

FAQ VOL II

A WORK IN PROGRESS

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS

messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

VOLUME II

© John Kimball McKee

latest update 16 June, 2025

All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

A planned resource by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries
P.O. Box 516
McKinney, Texas 75070
(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog
messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: *The New Testament* by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

REB: Revised English Bible (1989)

RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)

t. Tosefta

Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament

Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life

Version (2014)

TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New
Testament revised edition

v(s). verse(s)

Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and
New Testament Words*

Vul: Latin Vulgate

YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Death, What Happens at

Blogcast, 25 May, 2019

How are today's Messianic people to best approach the topic of what happens at death? Do people die, and then enter into complete unconsciousness until the resurrection? Or, do people die, and then have their consciousness transferred to another dimension, until the resurrection? Is "soul sleep" something that we need to be seriously considering, or does it need to be dismissed as a false teaching?

Death is one of the most difficult topics which any human being ever has to deal with. None of us likes dealing with the death of a family member, a close friend, or even people we do not know but still admire. Many people regularly visit the gravesite of a loved one, whereas others have their remains cremated and scattered into the wind. Even if you do not regularly visit a cemetery where your loved one may be buried, thoughts and memories of the deceased will undoubtedly still come to your mind from time to time, and the last memory you may have of such a person—that of your loved one's funeral—is perhaps what you remember.

The Holy Scriptures give us as Believers a great deal of comfort, as we know that we will see those who die in the faith again. Those of us who believe in the doctrine of resurrection, know that a gravesite is not the final destination. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians who had not largely originally grown up in a culture of resurrection, corrected them with this instruction:

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, NASU).

The doctrine of resurrection is comforting, because the process of decomposition will be reversed. No matter how hard the funeral industry may try to retard decay via embalming, the placement of a body in an hermetically sealed casket, and then the placement of a casket in a heavy airtight vault—a corpse will still decay. But as the Scriptures so properly put it, "I

will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 37:6, NASU). Isaiah 26:19 likewise says, "Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy" (NASU). The resurrection of our Lord Yeshua should assure us that those who have died in faith will also be resurrected, with bodies which will live and breathe again: "Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20, NASU).

The doctrine of resurrection is something very important for each of us to believe, especially as it concerns salvation and what Yeshua has accomplished for us (Hebrews 9:28). Yet undeniably connected to the doctrine of resurrection is what happens to the deceased in the interim. What is the intermediate condition of those who have died? Are our friends and loved ones, who knew the Lord during their lives and were saved, simply waiting in the ground for that day of resurrection, their bodies decaying? Or, are our friends and loved ones, who knew the Lord during their lives and were saved, **in the presence of the Lord**, awaiting to be reunited with their bodies on that day of resurrection?

Belief in a post-mortem afterlife, where deceased Believers wait in Heaven in the presence of the Lord until the time of resurrection, has come under considerable attack in the past century, primarily from theological liberals, but now even from some purported theological conservatives. Even in some parts of the Messianic movement (and certainly the Hebrew Roots movement), the idea that "going to Heaven when you die" is not a Biblical teaching, has gained much ground in various sectors, even though there has been little detailed engagement with the ramifications of such a view. The words of the Maccabean martyrs, "For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us" (4 Maccabees 13:17, RSV; cf. 9:8-9), are not heard. Ignored are the countless testimonies of faithful Believers who have lived their lives knowing that once they die, they will meet their Savior, having glimpses of Him in their twilight moments. And what of the conviction of those who know that when they worship the Lord, they join in with a company of angels and holy ones who are in Heaven right now worshipping the Lord (Hebrews 12:22-23)?

While he firmly held to the doctrine of resurrection, Paul's own words "My desire is to depart and be with Messiah, for that is far better" (Philippians 1:23, RSV), or perhaps more significantly, "**I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord**" (2 Corinthians 5:8, NASU), get quickly left out of the discussion. Frequently, it is not until one is facing death—either the death of a loved one, or one's own personal death—that the subject comes up. Many, because of all of the rhetoric which has been floating around, are confused and do not know what to believe about the time between death and resurrection. They do not know what to think between hearing things about Hellenistic philosophy, the different dimensions of life and death, Sheol and the grave, and whether or not the human being is unique among God's creatures in comparison to the animals.

