

# **MESSIANICS AND THE AFTERLIFE**

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**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
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# Messianics and the Afterlife

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# 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)

# What Happens Between Death and the Resurrection?

Death is one of the most difficult topics which any human being ever has to deal with.<sup>1</sup> 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 largely not 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

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<sup>1</sup> This analysis was originally entitled “To Be Absent From the Body” (2009).

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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 how 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 (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 levels of criticism in the past century, primarily from theological liberals, but now even from those who would (strongly) identify as theological conservatives. Even within some parts of the broad Messianic movement—and most especially within a majority of the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement—the idea that “going to Heaven when you die” is not a Biblical teaching, has gained ground in various sectors. How much detailed engagement has there actually been, with the ramifications of such a view? *Probably not enough.* 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, perhaps 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 or saints, 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 Christ, for that is far better” (Philippians 1:23, RSV), or perhaps more significantly, “I say, and prefer rather to be

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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—when the subject comes up. Many, because of all of the rhetoric which has floated around, are confused and do not know what to believe about the period of time between death and resurrection, what theologians often label as the **intermediate state**. 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 a 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 one’s inability to understand this properly, actually an indication that he or she is not as mature as they 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 you will encounter across today’s broad Messianic movement who can be confused. Most of contemporary 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.<sup>2</sup> Today, however, instead of hearing things like “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places...” (John 14:2, NASU), many in the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement will instead emphasize, “...the dead do not know anything...” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, NASU).

The doctrine of psychopannychy—more commonly known by the vernacular “soul sleep”—is not viewed as heresy in today’s evangelicalism,

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<sup>2</sup> Consult David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), pp 134, 594.

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but instead has often been viewed as a theological aberration.<sup>3</sup> I personally would not consider any Messianic or Hebrew Roots people who believe in what is commonly called “soul sleep” to be heretics, but I would consider a number of their interpretations of Scripture to be questionable, misguided, usually materialistic, and a bit one-dimensional at that—especially in view of the over 100 billion galaxies in our known universe, and in light of diverse scientific research proving the existence of multiple dimensions or parallel 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, it is fair to deduce that the majority of people in the Hebrew Roots movement believe in psychopannychy. On the whole, though, Messianic Judaism widely affirms a temporary disembodied afterlife, prior to resurrection. Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have never advocated any kind of “soul sleep,” as we have always adhered to the position of an intermediate afterlife for all people, in another dimension (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 been our observation that as the Messianic sphere of influence has expanded, particularly via spin offs such as the Hebrew Roots movement, people from traditions outside those of mainline Judaism and evangelical Protestantism have brought their theology of psychopannychy with them.<sup>4</sup> *They have frequently made it their duty to “correct” everyone.* This influence is often coupled with a wide amount of disrespect which has been encouraged toward our Christian theological heritage, and which has even been coupled with disrespect toward our Jewish theological heritage (in particular, the

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<sup>3</sup> 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 considered 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 considered the views of Bacchiocchi’s Seventh-Day Adventist Church in this regard to be an aberration, and stated quite clearly that he did not consider the Adventists to be a cult.

<sup>4</sup> These groups include, but are by no means limited to: the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, various offshoots from the Worldwide Church of God (Armstrongism), and various Sacred Name Only cults.

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beliefs of the ancient Pharisees). The doctrine of psychopannychy is now an avant-garde teaching throughout the Hebrew Roots movement, with some actually claiming it is “revelation” which the Father is restoring to His people.

It has become quite en vogue, for many in Hebrew Roots, to advocate that any belief in a disembodied afterlife is one of the so-called “lies” of the Christian Church which 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, was 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.”<sup>5</sup>

For some, this is *all* which 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 often said to be denying the blessed hope of the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We are said to be denying the reality of how Heaven is coming to Earth, and that Yeshua the Messiah will reign over this planet. We are said to have denied how God is concerned about restoring the whole human person (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Many psychopannychists 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 we surely do not!** No one should ever deny the fact that the orthodox Jewish and Christian 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**

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<sup>5</sup> C.J. Koster. (n.d.). *Replacement Theology-Part 2*. Qodesh Publishers. Retrieved 04 February, 2009, from <<http://www.qodesh.co.za/>>.

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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 many 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 Earth. It is not incorrect to assert that some have adopted a dangerous Platonic idea of how matter is evil (discussed further), and that instead all we need to be concerned about is something spiritual or metaphysical. N.T. Wright, among today’s scholars, has been correct to remind many, “The meaning of ‘resurrection’ as ‘life after life after death’ cannot be overemphasized” (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*).<sup>6</sup> 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 God’s people can view physical matter as “very good,” it should then lead to them properly fulfilling His mission and their dominion over the Earth, rather than spurning it.

It is also important for us to remember how those who believe in psychopannychy have customarily been divided into two sub-groups: sectarian cultists who widely 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 Protestantism.

Those who have adopted a belief in psychopannychy—often via some of the influence of Hebrew Roots—tend to be those who want to give

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> For a presentation of this point of view, peruse Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously But Not Literally* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001).

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evangelicalism a similar kick in the tuccus, and do not often want to constructively discuss the issues. Frequently, they are very contentious and mean-spirited about their newfound “Truth,” and they want everyone to know that they now deny some kind of “pagan belief” of going to Heaven after death. *This approach breeds nothing less than confusion among brothers and sisters*, 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, each of us should 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 how one’s convictions are confirmed by a fair examination of Biblical passages. I have discovered via experience that not all 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 with the question of death. Many realize that they have been caught up in a fad, and that they have been influenced by sensationalistic rhetoric of little substance.

### Interpretational Issues

Those who believe in the doctrine of psychopannychy, are often marked by failing to consider a wider scope and selection of Biblical passages, including the principle of progressive revelation—whereby statements made in the Tanach (OT) may be clarified by further statements made in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT; cf. Hebrews 1:1-2). Many advocates of psychopannychy often base their arguments entirely upon what they read as stated in the Tanach. Yet as Robert A. Morey rightly observed in his book *Death and the Afterlife*,

“we cannot base our understanding of death and an afterlife solely upon passages found in the Old Testament...we must recognize that the vision of the Old Testament prophets was intrinsically blurred and, as a result, was vague on most of the details.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984), 23.

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Only focusing on the Tanach is a serious problem even for those who *just hold* to a doctrine of resurrection, and deny any kind of disembodied post-mortem state for the interim.

The principle of progressive revelation should not at all be difficult for us to understand, because Believers in Messiah Yeshua stand on the firm conviction that He is the climax of the Tanach Scriptures (Luke 24:44; cf. Romans 10:4, Grk.). Prophecies which speak of Yeshua's Messiahship in the Tanach, are made clear by specific examples witnessed in the Gospels of His ministry and atoning work. In a similar way, it should not be a stretch to see how vague or unclear statements regarding death and human destiny in the Tanach, have greater clarification when the testimony and events of the Apostolic Scriptures are taken into account.

Those who advocate the doctrine of psychopannychy, do not typically consider a wider array of Scripture passages regarding the post-mortem state prior to resurrection. They often give an obscure text like the Book of Ecclesiastes more theological weight in the discussion of the state of the dead, than texts like the Gospels or the Epistles. A clause such as "the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5, RSV/NIV) by the anonymous Qohelet, is often believed to take vast precedence over statements by known people such as those of Yeshua the Messiah (Luke 23:43) or the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 5:4-10; Philippians 1:19-24). Furthermore, they often read Qohelet's words with the wrong presuppositions, failing to take into account its rather late acceptance *and* somewhat controversial place in the Tanach canon by Jewish authorities (m.*Yadayaim* 3:5; cf. m.*Eduyyot* 5:3).

One issue which absolutely requires examiners to not ignore the testimony of the Apostolic Scriptures, **is actually the doctrine of resurrection itself**. Some passages in the Tanach could be read from the perspective that there is no resurrection of the dead. Genesis 3:19 says, "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (NASU). Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 says, "It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean...they go to the dead" (NASU). And perhaps among the most problematic could be Psalm 78:39: "Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return" (NASU). Are these just reminders of how human beings are but the created, or are they assertions that people live their lives, die, *and that is it?*

Various people reading these verses may say that this indicates that there is no resurrection after time of death, as all die and there is no return from decomposition. No psychopannychists would argue that this is what these verses indicate; they would instead assert, and rightfully so, that these are all general remarks made about how all people die. They would also

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rightfully argue how a larger scope of Scripture passages needs to be taken into consideration, in order to confirm a theology of resurrection, including those in the New Testament (even though they frequently do not do this regarding the discussion of a post-mortem afterlife prior to resurrection).

It is not unimportant that for some interpreters of the Hebrew Bible, there is only one verse which unambiguously endorses the doctrine of resurrection. Daniel 12:2 says, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt” (NASU). Passages such as Isaiah 26:19 or Ezekiel 37:6 (previously quoted) may also give credence to a belief in resurrection, but as Benjamin D. Sommer concludes in *The Jewish Study Bible*, these verses are better taken “as a metaphor for national renewal” of Israel “as they return to their land to reestablish a commonwealth.”<sup>9</sup> For such an interpreter, being stuck with the Book of Daniel alone for Tanach support for the doctrine of resurrection, may indicate how this view was something which came very late within the Biblical period. While conservatives will often date the composition of Daniel to the Persian era (500s B.C.E.), liberals will frequently date Daniel to as late as the Maccabean era (164 B.C.E.). In such a schema, this would place the doctrine of resurrection less than two centuries prior to the ministry of Yeshua! One *could* view the doctrine of resurrection as a rather late arrival in the scope of Biblical revelation.

For many interpreters of the Tanach Scriptures, “Evidence for belief in resurrection in the OT is scarce and often ambiguous” (EDB).<sup>10</sup> To the mix of Scripture passages, could probably be added Job 19:25-26, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God” (NASU). But even Job has been dated by some to as late as the post-exilic period, which again for some makes the doctrine of resurrection a late invention. So in the words of George Robinson’s *Essential Judaism*,

“Belief in the resurrection of the dead, a key element in traditionally observant Judaism’s vision of the Messianic age, dates from the period of the Pharisees, and may be an outgrowth of Greek or Persian influence...According to at least one Jewish historian...the idea of resurrection of the dead gained its first currency at the time of the Maccabees, around the second century B.C.E., a period of great suffering

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, “Isaiah,” in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 834.

<sup>10</sup> David Rolph Seely, “Resurrection,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1120.

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for the Jews. In the face of such trauma...the notion of another life after death promised a final, cosmic release.”<sup>11</sup>

Conservative interpreters often accept Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:6; Daniel 12:2; and Job 19:25-26 as supportive of the resurrection of individuals, **and that the doctrine of resurrection appears in the Biblical narrative much, much earlier than the post-exilic period.** Yet it is absolutely true that *the debate* over the resurrection did not come to major fruition until the Second and First Centuries B.C.E., with this doctrine being a major division between the Sadducees and Pharisees. The former group did not accept the doctrine of resurrection because they did not see it in the Torah,<sup>12</sup> with the latter group accepting it and making it an integral part of their teaching. If the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, it should not at all be surprising how the Rabbinic tradition, while asserting “All Israelites have a share in the world to come,” listed the first group as those who would not share in the world to come, as “He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah” (m.*Sanhedrin* 10:1),<sup>13</sup> a direct assault on the Sadducees.

If the doctrine of resurrection did not become firmly developed within Jewish theology until the centuries immediately prior to Yeshua, then it should not be shocking to see how a similar theology of intermediate afterlife—**and even views of a Messiah to come**—were developed and refined at the same time. Should this at all disturb us? For the Believer in Yeshua, our conviction of the doctrine of resurrection does not come from the Tanach Scriptures alone, but the significant host of passages in the Apostolic Scriptures which attest to its validity—most especially because the Messiah has been resurrected!<sup>14</sup> In a similar way, placing ourselves within that same pro-resurrection First Century Jewish theology, tracing the same history of interpretation, do people such as myself believe in an intermediate afterlife in the presence of the Lord until the time of resurrection. The doctrine of an intermediate afterlife can be traced along

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<sup>11</sup> George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), 192.

<sup>12</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 138 discusses how the doctrine of resurrection may have threatened the relatively aristocratic position of the Sadducees, but most especially their political association with Rome.

<sup>13</sup> Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 604.

<sup>14</sup> Mark 12:18-27; Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40; John 5:25, 29; 11:25; Acts 2:32-36; Romans 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 20-22, 42-46; et. al.

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the same path as both the doctrine of resurrection and the expectation of a Messiah to come.

A widescale failure to give the First Century Pharisees their rightful place in today's Messianic theology, evidenced itself quite steadily over the first decade of the 2000s (due in no small part to the influence of the Karaite movement on Hebrew Roots), because when properly considered: Pharisaical theology will affect what we believe about the post-mortem state of the deceased. This is a theological strata which Yeshua the Messiah instructed His Disciples to follow (Matthew 23:2-3), and that the Apostle Paul was a part of specifically because of the doctrine of resurrection (Acts 23:6).<sup>15</sup> In addition to firmly believing in the resurrection, the Pharisees **also believed in an intermediate afterlife prior to resurrection**. The testimony of the First Century historian Josephus was that the Pharisees did "believe that souls have an immortal vigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life...the former shall have power to revive and live again" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18.14).<sup>16</sup> The Talmud similarly indicated how the Pharisees held that in death the body slept, but that the consciousness of a person would go to the presence of God until being restored to the body at resurrection:

"When someone gets up, he says, 'My God, the soul that you put in me is pure. You formed it in me. You breathed it into me. You keep it in me. You will take it from me one day but restore it to me in the time to come. So long as the soul is in me, I thank you, Lord my God and God of my fathers, master of all ages, lord of all souls. Blessed are you, Lord, who restores souls to dead corpses'" (b.*Berachot* 60a).<sup>17</sup>

That the ancient Pharisees believed in both the doctrine of resurrection and of an intermediate, disembodied post-mortem state, is something few scholars dispute. John W. Cooper summarizes in his book *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting*,

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<sup>15</sup> Consult the author's article "You Want to be a Pharisee" (appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic*).

<sup>16</sup> Flavius Josephus: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 477.

<sup>17</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. MS Windows XP. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM.

Cf. "soul," in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds. *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 599.

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“without exception the evidence we have supports the judgment that the Pharisees not only affirmed the resurrection of the body but the temporary separation of the soul as well. Many scholars suppose that during the first century A.D. these beliefs were found among the common people as well.”<sup>18</sup>

The Pharisees may have believed in a kind of dualistic view of human composition, but in stark contrast to their Greek neighbors (discussed further), it was one which included the acceptance of a doctrine of resurrection. The need for today’s Messianics people to follow the Pharisaical lead in determining our theology and *halachah*, can be best seen in all of the parallels between Pharisaical theology and the Apostolic Scriptures. Menahem Mansoor indicates,

“Pharisaic doctrines have more in common with those of Christianity than is supposed, having prepared the ground for Christianity with such concepts as Messianism, the popularization of monotheism and apocalypticism, and with such beliefs as **life after death, resurrection of the dead, immortality, and angels**” (EJ).<sup>19</sup>

The party of the Sadducees, which largely made up the Temple priesthood, were the only major group within First Century Judaism which denied any kind of existence after this life, be that a temporary disembodied post-mortem state, or the doctrine of resurrection itself. The testimony of the Apostolic Scriptures is unanimous in that the Sadducees denied the doctrine of resurrection (Mark 12:18; Matthew 22:23; Luke 20:27; Acts 23:6, 8). As Josephus recorded, “They....take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards...” (*Wars of the Jews* 2.165).<sup>20</sup> Not that unlike the Epicureans of Ancient Greece (the third group to be denied a place in the world to come in m.*Sanhedrin* 10:1), the Sadducees believed that a person got a single chance at life here on Earth, and that was it—with no rewards, resurrection, or any kind of existence to follow. Human life and animal life were quantitatively indifferent.

The belief in the doctrine of resurrection is unique to both Judaism and Christianity, having been significantly developed by the party of the ancient Pharisees. Wright is correct to assert in his book *Surprised by Hope*, “the early

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<sup>18</sup> John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 100.

<sup>19</sup> Menahem Mansoor, “Pharisees,” “Pharisees,” in Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 13:366.

<sup>20</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 608.

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Christian belief in hope beyond death belongs demonstrably on the Jewish, not the pagan, map.”<sup>21</sup> The First Century Messianic movement, as is evidenced by the Apostolic Scriptures, developed its theology of the intermediate state prior to resurrection from the same Pharisaical forbearers. Forgetting this may present a serious danger of accepting Saddusaical beliefs—which do not only deny an intermediate afterlife prior to resurrection—but the doctrine of resurrection itself.

## What does it mean to bear the image of God?

Advocates of psychopannychy commonly argue that those who believe in an intermediate disembodied state for the dead, prior to resurrection, have accepted a view of immortality which is not Biblical. It is fiercely argued from 1 Timothy 6:16, for example, that God “alone possesses immortality” (NASU). But they miss some qualifications which go along with God’s immortality, which need not be forgotten: “who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him *be* honor and eternal dominion!” (1 Timothy 6:15-16, NASU). Here, Yeshua’s exaltation in Heaven was magnified, and He was designated as One who possessed a status no one else could ever possess, because He was a member of the Godhead. From Paul’s point of view, no one on Earth had ever seen the Lord in His complete exaltedness, clearly because He was immortal and human beings were mortal. The vantage point was how Moses was unable to fully see God when he approached Him on Mount Sinai (Exodus 33:20).<sup>22</sup>

The type of immortality which defines who God is, *without beginning or end*, is not something any human being possesses—but this does not all of a sudden mean that the human being made by God is quantitatively indifferent than the animals. Morey describes in *Death and the Afterlife*, how

“Some are thinking of ‘essential immortality,’ which refers to a life having neither beginning nor end. According to the Bible, only God has essential immortality as an attribute of His being (1 Tim. 6:16). Since man begins at conception and does not come from eternity, he does not have essential immortality.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> The term Paul employed for “unapproachable,” *aprositos*, was similarly used by Philo in describing Moses’ ascension of Mount Sinai (*On the Life of Moses* 2.70).

<sup>23</sup> Morey, 23.

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No man or woman ever born by normal means is exalted over the cosmos and is the source of salvation, as Yeshua the Messiah is (Philippians 2:5-11; cf. Isaiah 45:23), nor does any man or woman possess the Divine qualities of omniscience or omnipresence. Yet, it is true that the Father has “seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Messiah Yeshua” (Ephesians 2:6, NASU), and that redeemed humans in Him have access to the realm of Heaven **right now** via prayer. It is entirely inappropriate for a Bible reader to equate a human being’s fate as being the same as the animals, especially if a major purpose for being created is associated with an outside dimension in addition to the present one.

The Scriptures are clear that human beings are different from the rest of God’s Creation. It is only of humanity or mankind that God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26, TNIV). *Elohim*—actually speaking to Himself—said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” (NRSV), *b’tzalmeinu k’demuteinu*. The human being who possesses God’s image was to have dominion over God’s Creation. In the words of Nahum M. Sarna in his Genesis commentary,

“A human being is the pinnacle of Creation. This unique status is communicated in a variety of ways, not least by the simple fact that humankind is last in a manifestly ascending, gradual order. The creation of human life is an exception to the rule of creation by divine fiat...Human beings are to enjoy a unique relationship to God, who communicates with them alone and who shares with them the custody and administration of the world.”<sup>24</sup>

The human being is of extremely high value, especially in comparison to the rest of Creation. Being made in God’s image (Lat. *imago Dei*), obviously means that human beings possess unique qualities which those of the animal kingdom at large do not possess. As Bruce Milne describes it in *The Message of Heaven & Hell*,

“Much is inherently finite, and that is ‘good’ if so appointed by God. Human beings, however, are uniquely appointed as divine ‘imagery’ and

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<sup>24</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 11.

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hence, if God so wills it, created immortal in reflection of one of the primary attributes of the Creator.”<sup>25</sup>

Any kind of immortal component which a human being may possess, comes as a reflection of his or her Creator, and would allow for a degree of continued existence after death. Those who have experienced redemption via the good news or gospel, and who have access to a God who sits in Heaven (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19), need to understand this very clearly as they consider their role in His Creation.

Psalm 8 picked up on the theme of humanity or mankind made in God’s image, and specifically on the fact of how God made human beings to rule over His Creation (Psalm 8:6-8). But the Psalmist’s assertion is a very important one which cannot be overlooked: “You have made him a little lower than God” (Psalm 8:5a, NASU) or “You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings” (NIV). The Hebrew clause of interest is *m’at m’Elohim*, “lower than God,” rendered in the Greek Septuagint as *brachu...par angelous*, “a little less than angels” (LXE), due to the ambiguous nature of *elohim*. Regardless, though, the lot of humanity is not cast with the animal kingdom **but instead** with the Heavenly host; the Psalmist **did not say** that human beings were made “a little higher than the animals.” Any kind of intermediate disembodied post-mortem state is a direct result of an association with the Heavenly host originating from human beings’ fashioning by God, a testimony to human uniqueness among His creatures.

Throughout history, human culture has demonstrated a number of unique qualities, bearing witness to God’s imprint. Hugh Ross lists a number of these major characteristics, in his book *The Genesis Question*:

1. awareness of a moral code “written” or impressed with a conscience
2. concerns about death and about life after death
3. propensity to worship and desire to communicate with a higher being
4. consciousness of self
5. drive to discover and capacity to recognize truth and absolutes<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, it is only the human race or human species among God’s Creation, which possesses intelligence, a capacity to reason, and verbal speech—making it different when compared to the animals. **Human beings are widely interested with what will happen to them when they die.** Do

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<sup>25</sup> Bruce Milne, *The Message of Heaven & Hell* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 67.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*, second expanded edition (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 55.

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any of us honestly think that a human being is unique compared to the animals, or is no different than a dog or cat (or apes and monkeys)? Do we actually realize how each of us has a connection to the Heavenly dimension?

Consider the further thoughts offered by Creationists Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, in their co-authored work *Who Was Adam?*:

“While humanity shares physical qualities with animals, people stand alone in terms of their spiritual nature. *Bārā’*, used in both Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 5:1-2 with reference to humanity’s creation, suggests God’s origination of something new. Not only were Adam and Eve fashioned (in an *’āsā* manner) from pre-existing material, but they were also created (*bārā’*) as something new—something that never before existed. Both passages identify human beings alone as creatures made in God’s image. In this sense, people were made distinct from the animals God formed.

“Other verses emphasize this point. Genesis 2:7 describes how God fashioned Adam and then breathed life into him. When God formed the animals and birds from the ground (Genesis 2:19), He did not impart to them this ‘breath of life.’ People stand apart from animals in that humankind alone received spirit life from God. Only humans concern themselves with morality, purpose, destiny, hope, questions about life and death and judgment after death, and questions about God’s existence and character.

“Humanity’s uniqueness is also implied in Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8:6-8. These verses state that God made people as His representatives on Earth, placing them as rulers over the animals. According to Genesis 2:19-20, God brought the animals and birds to Adam to name. This signifies Adam’s sovereignty over them. In Hebrew thought, names can be conferred only by someone in a position of authority.

“If only human beings bear God’s image, then culture and technology should make a dramatic appearance in the archaeological record. As a corollary to this prediction, humans should be culturally and behaviorally distinct (in ways that reflect God’s image) from all animals...”<sup>27</sup>

Those who believe that when human beings die, they do not go anywhere until the resurrection except the grave, skew the uniqueness of the human being—as the makeup of a human being is depicted as not too different than that of an animal. In his book *Immortality or Resurrection?*

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<sup>27</sup> Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam? A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2005), pp 49-50.

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Samuele Bacchiocchi describes what psychopannychists instead widely believe:

“If at death the soul of the believer *goes up* immediately to the beatitude of Paradise to be with the Lord, one hardly can have any real sense of expectation for Christ to *come down* to resurrect the sleeping saints. The primary concern of these Christians is to reach paradise immediately, albeit as a disembodied soul. This concern leaves barely any interest in the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the body.”<sup>28</sup>

It is absolutely true how there has been an overemphasis in much popular preaching—and sometimes overly simplistic preaching at that—on a disembodied state following death. The future resurrection of the deceased, and the Second Coming of the Messiah to Planet Earth, do not get discussed to the degree which they should. As Wright notes in *Surprised by Hope*, too many believe in “a future expectation that bears far more resemblance to Plato’s vision of souls entering into disembodied bliss than to the biblical picture of new heavens and new earth”<sup>29</sup>—*one which surely does need to be corrected*. But from the Biblical testimony of the human being made different in comparison to the animals, is it right to assume that when a person dies he or she experiences the same sort of death as the animals? If human beings were made a little lower than God and/or His Heavenly host, should not Bible readers more fully consider how this affects human composition? It is notable to consider how a wide number of psychopannychists have, perhaps unknowingly, cast their lot *with materialistic atheists and agnostics* who deny that humans are spiritual creatures, being no different from the animals as just “advanced animals” — rather than with the Bible, which does decisively teach that human are different from the animals.

If human beings are only one-dimensional creatures, with no significant Divine imprint upon them, then psychopannychists are probably right: at time of death human beings die, are interred in a grave, and return to base elements and molecules. A higher being might possess the power to resurrect or recreate the human being, but a human being is a creature solely of this dimension. *The Scriptures, however, do not teach this*. Human rule with God extends to the Heavens as much as it extends to Earth, as the author of Hebrews testified, “in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him” (Hebrews 2:7, NASU). Human rule beside God is something

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<sup>28</sup> Bacchiocchi, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 80.

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which extends far beyond Planet Earth and this dimension. Those who believe in psychopannychy, the view that once a human being dies that he or she just goes to a place of burial until the resurrection, **have denied the Biblical reality that human beings are different**, something realized by the image of God placed upon them. Morey rightly describes in *Death in the Afterlife*,

“In the light of the dignity and worth of man as the unique image-bearer of God, we cannot accept, therefore, the idea...that man’s death can be reduced to the death of brute beasts. What they fail to realize is that man is far too wonderful to die like a dog. A conscious afterlife is exactly what we would expect of such a wonderful creation as man.”<sup>30</sup>

It is very true that the reality of a bodily resurrection is not emphasized as much as it should be, in much of today’s contemporary discussion regarding the death of Believers. *This does need to seriously change*. But belief in the resurrection of the dead is by no means incompatible with a belief in an intermediate disembodied state. The image of God placed upon human beings, demonstrates how people are different among His Creation, and thus human death should be considered something different than the death of animals. **Are human beings the pinnacle of God’s Creation, or are they not?** When one can understand what being made in the image of God is all about, then it should allow Bible readers to see how people are not one-dimensional beings solely of this Earth—but that they indeed do have a connection to a Creator in another dimension.

### Are human beings just animated chemicals?

There is perhaps no bigger debate surrounding the intermediate state than what composes a human being. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (NASU). The sanctification of a human being, as portrayed in the Scriptures, is one where *a whole person*—not just a physical body and neither just an immaterial consciousness—is to be changed by God. Theological proponents of either psychopannychy, or of an intermediate afterlife prior to resurrection, should recognize this fact. The debate, rather, is focused around whether the various components of a human being can be separated at all, existing in multiple dimensions, or

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<sup>30</sup> Morey, pp 37-38.

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whether the various components of a human being can only exist in this dimension.

Psychopannychists argue a position of **monism** regarding the human person. They advocate that a human being—made up of body, soul, and spirit—can only exist in this present dimension of Planet Earth. Advocates of an intermediate post-mortem afterlife prior to resurrection, by the very nature of holding to such a view, have to advocate some kind of **dualism** for the human being. Human beings are made up of a material substance from this dimension, as well as some kind of an immaterial substance from another dimension, with one substance which can be separated and exist independent of the body in some form, even if intended just for a limited duration of time.

The majority position present throughout the orthodox Jewish and Christian theological traditions, is sometimes labeled as **holistic dualism**. Another description sometimes used is that humans are “(en)souled bodies.” A human being should be perceived as being a single entity—a person who will be fully reconstituted and restored at the time of resurrection—but separate parts of a human being can exist independent or separate from the body, the “essential soul” if you like, even though in being separated from the body such a component part would be different, and the person would be incomplete. Cooper explains this kind of holism in *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting*:

“It views an entity as a single primary functional system, not as a compound system constructed by linking two or more primary functional systems...It implies that parts do not operate independently within the whole, and that they would not necessarily continue to have all the same properties and functions if the whole were broken up...[But] holism does not necessarily imply that if the whole is broken up, all parts disintegrate into chaos and nothingness. Secondary systems might continue to exist, although without all the properties and capacities they had when integrated within the whole...On this view, souls, spirits, minds, or persons might be able to exist without organisms, although they would be deprived by the loss.”<sup>31</sup>

Cooper suggests that this kind of existence, albeit temporary, could be likened to how given the right conditions organs can sometimes survive outside of a body, such as those to be medically transplanted. Likewise, in today’s computer age and with what can be done with transferring software

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<sup>31</sup> Cooper, 50.

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and files between an individual personal computer, mainframes, servers across the Internet, and now even to our smartphones—the extra-body survival of a human consciousness allowed by an Eternal God, in a different dimension with different rules of existence, should not be that difficult to perceive.

Both monists and holistic dualists appeal to the creation of Adam in Genesis to make their case. After announcing His intention to create humanity in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), God created Adam. Genesis 2:7 says, “the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (NASU). Both monists and holistic dualists agree that one part of the human being, the body, is clearly of this Earth. They diverge on what it means for the human being to possess “the breath of life,” which makes a person “a living being.”

The Hebrew of Genesis 2:7 says *v'yipach b'apayv nish'mat chayim v'yehi ha'adam l'nefesh chayah*, or God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (KJV). To psychopannychists, the issue is closed. A human being is the combination of a physical body and a physical breath, which results in a soul. A human being—a soul—is thus entirely of this dimension of Planet Earth.

To their credit, psychopannychists have helped in wanting to get others to see how a human being does not “have” a soul, but rather “is” a soul—a *nefesh*. Thus, when the Scriptures commonly speak in terms of “that day there were added about three thousand souls [*psuchai*]” (Acts 2:41, NASU), it was not three thousand immaterial consciousnesses which were saved, but three thousand people. When a “soul” is talked about, it is frequently in reference to what a person is. Yet, there are still questions which need to be asked regarding what components make up this “soul.”

Is it significant that in the creation of the animals, it is nowhere said that the animals had *nish'mat chayim*, “the breath of life,” implanted into them?<sup>32</sup> Both Jewish and Christian commentators have frequently thought this is significant. The *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* makes the point, “the vital principle in man is different from that in the animal...The beasts [only] arose at the creative word of God.”<sup>33</sup> Sarna’s view in his

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<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 42:5 concurs, “Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath [*neshamah*] to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it” (NASU).

