

THE CONDITION OF THE DEAD IN JEHOVAH'S WITNESS SOTERIOLOGY

Cary E. Valentine

Cary Valentine, a lifelong Jehovah's Witness, is a PhD candidate at Andrews University and adjunct faculty member at Baker University, where he teaches several topics related to organizational behavior and leadership.

I was born into a Jehovah's Witness family and reared to have faith in the beliefs and traditions of Jehovah God's organization. My father held leadership and ministerial duties within the local Kingdom Hall congregation, which our family attended several times each week. By 1975, my father was serving as the local presiding overseer,¹ which at that time was viewed by some as the weightiest of leadership roles in a local Witness congregation.² Still a relatively young man in his early thirties, my father managed a full plate of congregation duties (including administration of local field ministry activities, shepherding³ of congregation members, preparing and delivering weekly meeting presentations, and working on several additional organization-related special projects), all performed without compensation.⁴ Dad also juggled a full-time job working construction (during weekdays) and overseeing our family's needs in the evenings and weekends while at the same time fulfilling his

ministerial duties. It was difficult balance to undertake and as a young boy, I could see the toll it took on him. Yet Dad felt it was what Jehovah God required of him in the last days of Satan's wicked system leading to the war of Armageddon as foretold in the bible book of Revelation 16:16. Dad was confident that his effort in serving zealously and tirelessly in the ministry would help facilitate his salvation as well those whom he led.

In 1975, the pressure on my father became even greater. At that time in organization's history, many of Jehovah's Witnesses speculated that the beginning of the seventh millennium of human existence would signify the end of the old-world system and beginning of Christ's rule.⁵ The official history of Jehovah's Witnesses states: "During the years from 1935 through 1944, a review of the overall framework of Bible chronology . . . , along with certain other factors, . . . led to the idea—sometimes stated as a possibility, sometimes [stated] more firmly—that since the seventh millennium of human history would begin in 1975, events associated with the beginning of Christ's Millennial Reign might start to take place then."⁶

In 1975, I was nine years old and remember thinking that I could be a member of a generation that would never see death. Many others during this period held this same expectation of the potentiality of Christ's return—and the end of mortal death as we know it. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that there is a provision in God's plan of salvation whereby one can forgo the wages of sin through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ and thereby never experience death. Thus, many Witnesses alive in 1975 expected that they would survive the pending war of Armageddon and then inherit a paradise-restored earth—having never tasted of death.⁷ However, the expectations—held by *some* of Jehovah's Witnesses—regarding what would take place in 1975 were not met. Armageddon was *not* fought, and the resurrection of the dead to a paradise-restored earth did *not* happen. Many were terribly disappointed. Nevertheless, my interest in God's plan for salvation did not waver, nor did my father's, during this turbulent time. I had watched my

paternal grandfather, who was also a faithful Witness of Jehovah, unexpectedly die when I was six years old. I remember seeing him for the final time, lying in an open casket, and hoping for that day when I would be reunited with him. I had every expectation that he would be resurrected in Jehovah God's restored earthly paradise. My father shared this same hope, fully expecting that he would see his father resurrected and dwelling in Jehovah's paradise-restored earth. Indeed, my father saved my grandfather's personal copy of the Bible with the intent of returning it to him on that glorious day.

While my father survived the 1975 disappointment spiritually unscathed and committed to the movement—including its doctrines on the afterlife—my mother's interest in Jehovah's Witnesses teachings wavered, along with the faith and commitment of many others whose expectations for 1975 went unfulfilled.⁸ Within a couple of years after the expected date of Armageddon, my maternal grandmother, who served as a full-time Jehovah's Witness minister, suffered a fatal fall while working in the field ministry and died. After that, my mother was done being a Jehovah's Witness, citing among other reasons, a disagreement with Witness ideas regarding the status of dead.⁹ Both as a child and as an adult, I often have found myself in the middle of my parent's forty-plus-year debate regarding God's plan of salvation and the Witness view on the state of the dead.

CONDITION OF THE SOUL AT DEATH?

