

THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES
PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

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ADAPTED FROM THE 1901 AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION

A SPECIALTY MESSIANIC EDITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES

PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

WITH TRANSLATION NOTES

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edited by J.K. McKee

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THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES

more commonly called *The New Testament*

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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: *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*
 BECNT: *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*
 BKCNT: *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*
 C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
 CEV: *Contemporary English Version* (1995)
 CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
 CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
 CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
 DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
 DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
 ECB: *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*
 EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
 eisegesis: “reading meaning into,” or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text
 EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
 ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
 exegesis: “drawing meaning out of,” or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own
 EXP: *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*
 Ger: German
 GNT: Greek New Testament
 Grk: Greek
halachah: lit. “the way to walk,” how the Torah is lived out in an individual’s life or faith community
 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
 ICC: *International Critical Commentary*
 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)
 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*
 PME: *Practical Messianic Edition of the Apostolic Scriptures*
 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: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
 TNIV: *Today’s New International Version* (2005)
 TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
 TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
 UBSHINT: *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

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The history of English Bible translations has been a very unique process, especially since the Protestant Reformation, and theological and spiritual developments over the past five centuries in the English-speaking world. One of the most significant advancements in the transmission of the Holy Scriptures into English was the production of the King James Version (or Authorised Version) in 1611, which up until the mid-to-late Twentieth Century was the most widely circulated English Bible in the world. Since the Seventeenth Century, notably with the expansion of European imperialism into places such as the Middle East, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), and North Africa, older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and manuscript fragments of the Scriptures, and related valuable historical materials, have been discovered—and continue to be uncovered. Perhaps one of the most significant discoveries of the Twentieth Century was that of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947. Because of important finds over the past two centuries, and ongoing research and new proposals always being made—especially into the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—English-speaking Bible scholars have taken to edit and revise translations of the Holy Scriptures in the English language. Taking into account newly discovered ancient texts, as well as changes in the English language itself, the English Revised Version was produced in Great Britain (1881-1885), followed with a counterpart in the United States, the American Standard Version (1901).

In 1952 the Revised Standard Version was released to much fanfare, which was the first major translation into modern English, as the ASV of 1901, while incorporating older Hebrew and Greek manuscripts which had not been extant in 1611, had still preserved much of the archaic Elizabethan-period English of the KJV. While this was a significant step, some Christian conservatives were a bit taken aback by the RSV's ecumenical translation team composing Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and Jews. One of the results of this was the 1977 release of the New American Standard Bible. The NASB was intended to be a modern conservative English revision of the ASV, yet it reads very similar to the RSV in many places. The NASB itself was streamlined somewhat in 1995, via the release of the New American Standard, Updated Edition. Both the RSV and NASB followed a translation philosophy of trying to be somewhat literal, more often now called formal equivalence. The RSV went through additional updates, with the release of the New Revised Standard Version in 1989, which employed a great deal of gender-neutral inclusive language. This was also not received well by all Christian conservatives, and 2001 witnessed an evangelical update of the original 1952 RSV called the English Standard Version, which retained a great deal of masculine-centric terminology.

The first major English Bible version that followed a translation philosophy called dynamic equivalency, or now more commonly called functional equivalence, was the New International Version, released in 1984. The NIV is now the most popular Bible purchased within the English-speaking world. The NIV was often rendered conceptually or thought-for-thought in many places. In some instances, this form of translation has been beneficial, given the NIV's strong theologically conservative leanings, but in other instances, it has been problematic. The NIV went through a substantial revision in 2005 with the release of the Today's New International Version, which employed a degree of inclusive language similar to the NRSV. This was not

received as well as was hoped by the NIV's largely evangelical Christian readers, and so the 2011 NIV was released to offer some alterations.¹

Compared with the wide variance of Christian Bible versions, there are, for the most part, very few Messianic Bible translations that exist. The most significant and widespread Messianic Bible version, which is seen throughout the broad Messianic community—encompassing both the Messianic Jewish movement and various independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots persuasions—has been the **Complete Jewish Bible** by David H. Stern, released in 1998. (Stern's original Jewish New Testament was first released in 1989.) The CJB has been an important work for expressing the Jewishness of the good news and Hebraic background, particularly of the New Testament, to Jewish Believers and non-Jewish Believers alike, employing a wide amount of Hebrew terms for proper names and place names. It is true, however, that the CJB was translated from a philosophy of dynamic equivalence, meaning that it is paraphrased in many locations.