<sup>33</sup> E-Sword 8.0.8: Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament. MS Windows 9x. Franklin, TN: Equipping Ministries Foundation, 2008.

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Genesis commentary is, “The uniqueness of the Hebrew phrase *nishmat hayyim* matches the singular nature of the human body, which, unlike the creatures of the animal world, is directly inspirited by God himself.”<sup>34</sup> Victor P. Hamilton similarly indicates in his Genesis commentary, “Unlike *rûah*, which is applied to God, man, animals, and even false gods, *neshâmâ* is applied only to Yahweh and man... Thus 2:7 may employ the less popular word for breath because it is man, and man alone, who is the recipient of the divine breath.”<sup>35</sup>

The Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Chumash* commentary considers the *nish'mat chayim* to be “the life that is unique to Man,” resulting in a person being a “rational soul that includes the power of intelligent speech. This is what elevates a human above animal life.”<sup>36</sup>

It is not at all a stretch to conclude that the *nish'mat chayim* breathed into the human being, indicates how human people possess a uniqueness specifically endowed by their Creator, a part originating from outside this Earth. The Hebrew language has no specific word for “mind” or “consciousness,” but it is safe to say that this *neshamah* or specific “breath” from God, would constitute it or give rise to it. The combination of a physical body made of this dimension, with a special breath made of another dimension, produces the “soul” or the human being. When this combination is brought together, an essential human person is formed.

In its totality, the “soul” or *nefesh* is not something entirely immaterial or entirely material, although psychopannychists argue that a *nefesh* is entirely material. One of the common appeals is made to the Torah’s decree that “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11, NASU; cf. Genesis 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:23), indicating that “life” is something solely of this dimension. The *nefesh* or “soul” of a creature is in its blood, right? The problem with making this assessment, is not that blood pumping throughout a creature indicates how it is physically alive; the problem is that eating the flesh of animals is what is in view in those Torah passages, and that human life and animal life are equated by psychopannychists as being *exactly* the same. While humanity’s dominion over the Earth demands that human people respect blood, especially those of the animals human beings kill for food, human beings are nevertheless **different from the animals** and

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<sup>34</sup> Sarna, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis*, Chapters 1-17 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 159.

<sup>36</sup> Nossou Scherman, ed., et. al., *The ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition*, 5th ed. (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2000), pp 11-12.

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were created for a much larger and more advanced purpose. The “soul” which is the human being, is not the same as the “soul” which is an animal.<sup>37</sup> A human being, most unlike an animal, is much more than the sum of its parts!

Those who have adopted a view of psychopannychy, are often frequently unaware of how much flexibility the Hebrew word *nefesh* actually possesses in the Tanach. To demonstrate the difficulty of this term, examiners indicate how “It may be used at one extreme to denote the principle of life in man or animal...and at the other to speak of a dead body” (*Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*).<sup>38</sup> Many have over-simplified this term, failing to recognize how it can be used, believing that it can only concern physical life, and not anything more. The *CHALOT* lexicon actually provides nine different definitions and applications available for the interpreter to pick. These include: “throat,” “neck,” “breath,” “living being,” “man, men, person, people,” “personality, individuality,” “life,” “soul’ as seat & support of feelings & sensations,” and “someone dead.”<sup>39</sup>

One of the most frequent usages of the term *nefesh* is how it simply represents people (Genesis 36:6; Ezekiel 18:4), including dead people (Leviticus 21:1, 11). This common usage leads many to conclude that *nefesh* only relates to physical creatures, but as Morey points out in *Death and the Afterlife*, this “is based on the hidden assumption that once the meaning of a word is discovered in a single passage, this same meaning must prevail in every other occurrence of the word,”<sup>40</sup> which is an hermeneutical mistake. The life principle or *nefesh* does take on a different dynamic in regard to humans, versus the animals. The *nefesh* as the seat of emotions worships God (Deuteronomy 10:12), sorrows (Leviticus 26:16), feels bitterness (1 Samuel 1:10), misery (Judges 10:16), grief (1 Samuel 2:23), or alienation (Ezekiel 23:17-18). On the Day of Atonement, God’s people are told to “humble your souls” (Leviticus 23:32, NASU), involving not only mental or spiritual humility, but also physical humility via fasting (cf. Acts 27:9).

These emotions which can compose the human soul are definitively different than animals which act solely on instinct, lacking God’s image. God Himself is even considered a *nefesh*, as He cried in Isaiah 1:14, “Your

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<sup>37</sup> The Torah prescribes capital punishment for those who commit murder (Exodus 21:12), yet the person who is responsible for the death of an animal only has to provide for restitution (Leviticus 24:18).

<sup>38</sup> Robert B. Laurin, “soul,” in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, 492.

<sup>39</sup> William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp 242-243.

<sup>40</sup> Morey, 44.

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new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me” (KJV). Given the variance seen here, Morey is correct, in *Death and the Afterlife*, to conclude that the term *nefesh* can “transcend the mere principle of physical life,”<sup>41</sup> so when a human being’s “soul” cries out to God, something more than just a being of this dimension is intended to be portrayed.

As the “soul” is usually what is used to represent the person, it should be no surprise that *nefesh* is used to define the post-mortem state as well. The Psalmist, appealing for deliverance, cried out that “God will redeem my soul [*nefesh*] from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me” (Psalm 49:15, NASU). He spoke of the possibility, “If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there” (Psalm 139:8, NASU). Also to be considered could be the death of Rachel, where “It came about as her soul [*nefesh*] was departing (for she died)” (Genesis 35:18, NASU). Likewise, Elijah called out to God to revive the widow of Serapta’s son: “‘O LORD my God, let this child’s soul come into him again.’ And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Elijah; and the soul [*nefesh*] of the child came into him again, and he revived” (1 Kings 17:21-22, RSV). While psychopannychists commonly argue that *nefesh* only relates to physical life and/or physical breath departing and coming, equally to be considered is how the *nefesh* as the essential person can be seen departing and coming—the result of what was created by combining a physical body with God’s immaterial breath. This would be most especially the case if Sheol in the Tanach is indeed the netherworld, and not just “the grave” (discussed further).

The variety of applications which surround the Hebrew *nefesh* are carried over into the Apostolic Scriptures via the Septuagint, as the LXX largely translated *nefesh* as *psuchē*.<sup>42</sup> Morey makes the important point, in *Death and the Afterlife*, that “the Septuagint never used *bios*, the Greek word for physical life, as the equivalent for *nephesh*.”<sup>43</sup> Similar to *nefesh*, *psuchē* can speak of physical life animating both animals and human beings (Revelation 8:9; 16:3; Matthew 2:20), refer to Earthly life (Matthew 6:25), or simply to human people (Luke 12:19; Acts 2:41). God likewise is associated as being a

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>42</sup> The BDAG lexicon offers just as wide a variance of possible definitions for *psuchē*: “life on earth in its animating aspect making bodily function possible,” “seat and center of the inner human life in its many and varied aspects, soul,” “an entity w. personhood, person” (Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, third edition [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], pp 1098-1099).

<sup>43</sup> Morey, 49.

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*psuchē* (Matthew 12:18; Hebrews 10:38).<sup>44</sup> And even though the “soul” or *psuchē* is rightly associated as being the whole human person, Yeshua did indicate how God has the power to punish both a person’s body, as well as the soul or what one is (Matthew 10:28). This would indicate a nuanced form of dualism, where at final judgment a whole person must be punished, but where something more significant than just a physical body needs to be in view.

A similar, and related term to *nefesh* which appears in the Tanach to describe human beings, is *ruach* or “spirit.” This is something psychopannychists often solely see as relating to a person’s physical breath, and nothing more. But will this stand up to the scrutiny of its uses? *Ruach* is used to refer to physical wind in weather (Genesis 8:1). Our invisible and immaterial God Himself is described to be a *ruach* (Isaiah 63:10), with His angels being called *ruachot* or “spirits” (Psalm 104:4). The life sent by God to both human beings and animals is “spirit” (Genesis 7:22). A human being’s own self is considered to be *ruach* or “spirit” (Psalm 77:6; Proverbs 29:11), one which goes back to God or His dimension at death (Psalm 31:5; Ecclesiastes 12:7), not supporting any kind of post-mortem extinction until the resurrection.

The Apostolic Scriptures follow the lead of the LXX once again, where *ruach* was frequently translated as *pneuma*. *Pneuma* can refer to physical breath, similar to how the false prophet will make the antimessiah’s idol appear living (Revelation 13:15). *Pneuma* is used to describe both God as spirit and His angels (John 4:24; Hebrews 1:14). Yeshua Himself considered a *pneuma* or spirit to be an immaterial being (Luke 24:39). *Pneuma* or “spirit” is sometimes used to describe various character traits of a person such as pride, humility, or fear (1 Peter 3:4), and the seat of emotions (Mark 2:8; 8:12; Matthew 26:41). And, *pneuma* is used to describe the deceased (Hebrews 12:23; 1 Peter 3:19), sometimes being believed by people to be some kind of ghosts (Luke 24:37).

Foremost of all, both *ruach* and *pneuma* are used throughout the Scriptures to refer to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is far more than just some kind of “breath” or force emanating from God, as within His people it is God’s distinct presence which takes up residence inside of them.

The deceased in the Hebrew Tanach are not depicted as “souls,” often for the reason that a specific term is employed instead. Departed spirits are labeled *refaim*, “shades, ghosts,” and *refaim* is the label given for the “name

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Isaiah 42:1; Habakkuk 2:4.

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of dead in Sh'ól" (BDB).<sup>45</sup> Psalm 88:10 asked, "Dost thou work wonders for the dead? Do the shades [*refaim*] rise up to praise thee? *Selah*" (RSV). Speaking of the adulteress, Proverbs 2:18 said, "her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the shades [*refaim*]" (RSV). When the king of Babylon died, it is exclaimed, "Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come, it rouses the shades [*refaim*] to greet you" (RSV). As Cooper concludes in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, "in reality the Israelites did affirm the existence of the departed,"<sup>46</sup> even if they were just *refaim* or shades of their Earthly selves in Sheol.<sup>47</sup>

Given the diversity of usages of *nefesh/psuchē*, *ruach/pneuma*, and *refaim* seen in the Scriptures, those who believe in a temporary disembodied state for the deceased prior to resurrection, have drawn conclusions based on how these terms are used within the Biblical text. They do give support for the premise that the consciousness of a human being who dies *can exist* outside the body. The human being may be a combination of a body from Earth and a breath from God—giving rise to the soul—but such a soul or essential person is a product of his or her Creator. While the body may be the frame on which the soul is formed, producing a human personality we would know, possession of the Divine image gives a human soul unique qualities which an animal soul simply does not possess.<sup>48</sup>

The contrast to the human being as a combination of elements, from this dimension and the dimension where God resides, is that the human being as a soul is a combination of a physical body and physical breath, being a creature entirely of this dimension. Bacchiocchi does not hide the view of psychopannychists in his book *Immortality or Resurrection?*, in saying, "both man and animal *are* souls...The term soul-*nephesh* is used for both people and animals because both are conscious beings. They both share the same animating life-principle or 'life-breath.'"<sup>49</sup> So here, the life of human beings and animals is equated as being exactly the same. Even though the psychopannychist would insist that human beings are different because

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<sup>45</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 952.

<sup>46</sup> Cooper, 60.

<sup>47</sup> Another term which may be employed, specifically for the deceased, is *neveilah*, "carcass, corpse" (BDB, 615).

<sup>48</sup> This is concurrent with a view proposed by Christian philosopher William Hasker, called emergentism, where the human person or "soul" comes forth from an interaction between mind and body, and is not solely material or immaterial.

Consult William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View* (Downers Grove, IL: 1983), pp 72-76.

<sup>49</sup> Bacchiocchi, 48.

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they do possess intelligence and verbal speech, the reality is that the human being is no more physically different than a dog or a cat or an ape. **From the place of the psychopannychist, a human being is entirely a corporeal entity.** The human person is largely just the result of highly advanced chemical processes in the brain, which would obviously be more advanced than one's pet, but chemical reactions nonetheless. As Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy describe in "The Human Constitution Debate,"

"Modern research into the brain has generally supported the monistic view of the self. All consciousness, thought, and even emotion is rooted in the brain's neurological activity. When scientists interfere with the neurological activity in a person's brain, the person's awareness changes, and he or she thinks or feels differently. Whatever other conclusions and/or problems these findings present, they suggest that human consciousness and mental activity is inextricably connected to the physical brain. This supports the...view that people are not conscious after death and will not be until God resurrects them in the **eschaton**."<sup>50</sup>

Advocates of psychopannychy, arguing that the human person is a creaturely entity entirely of this dimension, often have to rely heavily—or even rely exclusively—from scientific arguments which suggest that a human soul is simply the result of the processes found in the brain, and less on the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. And, some of this science does come from those who deny a Divine Creator. While various psychopannychists, believing in a Divine Creator, would say that these advanced processes come from God's ultimate imprint on men and women—it is unavoidable that many of the conclusions of monism are quite consistent with Darwinian evolution.<sup>51</sup> Those who believe that the human species came to exist in its present form, via millions of years of evolution, certainly argue that a human being is simply the result of advanced chemical reactions which are able to manifest themselves as a "soul." Detailing this evolutionary vantage point in "The Soul Needs a Brain to Continue to Function," Christian philosopher Richard Swinburne summarizes how,

"Four thousand million years of evolution produced man, a body and soul in continuing interaction. A human soul is more dependent for its

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<sup>50</sup> "The Human Constitution Debate," in Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), pp 97-98.

<sup>51</sup> Consult the useful summary in Cooper, "The Scientific Challenge to Dualism," pp 22-24.

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development on its own states than is an animal soul, for it has complex beliefs and desires kept in place and changing in accord with other beliefs and desires....When the body dies and the brain ceases to function, the evidence suggests that the soul will cease to function also.”<sup>52</sup>

Even though they may believe that the chemical processes in the human brain are not as random as evolutionists may believe, psychopannychists still have to rely on a great number of evolutionary and materialistic presuppositions to advocate that human beings are entirely one-dimensional. (It is most probable that Messianic and/or Hebrew Roots psychopannychists, are completely unprepared to join into the debate between evolutionary science and intelligent design over human origins.) It is not at all a coincidence that Christian theologians who have moved steadily toward a position of monism and psychopannychy, believing that the human soul is simply the result of combining a physical body with physical breath, often (staunchly) advocate some kind of theistic evolution.<sup>53</sup> (A number of them also have, at times, entertained ideas that what we commonly consider to be “sinful activities,” are just the predisposed genetic dispositions of a person, for which an individual should not ultimately be held responsible.) Those who would affirm that Adam and Eve were created by Divine fiat, are not unjustified to ask whether or not God’s imprint upon human beings is one-dimensional or multi-dimensional, **and whether human beings are just animated chemicals—or not.**

Yet even those who believe in theistic evolution, often recognize the uniqueness of the human being. Swinburne’s remarks in “The Soul Needs a Brain to Continue to Function,” concern how the relation of some Creator to a human, necessarily changes the nature of understanding the concept of “soul”:

“God, being omnipotent, would have the power to give to souls life after death (and if there is no natural law which ties the functioning of a soul to the operation of a brain, God would not need to suspend natural laws in order to do this)....If God did give to souls life after death in a new body or without a body, he would not in any way be violating natural laws—for, if

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<sup>52</sup> Richard Swinburne, “The Soul Needs a Brain to Continue to Function,” in Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, David Basinger, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, second edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 459.

<sup>53</sup> This is especially seen in Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

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I am right, there are no natural laws which dictate what happen to the soul after death.”<sup>54</sup>

Our God as all-powerful Creator certainly possesses the ability to create the human person with a consciousness which can exist separate from the body in another dimension. This may not necessarily be the ideal condition for a person, nor would it be the permanent condition for a person in the eschaton—and Paul might even have called such a state nakedness (2 Corinthians 5:3)—but it is by no means impossible for God to allow. An argument favoring an intermediate afterlife, especially for redeemed Believers, should be consistently based on the premise that the human being is unique among all of God’s creations. **A human being is not just a pile of animated chemicals.**

One who holds to a holistic form of dualism, would recognize and emphasize that the separation of the consciousness from the body at death is something *temporary*, to be kept in a holding place in another dimension until the resurrection. One who holds to monism, thinking that the physical human person of body and breath is all that someone is, advocates that each person will be essentially “recreated” at the resurrection. Yet at the time of the resurrection, will this lead to the reanimation and reconstitution of the same person who had lived and then “fell asleep” in unconsciousness—or is the resurrection simply the making of a new person, an essential replica or close duplicate produced from the (scant) bodily remains of one who had previously lived on Earth? This is where the monist position has had some serious philosophical problems.

How does God preserve a person, or the memories of a person, who lived on Earth and then dies? Monists often make it sound as though death is just as simple as being turned off, and resurrection is just as simple as being turned on—with only God knowing where “the switch” is. This would be pretty easy if human beings were just animals, because all that would have to be preserved would be basic instincts hard-wired into the brain itself, like: eating, sleeping, mating, exercise, and protection from predators. Human beings, though, are not like this. Each person has complex emotions and reasoning and artistic abilities, not to mention life experiences and significant accomplishments, which they remember and expect to carry with them—if one is at all theistic—beyond death.

Some form of re-creation from individual extinction at death does not at all account for how the memories and personality of someone will be stored.

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<sup>54</sup> Swinburne, in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, pp 466, 467.

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What is considered “memory,” is something chemically stored in engrams found in the brain. Such memory engrams decompose along with the body after death. Human beings do not possess android, robot bodies which are inorganic and would only need some heavy maintenance after going offline and then being reactivated. While some human remains decompose at a much slower rate than others, due to the conditions and climate of the place of internment, the patterns of human memories have to be stored somewhere after death if any kind of resurrection is to take place. This is especially true if resurrection is to be considered a reanimation of a legitimate person who had once lived a life on Earth previously—and not a recreation or cloning of a person.

Mick Pope legitimately asks in “Losing our souls?”, “if I cease to exist at one moment, and am totally recreated at another after a soul sleep, is it the same me?”<sup>55</sup> In *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View*, William Hasker points out the main problem with a monistic view of human composition, stating, “[I]t is...nonsensical to assert that God creates out of nothing a person that has already lived, died and completely passed out of existence...[I]t...is essential...that we should hold that in some way the ‘core person’ survives bodily death and continues in existence.”<sup>56</sup>

Re-creation from individual extinction, as psychopannychists advocate, is really not the same thing as resurrection. It involves the recreation of a body from decomposed/decomposing remains, and then God allowing that body to have the memories of someone who had previously lived, which He knows—resulting in the probable production of a (close) replica of someone who had once lived. From a vantage point of monism, those of us who are seen here on Earth today will only get one chance to genuinely live, and then at death our lives will be over. At the time of the resurrection, some kind of copy or clone of us created from our remains (or an *imposter* created from our remains?)<sup>57</sup> will enter into the eschaton, experiencing either the rewards or punishments which we incurred for it. That copy might think that it is us, but there will be reasonable doubt to question whether it truly is us.

There is only one undeniable way that the person who is resurrected at a future point in time, is the same authentic person who once lived on Earth, experiencing the rewards and punishments the person deserves, which are not to be passed on to some copy: **a temporary, disembodied afterlife**. With

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<sup>55</sup> Mick Pope, “Losing our souls?” in *Iscast Bulletin* No. 40 Autumn 2003. Accessed 01 March, 2010 from <<http://iscast.org.au>>.

<sup>56</sup> Hasker, *Metaphysics*, 80.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

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the human consciousness removed from the body at time of death, being transported to a holding place in another dimension (i.e., Heaven or Hell), that consciousness can then be returned a reanimated body at the resurrection. The person remains the same, whether the reanimated body has only partially decomposed and is revived, or the body has to be totally recreated as the corpse has decomposed completely into base atoms and molecules. The person would possess the memory of having died, having gone to another dimension after death, having experienced either refreshment or some kind of penalty, and then having returned to the body, the final rewards or punishment can be issued. Pope, interestingly enough a theistic evolutionist by trade, confirms in his article “Losing our souls?” that this is the only way that he, and not some duplicate of him, will be resurrected:

“If the soul is emergent from the brain, how is it stored apart from it?...My suggestion is that it is more like moving than copying, for the process occurs at death then the brain is dying, my soul is not both in my brain and preserved...by God....In short, I think we need to...expect to be with the Lord at death and wait for our new bodies. If God can create us in His image through evolution, and raise Jesus and us from the dead, He can sustain us with Him until Jesus’ return.”<sup>58</sup>

A re-creation from the (scant) remains of a person, with some kind of memories left by the deceased person implanted from God, runs the philosophical risk of wondering if the man or woman resurrected is really the same one who lived—or a facsimile. A resurrection involving the re-creation/reviving of a person’s remains, and the reintegration of a disembodied consciousness from another dimension into a reanimated body, **leaves no doubt that the person who once lived a life on Earth will be the same authentic man or woman to be resurrected.**

If a human soul is something entirely of this dimension, a combination of a physical body and physical breath, then examiners also need not avoid how this may cause some to look at people. A great deal of the contemporary literature which today examines the concept of the “soul,” is actually not as much focused on the exegesis of what *nefesh* or *refaim* or *psuchē* means, nor that much about the post-mortem state—but is more focused on the ethical controversies which can ensue, especially if human beings are just one-

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<sup>58</sup> Pope, “Losing our souls?”

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dimensional creatures.<sup>59</sup> If the *neshamah* of God, for example, is solely the physical breath of a person—some could take the possible position that a human life only begins when a newborn child takes its first physical breath outside of the womb. Until that point, some may see the fetus as just being a pile of chemicals inside the female uterus—**chemicals which can be jettisoned at any time prior to first breath**. While no psychopannychists I have ever encountered in my Messianic experience would ever support abortion, it is unavoidable that they may have unknowingly opened up a very dangerous door.

Psalm 139:13 is clear: “You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb” (NASU). This is a very tenable position to hold to if the *neshamah* or breath which God gave Adam (Genesis 2:7), was something more than just a physical breath. *In this instance, human life begins at the moment of conception*. While such life may not be fully developed or mature, a fetus is still nevertheless a living being even without having taken its first physical breath. In my own assessment, viewing the human person as being *solely* of this dimension, is degrading to the value of human life.<sup>60</sup> It skews the Psalmist’s assertion that human beings are made just lower than their Creator (Psalm 8:5-8), and frequently gives court to Darwinism. While God is indeed concerned about the whole human to be redeemed, including a man or woman’s physical body in the resurrection (Romans 8:23), this is by no means incompatible with a temporary disembodied state. Our Creator made human beings more than just animated chemicals! Our Creator gave human beings multi-dimensional capacities which the animals noticeably lack. Ross provides an excellent summary of this, in his book *Beyond the Cosmos: The Extra-Dimensionality of God*:

“The human spirit manifests itself, at least in part, by humans’ unique consciousness. While no reputable scholar disputes that human beings are uniquely conscious beings, many scholars hesitate or refuse to give God credit for that conscious nature. Some of this generation’s most brilliant researchers have tried valiantly to find within matter, energy, and the natural biochemical processes of our space and time dimensions a hypothesis for the origin and operation of the human consciousness,

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<sup>59</sup> Useful studies include J.P. Moreland & Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>60</sup> And to the psychopannychists’ credit, *solely* viewing the human person as being of another dimension can be equally degrading to human uniqueness.

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but none of their efforts has come close to succeeding. In fact, their findings only help build the case for a supernatural origin....

“[B]ecause we are spirit beings, we humans, alone among all earthly creatures, possess the capacity to experience life beyond physical death, life that survives outside the physical body we now occupy. God says we will witness His eventual creation of a new universe to replace this one. The new one will function with different physical laws and occupy different space-time dimensions...Because we humans are spirit beings, we can make this transition to life beyond our earthly body and earthly dimensions, either life without end in the new creation...or death without end in the lake of fire...”<sup>61</sup>

## Following the Fall

What almost all Bible readers conclude about the post-mortem state, is undoubtedly affected by the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the introduction of their sin to the rest of humanity. Both psychopannychists and those who believe in an intermediate afterlife, appeal to Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord” (NASU). Adam and Eve introduced death to humanity, yet those who welcome the good news or gospel can have eternal life. Psychopannychists conclude that physical death and physical life are entirely what are being described here, whereas those who believe in an intermediate disembodied afterlife, would argue that *something more* than just physical life or physical death should be considered. Are “life” and “death” one-dimensional, or multi-dimensional concepts, as seen in Scripture?

While Adam and Eve were certainly created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27), did they possess the ability for their bodies to live forever prior to the Fall? Some may get the impression from reading Genesis chs. 1-3 that Adam and Eve initially possessed an immortality of their bodies never dying, but this is actually not the impression seen from what God Himself said in Genesis 3:22: “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (NASU). Adam and Eve would have had to have eaten from the Tree of Life in order for their bodies to be continually regenerated, and live forever.

The instruction which was given by God to Adam in the Garden of Eden, was, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the

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<sup>61</sup> Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos: The Extra-Dimensionality of God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996), pp 122, 123.

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tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17, NASU). No one can deny the fact of how physical death is a definite part of the consequence of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit. In Genesis 3:19 God was clear to say, “By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (NASU). But was the penalty which Adam and Eve incurred for their sin *solely* physical death? Psychopannychists say a resounding “Yes,” and as Bacchiocchi would specifically argue in *Immortality or Resurrection?*, “people [often] believe Satan’s lie that no matter what they do, they ‘shall not die’ (Gen 3:4),”<sup>62</sup> which means that those who believe in a temporary disembodied afterlife, have obviously been beguiled by the serpent just as Eve was:

“The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.”’ The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die!’” (Genesis 3:2-4, NASU).

Satan tempted Eve by telling her that if she ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that she would not die. Of course, Bible readers all know that Adam and Eve did die subsequent to eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 6:5). Yet in a particular way, the Adversary was actually correct in telling Eve that when she would eat the fruit she would not “die.” God was clear to say *ki b’yom akholkha m’menu mot tamut*, “for in the day of thine eating of it—dying thou dost die” (Genesis 2:17, YLT), meaning that within a reasonable scope of time from committing the sin, Adam and Eve should have died. They were confronted by God for the crime they committed against Him:

“Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.’ And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’” (Genesis 3:9-12, NASU).

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<sup>62</sup> Bacchiocchi, 16.

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The serpent was chastised for his temptation of Eve (Genesis 2:14-16), and then the penalty for eating the fruit was laid upon Adam and Eve:

“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat from it”; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face You will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”’ (Genesis 3:17-19, NASU).

Adam and Eve were told that their future would not be as glorious as their past, but it is clear from the text that they did not physically die at the time when they ate the forbidden fruit. What happened instead? “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7, NASU). *Something spiritual took place within both Adam and Eve, when they ate the forbidden fruit.*

As a direct result of their sin, Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden: “therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken” (Genesis 3:23, NASU). From reading the account of humanity’s Fall, Adam and Eve did not “die,” at least in the context of what psychopannychists advocate, because Adam and Eve were still physically alive with their hearts and their brains still functioning. **Instead, Adam and Eve found themselves ejected out of Paradise.** Their innocence was gone and they could no longer fully commune with God. As Wright observes in *Surprised by Hope*,

“In Genesis, and indeed much of the Old Testament, the controlling image for death is exile. Adam and Eve were told that they would die on the day they ate the fruit; what actually happened was that they were expelled from the garden.”<sup>63</sup>

Adam and Eve did not “drop dead” from committing the first sin, but they were instead cast out of the Garden and removed from God’s presence. Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah would have to come on the scene, in order to restore humanity back to the condition of being in such full communion with the Father (Genesis 3:15; 1 Timothy 2:15, Grk.; cf. Revelation 12:17). His work *will be completed* with the manifestation of the New Heavens and New

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<sup>63</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 95.

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Earth (Revelation chs. 21-22) and with redeemed physical people entering back to an Edenic-type of state—meaning not just the redemption of the human consciousnesses, but of the whole person. Wright also comments in *Surprised by Hope*, “the promised final future is [not] simply that immortal souls leave behind their mortal bodies,”<sup>64</sup> because God’s plan of salvation history includes the abolishment of physical death at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:26; cf. Romans 8:23; Hebrews 9:27). Yet, such life and redemption can begin and be partaken of *long before* the resurrection.

Advocates of psychopannychy only look at death in terms of physicality, equating animal death and human death as being the same. The death Adam and Eve would have experienced, would thus have *only* been physical. Yet, the Apostle Paul only made the point that with the introduction of sin, “death spread to all men” (Romans 5:12, NASU) or “all mankind” (2020 NASB), *eis pantas anthrōpous* or “to all human beings” (author’s rendering), as animal death was something entirely different and independent of this. In Scripture, Bible readers do indeed see how “death” involves something much more than the stopping of one’s heartbeat and brainwaves. The unredeemed state of a sinner is being “dead in your trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1, NASU, cf. 2:5; Colossians 2:13), particularized in how “she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6, NASU), clearly depicting a condition which exists even when a person is physically alive. One who lives in sin is removed from the life of God, and a life of sin is a life regarded as existing in a qualitative condition of death.

The “life” which God promises to His people, is something which we can experience now—even prior to the resurrection—a “life” which is being restored to communion with Him! Yeshua the Messiah asked, “everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:26, NASU). He also said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24, NASU). Born again Believers *physically die* all the time, requiring Bible readers to look at the “death” and “life” of human beings in *something more* than just physical, one-dimensional terms. Morey notes in *Death and the Afterlife*, “The ‘life’ which we receive at regeneration is not to be a temporary existence. The life which we receive is described as being ‘eternal.’”<sup>65</sup> This is why our Lord said, “I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly” (John 10:10,

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>65</sup> Morey, pp 97-98; cf. 1 John 5:11-12.

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NASU), and while surely He did want His followers to be physically fit, He more especially wanted His followers to be in an intimate relationship with Him!

If we have properly interpreted the Creation account, Adam and Eve experienced God's life and God's presence inside of the Garden of Eden, and upon sinning were ejected into a condition of death and separation from Him. This death would have involved their physical bodies ceasing to function, *but it would have primarily included the end of their intimate communion with Him*. It is a mistake to limit the "life" of a human being entirely to physical life on Earth. While physical death is something to be conquered via the resurrection, the dominion of death can be *conquered now* by the power of the good news and people receiving salvation. Eternal life is not exclusively being given a resurrected and restored body to exist in the New Heavens and New Earth; *it is primarily being restored to an intimate communion with the Lord*. As the author of Hebrews said, "let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, NASU), a life of communion with God which was lost because of the sin of Adam and Eve, but can now be restored to men and women by the sacrificial work of Yeshua.

