A mainstay, of both traditional Judaism and Christianity, is the firm belief in the future resurrection of the dead. But what happens to people in the time between death and resurrection? Do people somehow go into absolute unconsciousness, only to then be somehow recreated? Is the death of a human being little different than the death of an animal? Or, is the death of a human being quite different than the death of an animal, with the consciousness of mind, memory, experience, and creativity—often called to be a "soul"—temporarily held in another dimension until the resurrection? This is a debate presently taking place throughout the broad Messianic community.

A much more vigorous debate takes place regarding what is going to occur to unrepentant, unrighteous sinners. Will these people experience a never-ending, ongoing eternal punishment? Or, will these people experience an obliteration from existence? Strong and firm disagreements between those who affirm some sort of ongoing eternal punishment, versus those who believe in annihilationism, have been present in Christian theology for the past century. These debates have been taken up by many people within the Messianic sphere of influence, with more than a few not quite knowing how to sort through it.

This resource, *Messianics and the Afterlife*, thoroughly discusses the issues of the intermediate state between death and resurrection, and the different dimensions of eternal punishment. It also offers some Q & A on the afterlife, and a preliminary analysis on where much of the subject matter currently stands for our faith community, in the 2020s.

MESSIANICS
AND THE AFTERLIFE

MESSIANICS
AND THE AFTERLIFE

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.blog

Messianics and the Afterlife

© 2024 John Kimball McKee
To Be Absent From the Body © 2012, 2021
Why Hell Must Be Eternal © 2012, 2021
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: Ig0rZh via Istockphoto

ISBN 9798880046065 (paperback)
ASIN B0CW1LQYLM (eBook)

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

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

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Apocrypha are from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), © 1952, Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

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.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION ..... **xiii**

WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION? **1**

Death Expectations in the Tanach 46

Genesis 37:35 46

Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Isaiah 8:19-20 48

Numbers 16:30-33 49

1 Samuel 28:13-15 50

Isaiah 14:9-11, 18-20 52

Psalm 146:2-4 55

Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 57

Ecclesiastes 9:5-10 60

Death Expectations in the Apostolic Scriptures 73

Mark 9:4-5; Matthew 17:3-4; Luke 9:30-33 74

Mark 12:25-27; Matthew 22:31-33; Luke 20:37-39 76

Luke 16:19-31 79

Luke 23:42-43 83

John 3:12-13 86

John 14:2-3 87

Acts 2:29, 34 90

Acts 7:56-60 92

1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 94

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 96

Philippians 1:21-23 100

2 Timothy 4:6-8 103

Hebrews 9:27-28 104

Hebrews 12:22-23 106

1 Peter 3:18-20 107

2 Peter 1:13-15 109

Revelation 6:9-11 111

WILL ETERNAL PUNISHMENT NEVER END? 135

Expectations in the Tanach Regarding (Eternal) Punishment? 173

Numbers 16:30-33 174

Isaiah 1:28-31 176

Isaiah 10:18 177

Isaiah 13:6-16 179

Isaiah 14:9-11, 18-20 181

Isaiah 26:11-21 182

Isaiah 34:1-4, 8-10 185

Isaiah 66:22-24 187

Ezekiel 18:4 191

Ezekiel 26:19-21 192

Ezekiel 28:6-10, 16-19 193

Daniel 12:2 195

Obadiah 16 196

Zephaniah 1:14-18 197

Malachi 4:1-3 198

Psalm 34:16, 21 199

Psalm 37:10, 20 200

Psalm 73:17-20 201

Psalm 92:7 203

Psalm 94:23 205

Psalm 104:35 206

Expectations in the Apostolic Scriptures Regarding (Eternal) Punishment 214

Matthew 3:11-12 215

Matthew 5:29-30 216

Matthew 8:11-12; 13:41-42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 217

