

Who does the Watchtower say will be Resurrected?

The Watchtower claims that teaching incorrect details about the resurrection amounts to apostasy. Yet there have been ongoing changes, and hence untruths, in Watchtower doctrine regarding the resurrection.

Is the doctrine of the Resurrection important? Apparently so. According to the Watchtower, Hymenaeus and Philetus were classed as apostates solely on the basis of making inaccurate statements about the *timing* of the resurrection.

"Why have Jehovah's Witnesses disfellowshipped (excommunicated) for apostasy some who still profess belief in God, the Bible, and Jesus Christ?"

Do we have Scriptural precedent for taking such a strict position? Indeed we do! Paul wrote about some in his day: "Their word will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of that number. These very men have deviated from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred; and they are subverting the faith of some." (2 Timothy 2:17, 18; see also Matthew 18:6.) There is nothing to indicate that these men did not believe in God, in the Bible, in Jesus' sacrifice. Yet, on this one basic point, what they were teaching as to the time of the resurrection, Paul rightly branded them as apostates, with whom faithful Christians would not fellowship." *Watchtower* 1986 Apr 1 pp.30-31

This is a surprising assertion considering the number of Watchtower interpretive oscillations in regards to this very doctrine of the Resurrection.

Russell viewed Jesus and Jehovah as fair and loving; quite different to the Jehovah described by Rutherford and preached about to this day. Russell believed that virtually all mankind would survive Armageddon to be given a probationary chance in paradise. There they would learn about God in order to make an educated choice as to whether they wish to follow him. Only those that actively and knowingly fight against God during Armageddon would not be given that chance. Russell also believed that everyone will be resurrected, including Adam and those from the days of Noah, in line with Scriptures such as *1 Corinthians* 15:22;

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall **all be made alive.**"

Over time, the Watchtower has made God more demanding, describing times such as Noah's Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah and Jesus' day as judgment periods, with no resurrection hope.

"That they might be really accountable at such times, he caused testimony to be given that they might know the issue and make their decision, by which they would determine their destiny, independent of any inherited condemnation from Adam. One of such judgment periods was the flood of Noah's day, prior to which Noah preached righteousness. Another was the fiery end of Sodom and Gomorrah, which cities saw warning miracles by angels and heard testimony from Lot before the rain of fire fell. In Jesus' day it was a time of judgment and he warned certain Jewish cities of a fate like that upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and judged certain scribes and Pharisees fit for the eternal destruction of Gehenna." *Watchtower* 1952 Jun 1 pp.334

Those that do not agree with the Watchtower Society, and die between 1914 and Armageddon, likewise lose any hope of a resurrection.

"Similarly, unrepentant apostates go, at death, not to Sheol, or Hades, but to Gehenna. (Hebrews 6:4-8; 2 Peter 2:1) The same is true of dedicated Christians who persist in willful sin or those who "shrink back." They will, therefore, not be resurrected." *Watchtower* 1982 Apr 1 p.27

All those destroyed at Armageddon also lose any hope of a resurrection.

"Yes, the destruction of the gross sinners in those cities was eternal, as will be the destruction of the wicked at the end of the present system of things." *Watchtower* 1990 Apr 15 p.20

What an unreasonable concept, inspired by Rutherford, that God would condemn imperfect people to everlasting destruction, in most cases with no knowledge of the Watchtower God or his requirements. The ongoing changes to this teaching are indication that God's spirit did not direct the Watchtower to conclude that Jehovah judges imperfect humans to everlasting destruction.

Adam

Resurrected

"The death of Christ secures for Adam and all of his race one full opportunity for salvation and no more. The majority have died in heathenish darkness without any opportunity; and many in Christian lands have disregarded their opportunity, as did the people of Capernaum. All must be brought to a full knowledge of their privileges in Christ and then all rejecters will be destroyed." *Watchtower* 1920 Oct 15 p.316

"Just when Adam will be awakened, only the Lord knows. It may be early or it may be late during the period of restoration." *Reconciliation* (1928) pp.323, 324 - Rutherford

Not Resurrected

"There is no promise found in the Scriptures that Adam's redemption and resurrection and salvation will take place at any time. Adam had a fair trial for life and completely failed." *Salvation* (1939) p.43 - Rutherford

"Adam and Eve are viewed as among those who are incorrigible sinners who "proved that they were not worthy of life, and they will not be resurrected."" *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* p.236

Sodom and Gomorrah

The Watchtower has constantly changed its stance on whether those destroyed at Sodom and Gomorrah will receive a resurrection or not. This is because two Scriptures present different viewpoints as to the severity of Sodom's destruction. *Jude* speaks of punishment of *everlasting* fire, whereas *Matthew* says those in Sodom would not fare as badly as others will.