Psychopannychists often have a problem recognizing that when Adam and Eve "died" at the time when they ate the forbidden fruit, they did not "drop dead" in medical terms with their hearts and brains ceasing to function—but instead were ejected from the Garden of Eden and God's presence. But some think that they have an easy answer for this. Genesis 5:5 says, "Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, and he died" (NASU). They connect this to Psalm 90:4, "a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by" (NASU), and believing that humanity has only been granted a 6,000 year cosmic week to inhabit Planet Earth, Adam then died in the first so-called "day" or 1,000-year period of human history. While this is a convenient way to dodge the reality that the "death" Adam and Eve experienced was primarily their ejection from the Garden, it has some problems attached to it.

While it cannot be denied that belief in a 6,000-year probation on Earth was a view of some Sages (b.*Sanhedrin* 97a-97b), with Psalm 90 offered as a substantiating text, Psalm 90 itself does not speak of a 6,000-year cosmic week for humanity. The overarching theme of Psalm 90 is God's timelessness compared to human temporality: "Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God...For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or *as* a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:2, 4,

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NASU). A thousand years passes by God like it is no time at all, even when people are able to live, if strong, for eighty years (Psalm 90:10).

Various Messianic and/or Hebrew Roots psychopannychists, who believe that Adam died in the first “day” of 1,000 years, rely heavily on the work of Seventeenth Century Archbishop James Ussher, who determined that the Earth was actually created in 4004 B.C.E. This chronology, however, was pieced together using presuppositions which interpreted the genealogy listings of Genesis chs. 5 and 11 incorrectly, failing to consider the use of any telescoping, and is a chronology which lost considerable support among conservative examiners in the Twentieth Century. Furthermore, anthropological data available since the Seventeenth Century, does clearly demonstrate how the human race is over 6,000 years old. Creationist Hugh Ross indicates in his book *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, “attempts to spread the Christian gospel in Asia were stymied because Chinese historical records gave a date for the origin and spread of civilization that preceded Ussher’s date.”<sup>66</sup> When encountering human cave paintings, such as those in Lascaux, France from an estimated 16,000 years ago<sup>67</sup> (with some of the other cave paintings in France and Spain dating to as many as 32,000 years ago), the 6,000 year chronology which so many hold to, is not at all easily sustainable.<sup>68</sup>

Unless “life” and “death” are only things to be considered in entirely physical terms, then there is adequate proof from the Fall, how the death introduced to humanity by Adam and Eve is first and foremost an unredeemed person’s separation from God, present in those who live in bondage to the realm of sin. This is a separation which can be remedied, however, by men and women receiving the salvation available in Yeshua. When a born again Believer dies, his or her consciousness will be transferred into the presence of the Lord—surely a *desirable condition* if one’s communion with Him has been restored to a heart which is then filled with great love for Him (Deuteronomy 6:5; Philippians 1:21-23)—with the salvation process fully consummating at the resurrection (Romans 8:23). It

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<sup>66</sup> Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, NavPress, 2004), 23.

Ross also discusses how geneticists have traced mutations in mtDNA and Y-DNA for the common male and female ancestors of humanity to a distance somewhere between 37,000 and 50,000 years ago (*Ibid.*, pp 224-226; *The Genesis Question*, pp 107-112).

<sup>67</sup> Information on visiting the cave of Lascaux can be accessed on the French Ministry of Culture website: <<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/>>.

<sup>68</sup> Consult the Messianic Apologetics FAQs, “6,000 Year Teaching” and “Genesis 5, 11 Genealogies.”

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is not unimportant at all that human death is differentiated from animal death (Romans 5:12). Advocates of psychopannychy have done a disservice in viewing “life” and “death” in only one-dimensional terms. By so doing, it has been my experience that many of them seem to not possess a significant knowledge of the spiritual realm, or for that matter of the communion which they should desire to experience with the Lord.

### What is Sheol? What is the grave?

Within the Hebrew Scriptures (OT), the place where the deceased go is called *Sheol*, translated in the Septuagint by the term *Hades*, whose usage carries over into the Apostolic Scriptures (NT). In most of today’s English translations of the Bible (i.e., RSV, NASU, NRSV, ESV) both Sheol and Hades appear in the text, leaving the reader to decide what is being spoken of. (David H. Stern’s Complete Jewish Bible similarly just uses *Sh’ol*). Versions like the 1984 NIV, however, often render Sheol as “the grave.” With this, Ecclesiastes 9:10 would say, “for in the grave [Sheol], where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” (NIV).<sup>69</sup> Yet there is a huge debate in today’s Biblical scholarship whether Sheol is actually “the grave,” meaning just a place of internment for dead bodies. The newer 2005 TNIV renders Ecclesiastes 9:10 with, “in the realm of the dead, where you are going,” which indicates doubt that Sheol is not necessarily “the grave.” So is Sheol/Hades the grave, or is it an extra-dimensional place where the consciousnesses of the deceased can be held prior to resurrection? The *New Interpreter’s Study Bible* provides the following summary of options:

“The Hebrew term [Sheol] refers on one level to the depths of the earth, literally, since it was where the dead were buried. On another level, it was the dwelling place of the dead (see ‘shades’), who experienced a state of being considerably less than earthly life but not nothingness. Sheol was not the exclusive abode of the righteous or the wicked, but of everyone, and it is often used as a synonym for death, as in Isa 28:15 (cf. 1 Sam 2:6; Job 21:13; Psa 6:5).”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> It cannot go overlooked how “Sheol,” in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 932 details how the “NIV prefers to translate *she’ol* as ‘grave’...and place the name itself in a footnote, a procedure that is neither helpful nor justifiable.”

<sup>70</sup> Walter J. Harrelson, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, NRSV (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 2291.

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Psychopannychists argue that Sheol/Hades is exclusively the grave, whereas those who believe in an intermediate afterlife prior to resurrection argue that it is an extra-dimensional realm of the dead.

Sheol is depicted as a place from which no one comes up (Job 7:9), seemingly requiring some kind of resurrection, causing many to conclude that it is only “the grave.” Some think that Sheol can mean either the netherworld or the grave, dependent on how the term is used in a passage. Yet, is it at all important that the location of Sheol is often contrasted to be as low as Heaven is high (Deuteronomy 32:22; Isaiah 7:11; cf. Job 11:8)? This could depict Sheol at one end of the cosmic spectrum, with Heaven at the other end, and with Planet Earth somewhere in the middle.

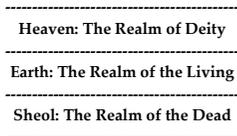
Heaven is surely in another dimension than Planet Earth, so why would it be a problem if Sheol were also in another dimension (or at least the same dimension as Heaven)?<sup>71</sup>

Expositors often do not disagree with the conclusion that Sheol and the grave are connected, as the power of death is in view, yet “the degree to which [Sheol] is identified with the grave has been debated” (*ABD*).<sup>72</sup> Is Sheol a synonym for the grave, or is it a companion for the grave—so that while one’s body decays in a tomb, one’s consciousness is reduced to a shade of its former self in Sheol? Strong evidence is offered on both sides, with many simply concluding, “At most it is a place of confinement away from the land of the living” (*ISBE*).<sup>73</sup> One’s presuppositions relating to whether Sheol is just the grave, or an extra-dimensional holding place, will affect how one interprets Scripture passages which portray the deceased in Sheol.

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<sup>71</sup> In the estimation of Daniel I. Block, “The Old Testament on Hell,” in Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Hell Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), pp 50-51,

“The Israelites shared with their ancient Near Eastern neighbors the perception of a universe consisting of three tiers of existence that may be portrayed graphically as follows:



“In death a human being passes from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead.”

<sup>72</sup> Theodore J. Lewis, “Dead, Abode of the,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:103.

<sup>73</sup> D.K. Stuart, “Sheol,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:472.

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One fact which can easily escape many Bible readers, is how the Scriptures do possess specific terms for a place of interment, a tomb or an actual gravesite. The Hebrew *qever* means “grave, sepulchre” (*BDB*).<sup>74</sup> When the Torah said that a person would be rendered unclean by touching a grave, a place of burial, *qever*, is what was referred to (Numbers 19:13-18). *Qever* was used to describe how the king of Babylon had “been cast out of your tomb” (Isaiah 14:19, NASU), and while the other “kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb” (Isaiah 14:18, NASU), the king of Babylon did not have a proper burial in a *qever*, instead being brought down to Sheol (Isaiah 14:9) where he was welcomed by the kings who preceded him. A common Messianic passage, Isaiah 53:9, detailed how “His grave [*qever*] was assigned with wicked men” (NASU).

In Greek, a term of specific interest to Bible readers would be *mnēma*, often meaning a memorial, and hence “gener. *grave, tomb*” (*BDAG*).<sup>75</sup> In the period between His death and resurrection, Yeshua’s body was placed in a *mnēma* (Mark 16:2; Luke 8:27), yet as the Apostle Peter would testify, “HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY [Psalm 16:10]” (Acts 2:31, NASU). Yeshua’s body was not placed in a *mnēma* long enough to decay, while the Lord was not left as a permanent resident of Hades (or Sheol; cf. Luke 23:43; 1 Peter 3:19).

While these are important examples to consider regarding what Sheol/Hades is, it behooves Bible readers, more than anything else, to examine the varied usages of *Sheol* as seen in the Tanach. This is largely because psychopannychists make their arguments about the post-mortem state almost entirely from the Tanach. (Regardless of what side one takes, interpreters are widely agreed that the usage of *Hadēs* in the Apostolic Scriptures, concurs with the Tanach usage of *Sheol*.) So does the Tanach depict Sheol as a place of internment, or as a holding place for the consciousness of the deceased prior to resurrection?

The first place *Sheol* appears, is in the Patriarch Jacob’s lament for his son Joseph, of whom he cried out, “A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!” (Genesis 37:33, NASU). Mourning for his lost son, Jacob was overcome so that all he could say was *ki-ered el-beni avel Sheolah*, meaning “I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol” (Genesis 37:35, NJPS). While it would be very easy for one to simply conclude that this means “in mourning will I go down to the grave” (NIV), it is not insignificant to recognize how—believing that his son was eaten by a wild

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<sup>74</sup> *BDB*, 868.

<sup>75</sup> *BDAG*, 654.

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animal—Joseph would have had no place of burial. Morey indicates in *Death and the Afterlife*, “He...speaks of ‘going down’ to reunite with his son, because it was assumed that Sheol was the place of departed spirits, probably a hollow place in the center of the earth.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, commenting on this verse, Sarna describes in his commentary on Genesis,

“[Sheol] is the most frequently used term in biblical Hebrew for the abode of the spirits of the dead. The region was imagined as situated deep beneath the earth, enclosed with gates. It was a place of unrelieved gloom and silence; it received anyone, good and bad, great and small. All were equal there, and none who entered it could leave”<sup>77</sup> (cf. Amos 9:2).

The first Biblical usage of *Sheol* allows for a belief in a disembodied post-mortem state, something even reflected in today’s somewhat progressive Jewish theology.<sup>78</sup>

For the most part regarding Sheol, though, Bible readers find a series of Tanach passages which are undeniably affected by one’s presuppositions. If Sheol is just the grave, they can be viewed this way—or if Sheol is a holding place for the human consciousness prior to resurrection, they can likewise be viewed this way. The following are a selection of passages to be considered. Thankfully, most Bibles do leave Sheol as is, leaving the reader to decide what is being communicated:

“For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; a father tells his sons about Your faithfulness” (Isaiah 38:18-19, NASU).

“The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of him *and* his helpers from the midst of Sheol, ‘They have gone down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword’” (Ezekiel 32:21, NASU).

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<sup>76</sup> Morey, 75.

<sup>77</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, “Genesis,” in David L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001), 232.

Also indicated by H.F.W. Gesenius: *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 798 as “a subterranean place, full of thick darkness (Job 10:21, 22), in which the shades of the dead are gathered together.”

<sup>78</sup> Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 114.

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“Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NASU).

“For there is no mention of You in death; in Sheol who will give You thanks? I am weary with my sighing; every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears” (Psalm 6:5-6, NASU).

“Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You; let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol” (Psalm 31:17, NASU).

“As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall rule over them in the morning, and their form shall be for Sheol to consume so that they have no habitation. But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me. Selah” (Psalm 49:14-15, NASU).

“Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol [realm of the dead, TNIV], for evil is in their dwelling, in their midst” (Psalm 55:15, NASU).

“For Your lovingkindness toward me is great, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol” (Psalm 86:13, NASU).

“For my soul has had enough troubles, and my life has drawn near to Sheol. I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit; I have become like a man without strength, forsaken among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and they are cut off from Your hand. You have put me in the lowest pit, in dark places, in the depths” (Psalm 88:3-6, NASU).

“What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah” (Psalm 89:48, NASU).

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night,’ even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike *to You*” (Psalm 139:7-12, NASU).

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“If I look for Sheol as my home, I make my bed in the darkness; if I call to the pit, ‘You are my father’; to the worm, ‘my mother and my sister’; where now is my hope? And who regards my hope? Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?” (Job 17:13-16, NASU).

From the variety of usages seen here, it is not difficult to see how some interpreters can view Sheol as being “the grave,” and yet how other interpreters can see Sheol as a shadowy netherworld for the deceased, where there is a quasi-existence of being cut of from Earthly experiences. Psychopannychists would view the varied references to Sheol in a poetic or non-literal sense, whereas those who believe in an intermediate post-mortem state, would view Sheol as a literal holding place for the consciousness of the deceased. Both psychopannychists and those who believe in an intermediate post-mortem state, are agreed that Earthly life is contrasted with the existence of the deceased. But *what kind* of existence for the deceased is implied in the sorts of passages above? Milne indicates in *The Message of Heaven & Hell*, that while “Its etymology is disputed...many scholars favour a root meaning such as ‘the desolate realm’, or the ‘un-world’.”<sup>79</sup> Sheol and the grave are undoubtedly partners, but to what extent? In *Death and the Afterlife*, Morey summarizes some thoughts which need to be kept in mind:

“Once in Sheol, all experiences related exclusively to physical life are no longer possible. Those in Sheol do not marry and procreate children because they do not have bodies. Neither do they plan and execute business transactions. Once in Sheol, they cannot attend public worship in the temple and give sacrifices or praise. There are no bodily pleasures such as eating or drinking. Those in Sheol do not have any wisdom or knowledge about what is happening in the land of the living. They are cut off from the living. They have entered a new dimension of reality with its own kind of existence...”<sup>80</sup>

If Sheol is portrayed as a quiet place of relative inactivity, but from where there can be a degree of conscious interaction among its inhabitants, then it need not be viewed as “the grave.” When living people prefer to rest today, they like to be in quiet or serene places. In the case of Sheol, it is portrayed more as a place where the deceased are left alone more than anything else. In the view of Peter C. Craigie, in his Psalms commentary,

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<sup>79</sup> Milne, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Morey, 79.

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“In Sheol, persons were believed to exist in a form of semi-life, at rest, yet not in joy, for they had not the fullness of life which made possible the richness of relationship with the living God. Death was thus to be dreaded.”<sup>81</sup>

Even in spite of a level of consciousness, the shades in Sheol could not experience all of the things which Earthly life offered.

Advocates of psychopannychy like Bacchiocchi, however, do believe that Sheol is just another term for “grave.” In *Immortality or Resurrection?* he provides Numbers 16:31-33 as his support, saying, “Perhaps the clearest example of the location of *sheol* beneath the earth is the account of the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who had revolted against the authority of Moses.”<sup>82</sup> These verses detail,

“As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with *their* possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly” (Numbers 16:31-33, NASU).

This was quite a dramatic scene, as those opposed to God’s servant were swallowed up by the ground. Bacchiocchi’s view in *Immortality or Resurrection?* is that “This episode clearly shows that the whole person, and not just the soul, goes down to *sheol*, to the realm of the dead.”<sup>83</sup> What he has failed to state, though, is the fact that being swallowed up by the ground is not the normal way which people die. Numbers 16:30 is clear to specify how this judgment was “something unheard-of” (NJPS) or “unprecedented” (HCSB),<sup>84</sup> so that Moses’ credibility could be confirmed to the Israelites. There is no major issue here if an Israelite had already believed that the consciousness of the deceased went to Sheol, because the rebels going down with their possessions would make the Israelites realize that what had made them prideful against Moses could not help them in the face of God. On the contrary, the Psalmist even says that one’s bones “have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol” (Psalm 141:7, NASU), supporting the view

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<sup>81</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1-50* (Dallas: Word Books, 1983), Prolepsis database.

<sup>82</sup> Bacchiocchi, 159.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>84</sup> Heb. *beriah*.

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of Sheol not being “the grave,” but instead a holding area for the consciousnesses of the deceased where physical elements are not allowed. The rebels opposing Moses would then be swallowed up and killed, ultimately ending up as just *refaim* or shades in Sheol.

Those who believe that the evidence points to Sheol being a temporary holding place for the disembodied deceased until resurrection, can point to usages of the term which can be read from the perspective of an extra-dimensional post-mortem vantage point. Morey provides a list of twenty reasons in his book *Death and the Afterlife* pointing to Sheol being an extra-dimensional netherworld, notably including: unlike a grave (Exodus 14:11), Sheol is never localized; Sheol can never be bought or sold (Genesis 23:4-20), unlike a place of entombment; humans can place a dead body in a resting place, but not in Sheol (Genesis 50:13); humans can touch a gravesite (Numbers 19:19), but not Sheol; remains in a grave can be removed or uncovered (2 Kings 23:16), but humans are incapable of removing or uncovering anything in Sheol; humans can beautify or decorate a gravesite (Genesis 35:20), but not Sheol. These factors have frequently led many Bible readers to the conclusion of how **Sheol is an extra-dimensional netherworld**.<sup>85</sup> As Morey further concludes,

“Sheol is ‘under the earth,’ or ‘the underworld,’ while graves were built as supulchres above the earth, or caves, or holes in the earth. Sheol is called the underworld in Isa. 14:9. It is also called ‘the lower parts of the earth’ (KJV) in Ps. 63:9; Isa. 44:23; Eze. 26:20; 31:14, 16, 18; 32:18, 24. Sheol is the opposite of heaven (Ps. 139:8). One must go ‘down’ to get to Sheol (Gen. 37:35).”<sup>86</sup>

While the linguistic debates over what Sheol is do rage on, there are some specific instances where death is portrayed in the Tanach which should give examiners a fuller picture of the subject, because as Cooper notes in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, we can often be stuck with “the indeterminacy of poetic language.”<sup>87</sup> It is incumbent upon Bible readers to see what the Tanach actually details about the death expectations of Ancient Israel, to have a fuller picture.

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<sup>85</sup> See Morey, pp 76-77, for his full twenty reasons on substantiating why the Hebrew *Sheol* cannot mean “the grave,” but an actual netherworld.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>87</sup> Cooper, 64.

## Messianics and the Afterlife

### Death Expectations in the Tanach

When reading the Tanach (OT), it is not difficult for one to see how the Hebrew Scriptures are more concerned about regulating human life on Planet Earth, than they are concerned about the hereafter. Cooper indicates in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, “The Old Testament is resoundingly this-worldly. The fullest possible extent for a human being is to live an earthly life as God created it to be lived.”<sup>88</sup> Many people, when reading the Tanach, get the impression that it has no expectation of any kind of intermediate afterlife, or for that same matter, a resurrection of the dead. The Tanach does certainly affirm the reanimation of physical bodies in the eschaton (Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:6; Daniel 12:2), but what does it say about the expectations regarding death? Does it conclusively speak against the concept of a disembodied post-mortem state? Psychopannychists certainly believe so, but those who believe in a temporary disembodied state prior to the resurrection, are not so convinced. The following are some passages which need to be weighed into the discussion, especially in terms of whether or not the Tanach supports psychopannychy.

#### Genesis 37:35

**“Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, ‘Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.’ So his father wept for him” (NASU).**

The first place where the Hebrew word *Sheol* is encountered in the Scriptures, appears in the Patriarch Jacob’s response to the news that his beloved son Joseph had been attacked and eaten by wild animals. Upon seeing the evidence, Jacob exclaimed, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!” (Genesis 37:33, NASU). Naturally, “Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days” (Genesis 37:34, NASU). Joseph was the son of Jacob from his dear wife Rachel, and his father Jacob knew of the dreams which Joseph had (Genesis 37:1-11), and had an inkling of the future God had intended for him. With Joseph now reported to be dead, this was all wasted.

Without expelling a huge amount of investigation, it is easy for some readers to see what Jacob said, and then encountering a version like the 1984 NIV, just assume that he meant, “in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.” Those who read a little more closely, noticing what Jacob

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 41.

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thought had occurred, as wild animals had not only murdered and eaten—but by this time had also excreted a great deal of Joseph’s body—should easily recognize how Joseph had no place of burial. The Hebrew clause *kiered el-beni avel Sheolah*, is best rendered as, “I shall go down to Sheol to my son” (RSV). While Jacob would be mourning for the loss of Joseph and not be able to see him grow up and accomplish his full potential, the two of them would be reunited in death in Sheol. But even such a reunification in death would not compensate Jacob for his loss. Walter Brueggemann offers these thoughts in his Genesis commentary: “So much had been entrusted to that young body. The body torn by the beast carried the future of the people. The ‘added’ one is irreplaceable [cf. Genesis 30:24]. No ritual covers it. No other children can substitute.”<sup>89</sup>

With Jacob having thought that Joseph was consumed by wild animals, having no place of burial (*qever*), the only thing left for the two of them would have been Sheol. Genesis 37:35 includes an important clue for later reading how Sheol is not a place of internment, but rather the shadowy world of the dead, a realm of another dimension. At the very least, as Hamilton indicates in his Genesis commentary, Sheol “is a proper name denoting the netherworld, which, in essence, was an extension of the grave.”<sup>90</sup> He advises readers to look at the term *Sheol* here as like the “vague [descriptions] ‘the great beyond’ or ‘afterworld.’”<sup>91</sup> No one who accepts an intermediate afterlife between death and resurrection would argue, solely on the basis of Genesis 37:35, that Sheol is not a partner along with the grave, nor that everything known about Sheol is seen here. As Hamilton further directs, “The question” of what this actually is, “can only be answered...by an investigation of all OT references to death, Sheol, resurrection, and the like.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 305.

<sup>90</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 537.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

## Messianics and the Afterlife

### Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Isaiah 8:19-20

“Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31, NASU).

“As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people” (Leviticus 20:6, NASU).

“When they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn*” (Isaiah 8:19-20, NASU).

Moses’ Teaching specifically forbade the Ancient Israelites from consulting mediums or necromancers (Heb. sing. *ov*), with capital punishment specified for those who would employ the services of such individuals. **It almost goes without saying that a prohibition on consulting the dead presupposes the belief in some kind of continued existence of the human consciousness after death.** Those who would consult a necromancer would do so with the express intention of communicating with a deceased person in the netherworld, who was to some degree aware of what existed beyond physical death. While the Lord certainly did not want His people engaging in these activities to open themselves up to evil, the intention for visiting a necromancer would have specifically been for not communicating with angels or demons, but instead with deceased humans. The only means for people to communicate with God, of course, were via worship and prayer; the means by which the departed were to be consulted were via occultic and forbidden practices.

It is indisputable that “There is abundant evidence for cults of the dead in the pagan world that surrounded Israel” (*ABD*), existing in Mesopotamia in the time of Abraham, in Ugarit, and in Canaan. There was an “ancient view that the dead as spirits maintained an ongoing relationship with the living, albeit in a weakened state of existence” (*ABD*).<sup>93</sup> While visiting a burial site was not uncommon for any ancient or modern culture, many ancient societies visited burial sites to do *more* than just remember and honor the deceased, but instead perform religious rituals to try to communicate with them and curry favor from the beyond. The rites of these cults, often

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<sup>93</sup> Charles A. Kennedy, “Dead, Cult of the,” in *ABD*, 2:106.

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trying to communicate with the deceased, were strictly forbidden for Ancient Israel.

The employment of *terafim*, or various household idols, were common in necromancy (Genesis 19:13; Judges 17:5; cf. Isaiah 29:4). Food offerings to the dead were prohibited (Deuteronomy 26:14; Psalm 106:28), as they were believed necessary for the ongoing nourishment of the departed. And it has even been suggested that one of the reasons why pork was off limits for Israel's diet, was how "the sacrifice of a pig was closely connected with rites for the dead (Isa 65:4)" (ABD).<sup>94</sup> Yet, the witness of the Tanach does indicate how the Israelites, even though prohibited from consulting necromancers, did try to communicate with the dead in Sheol. Some even assert, "The Hebrews in the remote past carried on an organized cult of the dead, especially of their ancestors" (ABD).<sup>95</sup>

Cooper concludes in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, "surely if the Israelites did not believe that the dead existed or that they could be consulted, there would have been no need to warn them against such practices."<sup>96</sup> A different kind of instruction would instead have been given in Moses' Teaching, if communication with dark spiritual forces or principalities were the only issue.

### Numbers 16:30-33

**"But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD.' As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with *their* possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly" (NASU).**

This passage was already reviewed in the previous section on Sheol, addressing the claim of psychopannychists that Korah and the rebels were only transported to the grave, and not a holding place of disembodiment. The ground opening up and swallowing the discontents and their possessions, was said by Moses to have been "something unprecedented" (HCSB) or a "miracle" (REB), meaning that this was not *the normal way* which

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 2:107.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 2:106.

<sup>96</sup> Cooper, 64.

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people died. The view that the rebels could have been physically killed by this, with their consciousnesses transferred to the netherworld of Sheol, is not at all a far stretch of the scene, especially if God wanted to emphasize how their possessions would not save them.

It is not unimportant that in the view of some, Korah and his company going down alive into Sheol, indicates that they may have never died. Philip J. Budd indicates in his Numbers commentary, how “The common death experienced by men in general is the withdrawal of breath and divine spirit (cf. e.g. Job 12:10; Ps 104:28). This is clearly distinguished from the abnormal intervention on God’s part anticipated here.” He lists one view, which asserts, “Since they ‘go down alive’ it may mean that they feel deprivation there, and suffer in a way that the dead do not.”<sup>97</sup> They do, after all, represent the first direct challenge to Moses’ authority, and to the establishment of the fledgling nation of Ancient Israel.

With this considered, the possibility that Korah and the rebels could have been taken into Sheol, without experiencing physical death, may serve as an antithesis of individuals like Enoch (Genesis 5:24) or Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) being translated by God up into Heaven.

### 1 Samuel 28:13-15

**“The king said to her, ‘Do not be afraid; but what do you see?’ And the woman said to Saul, ‘I see a divine being coming up out of the earth.’ He said to her, ‘What is his form?’ And she said, ‘An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe.’ And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage. Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’ And Saul answered, ‘I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do’” (NASU).**

King Saul visited the witch of Endor with the specific intent of communicating with the deceased Prophet Samuel, a significant problem for him as he routed all necromancers out of Israel, yet promised this medium that she would not be harmed (1 Samuel 28:9-10). As she performed her rituals, she said *elohim ra’iti olim min-ha’aretz*. Because the scene depicts

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<sup>97</sup> Philip J. Budd, *Word Biblical Commentary: Numbers*, Vol 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 188; also Timothy R. Ashley, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 318.

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some kind of spectre being called up and speaking to King Saul, psychopannychists have to immediately discount the possibility that this was actually the Prophet Samuel, as it would easily support the view that the consciousness of the deceased can exist outside of the body. Psychopannychists insist that this being, labeled as “*elohim*” by the witch of Endor, was only a demon impersonating Samuel and not the Prophet Samuel himself. Yet this has a problem when the rituals associated with the Canaanite cult of the dead—which we may safely assume this medium was practicing—are taken into proper consideration. Wright explains in his book *Resurrection of the Son of God*, “*Elohim* normally means ‘god’ or ‘gods’; this usage presumably reflects Canaanite belief in the divinity of the dead, surviving here as a kind of linguistic fossil. Here it seems to mean ‘a spirit’, ‘a being from the world of the gods’.”<sup>98</sup>

For some reason or another, God allowed the rites of this medium to work, and the Prophet Samuel communicated a rather ironic message to King Saul: “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary?” (1 Samuel 28:16, NASU). Obviously, if the Almighty Himself was unwilling to help Saul, then Samuel in the netherworld could not help Saul, either. And what was Samuel’s word to Saul? Samuel said, “tomorrow you and your sons will be with me” (1 Samuel 28:19, NASU), as they would be killed in battle and join the company of departed *refaim* or shades in Sheol. This was not just a poetic way of Samuel saying that Saul and his sons would die. Cooper notes in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, “[H]e expects Saul and his sons to be joining him. That would not be true if he were [just] in some special state of suspended animation provided by God for this unique occasion.”<sup>99</sup> The opinion of the Septuagint translators was, in fact, that the Prophet Samuel himself via a wizard, did communicate with King Saul:

“So Saul died for his transgressions, wherein he transgressed against God, against the word of the Lord, forasmuch as he kept *it* not, because Saul enquired of a wizard to seek *counsel*, and Samuel the prophet answered him: and he sought not the Lord: so he slew him, and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13-14, LXE).

The entity which identified itself as the Prophet Samuel, had a self-awareness as being the authentic Prophet Samuel. But, if for some small chance the critic is correct in suggesting that this was really some demon

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<sup>98</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, pp 93-94.

<sup>99</sup> Cooper, 65.

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imposter, psychopannychy still is insupportable. The demon imposter saying “tomorrow you...will be with me,” would mean that King Saul and his sons would still be transported to another realm. Demonic spirits are not native beings to Planet Earth, but rather to another dimension or spirit world. Such a condition requires disembodiment.

### Isaiah 14:9-11, 18-20

“Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; it arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; it raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us. Your pomp *and* the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; maggots are spread out *as your bed* beneath you and worms are your covering’ ...All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb. But you have been cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch, clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit like a trampled corpse. You will not be united with them in burial, because you have ruined your country, you have slain your people. May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever” (NASU).<sup>100</sup>

The death of the king of Babylon is an intriguing passage, because Bible readers see *Sheol* or the netherworld,<sup>101</sup> and *qever* or the tomb, depicted together. When the king of Babylon died, “Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come, it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth” (Isaiah 14:9, RSV), as the *refaim* or departed spirits of the kings who preceded him in death, actually welcomed his arrival into this new realm. They told their new companion, “So you have been stricken as we were, you have become like us!” (Isaiah 14:10, NJPS). In spite of the great power he may have wielded in life, the king of Babylon was not immune, as death is the great equalizer, and he was certainly no all-powerful deity as he might have imagined. What readers see, can indeed be interpreted as a disembodied post-mortem state in Sheol, actually described by J. Alec Motyer in *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, to be “the half-life of Sheol.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The 2005 TNIV tries to correct some of the mistakes of the 1984 NIV, by rendering Isaiah 14:9 with “the realm of the dead,” where *Sheol* appears, but still renders *Sheol* as “grave” in Isaiah 14:11.

