

# FAQ

**FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)**

**J.K. McKee**

**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
messianicapologetics.net

# Frequently Asked Questions

**FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES**

© 2021, 2024 John Kimball McKee

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

Cover Image: nullplus via Istockphoto

ISBN 979-8317009786 (paperback)

ASIN B09F1MWGB7 (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 516

McKinney, Texas 75070

(407) 933-2002

[outreachisrael.net](http://outreachisrael.net) / [outreachisrael.blog](http://outreachisrael.blog)

[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net) / [messianicapologetics.blog](http://messianicapologetics.blog)

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

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

# 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)

# Philippians 1:23

## What do those who believe in psychopannychy/soul sleep do about Philippians 1:23, and with Paul desiring to depart and be with the Messiah?

Philippians 1:23 is the second most commonly quoted passage about the afterlife (after 2 Corinthians 5:8) which one will probably encounter. Many Believers throughout history, when presented with a likely death, have been able to identify with the same series of choices, which the Apostle Paul had to make, when he wrote his letter to the Philippians from prison in Rome. Paul asserted how death for him would be “gain” (Philippians 1:21, NASU), but that to continue living would mean “fruitful labor” (Philippians 1:22, NASU), and that continuing to live was necessary for the Philippians’ sake (Philippians 1:24). Yet if given the choice, Paul expressed how “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Philippians 1:23, RSV).

People instinctively do not want to have to go through the process and the pain of death. People generally want to keep on living, and they want to remain with their families and friends. They want to watch their children and grandchildren grow up, and they want to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities and beauty God has provided on Planet Earth. Our mortality, though, will always catch up with us. Given Paul’s remarks in Philippians 1:23, did he at all see an unconscious blackness to be anticipated after his departure? Or, did Paul envision being welcomed into the presence of the Messiah Yeshua in Heaven?

Most Bible readers have rightly concluded that aside from the Second Coming taking place in their lifetimes, death is the means by which a born again Believer is ushered into the realm of the Lord. It is to be recognized how in ancient times the verb *analuō*, rendered as “depart,” regarded either a ship weighing anchor or of an army being transported from one location to another (2 Maccabees 9:1).<sup>1</sup> Peter T. O’Brien also notes how “[*analuō*] was used in the Greek world as a euphemistic metaphor for death.”<sup>2</sup> It would be quite appropriate to view Philippians 1:23 as Paul having said, “I desire to depart/die and [as a result I will]<sup>3</sup> be {immediately} with Messiah.”<sup>4</sup>

The Apostle Paul recognized that whether he lived or died—regardless of what happened to his body—“Messiah will even now, as always, be exalted...” (Philippians 1:20, NASU). If he should die, then such a death would represent “gain” (Philippians 1:21, NASU). While Paul would certainly leave behind a martyr’s testimony which others could gain encouragement from, going to be with the Lord Yeshua he loved so deeply made death that much more “gain” for him.

Paul’s choices of location (Philippians 1:22, 24 and 23) were two-fold: “to live *on* in the flesh” (*zēn en sarki*) or “to remain *on* in the flesh” (*epimenein [en] tē sarki*)—in contrast “to depart and be with Messiah” (*anulusai kai sun Christō einai*). Paul could continue to live in the body, performing critical ministry work on the Philippians’ behalf,

<sup>1</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne *Word Biblical Commentary: Philippians*, Vol. 43 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 48; F.F. Bruce, *New International Biblical Commentary: Philippians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 54; Peter T. O’Brien, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 130.

<sup>2</sup> O’Brien, 130.

<sup>3</sup> This conclusion is allowed by the conjunction *kai* functioning as a resultative: “to introduce a result that comes fr. what precedes” (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], 495).

<sup>4</sup> “I am torn in two directions on the one hand I long to leave this world and live with Christ, and that is obviously the best thing for me” (Philippians 1:23, Phillips New Testament).

The related noun *analysis* was employed in 2 Timothy 4:6, where Paul later observed, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [*analysis*] has come” (NASU).

