

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES  
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

# FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC COMMENTARY SERIES

by **J.K. McKee**

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THE PASTORAL  
EPISTLES  
1&2 TIMOTHY, TITUS  
FOR THE PRACTICAL  
MESSIANIC

J.K. MCKEE

**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net)

# THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

## FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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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>	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	HALOT: <i>Hebrew &amp; Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	Heb: Hebrew
Ara: Aramaic	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
b. Babylonian Talmud ( <i>Talmud Bavli</i> )	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old &amp; New Testament)</i>
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	KJV: King James Version
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	LXX: Septuagint
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	m. Mishnah
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
Ger: German	NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
GNT: Greek New Testament	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
Grk: Greek	

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)  
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)



# PROLOGUE

The three letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus—frequently referred to as the Pastoral Epistles—are three texts that many people within today’s Messianic movement automatically assume they know what they mean. Unlike some of our previous studies conducted to date (Hebrews, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians-Philemon, Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council), there has really been no clamor for a detailed Messianic examination of the Pastoral Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles might be some of the least considered of the Pauline corpus among Messianics, as it is sometimes unconsciously thought that there will be very little to gain if we expel the time and effort to analyze and dissect them. So, our level of engagement has often been limited to quoting a few verses here or there—most especially something like “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16)—but there has been no concentrated effort made to consider 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, or Titus as whole letters. Most disturbingly, there has been no concentrated effort among Messianics, at least to my knowledge, to try to join into some contemporary discussions present regarding the Pastoral Epistles’ ancient background, their proper interpretation, and their right application for men and women in the Twenty-First Century.

For quite some time, there has been a deep stirring in my heart to address the Pastoral Epistles. As I have steadily prepared myself for this study for over a year-and-a-half (2008-2010), acquiring different commentaries and resources, what I have read has only confirmed that a thorough Messianic examination of these letters is long overdue. Ben Witherington III indicates in his commentary how, “one could say that scholarship on these documents in the last fifty years has been something of a growth industry.”<sup>i</sup> In consulting some technical commentaries on the Pastorals and scholastic books on related issues, a cursory flip through of their bibliographies and footnotes confirms this! All across the spectrum—from conservative to liberal, and to the Right, Left, and Center—discussions on the Pastoral Epistles have been like a proverbial candy factory that does not stop putting out new confections. One can see trucks lined up delivering tons of sugar, milk, and cocoa to one end of the factory—and then tractor trailers, train cars, and even a few planes all positioned at the other end of the factory, ready to make deliveries to the masses. But, quite contrary to Willy Wonka’s factory where you have to have a golden ticket for entrance, this Pastoral Epistles factory is open to anyone.

It is really hard for me to believe that with all of the information and proposals out there on the Pastoral Epistles, that most of our Messianic faith community—especially in

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<sup>i</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 50.

congregational leadership and teaching—has been almost totally unaware of them. *With a huge chocolate factory in the center of town, it is hard to think that many of our leaders and teachers have not smelled the aroma from a distance, or really even noticed one of the delivery trucks.* Much of this has to do with the sad fact that the Pastorals do not get a huge amount of attention in Messianic congregational teaching or general usage. We may rightfully affirm statements about Yeshua the Messiah such as, “He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). However, are we at all informed of the various First Century social issues portrayed in the Pastoral Epistles? I know from my experience in dialoguing with various Messianic congregational leaders—some of whom are voracious readers—that when frequently referring them to scholarly books and articles on the Pastorals, they have not been too enthusiastic to read *or* skim through them (even when some of the material is free).

I was convicted about the strong need for a Pastoral Epistles Bible study in July 2008, on the last full day of my vacation to London. My “British excursion” was my personal gift to myself for completing my M.A. from Asbury Theological Seminary, and had been planned for more than a year in advance. Several months or so before leaving, a significant ruckus had erupted in some parts of the independent Messianic community, over the seizure of children from Mormon polygamists in Texas. Why would this be an issue for these people? It was an issue for them because they thought quite strongly that the Torah permitted polygamy, and that today’s Messianic movement needed to be more open to the idea. Many people, quite rightfully, spoke against such claims and pointed out that polygamy was never something God explicitly approved of—and that it was riddled with familial problems for those men who practiced it. I myself wrote a lengthy article in November 2008 entitled “Is Polygamy for Today?” where I answered the question with, “**polygamy was never intended for yesterday**, much less for today!”<sup>ii</sup>