<sup>101</sup> *Sheol* is rendered as “nether-world” in I.W. Slotki, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Isaiah* (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 68.

<sup>102</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 144.

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Isaiah 14:11 adds a physical dimension to this, because when the king of Babylon died, he was “brought down to Sheol; [with] maggots...spread out *as your bed* beneath you and worms are your covering” (NASU). Each of the kings who had preceded the king of Babylon in death, had their own place of internment, their own “house” (Isaiah 14:18, KJV) where their remains rested among their people, and they could be remembered and honored. The king of Babylon, in contrast, had “been cast out<sup>103</sup> of [his] tomb [*qever*]<sup>104</sup>” (Isaiah 14:19, NASU) and “will not be united” with the kings who preceded him “in burial [*b’qevurah*], because [he has] ruined [his] country” (Isaiah 14:20, NASU). The king of Babylon had no burial in any tomb or grave, but instead was given a bed of maggots and covering of worms. Consider the reaction of those who witnessed the fall of the king of Babylon:

“Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, *saying*, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to *go home*?’” (Isaiah 14:16-17, NASU).

In spite of the great power and influence he wielded in life, the evil actions of the king of Babylon caught up with him in the end. John D.W. Watts explains in his commentary on Isaiah,

“The observations of those who view the corpse reflect their astonishment and horror. The body has not been buried, but abandoned like garbage (v 19). He shares the fate of the dead among the poorest people: like the *aborted fetus*, like *the clothes of one stabbed* in a brawl, one killed in a *fall*, one *trampled* by a mob or on a battle-field, he is simply dumped in a pit and left to the birds and animals.”<sup>105</sup>

Rather than having a tomb where he could be honored and remembered by his people, all the king of Babylon had was a place among the shades in Sheol, where he could then be chastised by those who preceded him in death. His mangled corpse disappeared into history. Motyer suggests in *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, “Stripped of his royal robes, the king now has nothing to

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<sup>103</sup> Heb. verb *shalakh*; appearing in the Hifil stem (casual action, active voice), meaning either “**throw down**” or “**throw away**” (*CHALOT*, 372).

<sup>104</sup> “sepulchre” (RSV); “grave” (ESV/NRSV).

<sup>105</sup> John D.W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary: Isaiah 1-33*, Vol 24 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 211.

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clothe him but the bodies of those who died in...battle, heaped together ignominiously.”<sup>106</sup>

Advocates of psychopannychy do not see this scene as depicting any kind of literal descent of the consciousness of the king of Babylon into Sheol, but instead conclude that the king of Babylon dying and being greeted by previous kings in Sheol is just a poetic taunt, not to be taken with any kind of literalness. Previously, trees had been depicted as speaking (Isaiah 14:8), so why should readers take the shades of the kings in Sheol as being anything more than just metaphor? Sheol here is simply thought to be a synonym for the grave. But it does matter how *people* taunt the king of Babylon. In James 5:4, for example, while the unpaid wages of laborers figuratively cried out against the ungodly rich, so did the laborers themselves cry out to the Lord. No one argues against the laborers themselves being real people:

“Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (James 5:4, NASU).

In the full picture of what Bible readers see in the king of Babylon’s downfall, what it actually witnessed is Sheol and the grave contrasted. The taunt of the kings in Sheol was precisely that the king of Babylon had no grave, while the rest of them did have graves! The praises and fanfare which this monarch received in Earthly life, had shifted toward an existence of being ridiculed by those who predeceased him. At the very best, what the remains of the king of Babylon had, was a kind of sofa made of worms and maggots, resembling the kind of soft cushions he would have been able to rest upon as monarch. Morey states in *Death and the Afterlife*, “the king is cast out of his grave (*kever*) in order to be thrown into Sheol where the departed spirits can rebuke him (vv. 9, 10). In this passage, *Sheol* and *kever* are opposites, not synonyms,”<sup>107</sup> even if they might work together as partners in the death process.

The point made in the taunt was that the king of Babylon joined the other kings in Sheol or the netherworld—*not* that he joined them in burial. If there was any metaphor which needs to be understood from Isaiah 14:9, it would not be the taunting of the king of Babylon by the shades of the other

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<sup>106</sup> Motyer, *Isaiah*, 145.

<sup>107</sup> Morey, 76.

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deceased kings, but rather how these kings were depicted as rising up from thrones which they sat upon. This should be taken as symbolic language depicting these shades asserting some of their previous authority or reputation in Earthly life, not that they actually had real thrones or chairs of some sort to sit upon in the netherworld.

There is hermeneutical difficulty for the psychopannychist who believes that Isaiah 14:9-11, 18-20 is simply a symbolic way of describing death, but no post-mortem disembodied state. What is keeping Bible readers from interpreting Scripture passages, where they consider that the literal condition of the dead to be complete unconsciousness, in a similar poetic or symbolic way? Cooper notes in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting* that their “objection cuts both ways. It is also a problem for those who argue from Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes that pure unconsciousness is the literal Hebrew belief about the dead. Those texts [could not] be taken at face value either.”<sup>108</sup> It is disingenuous of the psychopannychist to just allegorize as poetry all references to Bible passages which depict people in a post-mortem, disembodied conscious state prior to resurrection.

### **Psalm 146:2-4**

**“I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (NASU).**

Psychopannychists often think that they have a very strong case from Psalm 146:2-4, as v. 4 obviously describes what happens to a person at death: someone’s breath leaves, the body decomposes, and the brainwaves or thoughts cease. No conscious post-mortem state is seen. These conclusions, however, fail to take into consideration the actual message being communicated by the Psalmist.

The Psalmist declared how he would praise the Lord with his being: “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!” (Psalm 146:1, NASU). The Psalmist refuses to place his trust “in the great, in mortal man who cannot save” (Psalm 146:3, NJPS). This is because human beings die and decompose, unlike a God who is the Eternal Creator and who demonstrates consistent faithfulness (Psalm 146:5-10). On these points, psychopannychists and those who believe in an intermediate afterlife, are not in disagreement.

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<sup>108</sup> Cooper, pp 63-64.

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What is to be made of the Psalmist's assertion that when a mortal dies, "in that very day his thoughts perish"? Some suggest that the scene here was Israel trying to seek its deliverance from allies of other nations, something which indicates distrust in God and was something which would not benefit them. Others would simply say that this concerned individuals placing their trust in princes or political leaders. Yet regardless of which view one takes, *esh'ton* is more concurrent with one's "**plan**" (*HALOT*; cf. RSV, NIV, NRSV, ESV, etc.),<sup>109</sup> as opposed to one's thoughts being the human consciousness. Leslie C. Allen explains in his Psalms commentary, "Their creatureliness spells the transience of their policies: in spite of their apparent power, from a long-term standpoint they are powerless."<sup>110</sup>

There is good reason to conclude that Psalm 146:2-4 does not concern the consciousness of a person ending at death, but instead the plans of any mortal sought out for salvation—over and against a God who should be praised and who alone can provide salvation. Only the Lord, because of who He is, is worthy of such praise and the Psalmist's trust, something that is to last *b'odi*, as long as the Psalmist can "exist" (Psalm 146:2, YLT/NJPS). While limited mortals who may be sought for salvation would fade away, the ability for the Psalmist to praise God is notably something that will not end, as *'od* frequently regards "a going round, continuance" (*BDB*)<sup>111</sup> or "permanence, constancy" (*CHALOT*).<sup>112</sup> In spite of what happens, the Psalmist's praises or acclamations to God, and the confidence placed in Him, will not stop with his Earthly life—even though the plans of princes would—likely necessitating some sort of ongoing, presumably post-mortem existence for the Psalmist,<sup>113</sup> especially when read in concert with other passages.

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<sup>109</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1:898.

<sup>110</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 101-150*, Vol 21 (Dallas: Word Books, 2002), Prolepsis database.

<sup>111</sup> *BDB*, 729.

<sup>112</sup> *CHALOT*, 267.

A further definition of *od* is offered by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 811: "It indicates repetition and/or continuance of something. It expresses the fact that something continues to happen."

<sup>113</sup> As recognized by various historical commentators (John Gill, Adam Clarke).

# What Happens Between Death and the Resurrection?

## Ecclesiastes 3:18-22

**“I said to myself concerning the sons of men, ‘God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.’ For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth? I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?” (NASU).**

In examining the works and teachings of psychopannychists, it is not difficult at all to see that there is perhaps no more favorite book of the Bible for them, than Ecclesiastes. For some reason or another, they feel content in giving this anonymous and controversial book more weight than many other texts of Scripture.<sup>114</sup> Few Messianics, much less Hebrew Roots people, who have adopted the doctrine of psychopannychy, are aware of how Ecclesiastes was one of the last books to be included in the Tanach canon, for the specific reason that some viewed it as being anti-resurrection. Tremper Longman III indicates in his commentary, how throughout both Jewish and Christian history, “The book was accused of contradictions, secularity, and even outright heresy”—precisely because “According to Qohelet, death is the end” and no resurrection (at least from some readings of Ecclesiastes) is to likely be anticipated.<sup>115</sup>

The Mishnah recorded debates which occurred between the Pharisaical Schools of Hillel and Shammai over Ecclesiastes’ usefulness: “[The Book of] Qohelet does not render the hands unclean,’ according to the House of Shammai. And the House of Hillel say, ‘It renders the hands unclean’” (m.*Eduyyot* 5:3).<sup>116</sup> Shammai considered the text to not render one’s hands unclean because Ecclesiastes was not intrinsically that holy, whereas Hillel viewed the text as being holy. Debate over the holiness, or unholiness, of the Book of Ecclesiastes, was still going on until the late First Century C.E. (m.*Yadayaim* 3:5), well after Yeshua the Messiah had come onto the scene.

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<sup>114</sup> Even those who hold to traditional, Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes, are largely aware that it has some issues. In the estimation of Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 454, “It is almost universally agreed among Biblical scholars that Ecclesiastes portrays Solomon’s apostasy and is therefore questionable for determining doctrine.”

<sup>115</sup> Tremper Longman III, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp 26, 273.

<sup>116</sup> Neusner, *Mishnah*, 653.

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The Apostle Paul's reference to Ecclesiastes 1:2, in Romans 8:20, assured Ecclesiastes a place within the Christian canon, but much of the Church has viewed Ecclesiastes with some of the same skepticism as the Rabbis.

Any difficulty those who believe in a temporary disembodied post-mortem state may have, however, needs to be resolved from the text of Ecclesiastes itself, and not with just dismissing or ignoring this book as somehow not being Scripture.

Here in Ecclesiastes 3:19 it is directly stated, "Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal" (NIV). Upon first reading, it appears that the consciousness of a human being does not go to an extra-dimensional holding place at the time of death. To the psychopannychist, those who believe in a disembodied post-mortem state have obviously got it all wrong.

The cotext of Ecclesiastes 3:19, though, provides readers a slightly fuller picture of what Qohelet was saying to his audience—an audience which likely needed to be encouraged to live a godly life, rejecting hedonism. Qohelet had stated just earlier, "I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves. He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end" (Ecclesiastes 3:9-11, NASU). *Gam et-ha'olam natan b'libam* is a unique statement to consider: "Also, he has put eternity into man's heart" (ESV), or "he has given human beings an awareness of eternity" (CJSB). While limited creatures that they are, human beings are to understand that there is something beyond Earth. Life on Earth, while possessing good things (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13a), pales in comparison to how "everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has *so* worked that men should fear Him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14, NASU). A life lived without Him as the emphasis misses the point! People must turn to God to be shown all the wonders of His work.

Qohelet returned to his largely pessimistic method of reasoning with the crowd. The cycles of human life repeat themselves (Ecclesiastes 3:15), but he added something: "in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness" (Ecclesiastes 3:16, NASU). *Resha* was present in places where it should not have been (cf. Micah 6:10-11), and so what would happen was, "'God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,' for a time for every matter and for every deed is there" (Ecclesiastes 3:17, NASU). This could be read as a hint of a future resurrection and judgment. But what follows are the difficult words which

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have stirred unbelievable controversy among many examiners of Ecclesiastes, as Qohelet asserted,

“As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like animals. Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless [*hevel*; more accurately meaning ‘transitory’]. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, NIV).

These are the kinds of sentiments which one might expect the Sadducees of the First Century C.E. to have said, those who categorically denied the resurrection of the dead. Did Qohelet deny the resurrection of the dead? Some interpreters actually say *yes*—so whether one is a psychopannychist or one believes in a temporary disembodied afterlife—this should force readers to interpret the Book of Ecclesiastes within the scope of the wider Biblical canon.<sup>117</sup>

When one considers the larger Biblical message, and the setting of Ecclesiastes as the period of opulence and corruption reflected in the Books of Amos and Micah, I would suggest that Qohelet’s purpose *was not at all*, in fact, to equate the fate of human beings and animals as being the same. Instead, he wanted to get his listeners to see that there was more to life than just fulfilling one’s sensual desires—things which were transitory and not permanent. Qohelet said that God would bring people to justice who committed wickedness (Ecclesiastes 3:17). Wicked people who think they can get away with sinful deeds, are really no better than the animals—thinking that once they die they will face no consequences for their actions before a Higher Power. Qohelet was making various points, using what we would classify today as reverse psychology: he said the exact opposite of what was true, to get his audience to think through the implications of their beliefs and actions.

From this angle, Qohelet cynically said, “For who can prove that the human spirit goes up and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21, NLT). Rather than speaking indisputable facts about how human beings and animals were compositionally indifferent, could it

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<sup>117</sup> For a further discussion, consult T. Longman III, “Ecclesiastes 3: History of Interpretation,” in Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), pp 140-149.

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instead have been that Qohelet was really trying to get his audience *to think* about their wickedness, and if they *really did* face the same fate as the animals? *After all, who can really prove that there is something more than this life?* His line of reasoning was for them to simply enjoy life on Earth now, because after all, how can one really know what happens next? He said, “I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?” (Ecclesiastes 3:22, NASU). No consequences after death, right?

Within the larger Biblical canon, readers and examiners clearly do know how there are definite consequences after death, and that the fate of human beings *is entirely different* from that of the animals. The Apostle Paul was clear on how “each one [of us will] be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10, NASU). Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 presents no problems to those who believe in *either* the resurrection and/or the resurrection and an intermediate afterlife—*if* the text is approached with the right presuppositions. Qohelet desired that his audience not allow the wickedness he had seen on Earth persist, and he asked them rhetorical questions to really think about whether their lives faced no consequences after death, and whether or not their destiny and composition was the same as the animals.

### **Ecclesiastes 9:5-10**

**“For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun. Go *then*, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going”** (NASU).

This section of the Book of Ecclesiastes, is probably the most frequently quoted Scripture passage by psychopannychists, toward people who believe in an intermediate afterlife prior to the resurrection. Ecclesiastes 9:5b said, “the dead do not know anything” (NASU) or “the dead know nothing” (RSV/NIV). *Sometimes this is screamed at people who are grieving the recent loss*

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of a loved one. While Qohelet was not screaming this at his audience, Bible readers need to once again understand his intention for making this remark, and seeing whether or not it really does support psychopannychy.

Qohelet was tempered by wisdom, as he said, "I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God....It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice" (Ecclesiastes 9:1-2, NASU). The power of death is something which will affect each and every person, as "there is one fate for all men" (Ecclesiastes 9:3, NASU). Qohelet's emphasis here was what would happen to evil people, and while "insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead" (Ecclesiastes 9:3b, NASU). You almost see a chance for possible repentance in his claim, "whoever is joined with all the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion" (Ecclesiastes 9:4, NASU). One might be weaker *and righteous* before God while living, as opposed to having died strong but with *no hope of restitution before Him*. What follows are some more words from Qohelet which have been strongly debated among interpreters:

"For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, NASU).

Psychopannychists will often take the short clause, "the dead know nothing" (RSV/NIV), and then claim that anyone who believes in an afterlife—in either Heaven or Hell—between the time of death and resurrection, is in severe error for thinking so. Yet this was not the context of Qohelet's words. Qohelet was speaking on how the dead could not participate "in all that is done under the sun," *tachat ha'shamesh*, things done on Planet Earth.<sup>118</sup>

Those who believe in psychopannychy often base their doctrine on half-verses such as Ecclesiastes 9:5b, which say "the dead do not know anything" (NASU). Yet this is not definitive evidence of no intermediate post-mortem

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<sup>118</sup> The clause *tachat ha'shamesh* appears throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, forcing any responsible reader to see that Qohelet's frequent vantage point was life as experienced on Earth: Ecclesiastes 1:3, 9, 14; 2:11, 17ff, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:12, 17; 6:1, 12; 8:9, 15, 17; 9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 10:5.

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afterlife, as the verse *continues* describing human life on Earth, and how the dead do not know of any of the following Earth-bound things: “their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:5c-6, NIV). Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 does not say anything about the condition of dead persons or where they are, but instead lists specific things which the dead cannot do, precisely because they are dead.

The things Qohelet listed such as love, hate, and zeal, were things which these people had time to participate in on Earth or “under the sun,” but could not participate in beyond the veil of death, hence not “knowing” about them. Once a person is dead, his or her fate is sealed before the Almighty, and no chance of restitution remains. A life of these specific worldly experiences is over. (Just consider how one of the greatest gifts which God has given to the human race, the pleasures and intimacy of marital sexual intercourse, can no longer be partaken of once a person dies.)

And so what is one to do while living that life “under the sun”? Is it a life of no value according to Qohelet? No. He said, “Go *then*, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works” (Ecclesiastes 9:7, NASU). Now was the time to live a life pleasing to God, where one could enjoy many blessings—and not condemnation—from Him! Qohelet said to “Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:9-10, NASU). Life on Earth, in spite of its imperfections, indeed has its rewards which God wants people to take advantage of—especially those who are living a life of obedience to Him. These are things, though, which are no longer available after death.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says that the joys God has created to be experienced on this Earth cannot be enjoyed when a deceased person goes to Sheol. While versions like the 1984 NIV render this as, “for in the grave where you are going...,” as previously discussed this more accurately means, “for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” (2005 TNIV). A deceased person joins the *refaim* or shades in Sheol, an extra-dimensional holding place for the consciousness, and is not completely what he or she once was on Planet Earth. Ecclesiastes 9:5-10, and Qohelet’s assertion “the dead know nothing,” presents no problems for those who believe in an intermediate disembodied

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afterlife, if readers can see how he substantiated what knowing nothing about *really involved*.

There are no major passages in the Tanach which conclusively prove that when a person dies there is no disembodied intermediate post-mortem state. There are passages in the Tanach, though, which do prove **that life on Earth is something to be enjoyed to its fullest**. Our purpose for living here on Earth *should not* be to just die and escape to the hereafter; such a view is absolutely foreign to the Tanach. Human beings have been given dominion over Planet Earth, and they should take advantage of all the wonderful joys in nature and in this world. As the Psalmist so aptly put it, “Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:3-4, NASU). God will shower His people with rewards in this world if they trust in Him and love Him! God’s people do not have to wait for the eschaton to experience such treasures. Ross’ thoughts from his book *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is*, are excellent, as human beings consider the joys of the current Creation, and the great things which people get to experience on this Earth:

“Today, with a human population topping six billion, Earth still offers plentiful supplies. In fact, the universe and Earth seem lavishly over-endowed for humanity’s survival. There is enough here for people to enjoy a magnificent environment, eat delightful food, spend quality time with others, access technology, and experience pleasure of all kinds—spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical. We easily could get by with less.....

“The first creation is ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31). It’s the best possible realm to encourage as many people as possible to choose something far better: an eternal relationship with the Source of all goodness. This creation also equips and trains individuals to receive the roles, rewards, pleasures, and relational fulfillments of the new creation. It’s the best possible place to bring about, part of that preparation, a rapid conquest of anything less than perfect goodness, and that of course includes evil.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Hugh Ross, *Why the Universe Is the Way It Is* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), pp 149, 185.

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### The Greek View(s) of Death and Afterlife

Before one can examine what the death expectations of the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) are, it is commonly argued that the Ancient Jews, the Pharisees in particular, picked up the idea of a disembodied afterlife from their interactions with the Greeks and not their reading of the Tanach (OT) Scriptures. For many people within today's Messianic sphere of influence—and especially those in the Hebrew Roots movement—all that needs to be said is, "Belief in the afterlife is Greek!", and that is reason enough for many to reject the concept of how born again Believers who have died are in the presence of the Lord, awaiting the resurrection (or for that same matter, many other Biblical doctrines). As I have far too frequently encountered, while a hyped-up fear of Hellenism or the Ancient Greeks have been invoked by various psychopannychists, I have never witnessed *a single* teacher actually quote the classical philosophers and what they believed—much less engage with such philosophers' opinions!

It is absolutely futile if Messianic and/or Hebrew Roots psychopannychists try to argue that the idea of an intermediate disembodied afterlife would have *only* been a late Hellenistic importation to Second Temple Judaism, *never known or encountered before*. This is because idea of a disembodied afterlife goes back several millennia before the classical Greek period. Various civilizations which preceded the founding of Ancient Israel and the giving of the Torah, in fact, believed in a disembodied afterlife.

The Mesopotamian *Descent of Ishtar*, dated to the late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.E.), portrayed this goddess descending into the underworld where the dead reside. Its opening words state, "To Kurnugi, land of [no return], Ishtar daughter of Sin was determined to go to the dark house, dwelling of Erkalla's god, to the house which those who enter cannot leave, on the road where travelling is one-way only, to the house where those who enter are deprived of light, where dust is their food, clay their bread. They see no light, they dwell in darkness."<sup>120</sup> This depicts a Mesopotamian deity going to a place from which no one returns.

The Egyptian religion had a significant theology of afterlife, as is easily testified by the pyramids and various inscriptions within the tombs of the pharaohs. The *Egyptian Book of the Dead* is a lengthy compilation of such inscriptions and their attendant papyri, describing what would happen when a departed person would enter into the netherworld. A person's entry

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<sup>120</sup> Stephanie Dalley, trans., *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155.

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into the world of the dead began by being judged by the god Osiris, as the heart was weighed on a scale and must have been lighter than a feather:

“Saith Horus the son of Isis, ‘I have come to thee, O Un-nefer, and I have brought unto thee the Osiris Ani. His heart is [found] righteous, and it hath come forth from the balance; it hath not sinned against any god or any goddess. Thoth hath weighed it according to the decree pronounced unto him by the company of the gods; and it is most true and righteous. Grant that cakes and ale may be given unto him, and let him appear in the presence of the god Osiris; and let him be like unto the followers of Horus for ever and for ever.”<sup>121</sup>

Morey goes on to summarize in *Death and the Afterlife*, how

“When we turn to the literary evidence, we find that the oldest extant literature abounds with references to a life after death. The *Egyptian Book of the Dead* reveals the elaborate views of that great civilization which arose along the Nile. The earliest Chinese literature spoke eloquently of man’s afterlife. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* reveals the ancient beliefs of those who lived ‘at the top of the world.’ The Babylonian and Assyrian belief in an afterlife is indisputable.”<sup>122</sup>

While this does not serve as conclusive evidence that the Ancient Israelites likewise believed in a disembodied post-mortem state, it does demonstrate how examiners have an array of pre-classical options at their disposal. It was not as though all civilizations prior to the classical Greeks believed in no afterlife, and that once the ancient Jews interacted with the Greeks, they then incorporated a rather late concept into their religion. On the contrary, there is a widely attested array of Ancient Near Eastern materials which support the premise that a disembodied afterlife was a view held by cultures contemporary to Ancient Israel. One could just as easily argue that the Ancient Israelites adapted the views of the Mesopotamians or the Egyptians regarding the post-mortem state, into the compilation of the Tanach Scriptures and writing about Sheol, just as one may try to argue that the Pharisees adapted the views of the Greeks. Among interpreters, though, John N. Oswald (in his Isaiah commentary) is one who appeals only to the concept of Sheol being the netherworld of the deceased, from the

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<sup>121</sup> E.A. Wallis Budge, trans., *Egyptian Book of the Dead* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 29. Note the illustration of the weighing of the heart on pp 31-32.

<sup>122</sup> Morey, 67.

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views found within the Ancient Near East—and not the later period of Hellenism:

“It is evident that the Hebrews conceived of the realm of the dead as a dusty, shadowy place where a dim reflection of the person lived on in inactivity...It was not a place at which arrival was anticipated. Those who went there had nothing to look forward to, so the dead are called *repā’im*, ‘the slack ones.’...[W]hile Sheol is [often] personified...there is no god or goddess of the underworld, who would be a central figure if [Isaiah 14:9-11ff] were written outside the Israelite milieu.”<sup>123</sup>

**But what did the Greeks actually believe?** Psychopannychists might try to argue that the Pharisees would have modified a view of Sheol as exclusively being “the grave,” perhaps to adhere more to the scene of Odysseus’ descent into Hades, where he encountered, among other people, his father, his mother, Achilles, and King Agamemnon (*The Odyssey* Book 11).<sup>124</sup> Yet as previously discussed, usages of Sheol in the Hebrew Scriptures *themselves* can demonstrate that it is an extra-dimensional holding place for the consciousnesses of the deceased, not requiring any kind of Hellenistic influence or re-interpretation. In fact, one of the interesting realities which need not elude any examiner, is that in the First Centuries B.C.E. and C.E., many Greeks and Romans *did not believe* in a disembodied afterlife as all that remained for a person. In his book *The Meaning of the Resurrection*, Paul Beasley-Murray notes the variance of views present in the Mediterranean world of the Apostles:

“In contemporary paganism, death was viewed as a sleep from which there would be no awakening....Although some Greek philosophers, such as Plato, taught a belief in the afterlife...these beliefs were lacking in substance and amounted to little more than viewing the life to come as a poor

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<sup>123</sup> John N. Oswalt, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 318 fn#15.

Also Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 83 fn#12:

“Belief in an underworld of some form was almost universal in the ancient Near East. While the Old Testament shares this belief to some extent, it does not endorse pagan ideas about it (e.g. that it is ruled by a god or gods of the underworld). If such a realm exists, it too is ruled by the LORD.”

<sup>124</sup> Homer: *The Odyssey*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: HarperCollins, 1975), pp 168-184.

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reflection of the present. Furthermore, these beliefs were not widespread.”<sup>125</sup>

Could it actually be true that many Greeks and Romans of the First Century did not believe in any kind of existence after death? Consider the Apostle Paul’s encounter with the Epicureans and Stoics at the Aeropagus (Mars Hill) in Athens:

“And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, ‘What would this idle babbler wish to say?’ Others, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,’ —because he was preaching Yeshua and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?’...Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, ‘We shall hear you again concerning this’” (Acts 17:18-19, 32, NASU).

It is very easy for many Bible readers to overlook the references one sees to the Epicureans and Stoics, and simply conclude that the divisions between them were no different than two rival political parties, and then move on. On the contrary, both the Epicureans and Stoics had their own views of the post-mortem state, with the former being able to easily dismiss Paul’s convictions of the resurrection. Epicurean philosophy, dating to the Fourth Century B.C.E., largely denied any kind of post-mortem existence, as “Epicurus taught that (1) there is no life after (physical) death, for death is the dissolution of the atoms in our bodily existence; (2) even if man were to live on, there would be no divine retribution, for the gods are not concerned with human life” (*ISBE*).<sup>126</sup> The Epicureans, largely holding to a philosophy of self pleasure until one died, would have easily dismissed the concept of a resurrection, as they advocated a significantly agnostic approach to any kind of existence after death, largely discounting the afterlife. It is not difficult to see them saying to Paul, “What would this seed picker wish to say?” (Acts 17:18, YLT).

Stoicism was a far more dominant ideology than Epicureanism, likewise originating from the Fourth Century B.C.E., and having significantly impacted the Romans as well as the Greeks, whose disciples included Seneca, Epictetus, and the Second Century C.E. emperor Marcus Aurelius.

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<sup>125</sup> Paul Beasley-Murray, *The Meaning of the Resurrection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 163.

<sup>126</sup> R.V. Vunderink, “Epicureans,” in *ISBE*, 2:121.

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Stoicism held that the Supreme Being was everything in the universe, as Stoic philosophy “may be described as a monistic and materialistic pantheism, in which God permeates all of nature” (*Dictionary of New Testament Background*).<sup>127</sup> “The essential nature of man is therefore one with the essential nature of the universe...For man is related to the universe as a microcosm to macrocosm, and the same fiery principle of life, law, and reason pervades them both” (*IDB*).<sup>128</sup> At death then, whatever matter or energy composed a human being, would simply be engulfed back by the universe. The Stoics did believe in a kind of disembodied afterlife, one where “At death, the soul separates from the body. It exists for a certain time on its own, but is reabsorbed into the [universe]...no later than at the next *ekpyrōsis*” (*ABD*).<sup>129</sup> This kind of post-mortem state would actually lead to a reincarnation of a person throughout the ages. The Stoics in Athens would have been more open to hearing Paul’s views on the resurrection of the body.

In contrast to the Epicurean belief that physical death was the end of one’s existence, and the Stoic belief in reincarnation, one encounters **Platonic dualism**. Psychopannychists commonly argue that Jews and Christians who believe in an intermediate afterlife have adopted Platonic dualism, a philosophy where physical matter is evil, but where metaphysical immaterialism is good. Socrates, Plato’s predecessor from the Fifth Century B.C.E., is recorded as saying, “Death, as it seems to me, happens to be nothing other than the separation of two things, the soul and the body, from each other. When, therefore, they are separated from each other, each of them is in a condition not much worse than when the human being was alive, and the body has its own nature” (*Gorgias* 524b).<sup>130</sup> Wright notes in *Resurrection of the Son of God*, “For Plato, the soul is the non-material aspect of a human being, and is the aspect that really matters.”<sup>131</sup> The human body is simply a temporary dwelling place for such a soul, and death is a release for the person to be brought into a greater and much better form of existence. Contemplating death, it is witnessed in the Platonic work *Phaedo*,

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<sup>127</sup> J.C. Thom, “Stoicism,” in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 1140.

<sup>128</sup> F.W. Beare, “Stoics,” in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:444.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Schmeller, “Stoics, Stoicism,” in *ABD*, 6:211.

<sup>130</sup> Plato: *Gorgias*, trans., James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1998), 125.

<sup>131</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 49.

