

WHEN WILL THE MESSIAH RETURN?

ESCHATOLOGY ESSAYS 2012

BOOKS BY J.K. McKEE

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J.K. McKee



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“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”

Matthew 24:29-31

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ABBREVIATION CHART AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that 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.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	exegesis: “drawing meaning out of,” or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	EXP: <i>Expositor’s Bible Commentary</i>
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	Ger: German
Ara: Aramaic	GNT: Greek New Testament
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	Grk: Greek
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	<i>halachah</i> : lit. “the way to walk,” how the Torah is lived out in an individual’s life or faith community
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	Heb: Hebrew
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	IDB: <i>Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	KJV: King James Version
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	
eisegesis: “reading meaning into,” or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	

Lattimore: The New Testament by
 Richmond Lattimore (1996)
 LITV: Literal Translation of the Holy
 Bible by Jay P. Green (1986)
 LS: *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell &
 Scott)
 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*
 NIGTC: *New International Greek
 Testament Commentary*
 NICNT: *New International
 Commentary on the New
 Testament*
 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
 orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how
 the Bible or one's theology is
 lived out in the world
 OT: Old Testament
 PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
 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*
 TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
 TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family
 Bible—New Covenant (2011)
 TNIV: Today's New International
 Version (2005)
 TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament
 Commentaries*
 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
 WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
 Yid: Yiddish
 YLT: Young's Literal Translation
 (1862/1898)

INTRODUCTION

As I sit down and prepare this edition of *When Will the Messiah Return?* for paperback reprinting and Amazon Kindle eBook release, I have a great number of thoughts and ideas circulating in my mind. This is not just because I am a rather introspective person, as I evaluate my spirituality daily before the Lord, and I have to think about a massive number of issues and topics as a Bible teacher; **I also have to evaluate the past eleven to twelve years (2000-2012) since I first got the idea for this book**, and all of the things which have taken place since then. My ability to probe the Holy Scriptures for important words and messages of insight has doubtlessly improved, given the wide array of publications currently available from Messianic Apologetics (especially as seen in the *Practical Messianic* commentary series), and with that how my approach to end-time prophecy, eschatology, and the Second Coming has also matured and been significantly refined. As I have edited and updated this book, I hope that what is represented in its pages is not only consistent with what I originally wanted it to be all the way back in 2000, but that it is something which can guide you in your approach to a subject matter which is certainly discussed by many Messianic Believers, evangelical Christians, and even secular people who investigate religious issues.

Since entering into the Messianic movement fully in 1996, issues surrounding the end-times and the return of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) have always been present, in some way, in my family's collective Messianic experience. Like many in the late 1990s, we were not immune to being affected by the wave of prophetic speculation and date-setting associated with the turn of the Millennium. We heard a wide number of theories involving the 1993 Middle East Peace Accord between Yitzchak Rabin (1922-1995) and Yasser Arafat (1929-2004), rapidly developing technology changes and the emergence of something new and world changing called the Internet, and something then-approaching in a few short years called Y2k. We encountered a wide amount of emotion, some paranoia, a great deal of fear, *and* not enough skepticism and common sense to balance things out. Even after Y2k and into the 2000s, we encountered more things—some related to the end-times, and others not, but still a bit sensational—which sounded rather appealing. Like many of today's

Messianic Believers around in the first decade of this century, we had to navigate different spiritual currents and eddies, some much easier than others.

In a mature community of Messiah followers, there should hopefully be enough grace and mercy present to recognize how all of us—at one point or another as limited human beings—are likely to have gotten a little too over-zealous regarding the end-times (among other things). The original Disciples of Yeshua Himself got a bit over-zealous at times. When approaching a Samaritan village which would not receive Yeshua, James and John actually asked of Him, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (Luke 9:54). When being betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Apostle Peter actually cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant with a sword (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; John 18:10). *None of us today, in our right mind, would ever dream of invoking such actions.* So, if we are genuinely to expect seeing these people—and many others, who made their own (significant) mistakesⁱ—in the Kingdom of Heaven in the future, then we can certainly extend to one another a wide berth in having been caught up in a little “prophecy euphoria,” among other things, at one point or another in our religious experience and pursuit of God.

