bodily, and our bodily death puts an end to our existence, and so our only hope for a future life is to be remade bodily.

Okay, let’s quickly go through a couple passages to illustrate this point. There are more, but due to my own time constraints, I have to keep this short.

39 This is the will of my Father who sent me, that of all he has given to me I should lose nothing, but should raise him up at the last day. 40 This is the will of the one who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

– John 6:39-40 (WEB)<sup>2</sup>WEB stands for *World English Bible*.

Notice, the way Jesus avoids losing those whom the Father has given to him is by resurrecting them at the last day. Obviously, this implies that he *would* lose them were it not for resurrection. This wouldn't be the case if they were non-physical souls who went to be with him when they departed from the bodies they once inhabited at the death of those bodies. If *that* were the case, a lack of resurrection wouldn't result in losing them, nor would a resurrection result in not losing them since they would already be not lost – they would already be with Christ.

The next and last passage we'll look at is from 1 Corinthians 15. Here, Paul is addressing some who had become followers of Jesus, but who evidently had a hard time with the doctrine of the resurrection (it was unpopular then as now). In fact, they said there would be no resurrection. Now, listen to Paul's response:

16 For if the dead aren't raised, neither has Christ been raised. 17 If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. 18 Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.

...

If the dead are not raised, then "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

– 1 Corinthians 15:16-19, 32 (WEB)

How plain that bodily resurrection is the only hope for a future life! If Paul thought we are immaterial souls temporarily inhabiting bodies, he wouldn't think that getting dead and staying dead would be so utterly hopeless – he wouldn't think that bodily death and no bodily resurrection equates to being perished. In Paul's mind, claiming there is no resurrection is logically equivalent to saying that we only have this life. This puts beyond reasonable doubt that he didn't believe in the now-popular doctrines of heaven, hell, and souls. He, like Jesus and the ancient Hebrew prophets, had a materialistic anthropology and his only hope for a future life was a materialistic hope.

We've really only been able to scratch the surface on these topics. Thankfully, there are some excellent written resources for those you who want to dive in deeper, which I hope is all of you. Most recently, I uploaded a pamphlet to this website called [The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism](#) written by Thomas Cooper back in 1823. Of course, there's a link to it in the description. It presents a clear and persuasive argument in favor of the proposition that a central tenet of Jesus's teachings was philosophical materialism.

Who was Thomas Cooper you ask? Well, he was an English and American philosopher, chemist, geologist, lawyer, judge, politician, college president, and economist (among other things) of the 18th and 19th centuries. He was a scientific advisor to James Madison and a close friend of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson respected him enormously, regarding him as being of exceptional intelligence. We know from correspondence between Jefferson and Cooper that Jefferson read Cooper's pamphlet and he was persuaded by its argument. This is how Jefferson himself said it in [a letter to Cooper dated December 11, 1823](#), "That the doctrine of materialism was that of Jesus himself was a new idea to me. Yet it is proved unquestionably." And let all the people say, "True that!"

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