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“[T]his ‘purification’, as we saw some time ago in our discussion, consist[s] in separating the soul as much as possibly from the body...And to have its dwelling, so far as it can, both now and in the future, alone by itself, freed from the chains of the body....And the desire to free the soul is found chiefly, or rather only, in the true philosopher; in fact the philosopher’s occupation consists precisely in the freeing and separation of soul from body” (*Phaedo* 67d).<sup>132</sup>

From this point of view, Ralph P. Martin can conclude (in his 2 Corinthians commentary) that various “Greeks looked forward to dying, for it represented a flight of the soul from the body and as such it promised a desirable goal.”<sup>133</sup> The physical body was just a shell to be thrown off of a person at death, and all that mattered was a release into the great beyond. It is not at all unreasonable for psychopannychists to point out that this is a common sentiment expressed by many of today’s evangelical Protestants who contemplate death. A release from the physical body will usher one into the endless bliss of Heaven, as God Himself is only concerned about the saving of an immaterial consciousness, *and not* the whole human being. This is what many contemporary Christian people believe about death, **having been taught incorrectly.**

The historian Josephus, writing about the Jewish Essenes, testified that their view of death and the afterlife was not too dissimilar from that of the Platonists. Matter was temporary and corruptible, and good people spend eternity in some place far beyond the seas:

“For their doctrine is this:—That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue for ever; and that they come out of the most subtle air, and are united to their bodies as in prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinion of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain, or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breezes of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean...” (*Wars of the Jews* 2.154-155).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Plato: *The Last Days of Socrates*, trans., Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp 120-121.

<sup>133</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, Vol 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 105.

<sup>134</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 607.

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While Platonic dualism does advocate a permanently disembodied afterlife, and while many Christian people have simply and errantly (and unknowingly) adapted Platonism into their view of human composition, it is inappropriate to just assume that the orthodox Jewish and Christian traditions have likewise just reworked Platonism into all of their theology. The very belief in the resurrection assumes that God is indeed concerned with the whole human person, *including* the human body. It is inappropriate to think that interpreters have to choose between either a permanent disembodied state after death (Platonism), or absolute unconsciousness until the resurrection (psychopannychy).

Those who hold to a monistic view of the human constitution often go a bit overboard in criticizing all forms of dualism, when most dualists in theology today do, in fact, emphasize the concern of God with the entire human being. In the estimation of Marc Cortez,

“most contemporary dualists are...keen to emphasize the holistic nature of embodied human life. Although dualists think that there is more to the story, they are quick to affirm the biblical emphasis on the human person being an embodied, psychophysical being” (*JETS*).<sup>135</sup>

**Holistic dualists** who believe in an intermediate afterlife do not adhere to Platonic dualism, but instead affirm that among all of God’s creations, the human being is different and thus must experience a different kind of death in comparison to the animals. Cooper explains in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, how “Affirming a dichotomy of body and soul at death does not necessarily contradict [the] holistic emphasis on human life and seems wholly compatible with Old Testament anthropology.”<sup>136</sup> One can only be labeled a Platonic dualist if there is *no emphasis* on the resurrection of the physical body in the eschaton, and *no emphasis* on God’s affirmation of how physical matter is *not evil*. Much of the Platonism which is witnessed in contemporary evangelicalism, has come as a result of popular preaching and sentiment—not any detailed engagement with the Scriptures. It has emerged because of tendencies to make sermonic messages more simplistic and “easy to understand” for congregants, rather than challenging and stirring people to probe the Word of God for themselves.

That God is concerned with the human body every bit as much as He is concerned with the human consciousness, can best be seen in the burial

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<sup>135</sup> Marc Cortez, “Book Review of *Body, Soul, and Human Life* by Joel B. Green” in [Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society](#) Vol. 52 No. 4 (2009):877.

<sup>136</sup> Cooper, 95.

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practices of the Ancient Jews. The Jews gave extreme respect to the human body after death, with internment most often taking place within twenty-four hours,<sup>137</sup> a custom which continues today within much of the observant Jewish community. Historically, both Jews and Christians have strongly disfavored cremation, with reasons ranging from the belief that God could not resurrect ashes (even though He surely can), to the view that a human made in God's image should not be defaced in such a dishonorable way. Only in the past two centuries have Christian views on cremation liberalized, being started by Europeans who saw it as a necessity, as cemetery space became unavailable. Now cremation is commonly practiced, often so that one will not have to think about a loved one decaying in a cemetery: a form of denial for survivors. Many of today's evangelicals oppose cremation, and they most especially oppose cremation accompanied with scattering ashes. History shows that cremation was quite common in the Roman world, for the precise reason that the body was viewed as a shell to just be discarded after death, as rubbish or garbage. Even burial at sea, of a complete human body, would be preferable to this (cf. Revelation 20:13).

The kind of holistic dualism depicted in the Apostolic Scriptures, is not the kind of dualism witnessed in Platonic philosophy. It is one which recognizes a nuanced difference between the body and the essential person as soul (Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4)—or perhaps described better where one sees the “inner man/self” or *esō anthrōpon*, compared and/or contrasted, with the “outer man/self” or *exō anthrōpos* (cf. Romans 7:22-23; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:14-16). The comparison of one's Earthly dwelling to the beyond may also be considered (2 Peter 1:13-15), although in such an intermediate condition a person would be considered “unclothed” (2 Corinthians 5:4, NASU) and thus incomplete. It would be an absolute mistake for anyone to think of the comparison of inner and outer man, or being at home in the body and thus separated from the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6), as the Bible's endorsement of Platonism. The redemption of the human being includes *all* aspects of the human being, *including* the body. As the Apostle Paul so aptly wrote in Romans 8:22-23,

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly

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<sup>137</sup> P.S. Johnston, “Burial and Mourning,” in T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 105; B.R. McCane, “Burial Practices, Jews,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 175.

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for our adoption as sons, **the redemption of our bodies**" (Romans 8:22-23, NIV; cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

J.K. Chamblin summarizes in the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, how

"Paul's 'holistic dualism' is utterly opposed to other kinds of dualism in the ancient world...in which *sarx* [flesh] or *sōma* [body] is inherently evil, the human *psychē* or *pneuma* [soul or spirit] is inherently good, and salvation consists in the release of the soul from the body. Paul dreads entry into a bodiless state at death (2 Cor 5:1-5) because it is unnatural and abnormal...That period is indeed an 'intermediate state'; ultimate salvation awaits the reintegration of the person at the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15:42-48; Phil 3:20-21...)." <sup>138</sup>

Yet, he is also keen to describe how

"Neither the monism of idealism that reduces the person to soul nor the monism of materialism that reduces the person to body is compatible with Paul. Nor are those contemporary forms of dualism which encourage [primarily] the saving of the soul and the depreciation of the body." <sup>139</sup>

Platonic Greek philosophy insisted that a person's soul was trapped inside the body, and seeking a final release to the great beyond. In contrast to this, those who believe in an intermediate afterlife believe that it is *intermediate* **precisely because of the doctrine of resurrection**. A human body is *not* something which God is unconcerned with saving, nor is it just an "empty shell" to be dispensed with as rubbish or garbage—and most especially not to be burned with ashes scattered—after someone's death. An intermediate disembodied state is affirmed on the basis of the human person being made different from all other creatures, not because matter is evil.

Contrary to what some psychopannychists may think, today's evangelical Protestant theologians do widely admit that too much of a Platonic Hellenistic influence has been witnessed in the contemporary ideas of today's Christians, where going to Heaven is emphasized over and against the resurrection. (And I have certainly encountered a number of Messianics who likewise fall into similar traps.) Wright honestly admits in *Surprised by Hope*, "that a good deal of our current view of death and the life

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<sup>138</sup> J.K. Chamblin, "Psychology," in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), pp 767, 768.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 768.

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beyond has come from...impulses in the culture that created...[things] that now need to be reexamined in the clear light of Scripture.”<sup>140</sup> While Wright affirms an intermediate afterlife in the presence of the Lord for born again Believers, he does speak on how since the Bible’s emphasis is more on the resurrection and the eschaton—the world to come—so should ours be. What this directly affects is how God’s people accomplish God’s mission for the present age here on Earth. If matter is not inherently evil, then God’s people should endeavor to see that at least some of the world to come is manifested here, *now in the lives of His people*, before its complete manifestation (discussed further).

Debates will rage on as to whether the Pharisees, who affirmed both an intermediate afterlife and the resurrection of the dead, adapted Platonic philosophy into their theology. It is certainly a fact that prior to the rise of classical Greek civilization, civilizations contemporary to Ancient Israel did affirm an afterlife, with the Ancient Israelites in Egypt being exposed to such views. The key in understanding whether or not those who affirm that deceased Believers are in the presence of the Lord have adopted Platonic philosophy or not, **is whether they also affirm that physical matter is evil, with a person’s immaterial substance alone being good.** For myself, I do not at all believe that physical matter is evil, nor do I believe that God is *only* concerned with saving the immaterial consciousness of a person, with the body to be thrown away after death like trash. On the contrary, I affirm how prior to resurrection a deceased Believer is both in the presence of the Lord in Heaven *and* interred in a cemetery/gravesite. A temporary disembodied state and affirmation of resurrection, need not be mutually exclusive.

### Death Expectations in the Apostolic Scriptures

Anyone who reads the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) undoubtedly encounters how the question of what lies beyond death is asked far more frequently than it is asked in the Tanach (OT). This is true whether one exclusively believes in the resurrection, or believes in an intermediate afterlife to later be attended by the resurrection. The Tanach largely does not ask questions about the beyond, because it is more widely concerned with the *corporate* nature of God’s people Israel and their conduct on Earth, whereas questions of an afterlife are decidedly *individualistic*. Because the New Testament does focus more on an individual person’s relationship to God, the question of individual eschatology is specifically taken up in

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<sup>140</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 27.

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multiple places. When passages describing the death of a person are factored into the discussion, one does not at all see the Bible painting a picture of psychopannychy, but rather of the human consciousness being temporarily removed out of the body until the time of resurrection.

### **Mark 9:4-5; Matthew 17:3-4; Luke 9:30-33**

*“Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Yeshua. Peter said to Yeshua, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah’” (Mark 9:4-5, NASU).*

*“And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Yeshua, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah’” (Matthew 17:3-4, NASU).*

*“And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Yeshua, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—not realizing what he was saying” (Luke 9:30-33, NASU).*

The scene of Yeshua’s Transfiguration before Peter, John, and James cannot be easily discounted by psychopannychists, as the Tanach figures of both Moses and Elijah appear before them. While it is true that the Prophet Elijah did not experience physical death (2 Kings 2:11), it is equally true that Moses did in fact die and was buried in an unknown grave: “So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place [*qevvurah*] to this day” (Deuteronomy 34:5-6, NASU). When the three Disciples saw Moses at this encounter, it is not difficult to see how they saw Moses in some kind of post-mortem disembodied form.

Psychopannychists think that they have an answer to this, as Yeshua later told His three Disciples, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead” (Matthew 17:9, NASU). They consider the

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Transfiguration of our Lord and His attendance by Moses and Elijah to only be something which the Disciples saw as a kind of trance, or possibly even an hallucination—meaning that it did not actually take place in the scope of real time—and thus the appearance of Moses, at least, could not have been Moses in any kind of disembodied form. And what of the Lord’s manifestation in all His glory? Was that too something which really did not happen? Does this open Bible readers up to the possibility that Yeshua was really just some kind of “wizard” and not the Son of God, who was able to make people see things in order to manipulate them?

The definition given of *horama* means, “that which is seen, a sight, spectacle” (LS),<sup>141</sup> notably different from *optasia*, “state of being that is experienced by one who has a vision, trance” (BDAG).<sup>142</sup> Of course, it is true that *horama* is used in the Apostolic Scriptures to describe visions or trances, such as with Peter’s vision of the sheet (Acts 10:17; 11:5) or Paul’s vision of the man of Macedonia (Acts 16:9). However, *horama* is used in Stephen’s defense speech to the Sanhedrin to describe Moses before the burning bush: “When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight [*horama*]; and as he approached to look *more* closely, there came the voice of the Lord” (Acts 7:31, NASU). No conservative reader of the Holy Scriptures would argue that Moses seeing the burning bush was a kind of vision, trance, or hallucination—but that it occurred in real time. Given the fact that Moses was present at the Transfiguration of Yeshua, Bible readers should take their cue for the proper meaning of *horama* from Acts 7:31 as “the sight.”

Furthermore, if the scene of the Transfiguration encounter was something just imagined, then the reaction of Peter to build three physical dwellings or tabernacles for them seems not only a bit odd, but quite out of place. One would only see the need to erect some kind of place for Yeshua, Moses, and Elijah to be given shade from the Sun and experience a degree of hospitality from the Disciples, only if the event occurred in real time. There is no indication in the text at all, that Peter, John, and James took the Transfiguration to be anything but something they experienced in the course of a regular day, as miraculous a day this was for them. In fact, the Apostle Peter himself explicitly testified later, how he was among physical eyewitnesses of those who encountered the Lord, indeed requiring this to be an event which occurred in real time:

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<sup>141</sup> H.G. Liddell, and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 565.

<sup>142</sup> BDAG, 717.

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“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ – and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18, NASU).

### **Mark 12:25-27; Matthew 22:31-33; Luke 20:37-39**

“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage about the burning bush*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC [Exodus 3:6], and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken” (Mark 12:25-27, NASU).

“But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB [Exodus 3:6]?’ He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” When the crowds heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching” (Matthew 22:31-33, NASU).

“But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the *passage about the burning bush*, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB [Exodus 3:6]. Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him.’ Some of the scribes answered and said, ‘Teacher, You have spoken well’” (Luke 20:37-39, NASU).

In this classic scene from the Gospels, some members of the Sadducees questioned Yeshua, as to what will happen in the resurrection, if a woman was unable to have offspring from the brothers of her husband who successively died (Mark 12:5-24; Matthew 22:23-30; Luke 20:27-36). When they are all to be resurrected, they asked Him whose wife she would be. Their intention was definitely to trick the Lord into looking foolish.

The Sadducees, of course, did not even believe in a future bodily resurrection. They only accepted the Torah or Pentateuch as valid Scripture, which would have limited the number of possible quotations Yeshua could have offered them, as they would have just dismissed outright any statement from the Prophets or Writings. So, in proving that the dead will be raised one day, Yeshua quoted from the classic burning bush scene in

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Exodus 3:6, where Moses was told, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (NASU).

There is no direct statement made in the Torah about any future resurrection, but this did not mean that neither Yeshua nor various Jewish Rabbis did not look for clues about the resurrection. Within the Talmud, the sentiment is expressed that there will be a resurrection, because offerings from the Land of Israel were to be given to Aaron the priest. This never happened in actual history, as Aaron died in the wilderness journey of the Israelites, and so it apparently requires that he come back to bodily life at some point in the future:

“How, on the basis of the Torah, do we know about the resurrection of the dead? As it is said, ‘And you shall give thereof the Lord’s heave-offering to Aaron the priest’ (Num. 18:28). And will Aaron live forever? And is it not the case that he did not even get to enter the Land of Israel, from the produce of which heave-offering is given? [So there is no point in Aaron’s life at which he would receive the priestly rations.] Rather, this teaches that he is destined once more to live, and the Israelites will give him heave-offering. On the basis of this verse, therefore, we see that the resurrection of the dead is a teaching of the Torah” (b.*Sanhedrin* 90b).<sup>143</sup>

Within the scope of Yeshua’s response to these Sadducees, He said that God is the God of the “living.” The source text actually uses the present active participle *zōntōn*, “those living.” The implication Bible readers encounter, is not only that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will rise again in the resurrection—but that they are already to be considered as “living” **and not** those who are “dead.” This is a very important statement, because not only had Israel’s three main Patriarchs been deceased for well over a millennium-and-a-half when Yeshua made this remark, but by this time their skeletal remains, wherever they had been interred, could have been largely decomposed as well.

The Sadducees here needed to be convinced of the reality of the resurrection, and so if these Patriarchs were to already be considered “living” to some degree, then a future resurrection makes absolute sense. The Sadducees did not believe in any kind of afterlife; they thought that when people died, that was the end of them—and Yeshua’s words undeniably stood in contrast to such faulty views.

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<sup>143</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.  
Cf. “soul,” in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, 599.

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Yeshua's assertion that these Patriarchs were "living" (*zōntōn*), also stands in contrast to psychopannychists, who assume that the dead are totally unconscious until the resurrection. The deceased in body are to be considered more than just somehow "alive to God's memory"; they are "living," but in an intermediate and incomplete condition. The ancient Jewish sentiment of 4 Maccabees 13:17 was, "For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us" (RSV). While this intermediate state in Paradise is conscious, it is not something like the life humans have on Earth. It is a kind of life according to the different rules and laws of another dimension. Wright further elaborates on this scene in his book *Resurrection of the Son of God*:

"Jesus' answer to the Sadducees, in fact, does point towards the refocusing of the resurrection hope which was to take place later...It speaks of a different quality of life, a life which death can no longer touch, and hence a life in which the normal parameters of mortal (i.e. deathbound) life, including procreative marriage, are no longer relevant. It speaks of an intermediate state in which all the righteous dead are held in some kind of ongoing life while waiting for the resurrection which everyone, Pharisee and Sadducee alike, knew perfectly well had not happened yet. It speaks about YHWH's past word to Moses, in order to indicate a present reality (the patriarchs are still alive), in order to thereby affirm the future hope (they will be raised to newly embodied life)."<sup>144</sup>

Yeshua's word that the Patriarchs were currently "living," stands against the psychopannychist ideology of monism, where humans are entirely physical beings of this dimension. But, Yeshua's word also stands against Hellenistic dualism, where the soul is believed to be trapped inside of the prison of a body seeking a permanent escape. In this account from the Gospels, we see support for holistic dualism, so while the Patriarchs may be "living" somewhere else prior to the resurrection—the resurrection of the body when the Messianic Kingdom arrives is to be the ultimate, historical goal.

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<sup>144</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 426.

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## Luke 16:19-31

“Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead’” (NASU).

The principal focus of Yeshua's parable of Lazarus and the rich man, was to get those who heard it to live a life on Earth which was righteous and concerned with the well being of the poor and needy. This was something the rich man failed to do, in spite of Lazarus coming to his house for scraps of food, and him having witnessed the unhealthy Lazarus licked by dogs on a fairly regular basis. No interpreter should disagree how the rich man will be punished for his lack of care and not showing mercy, care which he had the wherewithal to demonstrate. This is why the rich man wanted Lazarus to come back to life to warn his surviving family (Luke 16:28), so that they would not suffer the punishment he did. Yeshua emphasized in the parable, “If they won't listen to Moshe and the Prophets, they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!” (Luke 16:31, CJSB), as the rich man's brothers—who presumably acted in a similar sinful way as he—had sufficient warning in the Tanach Scriptures to live a life of concern for the less fortunate. For not only was there a great chasm between the righteous

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and condemned in Sheol (Luke 16:26), there was also a great chasm between the righteous and condemned on Planet Earth.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man does have more to teach a person about life and one's conduct on Earth, than it does the intricacies of the hereafter. If one does not live properly on Earth, punishment will await after death. Yet, no one reading Luke 16:19-31—including psychopannychists—can deny the fact that this account clearly does depict both Lazarus and the rich man in a disembodied intermediate post-mortem state in Sheol/Hades. The consciousness of Lazarus was taken by the angels to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22), a holding compartment for the righteous. The consciousness of the rich man, in contrast, was taken to a holding compartment where he experienced some kind of "agony" (Luke 16:25, NASU), being "tormented" (KJV). (Bible readers later see in Ephesians 4:8 how the occupants of Abraham's bosom would be transferred to Heaven at Yeshua's ascension). Among the condemned in Sheol/Hades, it is not difficult to see how a theology of intermediate Hell, to be experienced prior to their resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:6-7), was developed from the example of the rich man.

That Sheol or Hades was divided into two compartments of (1) one for the righteous and (2) the other for the condemned, was a belief common to Second Temple Judaism. This was a vantage point which Yeshua was teaching from. The First Century historian Josephus testified how,

"Hades is a place in the world not regularly finished; a *subterraneous* region, wherein the light of this world does not shine...This region is allotted as a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them *temporary punishments*, agreeable to everyone's behavior and manners...[The righteous] do not go down the same way; but the just are guided to the *right hand*, and are led with hymns, sung by the *angels* appointed over that place, unto a region of *light*, in which the just have dwelt from the beginning of the world...[found there are] the countenance of the *fathers* and of the just, which they see always smiles upon them, while they wait for that rest and *eternal new life in heaven*, which is to succeed this region. This place we call *The Bosom of Abraham*" (*Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades* 1, 4).<sup>145</sup>

What does the psychopannychist do about the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, and Yeshua teaching from the presupposition that the human

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<sup>145</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 813.

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consciousness can exist separate from the body in some kind of a holding place? Regardless of some of the symbolism which one applies to Abraham, Lazarus, and the agony the rich man experienced—the setting unavoidably depicted two people in a post-mortem, disembodied and conscious state. The Messiah Himself undeniably used the concept of a temporary, disembodied afterlife, to make some critical points in His teaching. If He used such a concept to teach important lessons, then it follows to correctly recognize that the Lord endorsed it.

The only answers which psychopannychists can offer to this predicament, clearly a problem for their one-dimensional theology of human composition, are not that impressive. All Bacchiocchi can say in *Immortality or Resurrection?* is, “The answer is that Jesus met people on their own ground, capitalizing on what was familiar to them to teach them vital truths.”<sup>146</sup> Some have been actually known to compare this account to our modern Aesop’s fables, even though Aesop’s fables frequently have animals, and not people, speaking to one another. And perhaps quite laughably, *The Scriptures* translation (1998) produced by the Institute for Scripture Research, rendered Luke 16:23 with the rich man actually “suffering tortures in the grave”! (This is something which can only be true if “the grave” is something more than just a place of interment, as Stern’s CJB/CJSB simply rendered *Hadēs* with the Hebrew “*Sh’ol*,” as the Salkinson-Ginsburg and UBSHNT versions also.)

Those who deny an intermediate afterlife prior to the resurrection, are stuck with a major problem in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. They protest that the consciousness of a person cannot exist separate from the body, yet this account as employed by the Lord clearly depicted people in a disembodied, post-mortem state, before the resurrection. To psychopannychists, a non-Biblical concept has just been employed in the Bible to communicate important truths. But why would a supposedly non-Biblical concept—with persons in a conscious, disembodied condition—have to be employed? Surely the Messiah could have used a different example to teach His audience about the need to live life properly on Earth. Why would Yeshua ultimately be caught deceiving people by using a fictional and mythological setting, to make instruction points on good behavior? *We should not believe He would do this*, and that the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, while possibly employing a parabolic protagonist (Lazarus) and antagonist (the rich man), **does not depict a fictional location.**

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<sup>146</sup> Bacchiocchi, 175.

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The problem, with psychopannychists saying that Yeshua was using popular mythology to communicate to His audience, is that they have just opened a major door to theological liberalism. *How absurd and dangerous is it to claim that a non-Biblical concept actually appears as a teaching tool in the Bible?!* If Yeshua's parable of Lazarus and the rich man *cannot* be taken as our Lord teaching that something *does happen* to the human consciousness after death, then there are likely other things which can similarly be disregarded or ignored. I can think of no one more important for today's Messianics than Yeshua's claim of how Moses is the author of the Torah (Mark 10:5; 12:19; Luke 20:28; John 1:45; 5:46). Some might say that "Jesus' own usage" of Moses "always indicates author and not title" (*Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*),<sup>147</sup> giving rise to Moses as possibly being only the author of disparate part or individual commandment(s) of the Pentateuch, but not at all being the principal author and/or overseer of its body composition. And in a similar way, working within the Jewish cultural norms of the period, Yeshua's references to the Flood of Noah (Matthew 24:37ff; Luke 3:36; 17:26ff) need not be to an actual historical event, but instead somehow to the Jewish exiles' reworking of the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* into an early copy of the Book of Genesis. And what is to be made of the Exodus, to which there are no quantitative Egyptian records—the prototype event for His salvific work on our behalf—is that mythology too? And Adam and Eve...?

**One needs to be very careful when claiming that certain parts of Scripture are to be regarded as only "fables,"** as it draws into question whether or not there are any other (significant) parts of Scripture which are mythology as well.

There may, in fact, be a legitimate place to compare the death of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:9-11, 18-20, and the death of Lazarus. Luke 16:22 records, "the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried" (NASU). In a similar way to how the king of Babylon had no tomb of his own (Isaiah 14:18-19), his corpse being left to rot the same as his victims (Isaiah 14:16-17), poor Lazarus as a consequence of his being poor and disregarded was stated to not have had any burial. The very dogs who would lick him (Luke 16:21), may very well have eaten or gnawed away at his corpse. All Lazarus had, consequently, was a place in Sheol/Hades with Abraham, to be held with the righteous until an expected resurrection (cf. Luke 16:28, 31). The only positive thing the rich man had, in contrast, though, was a burial.

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<sup>147</sup> D.W. Baker, "Source Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 800.

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The parable of Lazarus and the rich man may have more to teach people on Planet Earth about their conduct, than it does about the specifics of the intermediate state. And while it may be argued that since the ascension of Yeshua into Heaven, the compartment of Sheol/Hades holding the righteous has been vacated (discussed further), this account still depicts the consciousnesses of both the righteous and condemned existing in a disembodied state prior to the resurrection. To discount this as Yeshua simply reworking the popular mythology of the day into His teachings, opens a door to theological liberalism, where historical accounts in the Tanach appropriated by our Rabbi, can likewise be viewed as popular mythology and thus not at all real. If this account was complete fiction, then it immediately begs whether or not something like Genesis chs. 1-11 is reliable history.

### **Luke 23:42-43**

**“And he was saying, ‘Yeshua, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise’” (NASU).**

During the horrific scene when Yeshua was being executed at Golgotha (Calvary), one of the criminals alongside Him recognized how “this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:41, NASU), in spite of how he deserved his punishment. He saw that there was something different about Yeshua, and so he asked Him, “Yeshua, remember me when you come as King” (Luke 23:42, CJSB). Psychopannychists view this passage as only relating to the *parousia*, when Yeshua will return to the Earth and will inaugurate His Kingdom reign, and nothing more. Yet, even though the thief was seemingly forgiven and we will all see him in the Kingdom, Yeshua was clear to tell the repentant thief: “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43, NASU). This runs contrary to the thought that the thief will *only* be remembered in the resurrection. Both Yeshua and the repentant thief would *both* die that very day, and their consciousnesses would be transferred to Paradise, or the Abraham’s bosom side of Sheol (discussed earlier). Wright summarizes in *Surprised by Hope* how,

“[P]aradise is here, as in some other Jewish writing, not a final destination but the blissful garden, the parkland of rest and tranquillity, where the dead are refreshed as they await the dawn of the new day...Jesus, after all, didn’t rise again ‘today,’ that is, on [the same day as his crucifixion]. Luke must have understood him to be referring to a state of being-in-paradise, which

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would be true, for him and for the man dying beside him, at once, that very day—in other words, *prior to the resurrection.*"<sup>148</sup>

The *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* describes how Paradise is “the home of the first human beings (Gen. 2-3) and the place of intermediate rest or eternal bliss for the righteous...2 Corinthians 12:2-4, with its reference to the praise of the angelic choruses, suggests that paradise is the location of God’s throne and places it in the third heaven.”<sup>149</sup> From the usages of “Paradise” seen within First Century Judaism, it most often does not depict the final state of things, but rather a restful garden where the righteous deceased would be held, until the resurrection and/or the current Heaven which will give way to the New Heaven.

Psychopannychists, however, believe that they have an easy answer to this, and that Yeshua was not telling the forgiven thief beside Him, that immediately after death the two of them would be in any kind of intermediate Paradise. Many psychopannychists feel justified moving the English punctuation of Luke 23:43 to read something along the lines of, “Truly I say to you today, you shall be with me in Paradise” (the rendering seen in the Jehovah’s Witnesses 1961 New World Translation.)<sup>150</sup> For them, this would only be a general statement of how the thief would be resurrected in the future, and then ushered into the Kingdom. But one’s exegesis must be determined from the source text. It is irresponsible and manipulative of any interpreter to simply move around English punctuation in the Bible to fit their theology, without some sound backing from the Hebrew Tanach or Greek Apostolic Scriptures which sits behind an English translation. An interpreter cannot just arbitrarily move commas around in the English.

The Greek *sēmeron* means “today, this very day” (*BDAG*).<sup>151</sup> As indicated by *TDNT*, the vast majority of usages of *sēmeron* in the Biblical text deal with events which occurred on the same day as “today”:

“In Mt. 27:19 Pilate’s wife has had a bad dream today; this is an omen for a decisive day, but the immediate sense is the ordinary one. The usual sense is also present in the petition of Mt. 6:11: believers ask today for

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<sup>148</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, pp 150-151.

<sup>149</sup> “paradise,” in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, 469.

<sup>150</sup> The ISR Scriptures (1998), which is used in much of the Hebrew Roots movement, also moves the comma in Luke 23:43: “Truly, I say to you today, you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

<sup>151</sup> *BDAG*, 921.

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their daily bread from God. Similarly in 16:3 the reference is to today's weather, in 21:28 the father asks his son to work today" (*TDNT*).<sup>152</sup>

The *Louw-Nida Lexicon* defines *sēmeron* as "the same day as the day of a discourse,"<sup>153</sup> referencing Matthew 21:28 and how "A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today [*sēmeron*] in the vineyard'" (NASU).

Greek scholar Richmond Lattimore renders Luke 23:43 in his translation as, "Truly I tell you, this day you will be with me in paradise."<sup>154</sup> Yeshua the Messiah plainly told the thief beside Him that he would be with Him in Paradise *that very day* or moment, not just in the future Kingdom of God on Earth. Cooper concurs in *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting*, "For grammatical, semantic, and history-theological reasons, 'today' ought to be read literally."<sup>155</sup> When the narrative actually says *amēn soi legō sēmeron*, "Amen I say to you today..." it is almost impossible to argue that the day this is spoken is *not* the day the repentant thief would be welcomed into Paradise.

But even if one decides to arbitrarily move around English punctuation, this still does not quantitatively change the "today" emphasis of Yeshua and the repentant thief being together in Paradise. The only reason why "today" in Luke 23:42-43 is at all challenged, is because psychopannychists know how it lends strong support to a post-mortem, intermediate disembodied state; if this were any other issue, then what "today" (*sēmeron*) means would probably not be challenged. If the Lord told the thief "I say to you, today you are saved" or "I say to you today, you are saved," it would all communicate the same thing (cf. Hebrews 3:12-13).<sup>156</sup> Quite notably in Luke 23:42-43, Yeshua did not just tell the thief beside Him, "I say to you, you will be with Me in Paradise"; there is a clear emphasis on "today" being when it would happen.