For Jehovah's Witnesses, the "soul" is simply a term used to describe a creature that breathes or is a living being.¹⁰ This reasoning is derived from the *New World Translation's* rendering of the Hebrew word *nephes* as a "creature" that breathes and the Greek word *psyche*, traditionally interpreted as a "living being."¹¹ Unlike many in mainstream Christendom, Jehovah's Witnesses view the soul as the entire creature—not a separate part or spirit that is partitioned from the body and that can

live outside of the body after death. In support of this view, Jehovah's Witnesses often reference Bible passages, such as Genesis 2:7, where it says of Adam that, upon creation, "man became a living soul."¹² This, to Witnesses, indicates that the "soul" is not distinct from the creature but, rather, *is the creature* in its entirety. Witnesses will also point to Ezekiel 18:4, 20, which states, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," suggesting that the soul can die and thus represents the totality of the person rather than some separate spirit dwelling inside one's body.

Simply put, Jehovah's Witnesses hold the view that at death, a person ceases to exist. They argue that there is no limbo where the spirit or soul of the person goes to await the resurrection, no *immediate* visit to hell, purgatory, or heaven after a person dies.¹³ Jehovah's Witnesses suggest that teachings contrary to this view are a product of apostate or otherwise non-Christian origin, ultimately designed to undermine the unselfish provisions Jehovah God has made available so that humans may live forever and never have to face death and the suffering that precedes it.¹⁴

Accordingly, Witnesses hold that no part of us lives on after we die; we are conscious of nothing once we enter the grave.¹⁵ At death our brain stops working—our memories, feelings, and senses do not continue to function, and we do not—as individuals—survive the destruction of our brain. As one recent Witness publication noted: "The life we enjoy is like the flame of a candle. When the flame is put out, it does not *go* anywhere. It is simply gone."¹⁶ At death you and I are simply gone because we have no "immortal soul or spirit." There is no "invisible part of the human" that "leaves the body and lives on" after we die. For Witnesses, there is no work accomplished by those whose bodies are in the grave. The dead do not suffer pain or heartache. They do not seek truth or connection with their loved ones. They cannot harm those of us who remain here upon the earth, and they do not need our help. In addition, we cannot speak with them and they cannot contact us. They simply don't exist.¹⁷

"Spirit" . . . refers to an invisible force (the spark of life) that animates all living creatures. . . . The body needs the spirit in much

THE CONDITION OF THE DEAD

the same way as a radio needs electricity—in order to function. To illustrate this further, think of a portable radio. When you put batteries in a portable radio and turn it on, the electricity stored in the batteries brings the radio to life, so to speak. Without batteries, however, the radio is dead. So is another kind of radio when it is unplugged from an electric outlet. Similarly, the spirit is the force that brings our body to life. Also, like electricity, the spirit has no feeling and cannot think. It is an impersonal force. But without that spirit, or life-force, our bodies “expire, and back to their dust they go,” as the psalmist stated. Speaking about man’s death, Ecclesiastes 12:7 states: “The dust [of his body] returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it.” When the spirit, or life-force, leaves the body, the body dies and returns to where it came from—the earth. Comparably, the life-force returns to where it came from—God. (Job 34:14–15; Psalm 36:9) This does not mean that the life-force actually travels to heaven. Rather, it means that for someone who dies, any hope of future life rests with Jehovah God. His life is in God’s hands, so to speak. Only by God’s power can the spirit, or life-force, be given back so that a person may live again. . . . At the time of the resurrection, Jehovah will form a new body for a person sleeping in death and bring it to life by putting spirit, or life-force, in it.¹⁸

IS THERE A HELL?

Consistent with belief that the soul is not separate from the human creature and therefore dies with the person, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe in an eternal place of punishment commonly referred to by most Christians as hell. Witnesses reject the idea that there is fiery hell put in place to eternally torment those deemed unrighteous at the time of death or afterwards.¹⁹ Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the concept of an eternal place of torment stems from unscriptural origins, such as the teachings of the Greek philosopher Plato or the Catechism of the Catholic Church, each of which refers to such a place.²⁰ Witnesses believe

that the rendering of the Hebrew word *Sheol*, typically translated as “hell” in various versions of the Bible, is a spuriously influenced concept better defined as the “common grave of mankind”—where all living creature activity, along with mental comprehension, ceases.²¹

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, it is unreasonable to assume that a loving God would destine humans to suffer horribly in eternal misery—as if having no life or consciousness isn’t punishment enough. Witnesses argue that, as clarified in the case of Adam, “Dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19 New World Translation). This seems to suggest that the soul (or person) ceases awareness at the time of death—and thus teachings of hellfire are contrary to what is described in scripture and contrary to God’s love for humankind.