So what does this have to do with the Pastoral Epistles? During my nine day break in the United Kingdom, while away from the hassles of ministry, touring museums and historical sites—I got to really spend some time thinking. I spent much of the final day resting in my hotel room, and knew that *only* addressing the errors of polygamy would not be enough. The reason why polygamy was being entertained was precisely because of a huge gulf and ignorance in Messianic Biblical Studies and Messianic thinking as it regarded gender roles. Up until this point, some of my specific views of men and women in the Body of Messiah had remained closed to myself. I had certainly hinted at some of my views in piecemeal here and there (cf. Acts 16:14ff). But now with some people out there thinking that polygamy, at least in principle, was valid—I **could now be open about my own views** which were the exact opposite.

Understandably, when you are walking streets that you know for a fact that some of your ancestors once walked, you not only reflect on your personal past—but also your personal future. *I knew that one day I would have to specify what I believe about gender roles in the Body*

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<sup>ii</sup> Also consult Mark Huey’s McHuey Blog post from 29 June, 2008, “Tare-erized! Beware!,” available for access at <<http://mchuey.wordpress.com>>.

*of Messiah*. Much of this would have to involve a Pastoral Epistles Bible study, not only informing Messianic Believers on a few of the positions presently proposed in Biblical Studies, but also some of the positions *which I myself hold* regarding their interpretation. Within the broad Messianic world, I do have a few “controversial” ideas regarding passages seen in the Pastoral Epistles. Our ministry needs to demonstrate that we hold the Pastoral Epistles in very high regard, but do think that we need not draw any hasty or quick conclusions regarding what they communicate, because we might have failed to remember that these letters were written to some specific ancient circumstances.

After the 2008 polygamy discussions, I felt absolutely no hesitation to be quite open about expressing my egalitarian views of husbands and wives, gender roles, and most specifically women in ministry. If there are Messianics out there who believe that men can take multiple wives—it is only appropriate that Messianics who believe in the full equality of the sexes, of wives as co-leaders of the home (obviously in a monogamous marriage relationship), and of women in general occupying positions of teaching and spiritual leadership *can likewise be assertive*. Being Messianic *and* egalitarian, though, is a controversial position to be certain. It is, however, part of ongoing theological discussions and debates present in many branches of Judaism and evangelical Christianity. Over the past several years (since 2008), I have not hidden the fact that my egalitarian convictions are rooted within my own Wesleyan upbringing, and this is an area of longstanding disagreement that my family has had with the Messianic movement since the late 1990s. It is not an area of disagreement limited to any one segment of the broad Messianic movement, either, as it does stretch across our interactions with leaders and teachers in Messianic Judaism, and both the One Law and Two-House sub-movements.

In our examination of the Pastoral Epistles, we will be considering various proposals and perspectives that I find hard to believe that some of today’s professionally trained Messianic teachers have never heard, especially regarding 1 Timothy 2:8-15. I have a feeling that they have in fact heard about some of them, but have chosen to keep these things to themselves or consigned to their libraries (even when found in a common resource like the *NIV Study Bible*). *In various cases I suspect that some of the discussions have just been dismissed off hand*. Our study will not do this, especially as some of these proposals have been around for over twenty years, but for various reasons have not found their way into many, or most Messianic discussions of these letters (if any at all). Some of these proposals include consideration for ancient historical background, as well as some translation issues.

As you prepare to read through *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*, I want you to know that I fully accept these letters as genuine works of the Apostle Paul, and consider them to be fully relevant and authoritative for the Body of Messiah today. However, we need to understand what these letters meant to Timothy and Titus, and their unique circumstances in Ephesus and Crete, **before** we try to apply them in a Twenty-First Century context.