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<sup>152</sup> E. Fuchs, "*sēmeron*," in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abrid. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 1025.

<sup>153</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 1:654.

<sup>154</sup> Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The New Testament* (New York: North Point Press, 1996), 188.

<sup>155</sup> Cooper, 140.

<sup>156</sup> "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called 'Today [*sēmeron*],' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13, NASU).

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### John 3:12-13

**“If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man” (NASU).**

Psychopannychists commonly argue from John 3:13 that “No one has ascended into heaven” (NASU), and thus it is futile for those who believe in an intermediate afterlife to hold to such a conviction. However, if their conclusion about this is correct, then it could be taken as a nullification of Enoch being translated up (Genesis 5:24), as well as Elijah being taken into Heaven via a chariot (2 Kings 2:11).

The vantage point of the statements made by Yeshua has to be considered, because psychopannychists have based their conclusions without carefully reading the text. Yeshua Himself, within the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, had yet to ascend into Heaven (cf. John 20:17). Yeshua clearly did this (Acts 1:9), and so there is a definite problem of reading John 3:13 from the static position of no one on Earth ever having gone into Heaven.

The subject matter being discussed is witnessed to be disbelief in what the Messiah said and who had actually brought information from Heaven, *not* what happens after death. In this scene, Yeshua told Nicodemus that if he did not believe in the Earthly things of which He spoke—things which concerned a dimension and a state of being which he and others had all experienced and was common to them—then Yeshua’s listeners would surely not believe things about an extra-dimensional state of being in Heaven which they had never experienced (John 3:12), except only Him. Yeshua’s assertions were actually designed to point to the ignorance and faithlessness which His audience commonly suffered from, not the post-mortem state of the deceased. They did not possess the confidence to accept His words about the realities they knew about on Earth, much less the realities they did not know about in Heaven.

Yeshua had not yet “ascended” to Heaven at this point in John ch. 3, but He had clearly once been in Heaven as the pre-Incarnate Son of God. Yeshua’s word about “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven” (John 3:13, NASU), is best viewed in light of ancient Jewish opinions and speculations about Tanach figures having ascended into Heaven, then coming back to Earth to deliver Divine secrets. Yeshua discounted these as being true, as He was the only One authorized to bring humanity messages and information directly from Heaven. Colin G. Kruse explains in his commentary on John,

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“Jesus identified himself as the heavenly figure of great sovereign authority, the Son of Man...who came down from heaven, and therefore was qualified to speak authoritatively of heavenly things. At the same time he rejected all Jewish speculations about other ‘revealers’ who were thought to have ascended to heaven (e.g. Abraham, Moses, Enoch and Isaiah) to return with revelations for those on earth (cf. Pr. 30:4).”<sup>157</sup>

Yeshua the Messiah is the only One “who descended from heaven,” unlike those who may have been thought to have ascended into Heaven and returned with information from this realm. The NLT captures this well in its paraphrase, “No one has ever gone to heaven and returned.” And, when the Apostle Paul described being taken up into Heaven in an out of body experience, he was clear that he could not report on the things which he had seen (2 Corinthians 12:3-4).

In order to believe the Heavenly things which Yeshua would disclose to people in His teachings, extreme faith must be exhibited. And, many people could not even believe in the Earthly things Yeshua would talk about. Yeshua is the only One who has truly experienced the extra-dimensional realities of Heaven and has come to Earth to speak about them to human beings, having emptied Himself of glory and taking on human flesh (Philippians 2:5-11).

### John 14:2-3

**“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (NASU).**

All of us have all heard Yeshua’s words in John 14:2-3 quoted at some point in our spiritual experience, and they have often provided a great deal of comfort for survivors who have lost a loved one. In funeral eulogies, it is not uncommon to hear the sentiment of how the departed has gone to “a better place,” derived from these verses. However, the Lord’s statements, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself” (NASU), in John 14:3, likely has less to do with the intermediate state, than it does with the eschaton and Second Coming. This is because *topos* or “place” “sometimes means ‘sanctuary’ (the holy place)...Another

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<sup>157</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 110.

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use is for ‘someone’s place,’ e.g., a senator’s seat, a place at school, one’s place in the world” (TDNT).<sup>158</sup> This would point to the “place” being prepared as a position of authority in His future Kingdom (Revelation 20:6), similar to the various facilities available for the priests who served in the Temple (1 Kings 6:5-10; 1 Chronicles 9:26-27).

Still, Yeshua did say “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places” (John 14:2, NASU), which can be contrasted with the “place” He has to go prepare, because these locations *already* exist. Notice how the source text employs the present active indicative tense in *monai pollai eisin*, “are many rooms” (ESV). These domiciles already exist, and Yeshua, not speaking in the future tense as though “there will be many rooms,” did not have to return to Heaven to somehow make or create them. The very usage of *monē* in John 14:2, meaning “a stopping place, station” (LS),<sup>159</sup> can help Bible readers understand the purpose of the intermediate state for born again Believers, especially as the Temple is often depicted in the Apostolic Scriptures as being the point of intersection between the current world and what is to come.

Examiners have good reason to think that John 14:2-3 depicts a two-stage individual eschatology, as Wright observes in *Surprised by Hope* how when the early Believers spoke of the post-mortem condition,

“they seemed to regard this heavenly life as a temporary stage on the way to the eventual resurrection of the body...When Jesus declares that there are many dwelling places in his father’s house, the word for dwelling place is *monē*, which denotes a temporary lodging...first, [one encounters] death and whatever lies immediately beyond; second, a new bodily existence in the remade world.”<sup>160</sup>

Wright’s suggestion in his book *Resurrection of the Son of God*, is that

“The ‘dwelling-places’ of this passage are thus best understood as safe places where those who have died may lodge and rest, like pilgrims in the Temple, not so much in the course of an onward pilgrimage within the life of a disembodied ‘heaven’, but while awaiting the resurrection which is still to come.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> H. Köster, “*tópos*,” in TDNT, 1184.

<sup>159</sup> LS, 518.

<sup>160</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 41.

<sup>161</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 446.

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The *monai* or dwellings depicted in John 14:2 are likened unto a temporary lodging, where travelers would stop off during a long journey to rest and be refreshed. For the born again Believer who dies, being ushered into Heaven is like stopping off on such a journey. It is a Paradise of refreshment, and surely would possess more wonders than a luxury hotel—even to be considered “gain” (Philippians 1:21) for a Believer facing death—but it is nevertheless a temporary stopping point. Yeshua was clear to say that such *monai* did exist, as He stated, “if it were not so, I would have told you” (John 14:2, NASU).

The ultimate aim for a Believer, though, should be to incur a great “place” of responsibility in the restored Kingdom of God on Earth (John 14:3). At His Second Coming Yeshua as King will “take” (RSV, NIV, ESV) all of us beside Himself<sup>162</sup>—both the resurrected and living holy ones/saints<sup>163</sup>—and the righteous will then all be able to rule alongside Him. It is only at the Second Coming when *all* the holy ones/saints can occupy the places of rulership He has been preparing, with the enemy being defeated (cf. Hebrews 2:8); the intermediate state does not involve such rulership.

In viewing the intermediate state for Believers as *monai* in Heaven, prior to the resurrection, it is best for those who are survivors and have lost loved ones—that in spite of any temptation to do so—*not to speculate* on what the intermediate state actually involves and what lost loved ones are presently doing. We are to know it is a Paradise, and we should simply leave it at that.

The intermediate Heaven is a place of refreshment where one can bask in the presence of the Lord, awaiting for the fulfillment of the next stage in His plan of salvation history. The Holy Scriptures, while indeed speaking of the intermediate state, do not give many of the specifics of it. About as far as one can speculate on what goes on in that dimension, is that those who have been martyred in the faith are likely entreating the Lord to swiftly vindicate the righteous (cf. Revelation 6:9-11). It would also not seem unlikely that the disembodied righteous are revealed more about the nature of the universe, and the role redeemed humanity will play in the eschaton.

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<sup>162</sup> Grk. *paralambanō*.

<sup>163</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

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### Acts 2:29, 34

**“Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day...For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND”’ [Psalm 110:1]” (NASU).**

It is not uncommon at all to see the Apostle Peter’s words of Acts 2:34 quoted by psychopannychists. Peter did say, “David did not ascend into the heavens” (RSV), and so psychopannychists will commonly conclude that the righteous deceased are not in Heaven or in any kind of disembodied post-mortem existence, because here King David did not ascend into Heaven. David was one who “both died and was buried,” only having a *mnēma* or tomb (Acts 2:29). As is frequent with psychopannychists’ arguments, they have only provided a partial quote, and Bible readers have to assess the much larger context, having a feel for the broader message of what Peter was speaking to those assembled at *Shavuot*/Pentecost. Rather than making a remark about the post-mortem state of King David’s consciousness, Peter instead took the words of King David and established the Messiahship of Yeshua via Davidic Psalms and promises. Peter compared and contrasted Yeshua to David, because many of the promises which God made to King David, were fully realized in the Person of Yeshua, Great David’s Greater Son:

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Yeshua the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, ‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE’ [Psalm 16:8-11]. Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he

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looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY [Psalm 132:11; 2 Samuel 7:12ff; Psalm 89:3]. This Yeshua God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"' [Psalm 110:1]. Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua whom you crucified" (Acts 2:22-36, NASU).

In Peter's whole sermon as seen here, it was very true how King David was not executed, King David was not buried for three days, and King David did not ascend into Heaven as the risen Lord to be enthroned next to the Heavenly Father. These are things which *only Yeshua* had done as the Messiah and Savior of the world, because Peter applied Psalm 110:1 to Yeshua and *not to David*. In fact, as Yeshua had told the thief executed beside Him that they would be in Paradise (Luke 23:42-43), Peter asserted that the Lord "was not abandoned in *Sh'ol*" or the netherworld long enough so His "flesh did not see decay" (Acts 2:31, CJSB; cf. Romans 10:7). When Yeshua ascended into Heaven, Paul would observe later how He led with Him "a host of captives" (Ephesians 4:8, NASU) into Heaven, the righteous dead who had occupied the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades (discussed further)—and at Yeshua's return a host of holy ones/saints will follow Him to the Earth (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

Unlike the Lord Yeshua, David did not resurrect from the dead, ascend into Heaven via the clouds (Acts 2:33-34), and take a seat enthroned the Father's right hand as "both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36, NASU). This is what was meant by Peter, when he said that David did not ascend; it is an ascension which *only Yeshua Himself* could achieve, attendant with other important events, including Yeshua sending the Holy Spirit to His followers (Acts 1:5). As the Apostle Paul would later say, it is an ascension which assures God's people that "at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW [Isaiah 45:23], of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11, NASU). As respected as King David should be, he did not ascend into Heaven and take control of the cosmos as the Lord Yeshua has done (Ephesians 1:20-21). The context of Peter's words dealt with the resurrection and ascension of Yeshua the

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Messiah as LORD (YHWH)—as opposed to King David, whose bodily remains were still buried and who may *not* be considered LORD.

Yeshua was resurrected from the dead (Acts 2:32), and exalted to His Father's right hand (Acts 2:33) at His ascension. David, in contrast, died and was buried (Acts 2:29). Any reader of the Gospel of Luke, and its companion volume the Book of Acts, should be able to figure out what Yeshua's ascension into Heaven involved, and how David clearly did not do this.

Even though King David did not ascend *like this* and be exalted, it is not by any means substantial justification—when taken within the larger Biblical scope—to assume that he is exclusively in the grave and not in some kind of disembodied post-mortem state along with the other holy ones/saints. Peter's statement about David's non-ascension was associated with other salvation historical events which David, not being the Messiah, did not participate in.

### Acts 7:56-60

**"[A]nd he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they *began stoning him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, 'Lord Yeshua, receive my spirit!' Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them!' Having said this, he fell asleep" (NASU).**

The testimony of faithful Stephen, the first Messianic martyr, is one which many Believers have taken great comfort and encouragement from—as many have faced their deaths in a similar, albeit far less violent, way.

While Stephen was seen asking the Lord to forgive those who were unjustly murdering him—no different than how Yeshua Himself spoke as He was seen dying on the tree (Luke 23:34)—did Stephen simply breathe his last and hope that he would somehow be vindicated in the eschaton? Did Stephen simply hope that by his life of faithfulness to the Lord, that at the resurrection some copy of himself would be created, able to continue from where his own life ended? It does not seem appropriate to think that after gazing into Heaven and seeing Yeshua exalted—and appealing to Him to take his personal spirit—that Stephen then fell into a complete unconsciousness from which he has never exited for these past two millennia.

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Most psychopannychists believe that when Stephen was stoned, when he exclaimed “Lord Yeshua, receive my spirit!”, this was only a reference to Stephen’s physical breath leaving, and then Stephen—a person entirely of this dimension—fell asleep or died. This kind of claim runs into a significant problem, because of what happened as Stephen was being unjustly stoned. Before dying, he proclaimed to those gathered, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56, NASU). While this was an important theological declaration of Yeshua’s exaltedness—indeed believed to be blasphemy by those stoning him (Acts 7:57)—for someone to deny that Stephen *actually saw* the exalted Yeshua at the right hand of the Father in Heaven is entirely confounded.<sup>164</sup> If Yeshua the Messiah is everything for a Believer, then being welcomed into His presence is something to be greatly anticipated! Prior to his death, Stephen saw the Lord in Heaven; he did not just cry out to a Messiah He did not visibly see in another dimension, and nor should we be at all comfortable with the thought that Stephen hallucinated such an appearance of the Lord (discussed further).

There is no indication from this declaration made by Stephen that he was simply expecting to go to the grave at death. Rather, he was seen plainly calling upon the Lord and entreated Him to receive his spirit-consciousness. The verb *dechomai* means “**to receive someth. offered or transmitted by another, take, receive,**” and “**to take someth. in hand, grasp**” (BDAG).<sup>165</sup> Stephen earnestly cried out to the Lord for Him to take him into His presence. In Acts 3:21, the narrative of Peter’s preaching stated how “heaven must receive [*dechomai*]” Yeshua “until *the* period of restoration of all things” (NASU). So, just as Heaven received the Messiah, so do we have strong support in recognizing that Heaven likewise received Stephen. In Morey’s estimation in *Death and the Afterlife*, “Stephen did not look down at death to an unconscious existence in the grave. Instead, he looked up into heaven itself and asked Christ to take him up to be with Him.”<sup>166</sup> Indeed, looking at the Christophany of Acts 7:59-60 and with Heaven opened up before Stephen’s death, one cannot argue in favor of the dying Stephen staring down at sheer blackness and unconsciousness! On the contrary, with great eagerness Stephen joined the company of spirits who constituted the Heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-23).

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<sup>164</sup> The verb *theōreō* is used in Acts 7:56, meaning “**to observe someth. with sustained attention**” (BDAG, 454).

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>166</sup> Morey, 208.

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Stephen's spirit left and Stephen's body fell asleep—and *both* are still Stephen—to be reconstituted at the resurrection. This is why in his seeing Yeshua exalted in Heaven, the next place he would be, Stephen declared that Yeshua was the One who would return to vindicate those who have suffered just as he. As His Lord declared to the Sanhedrin before His own death, "you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER [Psalm 110:1], and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN [Daniel 7:13]" (Mark 14:62, NASU). Stephen's expectation, while being one where his Lord would receive him into Heaven, *was likewise* one where he will be resurrected from the dead at his Lord's Second Coming. It is not enough to simply go to Heaven, because only at the *parousia* will the corrupt world which condemned both Yeshua and Stephen **be brought into His full dominion**. Going to Heaven at death did not vindicate Stephen's martyrdom; only a future resurrection will. This has likewise been the expectation of millions of born again Believers who have similarly faced death.<sup>167</sup>

### 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15

**"For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yeshua. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep"** (NASU).

The promise of the resurrection of deceased holy one or saints, was a significant comfort for the First Century *ekklēsia*, particularly in the Apostle Paul's teachings about the Second Coming of Yeshua. Referencing the deceased Believers, Paul emphasized how at the *parousia*, "through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:14, RSV). The verb *agō* means "**to direct the movement of an object from one position to another,**" and here likely relates to "*lead, bring, lead off, lead away*" (BDAG).<sup>168</sup> When Yeshua the Messiah returns to the Earth, the consciousnesses of the deceased Believers will be brought with Him to be reconstituted with their bodies at the resurrection. They will be the first to participate—"the dead will be raised imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:52,

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<sup>167</sup> The only other legitimate way to view this passage is to claim that it supports an instantaneous resurrection, where upon going to Heaven the Believer is immediately given his or her new body, although with no period of unconsciousness occurring.

<sup>168</sup> BDAG, 16.

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NASU)—as they are the senior party, to the junior party of those who “will not all sleep, but...will all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51, NASU).

When our Lord Yeshua returns to Planet Earth, He will be accompanied by the host of the departed righteous. Paul had admonished the Thessalonians earlier, “that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua **with all His saints**” (1 Thessalonians 3:13, NASU), *meta pantōn tōn hagiōn*. This was a direct allusion to Zechariah 14:5, where “Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones<sup>169</sup> with Him!” (NASU).

Psychopannychists try to argue that Paul envisioned the holy ones or saints, accompanying Yeshua in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, as only being angels, and not disembodied Believers to be reconstituted with their resurrected and restored bodies. However, in response, readers do see in Scripture how both God’s angels and human holy ones or saints, are often associated with one another as being members of His collective host (cf. Psalm 8:5, LXX; Hebrews 12:22-23), and it is most doubtful that “all the saints” should be understood as only being hundreds of billions (or trillions?) of angels, as opposed to just millions of holy ones or saints with many legions of attendant angels. Within the Pauline corpus, it cannot be avoided how *hagioi* or “saints” is a term almost exclusively used to describe God’s people.<sup>170</sup> It can be safely asserted how when Yeshua returns, the “saints” brought with Him referenced here, are primarily the consciousnesses of deceased Believers to be reunited with their bodies. Yet, among those “saints” are surely members of the greater Heavenly host.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Heb. *kol-qedoshim*; the same terminology is used in the Pentateuch to describe God’s people:

“Indeed, He loves the people; all Your holy ones [*kol-qedoshayv*] are in Your hand, and they followed in Your steps; *everyone* receives of Your words” (Deuteronomy 33:3, NASU).

It should probably also not escape our notice that God’s people are also described as His “hosts”:

“And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD [*kol-tziv’ot YHWH*] went out from the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:41, NASU).

<sup>170</sup> D.R. de Lacy, “Holiness Sanctification,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 397.

<sup>171</sup> Mark 8:38; Matthew 25:31; Luke 9:26.

# Messianics and the Afterlife

## 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (NASU).

One of the most significant problems with the Corinthian congregation, among the many they experienced, was that too many had not been taught the essentials of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). It should also not be surprising that they had not been taught properly about the intermediate state as well, the time between death and resurrection. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Bible readers encounter the delicate balance of Paul’s theology of resurrection, and Paul’s theology of an intermediate afterlife, detailed.

This vignette opens with Paul’s assertion, “that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1, ESV). This Earthly tent was obviously a reference to the human body being “dissolved” (KJV), a person experiencing physical death, and so as a result Believers have some kind of a permanent house originating from God, from Heaven. Some view this as a reference to the *monai* or dwelling places to which Yeshua referred in John 14:2, a temporary lodging in Heaven for the departed prior to resurrection. Others would more properly view this as a reference to the transformed body, and how at the time of the Second Coming, the power of Heaven will manifest itself.

2 Corinthians 5:2 points to the latter being the case. Paul said, “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (KJV) or *ex ouranou*. When Believers receive an immortal body, Paul asserted that “having put it on, [we] will not be found naked” (2

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Corinthians 5:3, NASU). At the return of the Messiah, when the resurrection occurs and when the living righteous are “changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51, NASU), those who never die will be “clothed upon” (KJV), as the verb *ependuomai* means “**to put a garment on over an existing garment, put on (in addition)**” (BDAG).<sup>172</sup> Contrary to this, without being further clothed with an immortal body from Heaven via the Lord’s return, a death described as “nakedness” awaits. As Paul explained, this is something which is more likely to occur to most people.

2 Corinthians 5:4 clarifies how “while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (ESV). No one instinctively should want to go through the uncertainty and the experience of death. Instead, the preference of Believers should be to want to see the Lord return before they die, so that they can be further clothed, with immortality being placed on them like an overcoat. Everyone who lives is “oppressed” (NEB), as for most people the human body will die, and another state of existence will present itself—that of not being *en toutō* or “in this tent.” The Holy Spirit has been given by God to His people to assure them that the ultimate salvation they will experience involves their physical bodies possessing immortality (2 Corinthians 5:5; Hebrews 9:27-28).

All interpreters agree how Paul did not necessarily desire to be “naked” or “unclothed,” meaning a death state. But what does this state specifically involve? Is it just physical death and then a state of unconsciousness, as psychopannychists would conclude? People in Earthly life who are “naked” or “unclothed” still do exist, albeit in a somewhat exposed or *incomplete* condition. Paul had previously just said, “we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16, NASU)—meaning that although the tent of the human body may age steadily toward death, *ho esō* or the immaterial consciousness is not similarly weakened. For those who believe that the human consciousness can exist separate from the body, being “naked” or “unclothed” would be a fair description of such an “inner man” surviving after death. This is realized as the verb rendered “unclothed” (2 Corinthians 5:4) is *ekduō*, “*to strip oneself of a thing*” (LS),<sup>173</sup> as those who die before the Messiah’s return will find themselves stripped of their bodies. The Jewish philosopher Philo spoke of how, “his body, which was now removed from him like a shell from a fish, from his soul which was thus laid bare and

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<sup>172</sup> BDAG, 361.

<sup>173</sup> LS, 237.

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naked, and which desired its natural departure from hence” (*On the Virtues* 76).<sup>174</sup>

The Apostle Paul had a different view than Philo when it came to being “naked” or “unclothed,” as his principal desire was for his body to be further clothed (2 Corinthians 5:4), because he did not have a strong wish to really die. An existence stripped of his mortal body was not at all Paul’s main preference. Noting the different options in this passage, Motyer details in his book *After Death*,

“Using the metaphor of ‘clothing’, Paul speaks of three states: ‘clothed’, ‘unclothed’ and ‘clothed upon’. At death, the old clothing of the body is left behind and the soul enters the rest of the Lord’s immediate presence. Since, however, the soul is thus separated from its body, it is ‘unclothed’, a state as yet incomplete.”<sup>175</sup>

Paul’s thoughts shifted, though, as in 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 he did discuss what was more likely to take place for both him, the Corinthians, and most other Believers. He reminded them how, “being always of good courage” — so no matter what happened — “know that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6, NASU). The condition of being physically alive, *en tō sōmati* or “in the body,” is one which causes a person to be *ekdēmoumen apo tou Kuriou*, “absent from the Lord.” Paul said, “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7, NASU), and if death/nakedness were to intervene before the Second Coming, it was nothing to fear.

2 Corinthians 5:8 summarizes what being “unclothed” or “naked” would involve: “we are of good courage, I say, and prefer to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (NASU). Regardless of what took place in Paul’s life, or in the lives of the Corinthians—even though death would make him compositionally incomplete—**Paul actually preferred** to be *ek tou sōmatos*, “absent from the body.” This is literally being “out of the body,” with Paul’s inner self or his consciousness removed to another place. And the reason why he found satisfaction being absent from the body, even though he would find himself being “unclothed” or “naked,” is not difficult to see: *Kai endēmēsai pros ton Kurion*; he preferred “to be at home with the Lord.” The verb *endēmēō*, clearly means “**to be in a familiar place, to be at**

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<sup>174</sup> Philo Judaeus: *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 647.

<sup>175</sup> J.A. Motyer, *After Death: What Happens When You Die?* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 1996), 110.

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*home*" (BDAG)<sup>176</sup> or "to live in a place" (LS).<sup>177</sup> The RSV renders this text as, "we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." He said later that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20, NASU), and so even though separate from his physical body Paul would be an incomplete person, **being in the presence of the Lord in Heaven** is far better and preferable. Kruse further describes in his commentary on 2 Corinthians,

"In v. 8 Paul seems to recognize that although he does not wish to experience a disembodied state he will have to do so if he dies before the parousia. But this verse expresses his conviction that even if this should be his lot for a time, it would be more preferable than remaining 'in the body' and so 'away from the Lord' (v. 6)."<sup>178</sup>

Even though Paul did envision a temporary disembodied afterlife, this hardly meant that Earthly matters of service and ministry got put aside. He instructed the Corinthians, "we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him" (2 Corinthians 5:9, NASU). This was because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10, NASU). The judgment or *bēma* seat of the Messiah is a place all must eventually stand before.

While Paul did see himself dying and being welcomed into the presence of His Savior, such a "being home" with Him cannot be used as an excuse for dismissing "the things done while in the body" (NIV), which for Believers should involve accomplishing good works (Ephesians 2:10)! Being welcomed into the Lord's presence in Heaven is only to later be accompanied by the resurrection of the body, and the bringing of Heaven's reign to the Earth. Going to an intermediate Heaven is an expectation which only the redeemed human being can expect among God's creatures.

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<sup>176</sup> BDAG, 332.

<sup>177</sup> LS, 260.

<sup>178</sup> Colin Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 117.

## Messianics and the Afterlife

### Philippians 1:21-23

**“For to me, to live is Messiah and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Messiah, for that is very much better” (NASU).**

Many interpreters agree that Paul’s letter to the Philippians was written from the vantage point of him facing trial in Rome, and so for Paul the possibility of him dying for the good news was a definite and immediate reality. The Apostle had great assurance in his faith, because he said, “for to me, to live is Messiah and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21, NASU). In being martyred for his Lord, Paul’s testimony of not wavering would serve as an excellent example to others who would face similar persecution (Philippians 1:20). Yet, in Paul’s words to his beloved friends, he expressed how he did not want to die. “If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me” (Philippians 1:22, NIV), as still much more could be done for the spread of the good news or gospel. Paul found himself divided between dying, and staying on in Earthly life, being “betwixt” (KJV). He did “not know which to choose” (Philippians 1:22, NASU).

While he ultimately concluded that “to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake” (Philippians 1:24, NASU), the other option Paul had was one of significant gain for himself: “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Philippians 1:23, RSV). Psychopannychists would only say that after Paul died, he would enter into the deep, endless, unconscious sleep of death—only to be awakened by the Lord at the resurrection—so Paul’s next moment would indeed see him with Messiah, but with him denying any kind of post-mortem conscious existence in the realm of Heaven. Yet rather than departing to be with the Messiah, this actually works out to how Paul would depart and *eventually make it* to be with the Messiah.

Such a position significantly ignores the context of what “depart” actually means. The verb *analuō* is defined “to loose a ship from its moorings, weigh anchor, depart” (LS),<sup>179</sup> and was used in ancient times to describe death. It was also used as an ancient military term to describe breaking camp and moving to another location: “About that time, as it happened, Antiochus had retreated [*analuō*] in disorder from the region of Persia” (2 Maccabees

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<sup>179</sup> LS, 58.

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9:1, RSV). Paul's departure by death meant an actual *departure to somewhere*, like a ship leaving harbor or an army breaking camp—in this case a departure to the dimension of the Messiah in Heaven (cf. 2 Timothy 4:6). As Lattimore renders Philippians 1:23, “My desire is to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is much better.”<sup>180</sup>

The following clause *kai sun Christō einai* makes it very clear how Paul expected upon time of death to enter into the presence of the Lord. The verb *eimi* generally relates “of things, to be, exist” (LS),<sup>181</sup> and it would not be a stretch to render this phrase as, “and with Christ exist.” This would undeniably be a death considered “gain” (Philippians 1:21). While Paul's body would be asleep until the future point of reanimation at the resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16), Paul's expectation was one of meeting his Lord immediately after departure. As Gordon D. Fee explains in his Philippians commentary,

“Paul understood death as a means into the Lord's immediate presence, which for him and countless thousands after him has been a comforting and encouraging prospect. Very likely he also expected such ‘gain’ to include consciousness, and for most believers, that too has been a matter of encouragement.”<sup>182</sup>

It is important not to overlook how one of Paul's immediate successors in ministry, Clement of Rome, testified of his final years in ministry. Paul was said to have vigorously declared the good news, but then he left this world and went to the holy place:

“After preaching in both the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects. Thus he was removed from the world and went into the holy place, having proved himself a striking example of patience” (1 Clement 5).<sup>183</sup>

If Paul had said something like “I desire to depart and rest in Messiah” or “sleep in Messiah,” then psychopannychists might indeed have a case.

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<sup>180</sup> Lattimore, *The New Testament*, 427.

<sup>181</sup> LS, 229.

<sup>182</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 149.

<sup>183</sup> Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 6.

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But Paul said that he desired to depart and exist with Messiah. Paul did not say that he desired to die, have his body wait in a place of internment for some unknown period of time (several millennia by now) and decompose into base molecules, and then only be resurrected at some point in the distant future at the *parousia*. Such an occurrence of events would hardly be considered “gain”; at best it would be a “delayed gain.” In *Resurrection of the Son of God*, Wright observes how in Philippians 1:23,

“Paul describes this in such glowing terms (‘better by far’) that it is impossible to suppose that he envisaged it as an unconscious state. He looks forward to being personally present with the one who loved him and whose love will not let him go....He does not speak of ‘going to heaven’, though he would presumably have given that as the present location of the Messiah.”<sup>184</sup>

The reason Paul could say “my desire is to go off and be with the Messiah—that is better by far” (Philippians 1:23, CJSB), was precisely because Yeshua the Messiah was everything for him! Those who believe in a temporary disembodied afterlife are similarly motivated: Yeshua the Messiah and being in His presence are everything for them! Is Yeshua the Messiah *not* everything for psychopannychists? This is a question which few psychopannychists do not seem to want to answer. Their attention is geared more toward proving people who believe in an intermediate afterlife as being wrong.

When Bible readers consider what Paul expected after death—seeing the Lord—what is so ideologically wrong with affirming an intermediate state in Heaven for Believers in His presence? *Take important notice how Paul’s emphasis truly was going to be with the Lord*, as opposed to floating off into endless disembodiment, as is popularly thought. Being with the Lord, as opposed to escaping this world, should be the expectation of born again Believers. We should be motivated by a love for the Messiah we hold so dearly in our hearts, that we should desire seeing Him immediately after death the same as Paul. And, do keep in mind that although Paul expected to depart to see Yeshua immediately following death, he very much affirmed the reality of the resurrection to his Philippian audience, which would follow after a period of refreshment in Heaven (Philippians 3:20-21).