Is there any distinction as to what happens to the faithful and rebellious at death? According to Witness teachings, those who (during their mortal lives) were practicing Witnesses of Jehovah, and those who knew *nothing* about Jehovah’s truth and plan, will—upon death—sleep in Sheol or Hades, which is humankind’s common grave. Witnesses believe that this is *not* a literal place. Rather, it is a “figurative location where most of mankind sleep in death.” Those who knew the teachings of Jehovah and rejected them during their mortal lives will, on the other hand, be sent to Gehenna, which symbolizes complete and eternal destruction. Again, this is figurative, but it represents the post mortal status of those who will not be resurrected because they *knowingly* and *willfully* rejected the message of Jehovah’s Witnesses when they heard it.²² Thus, while Witnesses do not believe that anyone—wicked or righteous—continues to exist as a spirit/soul after they die, they do hold that there is a divine categorizing of people in anticipation of the coming resurrection.

WHAT IS HEAVEN?

Jehovah’s Witnesses hold the view that the Bible delineates between three basic forms of heaven.²³ These include the physical heavens, a spirit

realm, and a symbolic high or exalted place that is frequently referred to in scripture.

The “physical heavens” consist of the earth’s atmosphere, where the weather forms and birds fly, yet it may also refer to outer space. This boundary of the physical heavens is described in Deuteronomy 4:19 (NWT), which states, “And when you raise your eyes to the heavens and see the sun and the moon and the stars—all the army of the heavens—do not get seduced and bow down to them and serve them. Jehovah your God has given them to all the peoples under the whole heavens.” Jehovah God is not thought to dwell in the physical heavens. Even though the physical heavens can be viewed with the naked eye or with the assistance of telescopes capable of reaching far out into outer space, humans are constrained from seeing spirit creatures that might dwell in the physical heavens—except if they have taken on a facade comprehensible by humankind.²⁴

Jehovah’s Witnesses also acknowledge that, in scripture, the term “heaven” can also refer to a “spirit realm” which refers to a higher level or form of heaven over the physical heavens. In the spirit realm of heaven, Jehovah God (a spirit) resides—along with those faithful angels who make up the “congregation of the holy ones” described in Psalm 89:5–7 (NWT). Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that Satan and his demons at one time may have been allowed to reside in this place. However, they were cast out, as described in Bible prophecy—though they have been allowed to continue their existence in spirit form. Jesus Christ is believed to have existed in the spirit realm before he came to earth to do the will of his Father.²⁵ To further clarify, the spirit realm form of heaven does not consist of matter or material that can be seen. In contrast to most of Christendom, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not believe that the spirit realm is a place inhabited by multiple deities, ancestors of humans, or those mortal ones judged to have lived a good life by God while inhabiting the earth as humans.²⁶ There is also thought to be no communication (via mediums or any other means) by those who dwell in heaven with human souls. Indeed, those who attest to this type of communication

were speculated in some Jehovah's Witness literature to mistakenly be communicating with lying spirits not in God's favor.²⁷

The third part of Witness belief regarding heaven refers less to a location or venue of some sort but instead to a symbolic high place or elevated position typically associated with ruling authority.²⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses suggest that, in some scriptural passages, it is implied that heaven can be occupied by Jehovah God himself. His kingdom or government is prophesied to replace human rule, and a select remnant of Christian witnesses (144,000) hold a heavenly hope of ruling alongside him.²⁹

As we will discuss below, in addition to these three forms or concepts of heaven per se, Witnesses also believe that this earth will become paradisiacal—and the ultimate abode of those who love Jehovah God and obey his commands.