The challenge, of course, is not really in recognizing that many people, at one point in time or another, have gotten caught up in thinking that the return of the Messiah *must imminently take place* at some soon moment in their lifetimes—and with it as modern people having read or eisegeted various Biblical passages into the current news headlines. All one has to do is read Paul’s letters of 1&2 Thessalonians, to see how there were many people, in the First Century, who were convinced that the Messiah was going to return quite soon—and that was two millennia ago.ⁱⁱ The challenge, after some of the propositions, timecharts, and proposed dates have come and gone—and any associated hype, sensationalism, or paranoia—is what we learn from the experience. How do we take some less-than-

ⁱ We should each be reminded of the example of Moses here, who disobeyed the Lord via some sort of impatience, by striking the rock for water at Meribah (Numbers 20:11). Yet, He will obviously be in the Kingdom, as he appeared at the Mount of Transfiguration along with Elijah (Mark 9:4-5; Matthew 17:3-4; Luke 9:30-33).

Also to keep in mind would be the venerable Apostle Paul, who hunted down many Jewish Believers in Yeshua to see them executed as blasphemers, yet who would later have to say, “I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). Alas, he will surely be in the Kingdom (cf. 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Philippians 1:23).

ⁱⁱ For an examination of these two letters, consult the author’s commentary *1&2 Thessalonians for the Practical Messianic*.

objective and rather emotional experiences, *and turn them around* so that we can then collect our thoughts and focus on what is absolutely necessary as the people of God?

None of us should ever deny the future reality of the Messiah's Second Coming to Planet Earth, and that the evil powers of this world are going to be defeated. But too much of what we often end up doing, when we either hear teachings about the end-times, or read various Scripture passages about the end-times ourselves—is that we react or over-react to events and phenomena that are not only beyond our control, *but which specifically concern the powers of evil and realm of the Devil.* These are things which do not concern the forces of light or the realm of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

Far too many of the teachings, written or audio, or the different articles and books which you are likely to encounter regarding the end-times, are going to be focusing on things that you as a Believer in Yeshua not only have no control over—but they do not directly concern you. Much of what you are likely to have read or heard about the end-times concern potential dates or levels of development regarding the emergence of the New World Order, significant technology changes, various antimessiah/antichrist candidates who are active in global politics or members of (obscure) European royalty, and events in the Middle East. *Obviously these things are important.* I have a bachelor's degree in political science; I personally find these things quite fascinating for conversation and intellectual discussion and exercise. But I also have a much more important master's degree in Biblical Studies; men and women of God are to most critically know what their potential role or involvement is in relation to the return of the Messiah. **What are the people of God supposed to do?** They are surely not supposed to live in a condition of fear, paranoia, ineffectiveness, and widescale avoidance of human living as they wait for the return of the Savior!

The Seventy Weeks of Israel, for example, are intended “to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*” (Daniel 9:24). **The attention of those, who have placed their trust in the Messiah of Israel, must be placed on the everlasting righteousness and justice of God.** While none of us is called to be ignorant as to what goes on in the world at large—believe it or not, in spite of how global events often greatly upset each of us—such is all secondary in comparison to the restoration of His Kingdom and the realm of God's Son being established on this celestial sphere!