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<sup>184</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, pp 226-227.

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## 2 Timothy 4:6-8

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (NASU).

The language of 2 Timothy 4:6-8 is quite similar to Philippians 1:21-24. The previous scene reflected the possibility that the Apostle Paul may have died, and as result of death be welcomed into the immediate presence of Yeshua. There, however, Paul noted that rather than going on to be with the Lord, he must instead remain with the Believers a little longer as they needed his guidance and encouragement. The scene of 2 Timothy 4:6-8 would have occurred later, following Acts 28 and Paul’s release from Roman imprisonment. After having been in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), Paul had been arrested again. According to tradition, Paul was executed by Nero in Rome (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.5), and so the depiction of being poured out like a drink offering, served to acknowledge how Paul would suffer an unpleasant death.

2 Timothy is agreed by conservative examiners to be the last letter which Paul composed before dying, and it is not difficult to see why. He wrote his dear friend, “For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come” (2 Timothy 4:6, RSV). Paul had completed the work of ministry which the Lord had allotted to him (2 Timothy 4:7). The “time of my death” (NLT) was described as *ho kairos tēs analuseōs*, the noun *analusis* undoubtedly being related to the verb *analuō*, having been used previously in Philippians 1:23 describing Paul’s “desire to depart [*analuō*] and be with Messiah” (NASU). William D. Mounce notes in his Pastoral Epistles commentary, how

“Paul now knows that he will have to face what he had hoped would not occur, a period of disembodied existence, separate from the body but present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:1-8).”<sup>185</sup>

All which remained for Paul, subsequent to his departure/death, would be the return of the Lord to Planet Earth: where the righteous deceased will resurrected, a reunion with the living holy ones or saints at that time will

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<sup>185</sup> William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, Vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 578.

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occur (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17), and when final rewards will be issued to the whole company of Believers by Yeshua. 2 Timothy 4:8 says, “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (NASU). This sentence begins with the term *loipos*, which specifically “**pert. to that which remains over, esp. after action has been taken**” (BDAG).<sup>186</sup> It is obvious from the context how Paul’s time/season of departure is different from the future day when Yeshua will appear at His Second Coming.

This passage serves to confirm a two-stage individual eschatology. Individual persons depart/die, and are transported into the presence of the Lord in Heaven. Recognizing that his departure—via a likely gruesome death—was soon at hand, Paul testified how “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18, NASU). While what will occur at the Second Coming and resurrection were never out of view, these were not the words of someone who anticipated sheer unconsciousness for several millennia after death. Paul was going to the Heavenly Kingdom!

But, going to the Heavenly Kingdom is a temporary, intermediate condition, because at a future day in history Yeshua will return to Planet Earth, the deceased will receive resurrected bodies, and such a Heavenly reign will be fully manifested on Earth. For the Apostle Paul, all that was left or remained after his departure to be with the Lord, were the future events involving the Messiah’s return and the establishment of His Kingdom on Earth, and with that the dispersement of rewards to all of the holy ones or saints (living and deceased-resurrected).

### Hebrews 9:27-28

**“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Messiah also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (NASU).**

The author of Hebrews was addressing an audience whom he considered to be far along enough in faith, that “by this time you ought to be teachers” (Hebrews 5:12, NASU), meaning that they should have possessed sufficient knowledge and maturity to understand the

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<sup>186</sup> BDAG, 602.

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complicated issues of theology. It should not be that difficult to understand his perspective on salvation. Human beings are only allowed to die a physical death once, facing some kind of judgment—whether good or bad—following, sealing their fate as either redeemed or unredeemed (Hebrews 9:27). (And, if eternal punishment is considered to be the “second death” [Revelation 21:8], this should be taken in terms of a second kind of separation from God, not being annihilated from existence [discussed further].)

Yeshua the Messiah, sacrificed at Golgotha (Calvary) for the sins of the world, cannot be sacrificed again for the atonement of sins (Hebrews 9:28a). Yet, Yeshua is going to appear once again in regard to His Father’s unfolding plan of salvation history (Ger. *Heilsgeschichte*). Hebrews 9:29b says He “will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him” (NASU). In one’s analysis concerning the intermediate state, it is not difficult to see what the author of Hebrews was referring to. God is not just concerned about the salvation of an immaterial consciousness, but at the *parousia* Yeshua will return, the bodies of deceased Believers will be resurrected to physical life again, and the bodies of living Believers will be similarly translated (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51). As the Apostle Paul so excellently put it in Philippians 3:21, He “will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (NASU).

Salvation for an individual does not end with being forgiven of sin and reconciled with God. On the contrary, salvation for a person will only be completed at the resurrection, with *all* of the components of the human being brought to immortal vitality. Psychopannychists are not incorrect in pointing out how this message of resurrection has been sadly forgotten among many Believers. At the same time, though, psychopannychists have done a disservice in reducing the human being *entirely* to this dimension, as Believers do possess authority given by Him over things in His dimension (Ephesians 2:6).

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### Hebrews 12:22-23

**“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and [congregation] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect” (NASU).**

The author of Hebrews was likely writing his treatise on the heels of the impending destruction of Jerusalem in the late 60s C.E. (cf. Hebrews 8:4, 13), and as such he had to convince a Diaspora audience—teetering on denying Yeshua—how His sacrifice was indeed sufficient to cover their sins. These people may have thought in the back of their minds, even as Believers, that animal sacrifices occurring back in Jerusalem could always be something which they could find solace in. Now that this was going to be removed, what would they do? With this about to change, so would the dynamics of their faith—and they would be tested. In wanting his audience to look to an exalted Yeshua in Heaven for their answers, we also should not be surprised to see how the writer focused their attention off of an Earthly Jerusalem, and onto a Heavenly Jerusalem, where the Messiah resided. This was a Heavenly Jerusalem which will be eventually merged into the New Earth after the Millennium, and as the Eternal State begins (Revelation 21:1-10).

As is frequently seen throughout the Apostolic Scriptures, there is a sense of realized eschatology in the life of Believers—elements of the world to come to be experienced *now*—which is to encourage people to remain steadfast in faith. Hebrews 12:22 does not say “you will come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God sometime in the distant future,” but instead the perfect tense verb *proselēluthate* is employed, a past action with continuing effects or results: “you have come.” Morey explains in *Death and the Afterlife*, “the believers had been ushered into citizenship in and fellowship with the heavenly Jerusalem.”<sup>187</sup> This is a present, not just a future reality for them.

Who is to be seen in this Heavenly Jerusalem (*Ierousalēm epourainō*)? Obviously God is seen, and not surprisingly “myriads of angels” (Hebrews 12:22, NASU) are also seen. And it is at this point that the psychopannychist, who advocates that the human being is only of this dimension, gets decidedly embarrassed. Along with the Heavenly host of angels, “the spirits [*pneumasi*] of *the* righteous made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23, NASU) are seen

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<sup>187</sup> Morey, pp 212-213.

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worshipping God before His throne. This is obviously the disembodied consciousnesses of Believers, “righteous people who have been brought to the goal” (CJSB). The author of Hebrews concluded, regarding this, “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns from heaven*” (Hebrews 12:25, NASU). Ben Witherington III properly indicates in his commentary,

“Our author is thus envisioning what has happened already above in heaven, not what will happen at the end of history after the last resurrection.”<sup>188</sup>

These people never gave up on the Lord or His salvation during their lives, and having died, all that then awaited them would be the consummation of their salvation via the resurrection. They were regarded as being of the assembly of “firstborn,” a high status worthy of holy ones or saints who get to be with the Messiah before His return to the Earth.

Any person who has lost a loved one, who knew and loved the Lord, can take great comfort in these verses. When we join in corporate worship as Believers here on Earth, we also join into an ongoing worship of the Lord in Heaven. This not only involves angels before Him, but those who have *preceded us* in faith and have likely impacted us in many ways. The author of Hebrews’ use of this, to dissuade his audience from reneging on salvation, is not difficult to see. While eternal punishment would await if they fall away, any kind of reunion with redeemed family and friends would also not be possible.

### 1 Peter 3:18-20

“For Messiah also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water*” (NASU).

The Apostle Peter’s description of the Messiah’s salvific work—somehow affecting even those from Noah’s generation—is admittedly

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<sup>188</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 343.

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controversial, but it does offer Bible readers an important clue of how a post-mortem state of just sheer unconsciousness is not something too sustainable. Peter asserted that the Messiah died for the sins of all people, so that Believers might be reconciled to the Father (1 Peter 3:18a). He then followed this with a difficult remark: “He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18b, NRSV). Some interpret the datives (case indicating indirect object) *sarki* and *pneumati* as being locative, with “flesh” being of one dimension and then “spirit” of another dimension. A way to take this might be that when Yeshua was made alive “in the spirit” He did not resurrect physically, but instead only appeared to the Disciples as an hallucination. Yet, the disciple Thomas was able to physically touch Yeshua’s execution scars (John 10:27).

Another way of looking at the datives *sarki* and *pneumati*, is that these are not locative, but instead instrumental: “He was put to death in/by the flesh, but made alive in/by the spirit.” “Flesh” would be describing how He was put to death by “sinful men” (Luke 24:7, NASU), and in contrast “spirit” would be the power which guided and thus resurrected Him.<sup>189</sup> Continuing this train of thought, it would have thus been by the power of the Spirit that Yeshua “went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison” (1 Peter 3:19a, NASU), the same Spirit which would consequently raise our Lord from the dead. He would have had to transverse the great gulf between Paradise and prison (Luke 16:23-24). It is difficult to avoid the fact that *tois en phulakē pneumasin*, “the in prison spirits” (my translation), is a description of those who were disobedient during the time of the Flood, in a post-mortem disembodied penal state.

Psychopannychists advocate that when Yeshua died on the tree, He solely went to the grave. But what Peter has stated here speaks to the contrary, a view later reflected in various editions of the Apostles’ Creed, where Yeshua “suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, died and buried; he descended into hell.”<sup>190</sup> Peter said that the Messiah somehow “made proclamation” (NASU) to the spirits in prison who performed evil deeds at the time of Noah. In *Death and the Afterlife*, Morey explains how

“While there remain many unanswered questions which have never been fully resolved by any commentator in two millenniums, the phrase

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<sup>189</sup> Cf. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 467.

<sup>190</sup> Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 26.

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‘spirits now in prison’ clearly speaks of disembodied spirits in the netherworld.”<sup>191</sup>

This necessitates Yeshua to have gone somewhere *more* than just a place of internment, in the intermediate time between His execution and resurrection.

The controversy which has occurred over 1 Peter 3:18-20, is what “preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19, RSV) is to actually mean, with some concluding that condemned sinners can be redeemed even after death. Did Yeshua descend into Sheol/Hades and “preach the gospel” to those condemned during the time of Noah, so that they could now be considered “saved”? No. This problem can be easily solved by seeing that all which is said by Peter is *ekēruxen*, as the verb *kērussō* means “**to make an official announcement, announce, make known**” (BDAG).<sup>192</sup> While it can often relate to proclaiming the good news, in this case it appears that upon descending into Sheol/Hades, Yeshua instead would have simply declared a message of victory or righteous vindication to these spirits, as their final sentencing is all that they have left to look forward to (cf. Colossians 2:15). If Peter intended the gospel message of salvation to have been proclaimed by Yeshua here, then the verb *euangelizō*, often regarding “to evangelize,” was a more specific option which could have been used. The NASU rendering of “made proclamation” best captures what was intended by Peter’s remarks.<sup>193</sup>

## 2 Peter 1:13-15

“I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Yeshua the Messiah has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind” (NASU).

Similar to how the Apostle Paul reflected on his soon coming death in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, so did the Apostle Peter write about his forthcoming death

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<sup>191</sup> Morey, 214.

<sup>192</sup> BDAG, 543.

<sup>193</sup> Many who believe in a disembodied afterlife notably interpret this passage from a different view. Another common interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-20, sees Yeshua “preaching” through Noah at the time of his building the ark, via the Holy Spirit, following some of the views of John Calvin regarding this passage.

Cf. Wayne Grudem, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp 157-161.

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in his second letter. He talked about his current life, “I consider it right, as long as I am in this tent” (2 Peter 1:13, HCSB), *en toutō tō skēnōmati*. Here, Peter’s usage of *skēnōma* or “tent,” was akin to his “body” (RSV/NIV). He said that “I know that the putting off of my body [*skēnōma*] will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me” (2 Peter 1:14, RSV), as *apothesis* means “a putting aside, getting rid of a thing” (LS).<sup>194</sup> Peter spoke of a future time, shown to him by the Lord, where he would be putting off his physical body, his body being likened unto a temporary tent. Witherington points out in his commentary, “there is no doubt that some kind of body/personality or body/life dualism is here as in 2 Corinthians 5.”<sup>195</sup>

It is not difficult for one to see how Peter wrote this letter to issue some final instructions to the Believers. He wanted to both encourage and admonish them, as he would not be with them for much longer. He said, “I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things” (2 Peter 1:15, ESV), as his words would be direct and impactful enough so that they would not be forgotten. This departure was his “decease” (YLT). From the Greek, the clause of interest is *meta tēn emēn exodon*, with Peter’s departure from human life on Earth actually being an “exodus.” *Exodos* means “**movement from one geographical area to another, departure, path, course,**” and “**departure from among the living**” (BDAG),<sup>196</sup> and *Exodos* was the term used by the Septuagint translators to label the Book of *Shemot* in the Torah, because its primary theme is the Ancient Israelites’ departure from Egypt and entry into God’s purpose.

The Apostle Peter did not employ the term *exodos* by accident, describing his forthcoming death. He likened his Earthly death to the Israelites’ departure from Egypt. In order for Peter to depart in this manner, he had to actually *go somewhere*.<sup>197</sup> If Peter’s personal exodus was only his being transferred from Earthly life to an Earthly place of burial, it certainly weakens his expectation. Yet, if Peter’s exodus was his consciousness being transferred to an intermediate afterlife in Heaven with the Lord, then *exodos* was the appropriate term to use. And indeed, when one properly thinks of the Exodus, *just* a removal of Israel to the wilderness is an incomplete picture. The wilderness experience was a temporary stage of sojourning for

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<sup>194</sup> LS, 98.

<sup>195</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 325.

<sup>196</sup> BDAG, 350.

<sup>197</sup> The early testimony of *1 Clement* 5:4 was, in fact, “Peter, through unrighteous envy, endured not one or two, but numerous labours; and when he had at length suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him” (Roberts and Donaldson, 6).

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Israel on the way to the Promised Land. Similarly, Peter's exodus would not end at Heaven, but rather with the resurrection of his "tent" and entry into God's Kingdom on Earth.

### Revelation 6:9-11

**"When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also*" (NASU).**

Both psychopannychists and those who believe in an intermediate afterlife, recognize that a great deal of symbolism is employed in the Book of Revelation. Much of this—especially if one is a pre-millennialist—will only be known for certain as God's plan of salvation history unfolds sometime in the future. Yet here in Revelation 6:9-11, at the breaking of the fifth seal, it is difficult for one not to see a conscious disembodied post-mortem state portrayed, even if those in view are in a state of rest. Here, as the Apostle John witnessed, "I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained" (Revelation 6:9, NASU). It is right to recognize how John "saw" (Grk. verb *horaō*) these souls; they are not just some symbolic representations of people like a kind of chorus one would encounter in a Greek play. John did more than just hear the pleas of the souls, as though they were some kind of poetic voice not really intended to be viewed as actual persons who were viciously martyred.

It is not at all improper to view "souls" here as being just people, given the wide array of usages available for *psuchē*, because it is **the location** of where these people are crying out which needs to be taken into consideration. The setting depicted in Revelation was not people symbolically crying out from the ground, but rather they are associated with the altar found at "the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven" (Revelation 15:5, NASU). These Believers who have died, presumably as martyrs, entreated the Lord to enact His righteous judgment upon sinners (Revelation 6:10). Here, wearing some kind of white robes, Heaven is depicted as a place of rest and refreshment (cf. John 14:2), as these martyrs

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would have to wait just a little while longer (Revelation 6:11) until God's plan could be fully enacted. Morey summarizes in *Death and the Afterlife*, how "This passage has always proven a great difficulty to those who deny that believers ascend to heaven at death."<sup>198</sup>

Psychopannychists deny that these "souls" are actual disembodied people in Heaven, by basically allegorizing the text. In striving to overcome what they believe is a Platonic dualistic reading, they have actually embraced a cinematic reading consistent with Ancient Greek plays. These "souls" are simply to be likened to the voice of a chorus in the background. While God, His angels, Satan and his demons, and various other figures in the Book of Revelation are to be taken as literal persons and entities—these "souls" are viewed as just a poetic or cinematic representation. But how can a Bible reader honestly justify *people not being people*?

What the souls in Heaven appealed was, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Revelation 6:10, NIV). Their request was how long it would be until their murderers and/or the system which slew them will have been dealt with and defeated. As much as the resurrection of their bodies would serve to vindicate their matrydom, the *specific* request of these souls was actually not to be resurrected; their principal concern was actually to see the fallen world system overthrown and the government of the Messiah placed upon Planet Earth.

Revelation 6:9-11 actually helps Bible readers to understand the purpose of an intermediate afterlife a great deal. Psychopannychists commonly say that going to Heaven after death would make the resurrection of the body a kind of afterthought. But this scene communicates that the company of holy ones or saints in Heaven is likely active—especially martyrs—in appealing to Yeshua that the next stage of salvation history begin as soon as possible. Milne observes in *The Message of Heaven & Hell*, "whatever the experience of the intermediate state may amount to, it is not the end of the journey in any sense. It has within it a deep and ineradicable limitation."<sup>199</sup> As great as going to Heaven and seeing the Lord may be, only when He returns and defeats His enemies on Earth, can those who slew His holy ones or saints in cold blood be shown His full power and majesty.

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<sup>198</sup> Morey, pp 214-215.

<sup>199</sup> Milne, 175.

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There is no reason to believe that when the Apostles died, each of them expected to just float away to Heaven for a period of endless disembodied bliss, as such a view fails to take into consideration the significance of the resurrection to Second Temple Judaism. The Apostle Paul very clearly taught that the redeemed in Israel's Messiah are to be awaiting "the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23, NASU), their reanimated, restored physical selves. At the same time, the expectation for the First Century Apostles and holy ones or saints was not to just die and then fall into an endless unconscious dormancy for several millennia until the resurrection, either. The expectation was "Lord Yeshua, receive my spirit!" (Acts 7:59, NASU), and "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" (Philippians 1:23, RSV). Even if such a disembodied state would have been considered nakedness or incompleteness, it was nevertheless preferable "to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8, NASU) in the intermediate period between death and resurrection, as one would be in the presence of the Savior.

## The Netherworld and Heaven

A fair summary of Scripture passages, in both the Tanach (OT) and Apostolic Writings (NT), depicts that following death the deceased do not enter into an unconscious state, but rather that they do enter into some kind of disembodied intermediate state prior to the resurrection. Yet there can easily be a great deal of confusion between the Tanach and Apostolic Writings, as the Tanach describes *all* of the dead going to Sheol or the netherworld, and the Apostolic Writings describe the *redeemed* dead going to the presence of the Lord, presumably in Heaven. For the psychopannychist, this means that Sheol obviously just means "the grave," and then references in the Apostolic Writings have to be reworked, spiritualized/allegorized out of context, or outright ignored. For those who believe that the consciousness of a born again Believer is transferred to the presence of the Lord in Heaven at time of death, there has to have been some kind of transition point within the Scriptures where the righteous dead no longer went to the netherworld of Sheol, but now go to Heaven.

Based on some of the passages which we have just reviewed, various theologians of the emerging Christian Church of the late First and early Second Centuries, holding to a doctrine of an intermediate afterlife inherited from the Jewish Synagogue, investigated the writings of the Apostles, in an effort to determine what the transition point of one going to Sheol/Hades to

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the righteous *now* going to Heaven, would have been.<sup>200</sup> The doctrine which was formulated, was that upon His death at Golgotha, Yeshua the Messiah descended into the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades (Luke 23:43; cf. 16:22-24), made a proclamation of His victory to those who would remain imprisoned (1 Peter 3:19-20), and then upon His ascension into Heaven took along with Him the deceased righteous from the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades (Ephesians 4:9; cf. Romans 10:7), with the torments side of Sheol/Hades or Hell left occupied (cf. Philippians 2:11). This has commonly become known as either the **descent into Hades** or the **harrowing of Hell**.<sup>201</sup>

Can this view of the righteous dead being transferred from the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades, now into Heaven, be substantiated, when all of these passages are taken into consideration? In His parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Yeshua depicted Sheol/Hades as being divided into two compartments: one a side of Paradise or Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:23), and then the other a side of punishment (Luke 16:24). This was concurrent with the Pharisaical Jewish theology of the time, which actually held that the Paradise side of Sheol/Hades was but a temporary holding place for the righteous deceased. Josephus attested that here, "they wait for that rest and eternal new life in heaven, which is to succeed this region" (*Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades* 4).<sup>202</sup> Obviously at some point, the righteous deceased had to be vacated from Sheol/Hades, something anticipated in First Century Pharisaism.

Yeshua the Messiah told the repentant thief beside Him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, NASU), as upon dying they would both find themselves in Abraham's bosom. The Apostle Peter described how while in Sheol/Hades, "He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison" (1 Peter 3:19, NASU), a declaration of His vindication over evil. **The transition point of the righteous deceased going to Sheol/Hades at time of death, to now going to Heaven to be in the presence of the Lord, was asserted to be Yeshua's ascension into**

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<sup>200</sup> "Hades [Sheol]...was the place for the disembodied spirits of the unrighteous and the righteous separated from the body at death up to the time of Christ's resurrection. Even the Lord's 'soul' went there (Acts 2:27,31). Consequent to Christ's resurrection, believers go to be with Christ (II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23)" (Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, NASB [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1994], 1379).

<sup>201</sup> "Descent into Hades," in David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), pp 205-207; Everett F. Harrison, "Descent Into Hell," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 164.

<sup>202</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 813.

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**Heaven.** This would be seen in Ephesians 4:7-9, where the Apostle Paul described,

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Messiah’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN’ [Psalm 68:18]. (Now this *expression*, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things)” (Ephesians 4:7-9, NASU).

Paul’s principal aim in Ephesians 4, was to elaborate upon the unity which is to manifest itself among Believers in the Body of Messiah, and how each person has a distinct role to play by being given unique spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12). In explaining how Yeshua’s work had distributed gifts to His followers, Paul appropriated Psalm 68. Psalm 68 was a psalm of battle, and the verses leading up to Psalm 68:18, quoted in Ephesians 4:8, describe the Lord defeating His enemies (Psalm 68:1-4), His vindication for the oppressed (Psalm 68:5-6), His mighty power (Psalm 68:7-10), and the victory which is achieved by Him (Psalm 68:11-18). The Lord God fights in battle, and then leads forth captives caught in battle in His train to Mount Zion, to rule and reign in triumph:

“The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them *as at Sinai*, in holiness. You have ascended on high, You have led captive *Your captives*; You have received gifts among men, even *among the rebellious also*, that the LORD God may dwell *there*. Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, the God *who* is our salvation. Selah” (Psalm 68:17-19, NASU).

Please note how the Hebrew verb *laqach* can mean “take to or for a person” (BDB),<sup>203</sup> in regard to fetching something which is to later be distributed. *Laqach* can be extrapolated as “to give,” something which Paul may have imported into his letter via the Greek *didōmi*, in describing Yeshua’s distribution of gifts. The difference between the Hebrew MT or Greek LXX in Psalm 67:18, is that rather than receiving gifts, the Messiah as victor was depicted as distributing them. (Commentators have suggested that the modified quotation of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 follows a form

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<sup>203</sup> BDB, 542.

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of Jewish interpretation known as *peshet*, commonly employed by the Qumran community.)<sup>204</sup>

While Paul made a point that the ascension of Yeshua had brought about the distribution of gifts to His people, what does it mean when Yeshua had “LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES” (NASU), or *ēchmalōteusen aichmalōsian*? This clause is invariably translated as, “he led captive captivity” (YLT) or “he made captivity itself a captive” (NRSV), although *aichmalōsia* means “*captivity: a body of captives*” (LS),<sup>205</sup> often relating to prisoners of war (cf. Revelation 13:10). The rendering “host of captives” (RSV, NASU, ESV) or “captives” (NIV) is valid. It is not inappropriate to conclude that these “captives” were the righteous dead who once occupied the Paradise side of Sheol, because Yeshua’s ability to transport them to Heaven at His ascension would surely be indicative of His possessing “the keys of death and of Hades” (Revelation 1:18, NASU).

Identifying who this “HOST OF CAPTIVES” (NASU) was, is connected to Paul’s remarks made in Ephesians 4:9, “Now this *expression*, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?” (NASU). What did Yeshua descend to? There is no agreement among interpreters as to what the clause *eis ta katōtera [merē] tēs gēs* actually means, but there is good reason to recognize how this was more than just His descent to Planet Earth.

How low Yeshua actually descended is best answered by considering the Tanach descriptions witnessed of Sheol. Deuteronomy 32:22 describes how God’s anger “burns to the lowest part of Sheol, and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains” (NASU). The Psalmist cried out, “But those who seek my life to destroy it, will go into the depths of the earth” (Psalm 63:9, NASU), with *b’tachtiyot ha’aretz* being rendered as *eis ta katōtata tēs gēs* in the LXX. Is this just “the grave”? From *Death and the Afterlife*, Morey can remind us again how

“Sheol is ‘under the earth,’ or ‘the underworld,’ while graves were built as supulchres above the earth, or caves, or holes in the earth. Sheol is called the underworld in Isa. 14:9. It is also called ‘the lower parts of the earth’ (KJV) in Ps. 63:9; Isa. 44:23; Eze. 26:20; 31:14, 16, 18; 32:18, 24. Sheol

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<sup>204</sup> Pheme Perkins, “The Letter to the Ephesians,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 11 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 421; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 243.

<sup>205</sup> LS, 24.

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is the opposite of heaven (Ps. 139:8). One must go ‘down’ to get to Sheol (Gen. 37:35).”<sup>206</sup>

In Jewish theology “The lower parts of the earth” or “the regions beneath the earth”<sup>207</sup> represent something more than just a place of internment for the dead, as Sheol or the netherworld was believed to have existed under the Earth.<sup>208</sup> The Patriarch Jacob exclaimed, “Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son” (Genesis 37:35, NASU). As previously discussed, Sheol here cannot just mean “the grave,” because the deceased Joseph would have had no grave, as his father believed him to be eaten by wild animals (Genesis 37:33).

The Messiah’s low descent into Sheol or the abyss (Romans 10:7), was accompanied by a high ascent into Heaven. Ephesians 4:10 details, “He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things” (NASU). Yeshua ascended *huperanōn pantōn tōn ouranōn*, “higher than all the heavens” (NIV). The contrast with Ephesians 4:9 would be that just as Yeshua had descended to the lowest point in the cosmos (cf. Acts 2:31), now He has ascended to the highest point in the cosmos. From His exalted point in Heaven, Yeshua is able to fill all things (cf. Jeremiah 23:24). The Epistle to the Hebrews describes Yeshua’s condition in Heaven as one of service before His Father as High Priest (Hebrews 4:14; 7:26).

The ancient interpretation about “the lower parts of the earth,” relating to the righteous of Paradise being released from Sheol, with Heaven now opened—helps an interpreter reconcile statements made in the Tanach about all the dead going to Sheol prior to resurrection (i.e., Ecclesiastes 9:9-10), with statements in the Apostolic Scriptures about the righteous dead going into the presence of the Lord prior to resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:6-9; Philippians 1:20-23). A transition point had to take place, and Yeshua’s descent into Sheol or the lowest region, and His subsequent ascent into Heaven or the highest region—with the righteous holy ones/saints, “captives”—would be the best one. Morey summarizes in *Death and the Afterlife*,

“Before Jesus was raised from the dead, the apostles assumed that everyone went to Sheol or Hades. This Hades had two sections, one for the righteous

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<sup>206</sup> Morey, 76.

<sup>207</sup> *New English Bible with the Apocrypha* (Oxford and Cambridge: Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, 1970), 248 fn a.

<sup>208</sup> Sarna, in *Etz Hayim*, 232; cf. Jim West, “Sheol,” in *EDB*, pp 1206-1207.

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and one for the wicked. But Christ's resurrection changed this picture. Thus Paul uses the language of transition when he speaks of Christ taking the righteous out of Hades and bringing them into Heaven (Eph. 4:8, 9)."<sup>209</sup>

### Is going to Heaven a "pagan doctrine"?

Many who have adopted a view of psychopannychy, have not necessarily done so because they have sat down with their Bibles, and carefully exegeted the various passages describing human composition and the death expectations of the Tanach and Apostolic Scriptures. Many people within the Messianic sphere of influence—and certainly Hebrew Roots people—who have become psychopannychists, have been sensationalized into believing that going to Heaven upon time of death is a "pagan doctrine." It is commonly argued that those who believe that the consciousnesses of the deceased go to a holding place until the resurrection—known as either Heaven or Hell—have adapted a pagan concept more consistent with Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman views of the afterlife, than with the Bible.

In spite of the Biblical exegesis which stands in favor of the consciousnesses of the deceased being able to exist in a temporary disembodied state, just saying that the idea is "pagan," is often reason enough for some to become psychopannychists. Lew White, author of the publication *Fossilized Customs*, is quite direct when asserting,

"Pagans always believed that they would go into the skies to live with their deities....It is...important to note what Pagans taught about the 'spirits' of the dead being transported to 'heaven'. That is the heresy that has been accepted."<sup>210</sup>

Do notice how here that the idea of born again Believers being transported to the presence of the Lord upon time of death, is *not* just rejected on the basis of it somehow being "pagan"; it is rejected at the level of heresy. This is disturbing, because as much as I would reject the doctrine of psychopannychy as being an aberration, I would not consider psychopannychists to be heretics—as much as I would just consider them to be misguided and one-dimensional thinkers. Among all of the one hundred billion or so known galaxies in our universe, as well as the multiple universes or dimensions which modern science acknowledges now exist—they think that human beings made in the image of an Eternal God from

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<sup>209</sup> Morey, 86.

<sup>210</sup> Lew White, *Fossilized Customs* (Louisville, KY: Strawberry Islands, 2001), 41.