It is easy to say that this is a topic worthy of our discussion, lest we be confused any longer. An evaluation of the subject matter, and an impetus not to oversimplify things, is needed. The subject of death and resurrection is supposed to be something elementary (Hebrews 6:1-2), meaning that it is *to already be understood* by mature men and women of God. Is our inability to understand this properly as Messianic Believers, an indication that we are not as mature as we should be? What are the motives of Believers who are convicted that when they die they will be immediately transported into the presence of their Savior, and the motives of those who think that they will just fall asleep into sheer unconsciousness and be buried?

Stopping the Confusion

When surveying the debate over the intermediate state between death and resurrection, there are people in today's Messianic sphere of influence who are confused. Most of Messianic Judaism's position, on the intermediate state between death and resurrection, has been the same as most of evangelical Protestantism: a Believer in the Messiah departs this Earth for the presence of the Lord, with the person's consciousness (sometimes called a "soul") to be returned to his or her reanimated physical body at the time of resurrection.¹ Today, however, instead of hearing things like "In My Father's house are many dwelling places..." (John 14:2, NASU), many in the Hebrew Roots movement will instead declare "...the dead do not know anything..." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, NASU). Their influence has grown quite strong.

The doctrine of psychopannychy—more commonly known by the vernacular "soul sleep"—is often not viewed as heresy in today's evangelicalism, but is instead viewed as a theological aberration.² I would not consider those who believe in what is commonly called "soul sleep" to be heretics, but I would consider their interpretations of Scripture to be questionable, misguided, usually materialistic, and a bit one-dimensional (in view of the over 100 billion galaxies in our known universe, and especially in light of diverse scientific research proving the existence of multiple "universes").

To further complicate things, some of the passages, which psychopannychists bring to the attention of Bible readers, have sometimes been viewed as being anti-resurrection. Today, a sizeable number of people within the Messianic community believe in psychopannychy, or at least concede that it has valid points. Outreach Israel Ministries and

¹ Consult David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), pp 134, 594.

² Everett F. Harrison, "soul sleep," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 492; Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), pp 447-459.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1998), 189 actually considers any kind of dualistic view of human nature to be a "deadly heresy." Contrary to this, Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, pp 447-459 only considers the views of Bacchiocchi's Seventh-Day Adventist Church in this regard to be an aberration.

Messianic Apologetics have never advocated any kind of “soul sleep,” always firmly adhering to the Bible’s complete teaching of an intermediate afterlife for all people (whether in the presence of the Lord in Heaven or separated from Him in Hell) until the resurrection. **But, perhaps contrary to popular thought, we have always affirmed the reality of a future resurrection, never advocating a permanent disembodied afterlife.**

It has become quite en vogue in the Hebrew Roots movement to advocate that any belief in a disembodied afterlife, is one of the so-called “lies” of the Christian Church that must be discarded, with information on this subject presented in a very harsh manner. When people hear this—especially those who have lost loved ones and have had to go through some kind of grief counseling—they can be easily confused and not know what to do. C.J. Koster, founder of the Institute for Scripture Research, is quite direct in stating,

“One of the most popular doctrines of the Church is that of ‘going to heaven.’ Nobody is going to heaven. The Reign (Kingdom) of heaven is coming to earth - that is what we read in Scripture! The ‘going to heaven’ was a popular Pagan doctrine.”³

For some, this is *all* that needs to be said. They think that born again Believers being transported into the presence of the Lord at time of death is a pagan doctrine, and thus it must be rejected. Those who believe in a disembodied intermediate time in Heaven are said to be denying the blessed hope of the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13). They are said to be denying the reality that Heaven is coming to Earth, and that Yeshua the Messiah will reign over this planet. They are said to have denied that God is concerned about restoring the whole human person (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Many think that further examination with Scripture passages, which strongly point to Believers departing to an intermediate time in Heaven prior to the resurrection, is not necessary.