Eschatology, derived from the Greek term *eschatos* (ἔσχατος),ⁱⁱⁱ is defined by the *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* as “the theological study that seeks to understand the ultimate direction or purpose of history as it moves toward the future.”^{iv} The ultimate end or consummation of history is seen in Revelation ch. 21, when the righteous enter into the New Jerusalem, and the unrighteous are separated and are forced to suffer eternal exile from the Holy City from which they are excluded.^v Obviously, a massive number of things have to take place between now and then—including the fulfillment of a very important question that the Disciples specifically asked Yeshua, prior to His ascension into Heaven: “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). This obviously did not occur, given the Messiah’s direction for them to instead go out into the world, proclaim the good news, and make followers of Himself (Acts 1:7-8). Yet in the past century or more, especially given the rise of Zionism, World War II and the Holocaust, the advent of weapons of mass destruction, the birth of the State of Israel, and the retaking of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967—we are much closer to the return of the Messiah today than we ever have been before. But in the past decade or so, post Y2k and the 2000s, the wind has gone out of many Believers’ “proverbial sails” as it concerns the return of the Messiah. *Have we missed anything?* Is it not true that basically everything is in place for Yeshua to return and take up His Throne from Jerusalem?

This is where many of today’s Messianic Believers, who understandably focus on events in modern Israel, are left holding their breath and are waiting impatiently. Over the past several years, I have heard many people and leaders in today’s broad Messianic community express a variety of thoughts as to why the Messiah should be returning very, very soon. *Yet, they still wonder why He has not come back.* Obviously, we do have to consider how only God the Father has the ultimate control, regarding when His Son returns to the Earth (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32). But, are there not enough general signs surrounding the end-times that have taken place—which should signal that Yeshua will be returning—at least within the lifetime of some of the aged figures of the State of Israel, like the current President Shimon Peres (1923-)? At the very most,

ⁱⁱⁱ “pert. to being the final item in a series, **least, last** in time” (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], 397).

^{iv} Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 46.

^v Many of the uncomfortable and unpleasant aspects of this are discussed in the author’s publication, *Why Hell Must Be Eternal*.

should we not expect the return of Yeshua within the lifetimes of various younger figures who have served as Israel's prime minister, like Ehud Barak (1942-), Ehud Ohlmert (1945-), or Benjamin Netanyahu (1949-)—all of whom were essentially raised and served within the lifetime of the modern Jewish state?

This is, perhaps, the moment where we need to each begin to consider taking some sort of inventory of the important things which we **(a)** need a review of, regarding the Second Coming, and we **(b)** need to seriously consider, regarding the Second Coming. There are obviously many things which each of us look to take place, prior to the return of the Messiah, which are very important. *These are the common issues which are discussed and considered by many prophecy teachers.* Yet at the same time, are there any highly important things, which have been overlooked or ignored? These need not be forgotten or left out of our thoughts and considerations. While it is absolutely true, that as limited mortals, we still very much “see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV), as it concerns the future end-times—it is probably also true that there are a few, highly important things, that each of us needs to be considering in more detail, which need not escape our attention anymore. Is it likely that a few of us have become impatient regarding the return of the Messiah, because such overlooked phenomena, too, have to develop to some degree, before Yeshua can come back?

The purpose of *When Will the Messiah Return?* is to consider how the end-times relate to today's Messianic Believers. With this, I will be mentioning some well-known end-time signs and issues, with which you are already familiar. What I think makes this book unique and important is that we will be probing some end-time issues **which are not-so-well-known**. When we factor these things into our various thought processes, Bible studies, and petitions to our Heavenly Father—how does our approach and orientation to the return of the Messiah change? *Do any of us get “shaken up”?* Or, do we get humbled, a bit, in that some of the imperative remarks we have made to fellow Believers and friends in the world about God potentially moving “soon,” are not as secure and sound as we have asserted them to be? Above all, what are some of the spiritual things taking place in our day—which we can absolutely be involved with, be blessed by, *and* via which we can even experience a taste of the Kingdom to come—that are important to note, so that we can be effective and mature men and women of God?

When Will the Messiah Return? is surely not going to be the last book that you read on eschatology. It is my intention, though, that each of us might be presented with some important things to consider, some guidelines on various aspects of the end-times, and