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another dimension, are basically advanced animals. I believe psychopannychists incorrectly relegate the human being as a creature solely of Planet Earth, but I do not think they are “heretics.” As much as I would reject psychopannychy as being a valid doctrine, I do believe that there are indeed psychopannychists who are genuinely saved.

There is a severe error in rejecting a teaching of Scripture—such as the consciousnesses of Believers transported to the Lord’s presence upon time of death—as “pagan,” which very few who have adopted psychopannychy on this basis are aware of. If it is concluded that the idea of Believers going to Heaven to be with the Lord upon time of death is pagan, what is keeping a person from rejecting other doctrines or Biblical stories where paganism may also parallel the Scriptures? After all, are not there pagan myths about deities coming down from the sky in the form of humans and performing miracles, which mimic the Earthly life and ministry of Yeshua?<sup>211</sup> What do we do about stories like the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which is very similar to the Flood of Genesis 6-9? What do we do about the parallels which exist between the Genesis 1-3 Creation account and the Mesopotamian myth *Atrahasis*? And the list can go on and on...

Using “paganism” as a basis for rejecting doctrines seen in Scripture, should we conclude that the Gospel narratives of the Messiah’s life are pagan myths? Are the accounts of the Flood, Noah’s Ark, and even Creation itself, redacted versions of Mesopotamian mythology into the Torah? (This is what liberals certainly argue.) Certainly, today’s Hebrew Roots people are often not aware of all of the potentially “pagan” elements and connections which can be made between the Holy Scriptures and mythology. These actually include *more* of the cherished accounts and stories in the Tanach or the Old Testament, than they do the record of Yeshua’s ministry.

The “it’s pagan” argument which can frequently be made by psychopannychists must be held *consistently* and not selectively. If we reject an intermediate afterlife in Heaven for Believers prior to resurrection, on the basis that societies contemporary to Ancient Israel believed in a disembodied afterlife, then more significant beliefs and/or accounts in the Scriptures need to also be similarly reevaluated. What this does, more than anything else, is that it places not only the veracity of the Apostolic Scriptures—but the reliability and trustworthiness of the Tanach itself—on the proverbial chopping block. The ultimate result of such a quest will not be that one has a more intimate and blessed relationship with the Creator,

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<sup>211</sup> Consult the author’s article “Is the Story of Yeshua Pagan?” (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).

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but one will in fact deny that the Creator is concerned with human beings, *that is if He even exists*. A life of some form of Jewish Saddusaism and/or Hellenistic Epicureanism, with no future resurrection or existence to come, awaits.

**We cannot justifiably conclude that the idea of born again Believers going to Heaven upon time of death, prior to the resurrection, is pagan.** If we do this, we run the risk of later denying the trustworthiness of our Bibles, which itself will lead to either agnosticism or atheism.

## You must be born again!

Perhaps the most significant problem which we should have with psychopannychists, is what many (but not all) of them postulate about **the born again experience**.<sup>212</sup> In his words to Nicodemus, Yeshua the Messiah said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, NASU; cf. 3:7). Here, the clause rendered "born again" is *gennēthē anōthen*, more specifically meaning "born from above" (NRSV). This would mean that the nature of Heaven must be present inside of a committed and mature follower of Yeshua, if one ever expects to encounter and experience the Kingdom of God in his or her life. A significant part of seeing God's Kingdom made manifest, is being delivered from demons (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20), something which can surely take place when a person is spiritually regenerated!

It has long been recognized in Biblical Studies that being "born again" or "born from above" was used in Second Temple Judaism to describe proselytes. The Talmud records, "R. Yosé says, 'A proselyte at the moment of conversion is like a new-born baby'" (b.*Yevamot* 48b).<sup>213</sup> In his sermon "The New Birth," John Wesley made use of this Jewish designation to explain the transformation which takes place within a person via the power of the good news:

"The expression, being born again, was not first used by our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus: it was well known before that time, and was in common use among the Jews when our Savior appeared among them. When an adult heathen was convinced that the Jewish religion was of God, and desired to join therein, it was the custom to baptize him first, before he was admitted to circumcision. And when he was baptized, he was said to be born again; by which they meant, that he who was before a child of the

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<sup>212</sup> Cf. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, pp 326-328.

<sup>213</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

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devil, was now adopted into the family of God, and accounted one of his children.”<sup>214</sup>

An ancient proselyte to Judaism would have had to turn his back on his previous way of life in paganism, and submit himself to a procedure where that old life was considered to be behind him. He was born again into a new life knowing the God of Israel and becoming a member of the Jewish community. In a similar way to be a true follower of His, Yeshua the Messiah required that people be born again. They would turn their backs on their old way of thinking, and instead turn to the salvation which He provided and the example He had set for living. As a result, men and women would take on a new nature and could be considered new people, forgiven of sin and spiritually regenerated—hence, “born from above.”

The Apostle Peter more specifically described what it means to be born again:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who according to His great mercy **has caused us to be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead...**for you have been born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:3, 23, NASU).

1 Peter 1:23 employs the perfect passive participle *anagegennēmenoi*. This depicts an ongoing past action with continuing results, having been accomplished by an external force, namely God and/or His Holy Spirit. Believers have been reborn via an imperishable seed as guaranteed by the Word of God or the Holy Scriptures (cf. 1 Peter 1:24-25; cf. Isaiah 40:6, 8). The born again experience is *not* something which is to come sometime in the future for Believers, but it is something which they each partake of *right now* following their acceptance of salvation in Messiah Yeshua. The resurrection of Yeshua is to assure the redeemed in Him, that the born again experience which they have partaken of, is a genuine and authentic action in their lives. Peter called this an *elpida zōsan* or “living hope”—the verb *zōsan* actually being a present active participle—meaning that this is a present reality which every Believer possesses!

Many of today’s psychopannychists who one will encounter, however—with this viewpoint growing throughout the independent

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<sup>214</sup> N. Burwash, ed., *Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards Part I: The Sermons, with Introductions, Analysis, and Notes* (Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing, 1988), 462.

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Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement—argue that **the born again experience does not occur** when a Believer confesses and repents of sin, and is spiritually regenerated. *This is very disturbing!* Often thinking in one-dimensional terms, their conclusions are not that far off from those initial questions of Nicodemus: “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?” (John 3:4, NASU). Yeshua poignantly asked Nicodemus, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?” (John 3:10, NASU), as our Lord only reoriented the ancient Jewish usage of “born again” from proselyte conversion, to now one who followed and believed in Him, being a recipient of His salvation.

So if the born again experience does not occur when a Believer receives Yeshua into his or her life, when does it take place? Many of today's psychopannychists believe that it will take place at the future resurrection. White says that at the resurrection, “we are re-born, clothed with immortality.”<sup>215</sup> Yeshua rebuked Nicodemus for thinking that being born again was something *entirely physical*, having told him, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6, NASU). **Yeshua's followers must be born of the Spirit!** Being born again requires the redeemed to have been transformed from within, and hence possessing a transformed heart and mind oriented toward God and His love. While I would not consider belief in psychopannychy to be a salvation issue, per se, **it is undeniable that many psychopannychists will say that they are not born again.** Does this mean that they do not possess a new nature and are not reconciled to the Father? Have they not been spiritually changed via the power of the good news? I will leave the final judgment to the Lord, but if certain people themselves say that they are not born again, then it is a pretty good clue that they are not.

It is notable, in total fairness, that not all psychopannychists believe that the born again experience takes place at the future resurrection. Koster, among others, affirms that the born again experience takes place within a Believer's life on Earth,<sup>216</sup> making reference to a variety of passages in the Apostolic Scriptures which any of us should take a great deal of comfort in, describing the new nature (i.e., Romans chs. 6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:9; 5:18). Yet in all honesty, if one is truly forgiven of sins and born again—meaning spiritually regenerated—then Yeshua the Messiah *will mean*

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<sup>215</sup> White, 41.

<sup>216</sup> C.J. Koster. (n.d.). *We need to be born again!* Qodesh Publishers. Retrieved 23 February, 2009, from <<http://www.qodesh.co.za/>>.

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*everything for that person.* This is why Paul could say, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Yeshua my Lord” (Philippians 3:8, NASU). It was his desire, and the desire of many Believers since, to see the Lord immediately after death (Philippians 1:23).

Being born again and supernaturally transformed from within, is *the motivation* for Believers wanting to go to Heaven and meet their Lord. This is not a denial of the resurrection, but is a desire to see the Savior because of the love for Him which has changed the heart. If the psychopannychist *really* is “born again,” what is his or her motivation *for not* wanting to go to Heaven and meet the Lord, and instead only fall into endless unconsciousness until the resurrection? It has been my experience that various psychopannychists do not appear that eager to see the Lord following the time of their death. What do they communicate when many of them protest that Believers going to an intermediate place in Heaven until the resurrection is non-Biblical? It is possible that their desire is *to not* be with the Messiah? We may never know, and their denial of an intermediate state in the presence of the Lord is an issue which they need to resolve in their spirituality and their relationship with Him.

## The Resurrection and the World to Come

While many of us are convinced that the Bible teaches that the consciousness of a born again Believer is transported to the presence of the Lord upon time of death, it is an **absolute mistake** for anyone to believe that a disembodied state in Heaven is the permanent condition awaiting the redeemed in the future. An intermediate state in Heaven for Believers is affirmed, because human beings are different than the animals, and they bear a Divine imprint from their Creator. Yet the very fact that such a time is commonly called *the intermediate state*, necessitates a future resurrection and reconstitution of a person’s body and consciousness. It is a grievous mistake that much popular preaching emphasizes “going to Heaven,” and often de-emphasizes God’s Kingdom coming to the Earth. Isaiah 11:6-9 so eloquently summarizes much of what the reedeemed have to look forward to:

“And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy

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mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9, NASU).

The eternity which awaits the redeemed, is not one where we throw off our mortal bodies and then just enter into another dimension. On the contrary, it is one where we see the ultimate merging of two dimensions into a new Creation, as the Apostle John recorded, “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2, NASU). Because so much of an emphasis can be placed by people upon the intermediate state, the *Eternal State* where all Creation is redeemed by God and the New Heavens and New Earth appear, too often lose their emphasis in the faith experience of today’s Believers.

The Eternal State for Believers is not going to be endless disembodied bliss; it is rather a resurrection and reconstitution of the body, where “this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53, NASU). The whole company of righteous, deceased and living, will not all be with the Lord until the resurrection and Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Yet, because of a common de-emphasis on the resurrection and world to come found among many contemporary Believers and in popular preaching, the psychopannychist will often step in and explain how only his or her view of death as being an endless unconscious sleep to be attended by the Second Coming, is Biblically acceptable. Bacchiocchi summarizes in his book *Immortality or Resurrection?*,

“Death is never presented in the Bible as ‘the climatic experience of our lives.’ It is not that surprising that for Catholics and Protestants the Second Advent is no longer really necessary, because they believe in meeting Christ at death as disembodied souls....Besides being foreign to Scripture, this teaching encourages Christians to strive for individual and immediate blessedness after death and, consequently, pushing into the background the hope for a universal, cosmic, and corporate redemption to be realized through the Coming of the Lord.”<sup>217</sup>

While making some valid points about people forgetting about the significance of the bodily resurrection—and only being concerned with death and a so-called release into endless disembodiment—Bacchiocchi actually runs a serious risk here. He appears to have responded to one

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<sup>217</sup> Bacchiocchi, 251.

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extreme with another extreme. The antithesis of believing that endless disembodiment awaits the righteous, is to believe that *only* the resurrection and the world to come await the righteous. From this vantage point, the universal, cosmic redemption is something to only take place far into the future, and so whatever happens before that time, we as Believers will simply have to wait things out. Our hope is something entirely of the future, and not something of the present.

What such a view fails to account for, is the fact that Believers are not called to live in the present age as though the future age has yet to manifest itself. *The ekklēsia is to live the life of the resurrection now in the present age!* That Second Temple Judaism held to an eschatological dualism is difficult to deny. 4 Ezra 8:1 summarizes the view of how “The Most High made this world for the sake of many, but the world to come for the sake of few.”<sup>218</sup> The Apostle Paul reflected this same kind of eschatological dualism in his letters, contrasting the present evil age with the age to come, when God’s complete salvation will manifest itself (Galatians 1:4; Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 1:26). The powers of the current evil age are destined to pass away (1 Corinthians 2:6-7), and Believers themselves are the ones “upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11, NASU). But where Paul’s Jewish contemporaries thought that the world to come was only something intended for the future, Paul recognized that Yeshua’s own resurrection has blurred such a distinction. In the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, D.E. Aune summarizes how

“For Paul the present is a temporary period between the death and resurrection of Christ and his return in glory in which those who believe in the gospel share in the salvific benefits of the age to come (Gal 1:4; 2 Cor 5:17). This temporary period is characterized by the eschatological gift of the Spirit of God...Though the final consummation still lay in the future, for Christians the new age was present because the Messiah had come.”<sup>219</sup>

Psychopannychists, while rightly emphasizing the importance of the resurrection to come at Yeshua’s *parousia*, often make a mistake in failing to emphasize that the reign to be manifested on Earth at the Second Coming **has already begun**. As Believers and God’s representatives, born again Believers are required to capture elements of the future Kingdom of God right now on Earth! The Body of Messiah, as a unique group of people

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<sup>218</sup> B.M. Metzger, trans., “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 542.

<sup>219</sup> D.E. Aune, “Apocalypticism,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 31.

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empowered by the Holy Spirit, is a people which presently finds itself living in an age dominated by the forces of evil. When Yeshua proclaimed, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17, NASU; cf. 10:17), this was not just a promise of a future far off Kingdom of God on Earth, to only be realized at the Second Coming. **It was the inauguration of the realities of the future age in the present age of evil.**

Advocates of psychopannychy can indeed be seen to make the insidious charge that those who believe in an intermediate afterlife for Believers, deny the significance of the resurrection and Second Coming. They commonly say: *What would be the point of the resurrection of the saints if Believers go to Heaven at the time of death?* A similar question could be asked in response: *What would be the point of the world to come manifesting itself, if Believers are to live the life of the world to come now?* All psychopannychists have done is respond to one extreme with another extreme, going too far by overemphasizing the future resurrection and Second Coming, as though future realities are not to be realized *to some extent* now in the lives of Believers prior to their full consummation.

If we are called as Believers to live the life of the world to come *prior to its consummation*, then we certainly do need to respect our bodies and not fall into the ancient Gnostic error of thinking that what one does with the human body does not affect a person spiritually, or vice versa. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 6:18 certainly come to mind: “Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body” (NASU). God does expect His people to take care of their whole selves, not only for them to be effective for His service, but so they can present themselves as citizens of that world to come in the future, *now* in the present evil age (cf. Philippians 3:20). For Messianic Believers—among the many examples we could consider—this would mean that when the author of Hebrews writes, “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9, NASU), this was not just some generic spiritual rest in the Messiah, but every *Shabbat* when we rest, we are to get a foretaste of the realities of eternity. Bacchiocchi’s thoughts in *Immortality or Resurrection?* are actually well taken:

“Biblical wholism challenges us to be concerned about the whole person. In its preaching and teaching, the church must meet not only the spiritual needs of the soul but also the physical needs of the body. This means teaching people how to maintain emotional and physical health. It means that church programs should not neglect the needs of the body. Proper diet,

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exercise, and outdoor activities should be encouraged as an important part of Christian living.”<sup>220</sup>

I know few people who believe in an intermediate afterlife in Heaven, who would disagree with Bacchiocchi here. Spiritual leaders encouraging their constituents to be concerned with physical health, every bit as much as spiritual health, **is a very good thing.**

The continuance of a Believer’s consciousness after time of death, in an intermediate state in the Lord’s presence, is a recognition of the uniqueness of the human being made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:5-6), and the fact that redeemed humanity’s reign extends beyond Planet Earth (Ephesians 2:6). Mature Believers should be able to walk a balanced life of faith where they are maintained spiritually from prayer, worship, and the Scriptures—and they are also maintained physically by eating right, exercising, and taking care of their bodies. They can recognize that even if their consciousness may be temporarily separated from their bodies at the time of death, this by no means should be used as an excuse to abuse the body and treat it as not being as important as the mind. As Milne excellently puts it in *The Message of Heaven & Hell*,

“Provided that we continue to affirm the essential provisionality of the intermediate state, and make clear that the goal of Christ’s saving work as far as the believer is concerned is always an embodied existence within ‘a new heaven and a new earth’, no denigration of the body appears implied.”<sup>221</sup>

If redeemed humanity is indeed intended to rule and reign as God’s viceroy in eternity, over the New Heavens and New Earth, it only makes sense that the promise of the resurrection and a new life in such a place, should be adequate impetus for us to *actually live* some of that future life **right now**. Being made in God’s image does not only mean that humans possess a uniqueness which the animals lack, but it also means that we are required to take responsibility for Planet Earth (Genesis 1:28) and its people. This directly affects the mission of God’s people today, and how Believers are to be actively representing Him to unredeemed humanity at large. Bishop N.T. Wright, who does believe in an intermediate afterlife for Believers in Heaven, has done us all a great service in pointing that our emphasis as the Body of Messiah needs to really be on the **“life after life**

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<sup>220</sup> Bacchiocchi, 34.

<sup>221</sup> Milne, pp 168-169.

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after death.”<sup>222</sup> While the intermediate state in Heaven may be a “gain” (Philippians 1:21), this should not deter Believers from fulfilling the work of the good news. If we are already citizens of God’s Kingdom to come, then we should manifest such citizenship in our behavior and in appropriate acts of service. In *Surprised by Hope*, Wright summarizes how

“[W]hen we see salvation, as the New Testament sees it, in terms of God’s promised new heavens and new earth and of our promised resurrection to share in that new and gloriously embodied reality—what I have called life after life after death—then the main work of the church here and now demands to be rethought in sequence.”<sup>223</sup>

The examples of such work that Wright asks us to consider are not that difficult to understand, as they include care “for the poor, the sick, the lonely and depressed, for the slaves, the refugees, the hungry and homeless, for the abused, the paranoid, the downtrodden and despairing, and in fact the whole wide, wonderful, and wounded world.”<sup>224</sup> Ironically enough, while psychopannychists may place a heavy emphasis on the resurrection and the world to come, theologians such as Wright and others—who actually believe in an intermediate disembodied afterlife—are among those who are trying to more consciously enact *what can be enacted* of that world to come *now in this world*. While Bacchiocchi emphasizes physical health, Wright takes it even further and emphasizes how Believers need to be concerned with the environment.<sup>225</sup> (Note that one does not have to believe in the theory of global warming to know that there are environmental issues. Entire landscapes, forests, or irreplaceable natural treasures can be devastated by an unimpeded advance of industry.)

In my experience, I have yet to see psychopannychists really concern themselves with these kinds of issues. It is thought that Yeshua the Messiah is going to return and solve all of these problems, and when He does, He will awaken Believers from their endless unconscious sleep and usher them into Heaven on Earth. They think those are issues entirely of the future, which Believers should not really concern themselves with, and instead will only be solved by the *parousia*.

If psychopannychists want to argue that those who believe in a temporary disembodied afterlife prior to resurrection downplay the

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<sup>222</sup> Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, pp 151, 169.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 191-192.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

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significance of the resurrection, they are certainly free to think so. But I would argue that many of the same psychopannychists have placed so much of an overemphasis on the resurrection and Second Coming, that very little effort is expended at capturing some of the life of the world to come in the present evil age. Contrary to this, while the intermediate state is “gain,” a concern with the “life *after* the afterlife” should motivate Believers to be a people empowered for God’s service, as we seek to represent Him by our good works of service to others and concern for those *in the present age*. It is foolish for any of us to think that we will receive great rewards in the future age of resurrection and restoration, *if we do not try* to live the life of such a future age now. **The Scriptures require us to represent the future age of the Kingdom of God in the present age.**

### My Own Personal Experience

Whatever one of us believes about the intermediate state—whether a person is expecting to fall into an endless unconscious sleep until the resurrection, or be welcomed into the presence of the Lord in Heaven until the resurrection—we are each affected by our personal experience, or lack thereof. Having just compiled a great deal of Biblical evidence and engagement with the viewpoints of psychopannychists, **I cannot hide the fact that I myself believe in an intermediate afterlife in Heaven prior to the resurrection because of my life experience.**

The second most important spiritual experience in my life, occurred on September 1, 1992, in the intensive care unit of St. Elizabeth Hospital in Erlanger, Kentucky. Five months earlier, my father had been diagnosed with malignant melanoma. He received the appropriate cancer treatment, including being admitted to an NIH trial clinic in Frederick, Maryland. The experimental treatments went well, and he returned home. *But the cancer was very aggressive*, and the side effects of his treatments caused a low blood platelet count. Two days prior to September 1, my father woke up in the middle of the night with a massive headache. What was discovered via CT scan were five huge cancerous lesions on his brain stem which were hemorrhaging. Within a day of being admitted to the hospital, and having said some very direct words to my mother about how “I can see the Rock and hear the music,” my father fell into a coma from which he would never wake up.

My father was immediately taken to the ICU ward at the hospital and placed on a respirator. He was shortly declared legally brain dead, and could not even move his eyelids, much less any other part of his body. *He*

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*had no brainwaves.* St. Elizabeth was a Catholic hospital, and as such we had to wait several days before we could do anything, but my mother already knew that it was the time to write his obituary. On the morning of September 1, the respirator was turned off, and my father's heart steadily stopped beating. **At the moment when my father's pulse stopped, his arms slowly raised straight up in the air as though something were pulling on him.** *A great peace then enveloped the room.* The attendant nurse in the room, watching this man die, was crying because she had never seen anything like it. People who are brain dead, in a practically vegetative state, are not supposed to move like this while they are dying, because they lack the capacity to do so. What the survivors of the McKee family had witnessed that morning of September 1, 1992, was that something had been pulled out of their father's body.

My father began the year 1992 believing that he would have his heart's desire fulfilled. The recession of 1991 was ending, and his software business began to do well again. My mother was pregnant and ready to give birth to my sister Maggie. *Things were improving for the McKees,* so for my father to suddenly get cancer did not make any logical sense.

In his final weeks of life, we were all able to witness how my father's attention was not on things of this world. *He was steadily thinking of the next world.* His desire was no different than that of the Apostle Paul: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (NASU). This is not to say that my father was at all conflicted, because Paul was also: "I am hard pressed between the two" (Philippians 1:21, 23, RSV), as my 41-year old father had a young wife and three young children, with one being an infant. But in those final days you could see that my father's concern was that he be prepared to meet his Lord in glory.

**I will never, ever be a psychopannychist.** When my father died, his consciousness departed and he was welcomed into the presence of Jesus Christ in Heaven. What was left for us was the body of my father. My father was a very serious born again Christian, and he knew that even though his desire was indeed to depart this Earth and meet his Lord, that an intermediate Heaven would not at all be his final destination. As a lay minister, my father delivered many sermons—and he believed in the resurrection! He did not just believe in it because he recited "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" every week from the Apostles' Creed as blind dogma; he elaborated on it and explained what he believed. In a sermon entitled "The Meaning of the Resurrection," delivered on April 28, 1991, my father taught

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“we who have a relationship with Jesus Christ are going to live forever. And those who have gone on—who are WITH THE LORD—are not dead. They’re alive. So why don’t we say so? Let’s have the courage, if we know they died in Christ, to say they’re WITH THE LORD!

“I will go so far as to say, with Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, when you make the funeral arrangements, don’t buy a plot, ask if you can rent!”

Kenneth Kimball McKee (1951-1992) believed in going to Heaven, *and* he believed in the resurrection of the dead. As an evangelical Christian sold out to serving the Lord, Kim McKee most especially believed in living the life of the world to come *now* in the present world. He believed in good works of service for the greater Body of Christ, enacting as much of that life of the world to come *prior to* the Second Coming. Kim McKee was active in the Kentucky conference of the United Methodist Church, he was a registered lay minister and active Sunday school teacher, he participated in the Lay Witness Mission, Kairos prison ministry, and most notably was known as an Emmaus team leader, being the first men’s team leader to Madras, India in January 1991. Before being diagnosed with cancer, Kim McKee had already been approved to begin the process of becoming an ordained Methodist pastor. *And perhaps most importantly, Kim McKee believed in the significance of the Jewish Roots of Christianity.* The only reason a person like Kim McKee would have been promoted early, was because God has a bigger plan in mind, as his death would need to influence and motivate others for the service of ministry.

Many years ago I remember my father taking me to visit our McKee family plot, where his parents (and my grandparents) are buried. I also remember having to go to the same plot and help choose a place for him to be buried. I know that my father’s desire in his last days was to meet the Lord Jesus, because in his own words, “Our home and our hope is not here, it’s in the presence of the Lord.” **But these are not words of escape into endless disembodiment.** My father also firmly believed that the Lord would “transform [his] body of [a] humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:31, NASU).

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After Kim McKee died, we all knew that he was in the presence of his Savior, yet Kim McKee's body was not treated with any disrespect as though it were just an empty shell to be thrown away as rubbish or garbage, burned, with ashes cast into the wind. Kim McKee's body is an important part of his being, waiting to be reconstituted at the time of resurrection when Yeshua the Messiah returns with "all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13, NASU). My father was given proper honor and burial—a funeral deserving of a redeemed saint. My father's own grave marker includes the epitaph "Jesus Christ the Rock of My Salvation," a testament not only of him desiring to see the Lord, but that the survivors of the McKee family and all of his friends and Christian loved ones will actually get to touch and embrace his body again!



The only regret the survivors of the McKee family have today, is that since we moved away from Northern Kentucky in 1994, we have not visited our father's gravesite as frequently as we should. We know that even though he is in Heaven with the Lord, he is also buried here on Planet Earth. Yet, when I visit our special family plot, I hold deep in my heart that for me *personally*, this is the most sacred place on Earth—and if I knew the day of the Second Coming, I would make every effort to be there, in preparation of Yeshua HaMashiach descending in the clouds "with all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13, NASU).

## To Be Absent From the Body

I have had some direct experiences with death, and I have seen the consciousness of a redeemed Believer leave his body to enter into the presence of the Lord. I would personally have a great deal of difficulty sitting in an assembly, led by a pastor or teacher who actively taught the doctrine of psychopannychy—one who would contentiously confront Believers who have the assurance that their deceased loved ones are in the presence of the Lord, waiting in Heaven until the resurrection, and regard such a belief as being a "lie." Some pastors or teachers may prefer to be agnostic about this subject, not quite knowing what to believe—and I would place them in a different category, provided they largely did not teach on death but instead on living properly here on Earth. But those who actively deny an afterlife in the presence of the Lord for Believers, in spite of the

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Biblical evidence? I do not think I could bring myself to be part of an assembly led by a staunch proponent of psychopannychy.

I do not consider psychopannychy or “soul sleep” to be heresy, and I do think that there are people who believe in it who are genuinely saved. At the same time, in light of the strong Biblical evidence in favor of a conscious, disembodied intermediate state—what is to be said of those pastors or Bible teachers who actively advocate that human beings are no different than dogs, cats, or apes? *They say that upon time of death, we will not be welcomed into the presence of the Savior in Heaven.* For degrading humans who are unique and special among God’s creatures—and for trying to steal from survivors the small comfort they have for knowing that their deceased loved ones, who knew Yeshua/Jesus, are in Heaven until the resurrection—advocates of psychopannychy will surely have various spiritual rewards confiscated from them by the Messiah.

**Why would there ever be such people actively teaching that born again Believers are to not meet the Lord in Heaven after death?** Is departing to immediately be with the Messiah not something which motivates them? The Apostle Paul had difficulty contemplating death, actually considering it nakedness—and he by no means wanted to go through the process of dying—but he still recognized the benefit of how in being absent from his body he would be at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:3, 8), surely something which is good. And this is no permanent condition, either, otherwise we would not call it the *intermediate* state.

Why might we encounter those, within today’s Messianic sphere of influence, who do not want to be in the presence of Yeshua the Messiah when they die? Is this just because of bad theology and empty rhetoric? Have they just not investigated it thoroughly? Could they be afraid of what lies beyond death, because they are unsure of their salvation? I do not know, as this is an issue which psychopannychists must work through with the Lord. If they lack the relationship with God which they should have, perhaps death is indeed something they fear, and endless unconsciousness is all they should really want. But we need to have an assurance of salvation, so “with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in [our bodies], whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20, RSV).

At the time of death, the psychopannychist who has made a confession of faith in Yeshua/Jesus, largely looks to sheer blackness and utter unconsciousness. Those who believe in a conscious intermediate state look forward to immediately being ushered into the presence of the Savior we love, and in being reunited with many loved ones who also knew Him. *We*

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*then join the company of righteous who eagerly demand for the Lord to press forward in salvation history, and for the resurrection to occur* (cf. Revelation 6:10). Do “soul sleep” advocates have the faith that our Creator, if He truly exists, will actually wake them up from their unconscious “sleep”—as in the words of the John Donne poem, “One short sleep past, we wake eternally, And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die”?<sup>226</sup> Or, from their presuppositions, is it more likely that a duplicate of these people—which thinks it is them and has a wide degree of their memories—will enter into the Kingdom?

Atheists and agnostics believe that death is the end. In the estimation of my late first cousin, twice removed, Charles L. Allen, one who is “not sure of God and has no hope of the eternal home...at the close of life’s day, can look forward only to some dark grave and oblivion” (*God’s Psychiatry*).<sup>227</sup> A doctrine of psychopannychy or soul sleep is a close, personal friend to such a God-less worldview, as it prevents people from thinking they really have a connection with the dimension of Heaven, from which the Lord reigns, and which Believers are ultimately citizens of (Philippians 3:20).

The issue of where the Believer goes at time of death ultimately pertains to one’s spiritual motivation. Are human beings one-dimensional creatures solely of Planet Earth? What is inherently wrong with Believers going to Heaven to be with the Lord upon time of death? What is wrong with communing with God? Is there anything evil and repulsive about believing in an intermediate afterlife? Is there something which instinctively drives people *away* from wanting to meet the Lord? And not to forget the resurrection—how do we concern ourselves with the life *after* the afterlife, and participating in some of that promised life right now in the mission and actions of the Body of Messiah?

If the Messianic movement is to be molded into a mature force of righteousness, then it is time that we put such elementary issues of faith well behind us (Hebrews 6:1-2), and see psychopannychy vanquished from our midst. If we should die before His return, we should look forward to being welcomed into the Lord’s presence in Heaven. In the meantime, **let us live the life of the world to come here on Earth today!**

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<sup>226</sup> “John Donne on the Resurrection,” in Alister E. McGrath, ed., *The Christian Theology Reader*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 625.

<sup>227</sup> Charles L. Allen, *God’s Psychiatry* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1953), 37.