TWO KINDS OF RESURRECTION

Jehovah's Witnesses describe the resurrection as a "rising up from death"—deriving this definition from the Greek word *anastasis*, meaning to raise or stand up.³⁰ God's ability to resurrect or restore human existence is established frequently in scripture, and is consistent with God's original purpose; namely that humankind would not experience death at all. Jehovah's Witnesses reason that God did *not* originally predestine humans to a certain life span or fate but instead gave humans the opportunity to choose to serve him or not.³¹ Resurrection hope is available to those faithful ones who walked the earth before the coming of the Messiah and those who lived after him, along with those who perished in death without proper opportunity to accept the forgiveness of sin that Christ's ransom sacrifice makes possible. While Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the restored earth is the primary domain faithful humans will inhabit post-Armageddon, during the Millennium, and possibly

beyond—scripture foretells of both an earthly and heavenly resurrection hope.

Jehovah's Witnesses view the "first resurrection," as mentioned in Revelation 20:4–6, to be the raising of those chosen to serve as kings and priests with Christ during the Millennium. Witnesses identify the number of this group, as mentioned in Revelation 14:1–4, literally to be 144,000. These individuals give up the natural hope of living forever on earth, though they originated as flesh-and-blood entities. Their ascension is thought to be immediate, meaning that at the time of death those chosen to be part of the first resurrection are instantaneously caught away to join the Lord within the spirit realm "in the blink of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:51–52 NWT).

Jehovah's Witnesses also identify a second or earthly resurrection of both righteous *and* unrighteous individuals who have the potential to gain everlasting life on earth. Those deemed "righteous" but not appointed to serve with Christ in heaven (as part of the 144,000 or "anointed class") made use of the opportunity given them here on earth to learning of Jehovah God's plan and provision of the ransom sacrifice. These individuals repented, aligned their lives with God's principles, and served as Witnesses to those who had not yet heard the message of salvation God gifted to imperfect humans.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that for some of those deemed unrighteous—but still resurrected in this second resurrection—there will be a resurrection of judgment. These individuals will still have an opportunity to gain eternal salvation during the Millennium. They will live as resurrected beings during the Millennium and, at its end, be judged by Christ and his 144,000 associates as either worthy of everlasting life or worthy of destruction. These are individuals who were in some way unable during mortality to learn of the life-saving provisions Jehovah had provided—either because they were not exposed to it during mortal life, or because they were otherwise unable to comprehend the message. Just as Adam was a perfect man choosing willingly to sin against Jehovah's law (while in Eden), so too will resurrected humans have a chance

to make the choice to either serve God willingly or reject him and his plan. If they then follow Jehovah God at the end of Millennium, they will be restored to perfection.³²

Jehovah's Witnesses hold that, at the end of Christ's Millennium, Satan will be released from his abyss to mislead and test human's resurrected to an earthly destiny. This will provide them with a choice to serve Jehovah God for the final time. Since humans will then be restored to a state of perfection, they will have the same simple choice Adam and Eve did at the time of creation—to serve God or to not. This Final Judgment involves those who reject Jehovah God and Christ's Jesus's ransom sacrifice and who will die a second time, never to be resurrected again. Indeed, they will cease to exist for eternity. At that time, the physical consequences of Adam's rebellion will no longer weigh humans down with the wages of sin, so the choice made to serve God or not is, as it was for Adam, one that is just, fair, and made of free will.

In summation, regarding the resurrection of the dead, Witnesses have a number of unique teachings.³³ First, as we alluded to earlier, Gehenna or the second death, is for those who had a “full knowledge of the truth” and yet rejected it, “choosing a course of opposition to God and righteousness.”³⁴ They are the only ones who will not be resurrected. Once they have died, they cease to exist for eternity, whereas all others who have died cease to exist only temporarily.³⁵

A second unique teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding the resurrection has to do with the purpose of the Millennium. Witnesses hold “that there shall be a resurrection of the . . . just and unjust” (Acts 24:15), or the righteous and the unrighteous. Those who accepted the Witness message and lived it during mortality (i.e., the “righteous” or “just”) and those who never had a chance to hear it or understand it (i.e., the “unjust” or “unrighteous”³⁶) will be resurrected during the Millennium and will have a *chance* to live forever—though not all resurrected beings will live forever.³⁷ If those who had not heard the message during mortality reject it during the Millennium, they will die a second time and will then cease to exist throughout eternity. Thus, according to Witness belief, those

resurrected to the earth at the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ, *can* in fact, die a second time when in the state of perfection.³⁸

Finally, Witnesses also hold that there will be a physical resurrection and a spiritual one.³⁹ The 144,000—or “spirit-anointed Christians”—will be resurrected as spirits. For these chosen few, their spirit resurrection is thought to be instantaneous upon their death.⁴⁰ Those faithful ones who are not part of the 144,000 are thought to be destined to live upon the earth in paradise forever. This group will enjoy a physical resurrection during the Millennium and are anticipated to have their personality and all their memories and beliefs completely restored.