Jude 1:7 So too Sod'om and Go-mor'rah and the cities about them, after they in the same manner as the foregoing ones had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for

unnatural use, are placed before [us] as a [warning] example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.

Matthew 10:15 Truly I say to YOU, It will be more endurable for the land of Sod'om and Go-mor'rah on Judgment Day than for that city.

Over its history, Watchtower leaders keep reaching different conclusions as to which Scripture should receive the greater emphasis. This removes any confidence that Watchtower leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the Bible's true meaning, and indicates God does not direct them to their doctrinal conclusions.

Resurrected

"Let me give you an illustration that will be forcible: The Sodomites. Surely if we find their restitution mentioned you will be satisfied. But why should they not have an opportunity to obtain eternal life as well as you or the Jew? They were not wicked in the proper sense, for they did not have law or much knowledge. True, they were not righteous, but neither were you when God gave you your opportunity. Christ's own words shall tell us that they are not as guilty in His sight as the Jews, who had more knowledge: "Woe unto thee Capernium, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained unto this day." Thus Christ's own words teach us that they had not had their full opportunity. "Remember," Christ says of the Sodomites, that "God rained down fire and destroyed them all." So, if their restoration is spoken of, it implies their resurrection." *Watchtower* 1879 Jul 1 p.8

"Thus our Lord teaches that the Sodomites did not have a full opportunity; and he guarantees them such opportunity." *Studies in the Scriptures, Series I* p.110

This shows us clearly that the eternal fate of the Sodomites is not sealed. When we turn to the Word of the Lord through Ezekiel the Prophet, 16:46-63, we have abundant testimony that the Sodomites will not only be awakened from the sleep of death, but when awakened will be brought to a knowledge of God and to an opportunity of obtaining everlasting life, through The Messiah, by willing obedience. *Watchtower* 1913 Feb 1 p.45

"The Scriptures distinctly tell us that the Israelites and the Sodomites will be sharers in that work of restoration, restitution." *Watchtower* 1920 Oct 15 p.316

Not Resurrected

"Sodom and Gomorrah were reduced to complete desolation, from which there is no possibility of recovery; and so likewise the modern Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites shall be destroyed, and the place where they have inhabited shall be, as prophesied, "even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation." The religious-totalitarian rule and rulers, the commercial robbers and those who have defied Jehovah God and his Theocracy, shall perish for ever at the battle of Armageddon, as the prophecy declares." *Watchtower* 1941 p.367

"The ancient destructions upon Noah's contemporaries and Sodom and Gomorrah must be just as final, else how could they illustrate the one Peter was discussing?" *Watchtower* 1952 Jun 1 p.335

"Similarly, Sodom did not endure its judgment day, had failed completely, and the Jews knew its fate was sealed. Their opinion of Sodom was the lowest possible. So when Jesus told them that it would be more endurable for utterly depraved Sodom than for these Jewish cities they got the powerful point. These Jewish cities had heard the warning and had seen powerful works; they had had their fair judgment trial and by their decision showed they were worthy of eternal destruction." [Watchtower 1952 Jun 1 p.338](#)

"He was pin-pointing the utter impossibility of ransom for unbelievers or those willfully wicked, because Sodom and Gomorrah were irrevocably condemned and destroyed, beyond any possible recovery." *Watchtower* 1954 Feb 1 p.85

Resurrected Again

"As in the case of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus showed that Sodom, bad as it was, had not got to the state of being unable to repent ... So the spiritual recovery of the dead people of Sodom is not hopeless" *Watchtower* 1965 Mar 1 p.139

See also [Watchtower 1965 Aug 1 p.479](#)

Not Resurrected

"How will these, having been caught, be disposed of? Will they be preserved alive? Will they be killed and buried in Hades or Sheol, which is the common grave of dead mankind, from which resurrection is possible? No, these political organizations are slated to be "hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulphur." This the Bible describes as the "second death." (Rev. 20:14) It means the death from which there is no resurrection. They will be burned up root and branch, as completely gone forever as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which Jehovah God burned up by a rain of fire and sulphur from heaven, never to be rebuilt. It is destruction in Gehenna in which God destroys both body and soul (any right or possibility of living)." *Watchtower* 1967 Jul 1 p.409

Resurrected Again

"Moreover, God's undeserved kindness and care are so great that he will bring back the people of Sodom by a resurrection, with opportunity to learn and turn around to the way of life, even as his Son stated." *Awake* 1974 Oct 8 p.20

Not Resurrected

"Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction." [Watchtower 1988 Jun 1 p.31](#)

Some Resurrected

"This is also illustrated by what happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their inhabitants. Jude indicated that these cities were everlastingly destroyed. (Jude 7; compare 2Pe 2:6.) However, Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 10:15 show that at least some of the

inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will receive a resurrection." *Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 1* p.616 (Released Jun 17, 1988)