I am especially appreciative of William D. Mounce’s commentary on the Pastoral Epistles in *WBC*, and I am sorry that so much of it has had to be skipped over, largely due to his significant attention given to Greek language issues and various statistics. His defense of Pauline authorship of the Pastorals is most impressive. Even when disagreeing with him in

places, it is hard not to be impressed by the detail. I look forward in my spare time to picking his commentary off of the shelf, and flipping through it as I dissect various verses and issues in greater precision. I am also quite glad that Philip B. Payne's book *Man and Woman: One in Christ* was able to be released in time (2009) for this study, as he summarized many of the issues we will be considering, from an evangelical egalitarian perspective.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Pastoral Epistles (sometimes abbreviated as PE)<sup>1</sup> in total make up thirteen chapters of the Apostolic Scriptures. These three letters compose semi-personal correspondence between the Apostle Paul, and two of his closest ministry associates in Timothy and Titus. Those who take the time to read and dig into what these three letters communicate can deduce many positive things about their ministry work together, and how two younger men—at least younger than Paul—have now entered into that season of service to the Lord when they do not need as much direct guidance or oversight as they previously required. The Pastoral Epistles might not be the end-all for the necessary guidelines on how to lead, order, or oversee the inner workings of assemblies of Believers, but they are to doubtlessly be consulted and appreciated. People who serve in full-time ministry should place a very high value on these letters, as they can derive encouragement from them in the diverse circumstances they face in serving the Messiah today.

1&2 Timothy and Titus are commonly called the “Pastoral Epistles” because a major theme witnessed is that they concern the care and order of assemblies of Believers. Referring to these three letters as the Pastoral Epistles is a convenient term that has been employed since the Eighteenth Century. Information about men and women in the assembly (1 Timothy 2), those in positions of authority (1 Timothy 3; 5:17-25; Titus 1:5-16), or other groups within the assembly (1 Timothy 5:1-16; Titus 2) is seen. Instructions about avoiding foolish arguments (i.e., 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9) clearly have congregational applications. Some warnings on the future are given (2 Timothy 3), and there is a disciplinary tone present in parts of all three letters. Suffice it to say, when the major themes of the Pastoral Epistles are put together, there is much discussion among interpreters as to what should be done with them. Some of what is written is undeniably bound by an ancient context (1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 4:9-21). How do these letters inform us on how the Body of Messiah is supposed to function?

Should 1&2 Timothy and Titus really be considered the “Pastoral Epistles”? These letters do not exclusively have themes of pastoral care in content, even though they are commonly consulted when matters of congregational structure are in view. They are written to individuals who have pastoral duties, *but* Timothy and Titus served more as superintendents

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that in spite of the common reference these three texts as “the Book of 1 Timothy/2 Timothy/Titus,” I am going to purposefully refer to them as the Epistle of 1 Timothy/2 Timothy/Titus, or Paul’s letters to Timothy and letter to Titus, and not use this reference. By failing to forget that these texts are letters written to specific audiences in specific settings, we can make the common error of thinking that they were written *directly to us*. Our goal as responsible interpreters is to try to reconstruct what these letters meant *to their original audiences first*, before applying their message(s) in a modern-day setting.

I will also at times simply refer to the Pastoral Epistles or letters as the Pastorals.

or lieutenants commissioned by Paul to oversee groups of Believers in Ephesus and Crete. Timothy and Titus did not really serve in the capacity of a local pastor or rabbi, either in an ancient or modern context. They are given instruction and encouragement by Paul to function in a calling in which many in full-time ministry do not serve, as it goes beyond the scope of an individual fellowship or assembly of Believers.

The grouping of 1&2 Timothy and Titus as the Pastorals is something that is by tradition only, and is necessary likewise only so that interpreters can more adequately join into the modern study of them. They make up the last three letters composed of the Pauline corpus, and give us an important peek into the final years of Paul's mission. But, if we were to separate out 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, it is sometimes thought that one's reading of these individual letters might be a little different. We might be more apt to pick up on non-pastoral themes, which we can be, admittedly, exclusively inclined to look for if they are just considered the "Pastoral Epistles." At the very least, we do need to read these letters more in terms of what they personally convey from the Apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus. Gary W. Demarest describes, "There's every reason to believe that Paul was a prolific letter writer. If so, he must have written letters to people like Barnabas, Silas, Luke, and others. The fact that these are the only three personal letters that either survived or were considered worthy of inclusion in the New Testament canon makes them stand in a class all by themselves."<sup>2</sup> We will not only learn about Timothy and Titus in Paul's writing to them, but also can learn things about Paul himself.