---

## Philippians 1:23

---

or he could die and be with the Lord. Of significant notice should be Paul's usage of *tēn epithumian* or "I desire" (Philippians 1:23, NIV), pointing to an individual longing.<sup>5</sup> Philippians 1:23 represents an individual eschatology; Paul would get to see the Lord *before* those reading his letter. A corporate eschatology of all the redeemed is reflected elsewhere in his writings, in how both deceased and living Believers will together "always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17, NASU) at the resurrection and Second Coming.

Paul preferred the choice of departure/death to be with the Messiah; contrary to this the Philippians would not depart/die, but instead would continue on with their lives. In the estimation of R.P. Martin in his commentary, "Any idea of an unconscious state following death...is denied by the sheer simplicity of Paul's expectation."<sup>6</sup> Paul would die, and he would be departing to the realm of the Messiah in Heaven. In *The Message of Philippians*, J.A. Motyer describes how, "Scripture leaves so much about life after death undescribed, but on this central fact there is no hesitation: the Christian dead are 'with Christ'."<sup>7</sup> A personal departure to going to be "with Messiah" should correctly be understood as dying and going to Heaven—where Yeshua presently is—and there should be no surprise why Believers facing death **have taken so much comfort and encouragement** from Philippians 1:23! In his commentary, Gordon D. Fee observes how for Paul,

"His present existence 'in Christ' makes it unthinkable that he would ever—even at death—be in a 'place' where he was not 'with Christ.' Hence death means 'heaven now.' At the same time, a person's death did not usher him or her into 'timeless' existence. Hence the bodily resurrection still awaits."<sup>8</sup>

It is thought among various interpreters that Paul's desire to depart and be with the Messiah in Philippians 1:23, causes a potential conflict of views: death ushers a Believer into the presence of the Lord, yet Paul eagerly anticipated the resurrection of the dead. There is, actually, no tension within the Pauline letters as long as it is emphasized that dying and going to Heaven is not the permanent condition of deceased Believers. Gerald F. Hawthorne is proper to remind us in his commentary, "the intermediate state is not in itself a separate ground for comfort...; it has no independent existence apart from the resurrection."<sup>9</sup> Fee further states, "this is a tension of our making, not of Paul's...These two ideas rest easily side by side in Paul because 'being with Christ' at death is not the final goal; resurrection is. But the former is nonetheless 'gain' to Paul, precisely because Christ is the beginning and end of all for Paul."<sup>10</sup>

Bible readers have problems when verses like Philippians 1:23 are read and expounded upon isolated by themselves, as the goal of a person's existence is thought by some to mean to die and go to Heaven—where elsewhere in Paul's letter there is most certainly an emphasis on the resurrection of the dead (i.e., Philippians 3:20-21). The resurrection of the dead is the consummation of Believers' salvation (Romans 8:23), and it is only at the time of the Second Coming when the company of *all Believers*—both those who have died and those still living—can be *with the Lord*. A disembodied state for those who have died must always be emphasized as being **temporary** (although it does assure us without any doubt that the same person, who had once lived on Earth, is the same authentic person who will be resurrected).

Death, as opposed to the resurrection, is the means by which an *individual* Believer can enter into the presence of the Messiah. A reading of the Epistle to the Philippians, though, demonstrates how the Apostle Paul clearly **never** expected to depart/die and be ushered into endless disembodiment. He firmly anticipated, that at the resurrection, the Lord "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" (Philippians 3:21, NASU).

The psychopannychist is familiar with Philippians 1:23, and with Paul's expectation to depart/die and be with the Messiah. The psychopannychist will argue against a conscious intermediate afterlife for Believers in

---

<sup>5</sup> "Here [*epithumia*] has a positive connotation, signifying a particularly strong desire on the part of the apostle...a longing for that which he earnestly and continuously (if the present tense of [*echōn*], 'having', is pressed) desired" (O'Brien, 129).

<sup>6</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, Vol 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 79.

<sup>7</sup> J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1984), 89.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 149.

<sup>9</sup> Hawthorne, 51.

<sup>10</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 149 fn#48.