"It will be more enduring for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city." Sodom and Gomorrah were everlastingly destroyed as cities, but this would not preclude a resurrection for people of those cities." *Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 2* p.985

Not Resurrected

"Some adjustments will be made in future printings of the Live Forever book. The only significant change is with regard to the Sodomites, on pages 178 and 179. This change appeared in the Revelation book, page 273, and in The Watchtower of June 1, 1988, pages 30 and 31. You may wish to note it in earlier printings that you have on hand." *Kingdom Ministry* 1989 Dec (US Edition) p.7

"A definite indication is found at Jude 7, where we read that "Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them ... are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire." Yes, the destruction of the gross sinners in those cities was eternal, as will be the destruction of the wicked at the end of the present system of things." *Watchtower* 1990 Apr 15 p.20

"Those who are judged unworthy of a resurrection are pitched into "Gehenna," or "the lake of fire." (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:47, 48; Revelation 20:14) Among these would be the first human pair, Adam and Eve, the betrayer Judas Iscariot, and certain ones who died when God executed judgment upon them, such as the people in Noah's day and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah." *Watchtower* 2005 Jul 15 p.31

Everyone

Resurrected

"All are to be awakened from the Adamic death, as though from a sleep, by virtue of the ransom given..." *Studies in the Scriptures Series V* p.478 - Russell

"Under this new covenant the whole human race shall have the opportunity to come back to God through Christ the mediator" *The Harp of God* p.328 (or p.334 according to edition) - Rutherford

Not Resurrected

"It has been held by many that the Scriptures guarantee that 'all must come back from the dead' at Christ's return and during his thousand-year rule. (Studies in the Scriptures, Series Five, pages 476-486). That conclusion does not appear to have support in reason or in the Scriptures" *Salvation* (1939) p.224 - Rutherford

Earthly Resurrection

Russell was firm in his belief that Jesus earthly rulership and the earthly resurrection would commence in [1914](#). Rutherford moved the start of the earthly resurrection to [1925](#). The timing of the resurrection proved false on both accounts. Since then, the Watchtower leaders have been

more coy, simply stating that the earthly resurrection will begin after Armageddon, which is expected to be [soon](#).

1914

"The beginning of the earthly phase of the Kingdom in the end of A.D. 1914 will, we understand, consist wholly of the resurrected holy ones of olden time—from John the Baptizer back to Abel—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the holy prophets." *Studies In the Scriptures Series IV - The Day of Vengeance* p.625

1925

"The chief thing to be restored is the human race to life; and since other Scriptures definitely fix the fact that there will be a resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other faithful ones of old, and that these will have the first favour, we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected and fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representatives of the new order of things on earth." *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* p.88

Soon

"Soon, at Armageddon, Jehovah's way of governing will permanently replace human-based governments under Satan's influence. (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 16:16) Human rule will end, and God's Kingdom will hold sway over the entire earth. ... Indeed, the earth will become a paradise in which there will even be a resurrection of the dead." *Watchtower* 2010 Jan 15 p.32

Heavenly Resurrection

The heavenly resurrection has likewise undergone change. Until 1927 the heavenly resurrection was said to have started in 1878. Later "all the evidence" showed it to have started in 1918. Now it is admitted that it only may have happened in 1918.

1878

"Our Lord's resurrection occurred three and a half years after his advent as the Messiah, in A.D. 29; and the resurrection of his body, the Church, we have seen, was due in the year 1878, three and a half years after his second advent, in October 1874." *Thy Kingdom Come* p.305

1918

"All the evidence indicates that this heavenly resurrection began in 1918, after Jesus' enthronement in 1914 and his riding forth to start his kingly conquest by cleansing the heavens of Satan and his demons." *Revelation, Its Grand Climax At Hand!* p. 103

"One of the many enlightening truths that God now gave his witnesses was about the members of God's spiritual nation who had died physically. This was in 1927. In that year the witnesses understood that the dead spiritual Israelites had been raised in 1918 to life in heaven with Christ Jesus. It was an invisible resurrection, of course." *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained* p.192

Possibly 1918

Since 2007, the Watchtower is sounding decidedly less dogmatic about 1918.

"Could it, then, be reasoned that since Jesus was enthroned in the fall of 1914, the resurrection of his faithful anointed followers began three and a half years later, in the spring of 1918? That is an interesting possibility. Although this cannot be directly confirmed in the Bible, it is not out of harmony with other scriptures that indicate that the first resurrection got under way soon after Christ's presence began." *Watchtower* 2007 Jan 1 p.28

This brings into question prior comments as to this teaching being "enlightening truths", and the "evidence" supporting it.

If promoting incorrect teachings about the resurrection labels one an apostate, then the range of changed Watchtower teachings on this subject should be cause for concern for any that follow the Watchtower Governing Body.