

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

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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)
NJSB: *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)

Heaven, prayer covering offered by deceased loved ones

Do you think that the righteous in Heaven offer prayer covering for those of us who are on Earth?

When dear Believers have experienced the loss, in particular a tragic or unexpected loss, of a loved one—it is only natural to think that the deceased has gone to Heaven to advocate for some kind of special protection for survivors on Earth. As a ministry, we have often heard from those who have lost family members or close friends, and how they say that the deceased are presently in Heaven providing some kind of “prayer covering” on behalf of those they left behind. When outsiders familiar with religious history hear these kinds of remarks, it may make them think about Homeric mythology, and about the descent of Odysseus into Hades (*The Odyssey* Book 11), where he encounters his father and mother and they advise him on Earthly life.¹ Such a view might also cause one to think about various kinds of Roman Catholic rituals where prayers for the dead exiting purgatory are issued, or even just outright occultic séances where people on Earth try to communicate with the dead.

In the Roman Catholic context, survivors on Earth are to offer prayers on behalf of the deceased in purgatory, to see that their final sins are purged from them and they can be allowed into Heaven. The significant problem with this, as rightly noted by Bruce Milne in *The Message of Heaven & Hell*, is how it “seriously compromises the sufficiency of the sole mediation of the Lord Jesus.”² Similarly, the righteous deceased in Heaven offering prayers for their loved ones on Earth might be understood as a kind of reverse purgatorial prayer. What happens to the final victory of the Messiah? Should not Believers on Earth themselves entreat the Father in the name of His Son to mediate before the throne (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 12:24)? Why would we need any deceased relative or friend in Heaven to offer a prayer on our behalf? *Is the Messiah’s mediation not enough?*

Those who affirm the reality of an intermediate afterlife in Heaven for deceased Believers, prior to the resurrection, can infer a few important things about those who go to Heaven:

1. The deceased righteous are in a place of Paradise and refreshment (Luke 23:43).
2. The deceased righteous have learned more about the wider universe and dimensions of God’s wider Creation, simply via the process of going to Heaven.
3. The deceased righteous are involved in some kind of ongoing or regular worship before God (Hebrews 12:23).
4. Many of the deceased righteous, specifically martyrs, are actively entreating the throne of God to continue His plan of salvation history (Revelation 6:9-10).

Given the fact that there are persons in Heaven crying out, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10, NASU), then it does seem likely that many of our departed loved ones are involved in some kind of preparatory activity in anticipation of the Second Coming. They will, after all, be among the mixed company of those who return to the Earth at the *parousia* (1 Thessalonians 3:13; cf. Zechariah 14:5).

This, however, involves many things which Believers alive today on Earth are not to specifically know about—given the fact that Paul was not permitted to state what he saw or heard going on in Paradise (2 Corinthians

¹ Homer: *The Odyssey*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: HarperCollins, 1975), pp 168-184.

² Bruce Milne, *The Message of Heaven & Hell* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 171.

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12:2-4). The Revelation 6:10 question finds a notable parallel in the Disciples' own word to Yeshua, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6, NASU). As beneficial as a disembodied state in Heaven might be, as one will be in the presence of the Messiah Himself—true fulfillment for either a departed Believer or any of us alive today (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17), will only be found when He returns, the dead are resurrected, and we all see His Kingdom on Earth made manifest. The deceased in Heaven are most eager to see salvation history progress forward. *They by no means want to remain disembodied indefinitely.*

While it is tempting for survivors to think that their departed loved ones are in Heaven offering up prayers on their behalf, there is no evidence in the Bible that the deceased actually do this. Whatever the departed righteous in Heaven are actually doing, it is something **which is largely off limits** for those of us on Earth to know—and Scripture explicitly prohibits us from trying to communicate with the dead (Deuteronomy 18:11). We need to have the assurance ourselves, *personally*, that we are diligent in our own praying to God—not trying to rely on deceased loved ones who are likely involved in things beyond our comprehension:

"Therefore 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).