A rather recent commentator (2006), Philip H. Towner, is one who thinks that using the term "Pastoral Epistles" for 1&2 Timothy and Titus should be issued its "farewell." He thinks, "Its use to describe the contents of the letters is benign enough, but the assumptions about the letters and their intention on which it rests already betray a tendency toward restraint."<sup>3</sup> Many who have used the term "Pastoral Epistles" in their examination of 1&2 Timothy and Titus recognize that these three letters are not exclusively concerned about the ordering of the *ekklēsia*. 2 Timothy itself has very little to say about assemblies of Believers, and is instead a personal message from Paul to Timothy. So, it is probably best that even though the description "Pastoral Epistles" is frequently used in various works, that it be counterbalanced with references such as "these letters" or "Paul's writing to Timothy/Titus."

Because of the widespread usage of the term "Pastoral Epistles" seen among commentators, we will be employing it in this commentary, although not exclusively. In reading these three letters, our concerns should be oriented *beyond* just trying to derive congregational-based orthopraxy. A wider variety of issues are encountered in 1&2 Timothy and Titus, ranging from how some Believers are in danger of falling away from the faith (1 Timothy 5:14), and how Believers are to stand in contrast to the world (2 Timothy 4:10). There are issues pertaining to slaves (Titus 2:9-10) and to women teaching (1 Timothy 2:11-15). We probably see some form of proto/pre-Gnosticism referred to and refuted. There is

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<sup>2</sup> Gary W. Demarest, *The Preacher's Commentary: 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus*, Vol 32 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), pp 150-151.

<sup>3</sup> Philip H. Towner, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). 88.

also discussion pertaining to the One God of Creation (1 Timothy 2:5) who made all things (1 Timothy 4:4), and the position of Yeshua in relationship to this One God (1 Timothy 3:16).

In joining into where these letters currently stand within the scope of Biblical Studies, it must be noted that there are debates over authorship, authorial intent, historical background, and translation. While much of this discussion regards contemporary debates over gender roles and specifically women in ministry, some of it also pertains to the degree of possible (incipient) Gnostic influences in Ephesus and Crete. Messianics should be mindful of the role that the Torah played in various false teachings circulating (1 Timothy 1:7-9; Titus 1:14; 3:9).

## WHO WAS THE AUTHOR OF THESE LETTERS?

The Pastoral Epistles are part of a collection commonly known as the Deutero-Pauline letters (also including: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians), meaning that not all theologians agree that they were written by the Apostle Paul. The letters themselves do attest to some degree of Pauline authorship, as the opening greetings include references to “Paul, an apostle” (1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1) and “Paul, a servant of God” (Titus 1:1, RSV). While there is considerable debate today among interpreters as to whether 1&2 Timothy and Titus are authentic works of Paul, the developing Christian Church of the mid-Second Century and onward accepted these three letters as genuinely Pauline. The historian Eusebius, recording the words of Serapion, bishop of Antioch, described how “We, brethren...receive Peter and the other apostles as Christ himself. But those writings which falsely go under their name, as we are well acquainted with them, we reject, and know also, that we have not received such handed down to us” (*Ecclesiastical History* 12.2.3).<sup>4</sup> The judgment of the Pastoral Epistles being authentically Pauline was reflected early by the Muratorian Canon and by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 1.16.3; 2.14.7; 3.14.1), although they were rejected by the heretic Marcion.

Pauline authorship of 1&2 Timothy and Titus went unchallenged until the Nineteenth Century. This extends today as liberal scholarship continues to deny Pauline authorship, with the Pastorals most often reckoned to be the most “inauthentically” Pauline writings in the Apostolic Scriptures. The Pastoral Epistles are often considered to be the result of a later generation either expanding upon previous Pauline traditions, or writing something in the name of Paul as a definitive authority to address some complicated circumstances facing themselves. It is very true that pseudepigraphy or writing a composition to honor the legacy of a deceased person in his name, did exist in the ancient world.<sup>5</sup> So, were the Pastoral Epistles actually written to either honor Paul, or to preserve some fragments of his teaching? Known frauds in Church history include 3 Corinthians, the Letter to the Laodiceans, and the Letters of Paul and Seneca.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, some extra-Biblical literature, known to be pseudepigraphal like *1 Enoch*, has had a degree of consideration at times in theology. What are the criteria for something to be consulted, and something to be accepted as a prime work of a real apostle? William D. Mounce points out,

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<sup>4</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea: *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C.F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 202.

<sup>5</sup> Consult some of the useful discussions in Witherington, pp 26-38.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Towner, 21 fn#52; Witherington, 51.