While all Christian denominations have certain elements of their soteriology that may be unique to them, Witness teachings about salvation are perhaps the most unique and certainly the most prone to misunderstanding.

NOTES

1. Effective 1 January 2009, Jehovah’s Witnesses ceased to use the term “presiding overseer,” replacing the title with “coordinator of the body of elders.” See “Announcements,” *Our Kingdom Ministry*, 8 November 2008, 3.
2. It has been the practice of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the past several decades to refrain from isolating authority to individual members of the congregation elder body.
3. The term “shepherding” refers to an activity where congregation elders and ministerial servants visit those in the congregation in need spiritual counsel be it consoling or admonishment in some cases. See “They Compassionately Shepherd the Little Sheep,” *The Watchtower*, 15 September 1993, 20–21.
4. Those who serve in leadership roles within Jehovah’s Witness Kingdom Halls do not receive compensation.
5. See “Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?,” *The Watchtower*, 15 August 1968, 494–95. See also *Jehovah’s Witnesses: Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 1993), 633. The year 1975 was predicted in 1966 as a “date of significance,” though what exactly should be expected was left somewhat vague. Many Witnesses,

including some on the Governing Body (i.e., the Jehovah's Witnesses' highest quorum of leadership), believed that 1975 would be the conclusion of Armageddon, the binding of Satan, and the beginning of the Millennium and Christ's thousand-year reign. Again, the leaders of the Society highlighted the date but were not specific as to what exactly they were predicting would happen on that date. See *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 104. The most explicit statement on what was expected to take place in 1975 is found in the 1966 Witness publication, entitled *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, which states that "six thousand years from man's creation will end in 1975, and the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 CE. So, six thousand years of man's existence on earth will soon be up, yes, within this generation. . . . So, in not many years [approximately nine] . . . we are reaching what Jehovah God could view as the seventh day of man's existence. How appropriate it would be for Jehovah God to make of this coming seventh period of a thousand years: . . . the reign of Jesus Christ over the earth for a thousand years, the millennial reign of Christ." *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1966), 29–30.

6. *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 632–33.
7. See "What Is the Best Gift of All?" *The Watchtower*, public edition, 2017, no. 6, 6–7.
8. As an example of how the Society's leadership felt about their predictions, and how the average lay Witnesses believed their leader's interpretations of Bible chronology, note what the May 1974 issue of the monthly Witnesses paper (entitled *Kingdom Ministry*), stated, "Reports are heard of brothers selling their homes and property and planning to finish out the rest of their days in this old system in the pioneer service. Certainly, this is a fine way to spend the short time remaining before the wicked world's end." "How Are You Using Your Life?" *Kingdom Ministry*, May 1974, 3. In reality, a number of Witnesses *did* sell their homes or quit their jobs in anticipation of the "world's end"—and with the intent of focusing all of their time and efforts on preaching the word until the "end" actually arrived. Some Witnesses postponed needed healthcare, while others liquidated any assets they had—again, in order to have the cash to live off of so that they could spend the remaining days in full-time preaching of Jehovah's word. However, when

THE CONDITION OF THE DEAD

1975 passed with nothing of significance happening, some became disillusioned; others simply picked up the pieces and moved forward, trusting that God's will would be done when he felt it was time. Some do not feel that this event caused any great disappointment or disillusionment among faithful Witnesses however others, like my mother, found it devastating and left the movement. Clearly, different people responded in different ways. Regardless, this was a difficult time for Jehovah's Witnesses—and, for some, this remains a frustrating era in the organization's history.