2011 was an important year for Messianic Bible translation, as it saw the release of the **Tree of Life—The New Covenant**, a literal Messianic version, somewhat based on the public domain 1901 American Standard Version, often taking into account the public domain electronic edition World English Bible, Hebrew Names Version, with the Psalms released in 2012, and the full Bible by the end of 2014. Unlike the CJB, the TLV is the product of around fifteen Messianic Jewish ministries, and has been theologically vetted by a team of both Messianic Jewish and Christian scholars. The TLV, unlike the CJB which preceded it, has employed only a limited selection of Hebrew terms, such as Yeshua, Messiah, Torah, and various ritual items, widely leaving more customary English proper name and place names intact. Its release has been greatly welcomed by many Messianic and Christian people.

THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

In a technical sense, and especially when one factors in the plethora of “restored name” versions produced by the Sacred Name Only movement (often just selective edits of the KJV),ⁱⁱ today's Messianic community does not really need another Bible version, be it of the entire Holy Scriptures, or even just the Apostolic Scriptures. As far as widespread distribution across our faith community, for general reading and consumption, the functional equivalence Complete Jewish Bible and more formal equivalence Tree of Life Version, have demonstrated themselves to be rather sufficient. They both represent fairly conservative theological positions, they both uphold the Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth, and they both uphold the general validity of the Torah or Law of Moses for the post-resurrection era.

In the mid-to-late 2000s, the attention of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics was primarily focused on building up the first releases in its series of Messianic commentaries on books of the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament—a heavy labor which still continues. Obviously, in these commentaries, there have been various places where an author translation was proposed and defended, mostly for various terms or clauses of dispute. In 2012, as these volumes began being converted to eBook for Amazon Kindle, we thought it prudent to add an Author's Rendering appendix to each complete book commentary. This is not unlike how in many Bible commentaries, an examiner will provide his or her own rendering of the text examined.ⁱⁱⁱ With some nuanced translations proposed in the volumes of the *Practical Messianic* series, it has been useful that once readers finish reading the commentary, for them to see how such renderings might appear in the Biblical book as a whole.

¹ For a further review, it is recommended that you consult Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001). Additional thoughts are accessible via the article “**English Bible Versions and Today's Messianic Movement**” by J.K. McKee, in his book *Confronting Critical Issues*.

ⁱⁱ One of the most widely circulated Sacred Name versions, which you will encounter across the broad Messianic community, is *The Scriptures* (Northriding, South Africa: Institute for Scripture Research, 1998, 2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ The 1995 New American Standard, Updated Edition (NASU) is actually used as the main English Bible version in the *Practical Messianic* commentary series, and most publications released by Messianic Apologetics.

We have had to wait patiently, with much prayer and consideration, to evaluate whether or not it would be prudent to see a specialty version of the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament be released, as a volume within the *Practical Messianic* series. Principally, we have had to determine whether or not the spiritual and theological climate of the Messianic community would be open to such a publication—but most importantly whether the commentaries, books, and articles produced by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics would have reached a certain rate of threshold, with a wide variety of issues addressed and positions defended, which could be referenced. As things stand today, we do not have a complete set of *Practical Messianic* commentaries released on every book of the Apostolic Scriptures. But, we do have a sufficient selection of enough *Practical Messianic* commentaries, and other books and articles and FAQ entries, defending various theological positions which are important to many of today’s Messianic people (as well as new resources on the horizon for release). These mainly, although not exclusively, pertain to various issues surrounding the post-resurrection era validity of the Torah or Law of Moses, Moses’ Teaching. There are some renderings seen in *The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition* or *PME*, which are not likely to be seen in any other Messianic edition of the New Testament anytime soon.

There are many specialty editions of the New Testament which have been released over the centuries by various scholars and examiners of importance. In the past century to the present, versions like those of Moffat, Phillips, Williams, Montgomery, Goodspeed, and the Kingdom New Testament, among others, have certainly played an important role in Bible readers accessing the Holy Scriptures. In many cases, these sorts of publications have been released, so that others might more easily access a teacher’s theological works and understand his or her perspectives on passages of importance or debate. John Wesley, for example, published his own edition of the New Testament in 1755, with his English version including some selective edits of the more widely used KJV. N.T. Wright took the translation he produced for his *for Everyone* commentary series, updated it slightly, and released it as the Kingdom New Testament.