Matthew 10:28 219

Matthew 25:41 223

Mark 9:43-48 225

Luke 16:19-31 226
Acts 3:23 227
Romans 2:6-8 229
Romans 16:20 231
1 Corinthians 3:17 232
1 Corinthians 10:9-10 233
2 Corinthians 2:15-16 234
Philippians 1:28 234
2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 236
2 Thessalonians 2:3 239
Hebrews 9:27 240
Hebrews 10:26-27, 39 241
1 Peter 3:18-20 242
2 Peter 2:1-3, 6 243
2 Peter 2:9-12 245
Jude 7 248
Revelation 14:10 250
Revelation 19:20 253
Revelation 20:7-10, 14-15 254
Revelation 22:14-15 258

Q & A ON THE AFTERLIFE 285

Psychopannychy, motivation for belief 285
Dualism 287
Death, as an unconscious sleep 292
Breath of life, humans and animals 298
Eternal life, physically alive forever 301
Afterlife, negates need for resurrection 305
Afterlife, negates significance of death 307
Heaven, prayer covering offered by deceased loved ones 309
2 Corinthians 5:8 311

Philippians 1:23 318
Luke 16:19-31 323
Born Again at Resurrection 328
Funeral Customs, Messianic 332
Abortion 335
Theistic Evolution 337

CURRENT STATUS:
MESSIANICS AND THE AFTERLIFE 341

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 349

COMBINED BIBLIOGRAPHY 351

STATEMENT OF FAITH 371

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: *Encylopaedia 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)

Introduction

Without any doubt, one of the most uncomfortable subjects which any human being has to confront in life is **death.** You do not have to be that well versed in reading the Bible, to adequately understand how *death is a part of living.* With the possible exception of those who will actually be alive at the moment of the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:51), the biological life functions of each and every one of us will cease. A mainstay, of both Judaism and Christianity, has been the firm belief in the future resurrection of the dead. A Scripture passage like Daniel 12:1 unambiguously declares, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake..." (NASU). Everyone whom I know in today's broad Messianic movement, would agree that the deceased from all ages will have their physical remains reanimated and resurrected to new biological life.

Yet for many, questions abound about what is to occur in the time period between physical death and future resurrection. Do people somehow go into absolute unconsciousness, only to then be somehow recreated? Is the death of a human being little different than the death of an animal? Is the death of a human being quite different than the death of an animal, with the consciousness of mind, memory, experience, and creativity—more often called in the vernacular to be a "soul"—temporarily held in another dimension until the resurrection?

A much more vigorous debate takes place regarding what occurs to unrepentant, unrighteous sinners. Will the condemned experience a never-ending, ongoing eternal punishment? Or, will the condemned experience an obliteration from existence? Strong and firm disagreements between those who affirm some sort of ongoing eternal punishment, versus those who believe in annihilationism, have been present in Christian theology for the past century.

The topic of eternal punishment, or Hell as it is most commonly known, is not one which brings any degree of happiness or joy to the Bible teacher. *It brings a great deal of unhappiness and lamentation.* Yet, it is not a topic which can at all be legitimately ignored. It is one which requires an evaluation of the different ideologies involved, a classification of various original language terms regarding "destroy" and their nuances, the time and setting of various passages of Scripture—and above all a weighing of the value of an individual's salvation.

Messianics and the Afterlife

This updated and expanded volume takes up some of the uncomfortable discussion which has gone on in contemporary theology regarding death, the afterlife, eternal punishment, and how it affects our contemporary Messianic faith community. No person within today's Messianic movement, should ever have to wait until the uncomfortable moment of facing death—to sort through some of the main theological and ideological matters of the afterlife. It is my sincere hope that this resource, *Messianics and the Afterlife*, will be used to help you answer and resolve the different dimensions of human composition and destiny.

J.K. McKee
Editor, Messianic Apologetics

What Happens Between Death and the Resurrection?

Death is one of the most difficult topics which any human being ever has to deal with.[1] 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 Thessalonicans 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

[1] This analysis was originally entitled "To Be Absent From the Body" (2009).