Yet this kind of argument leaves out some very important data: it assumes that *everyone* who believes in a disembodied intermediate state for Believers in Heaven denies the doctrine of resurrection—**which they surely do not!** No one should ever deny the fact that the orthodox Jewish and Protestant traditions—which today’s Messianic movement largely benefits from—are *united* in their shared conviction that there will be a resurrection of deceased bodies in the eschaton (Daniel 12:2). The doctrine of resurrection sets the Biblical message strikingly apart from paganism, because it advocates that our Creator is very much concerned with the physical human body, every bit as much as He is concerned with the immaterial human consciousness.

It is right to say that various Christian teachers and pastors have overemphasized “going to Heaven” in popular preaching—perceived as some form of endless disembodied bliss in the clouds—at the expense of underemphasizing the Second Coming of the Messiah, where physical bodies of deceased persons will be resurrected and His reign will come to Planet

³ C.J. Koster. (n.d.). *Replacement Theology-Part 2*. Qodesh Publishers. Retrieved 04 February, 2009, from <<http://www.qodesh.co.za/>>.

Earth. It is not incorrect to assert that some have adopted a dangerous Platonic idea that matter is evil, and that instead all we need to be concerned about is something spiritual or metaphysical. N.T. Wright, among today's evangelical scholars, has been correct to remind us, "The meaning of 'resurrection' as 'life after life after death' cannot be overemphasized"⁴ (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*). As the people of God, we are responsible for remembering that the world God has made is "very good" (Genesis 1:31), and that physical matter is by no means inherently evil. If we can view physical matter as "very good," it will lead to us properly fulfilling His mission and our dominion over the Earth, rather than spurning it.

It is also important for us to remember that those who believe in psychopannychy have often been divided into two sub-groups: sectarian cultists who deny key Biblical doctrines such as Yeshua's Divinity, and theological liberals. For almost two centuries, liberal theology has widely advocated that Holy Scripture should be treated as some kind of inspirational theology, but not as accurate history.⁵ Liberals have to often deny an intermediate state for the dead, because if Believers are waiting in the presence of the Lord in Heaven prior to resurrection, then unbelievers must be similarly waiting in some kind of intermediate punishment prior to their resurrection and final sentencing. (Their actual position on the doctrine of resurrection is frequently uncertain.) Sectarian cultists, however, are simply guided by an ethos of wanting to inflict as much damage as they can on what they perceive as any cardinal doctrine of evangelical Christianity.

Messianic people, who have recently adopted a belief in psychopannychy, tend to be those who want to give evangelical Christianity a similar kick in the tuchas, not often being guided by wanting to constructively discuss the issues. Frequently, they are very contentious and mean-spirited about their newfound "Truth," and want everyone to know that they now deny some kind of "pagan belief" of going to Heaven. *This approach breeds nothing less than confusion among brethren*, and does not encourage an objective analysis of the Scriptures. It certainly does not help those who are grieving over the loss of a loved one who knew the Savior.

In contrast to this, we should be those who want to give a fair hearing to the issue, examining what the Scriptures say about the human constitution, the intermediate state of the dead prior to resurrection, and the ideology of a person wanting to go to the presence of the Savior at time of death or just to a place of burial. Denying something simply because "the Church taught it" is insufficient; what matters is that one's convictions are confirmed by a fair examination of Biblical texts. I have discovered via experience that not all Messianics who embrace a belief in psychopannychy hold to it indefinitely, as there will often be a reevaluation of the view when a relative or close friend dies, or when one's own self is struck

⁴ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 31; see also *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), pp 151, 169.

⁵ For a presentation of this point of view, this writer recommends you peruse Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously But Not Literally* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001).

with the question of death. Many realize that they get caught up in a fad, and that they have been influenced by sensationalistic rhetoric of little substance.