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition has a similar intention. The PME is not at all intended to stop today’s Messianic people from using the CJB, TLV, or some other well known Christian or Jewish version like the NASB/NASU, RSV/NRSV/ESV, or NIV/TNIV, as their primary Bible. The PME is intended to be a supplementary tool, the same as any other specialty New Testament edition which has been released before it. And, for those of you who have been steadily building a library of *Practical Messianic* commentaries, this should be a welcome addition to your collection.^{iv}

SOURCE TEXT USED FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition was initially assembled from the various Author’s Rendering appendices appearing in complete book *Practical Messianic* commentaries released by Messianic Apologetics,^v with some changes and updates made here and there. These, along with the rest of the books of the New Testament, have been adapted from the public domain **1901 American Standard Version (ASV)**, updated with modern English,^{vi} and retranslated where necessary with an overall Messianic theological reading. The critical edition

^{iv} It cannot go unnoticed that the PME has been especially released for service via the widespread free book prison ministry of Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics.

^v To date (2015), volumes have been released (listed in order of release) on: James, Hebrews, Philippians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, Acts 15, the Pastoral Epistles of 1&2 Timothy and Titus, 1&2 Thessalonians, Romans.

Also not to be overlooked are the two workbooks, *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* and *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

^{vi} Much is undeniably owed to consulting the literalness and modern English of the 1977 New American Standard Bible (NASB), which was more faithful than not to the 1901 American Standard Version.

United Bible Societies' 1998 *Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition*,^{vii} the same basic text as the *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graecae, 27th Edition*,^{viii} has also been consulted with appropriate updates reflected in the English rendering.^{ix}

FEATURES PRESENT IN THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

Unlike some Messianic Bible versions (notably the CJB) which have preceded it, *The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition* uses a minimum of Hebrew or Jewish terminology. Yeshua (ישוע) is used to represent the Greek *Iêsous* (Ἰησοῦς), Messiah to represent the Greek *Christos* (Χριστός),^x and Torah (תורה) to represent the Greek *nomos* (νόμος) where it is reasonably clear that the Law of Moses or Pentateuch is in view.^{xi} To this end, the PME follows very much in the wake of the **Tree of Life Version**, with more common English terminology appearing for both proper names and place names. The Hebrew terms involving various ritual items, are largely addressed in footnotes. Names for religious holidays and functions will more commonly use customary English forms than their Hebrew designations, also with some discussion in footnotes. This also extends to a selection of various proper names, which have been left in their traditional form (i.e., Judas Iscariot), or various statements obviously of Hebraic or Semitic origin (i.e., Hosanna).

Two features of the PME, which are owed extensively to the 1901 ASV (and its successors the 1977 NASB and 1995 NASU), include the employment of *italics* for words not present in the actual Greek source text. Most of these words include either definite articles or various forms of “to be” verbs, as well as missing nouns or pronouns obviously implied by the wider context. Adding words in *italics* for theological reasons has been kept to a minimum. SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS, as have been seen in both the 1977 NASB and 1995 NASU, have been employed to represent significant quotations or allusions from the Tanach or Old Testament. More of these, however, have appeared, as cues have been taken largely from the critical edition Greek New Testaments consulted, which have noted more some additional verses.

This edition of the PME has reproduced references from the Tanach or Old Testament in its footnotes, mainly those recognized in either the 1977 NASB and 1995 NASU, and those noted by the 1998 CJB. To be streamlined, most quotations from the Tanach or Old Testament have been reproduced from the NASU or CJB, with some from the 2014 TLV. When a quotation from the Septuagint is made, the 2007 New English Translation of the Septuagint or NETS is mainly employed. Not all Tanach or Old Testament quotes appearing in the Apostolic Scriptures are word-for-word, as some are abbreviated or adapted, they may include stylistic differences, **many are from the Greek Septuagint (LXX)**, and some are compounded or amalgamated with other Tanach or Old Testament passages. Where necessary, some of the noticeable differences, which may catch readers off guard, have been explained. (A lengthy theological evaluation of these quotations is beyond the scope of this resource.)

Unique to the PME, is how it has employed a moderate degree of gender-neutral or inclusive language, following much of the convention present within the 1989 NRSV and 2005 TNIV. This includes, among other things, how the generic *anthrōpos* (ἄνθρωπος; Heb. equiv.

^{vii} Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998).

^{viii} Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graecae, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (New York: American Bible Society, 1993).

^{ix} Messianic Apologetics is very much aware of the many arguments which are present from people across the broad Messianic movement, who believe that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew, or perhaps Aramaic. Many of these arguments have been addressed in the publication *The Hebrew New Testament Misunderstanding and related issues* by J.K. McKee.

^x Do consult the discussion present in the article “**Sacred Name Concerns**,” appearing in the book *Confronting Critical Issues* by J.K. McKee.