Heaven, saying something like, “Their relation with Christ is one of immediacy, because they have no awareness of the passing of time between their death and resurrection” (Samuele Bacchiocchi).<sup>11</sup> It is recognized how Paul surely expected to depart and be with the Messiah, but is claimed that it would only take place after a long unconscious period, and then be a reality at the resurrection. If Paul had written “I desire to depart and rest/sleep in Messiah,” then there would be fewer problems with his “departure” via death involving a long, unconscious period prior to the resurrection. **But Paul did not say this.** Paul did not say “I desire to depart and be raised in Messiah,” either. Paul said that his desire was to depart/die and as a result go somewhere: the presence of the Lord Messiah.

If Paul had ever written “I desire to depart and be with Timothy” or “I desire to depart and be with Priscilla and Aquila,” from his setting, no one would ever question the fact that he would be transported somewhere. All Paul would have to go do was pack his bags and make his way to the nearest port and hop on a ship, or just start walking, to go see his dear friends. But since Philippians 1:23 is talking about a departure to be with Yeshua the Messiah, who resides in the dimension of Heaven, psychopannychists want us to think that humans (made in God’s image with a unique supernatural imprint, no less) cannot cross over into that dimension. They would actually ask us to look at this verse as meaning, “I desire to depart and *eventually* be with Messiah,” which would occur sometime after Paul’s death and confinement in the grave, now being a period of almost two millennia.

The psychopannychist may ask us to look at Philippians 1:23 as a statement of relationship: Paul only desires a closer communion with the Lord Yeshua, and he is not making any kind of claim as to the post-mortem condition. No one can deny how Paul in Philippians was motivated by his relationship with the Messiah, so much so that he wanted to emulate His sufferings, death, and resurrection as closely as he could in his ministry service (Philippians 3:10-12). Yet, if one’s relationship with Yeshua is everything for a person—**why would one not expect to be with the Lord immediately upon time of death?** A cursory reading of various psychopannychists’ writings will demonstrate how many of them do not seem to be motivated by that close a walk with the Lord, but rather proving anyone who holds to an intermediate afterlife in Heaven prior to the resurrection as being dreadfully wrong.<sup>12</sup>

While psychopannychists think they are doing us all a service, by drawing our attention to overlooked and underemphasized Biblical passages on the resurrection of the body—they go too far in arguing against an intermediate afterlife in Heaven. *They actually argue against born again Believers, who love the Lord, going to be with Him at the earliest possible moment.* What might this say about their relationship with the Lord, and of their wanting to “depart” and be with Him? Thankfully, the psychopannychist’s personal relationship with the Messiah is something which only he or she can work out with Him.

While Paul was released from his confinement in Rome and was able to conduct more ministry work, he would find himself imprisoned again. Communicating to his dear friend Timothy in his final days, he said, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [*analysis*] has come” (2 Timothy 4:6, NASU). According to ancient Christian tradition, Paul was executed by Nero in Rome (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.5). One of Paul’s immediate successors in Rome, Clement, communicated how he was a man of faith worthy of emulation by all, and who died an appropriate death:

“He was in bonds seven times, he was exiled, he was stoned, He preached in the East and in the West, winning a noble reputation for his faith. He taught righteousness to all the world; and after reaching the furthest limits of the West, and bearing his testimony before kings and rulers, **he passed out of this world and was received into the holy places.** In him we have one of the greatest of all examples of endurance” (*1 Clement* 5).<sup>13</sup>

When the Apostle Paul was executed, he was finally able to depart and be with the Lord Yeshua in Heaven whom he had served with such steadfastness and vigilance. Yet nowhere did the good Apostle ever expect to

---

<sup>11</sup> Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1998), 179.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 189, and his actual usage of the description “deadly heresy.”

<sup>13</sup> Maxwell Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1968), pp 25-26.

---

## Philippians 1:23

---

remain in Heaven forever (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:13). While being with the Lord was extremely important to him, it is only at the resurrection of the dead *when the entire company of redeemed* will get to be with Him and we will get to *all* enter into His Kingdom! Then, the world system which murdered Paul, will finally have to be subdued by the Master of Heaven.