9. This put considerable strain on my parents' marriage and within three years of 1975 they divorced, and my father was forced to relinquish his leadership roles in the congregation.
10. See "What Is the Soul?," <https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/what-is-a-soul/>.
11. See "Soul," *Insight on the Scriptures* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1988, 1988), 2:1004.
12. Biblical passages are cited from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
13. See "Where or What Is Limbo?," *The Watchtower*, 15 September 1988.
14. See "Myth 1: The Soul Is Immortal," *The Watchtower*, 1 November 2009.
15. See *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 70, 127, 145, 156.
16. See *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (Wallkill, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2006), 58–59.
17. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 58, 64, 208.
18. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, 210–11.
19. See "Myth 2: The Wicked Suffer in Hell," *The Watchtower*, 1 November 2009.
20. See "What Is Hell? Is It a Place of Eternal Torment?"
21. See "*What Does the Bible Really Teach?*" (Wallkill, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 2014), appendix.
22. See "Gehenna," in *Insight on the Scriptures*, 1:905–6; "Sheol," in *Insight on the Scriptures*, 2:922–23; *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 212–13. Witnesses note that only God can judge. If someone is sent to Gehenna, it was because they were judged by God to be "wicked" in heart. Witnesses stress that some reject the Witness message for reasons other than wickedness (e.g., misunderstandings, prejudice, or preoccupations). These will

- not be sent to Gehenna, and many will eventually accept the message of the Witnesses.
23. See “Who Go to Heaven?,” <https://www.jw.org/en/bible-teachings/questions/go-to-heaven/>.
 24. Jehovah’s Witnesses reason that, unlike spirit creatures, humans consist of flesh and blood. Thus, humans do not possess the same sensory abilities that spirit creatures possess and can’t comprehend certain types of phenomena spirit creatures are able to experience and comprehend.
 25. See “Questions About Those in the Spirit Realm,” *The Watchtower*, public edition, 2016, no. 6.
 26. “Who Go to Heaven?”
 27. *Can You Talk with the Dead? Is This Life All There Is?* (Wallkill, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, 1981), 74–78.
 28. “Heaven,” *Awake!*, 2016, no. 1, 14–15.
 29. “God’s Judgment Makes Manifest the Truly Rich,” *The Watchtower*, 1 April 1967, 212–19. In some scriptural instances, “heaven” has reference to human governments who have exalted themselves unjustly—or to those wicked spirits who seek to propagate evil in the world, but who will soon face destruction. In years past, Jehovah’s Witness literature often stated that the “present system of things”—along with the symbolic heaven—will be “shaken,” removing all creatures at enmity with God’s purpose and kingdom.
 30. See *Insight on the Scriptures*, 2:783–93.
 31. Jehovah God purposed that Adam and Eve would multiply and fill the earth with humankind, and that has not changed. If God’s purpose is perfect, then there is no need for it to be altered, and in fact it must be fulfilled as he planned.
 32. “A Grand Millennium Approaching,” *The Watchtower*, 1 June 1990, 5–7.
 33. See “Resurrection,” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, 2:783–93.
 34. See *Jehovah’s Witnesses: Proclaimers of God’s Kingdom*, 129; “Resurrection,” 2:791–92.
 35. See *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 73.
 36. See “Resurrection,” 2:788; *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 72–73.
 37. See *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 36.
 38. See *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 70. A friend of mine, who is an elder in a Utah Witness congregation, has used the following analogy: “If a Hindu living in India had never had a chance to know about Jehovah’s

THE CONDITION OF THE DEAD

Witnesses and their message, at death he would ‘sleep’ (in the grave). Then, during the Millennium, this Hindu would come forth as a resurrected being and get his chance to accept true Christianity. At that point, if this Hindu rejected the Witness message, he would die a second time and then cease (from that point forward) to exist in any form or capacity. If, on the other hand, the Hindu from India accepted the message of the Witnesses (as presented to him as a resurrected being during the Millennium), he would be blessed to live in paradise on earth forever (now as a true Christian, rather than as a Hindu). But, on the other hand, if he had studied with the Witnesses during mortality and did not accept the message they bear, then upon death he would simply sleep forever—as he had had his ‘chance.’” I should add that all good Witnesses will tell you that only Jehovah God knows who *really* has or has not had his or her “chance.” Thus, Witnesses avoid judging people. They simply explain how they understand things will play out after one dies.

39. See “Resurrection,” 2:787–88; *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 71, 73–74.
40. See *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (2006), 74.