^{xi} Consult the article “**Torah as Constitution**” by J.K. McKee, in the *Messianic Torah Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

adam, אָדָם) can be better rendered with “humanity” or “humankind,” rather than “man” or “mankind,” or in the case of individuals, “human being(s),” “mortal(s),” “person(s),” or “people.” *Adelphoi* (ἀδελφοὶ) is frequently rendered as “brothers and sisters.” However, the singular “he” has been widely maintained when a single person is being spoken of, rather than the plural “they,” which can unnecessarily complicate singular and plural issues from the source text.

Another feature of the PME, in following a philosophy of inclusive language—which definitely makes it distinct among Messianic editions of the Holy Scriptures—is how the Greek *ethnos* (ἔθνος), the equivalent of the Hebrew *goy* (גּוֹי), is widely rendered as “nation(s)” and not the more customary “Gentile(s).” This is more theologically neutral, especially in various missiological passages.^{xii}

Not inconsistent with other Messianic versions, the term *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία) is not rendered as “church.” It is instead, following the convention of the YLT and LITV, and as recommended by the TDNT entry,^{xiii} rendered as “assembly.”

Per customary evangelical Christian convention, and also much Jewish convention, a variety of pronouns and possessive pronouns pertaining to the Father and the Son have been Capitalized.

The headers present in the PME have been largely derived from the *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament*.^{xiv}

THE ORDER OF THE APOSTOLIC CANON EMPLOYED IN THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION

While all of the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament appear within *The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition*, the order in which they appear is admittedly eclectic. In most Bibles, the books of the New Testament appear via the order of: Gospels-Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the General Epistles, and Revelation. Not all ancient textual witnesses of the Greek Apostolic Scriptures, though, have placed the General Epistles after the Pauline Epistles, and there have been some attempts in the past to actually place them before the Pauline Epistles, with the Epistle of James being listed after the Book of Acts.^{xv}

This order has itself been modified, per what is seen in the Messianic Apologetics workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic* (2012 paperback). The PME broadly follows the order of: Gospels-Acts, the General Epistles, the Pauline Epistles, and the Later New Testament. Mark is listed first, as it is widely agreed to have been the first Gospel composed. Luke and Acts are naturally listed consecutively, as volumes I and II of a composite work. 2 Peter is followed by Jude, and Colossians is followed by Philemon, just as they frequently do in many commentaries.

^{xii} Consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, “**Gentile, Term,**” which further addresses the various inclusive language issues.

^{xiii} “Since the NT uses a single term, translations should also try to do so, but this raises the question whether ‘church’ or ‘congregation’ is always suitable, especially in view of the OT use for Israel and the underlying Hebrew and Aramaic... ‘Assembly,’ then, is perhaps the best single term, particularly as it has both a congregate and an abstract sense, i.e., for the assembling as well as the assembly” (K.L. Schmidt, “*ekklesia*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abrid. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 397).

For a further review, consult the sub-section “**The Term Ekklesia,**” appearing in the publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* by J.K. McKee.

^{xiv} *Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament*, NE27-RSV (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies/Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001).

^{xv} Robert L. Webb, “Epistles, Catholic,” in David Noel Freedman, ed. et. al., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:570 notes,

“As a collection, the Catholic Epistles were not always listed or placed in the same location in the NT canon...except for Codex Sinaiticus, all uncial mss which have both Paul’s epistles and the Catholic Epistles place the Catholic epistles first. Westcott and Hort attempted to restore this order because of its ancient attestation. However, the order still used today demonstrates the dominant influence of the canonical order found in Jerome’s Vulgate.”

THE APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURES PRACTICAL MESSIANIC EDITION AND OTHER MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS MATERIALS

The Apostolic Scriptures Practical Messianic Edition has not at all been produced to be used in isolation from other publications and materials released by Messianic Apologetics, where further explanations and discussions on a wide array of theological and spiritual issues have certainly been provided. The relationship that the PME has to the *Practical Messianic* commentaries, and other Messianic Apologetics resources, is most critical. The PME does reflect, in various verses, a number of theological positions unique to Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. This edition of the PME does include **Translation Notes**, which have especially been provided for passages where there is a controversial rendering offered that is *known* to clash with a position held in much of evangelical Christianity, or even a sizeable part of the Messianic movement.^{xvi} The introductions provided to each book of the Messianic Writings have been adapted from the workbook *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

^{xvi} Various footnotes and annotations provided within the PME may also address some controversial and/or fringe perspectives of various Apostolic Scriptures passages present within the widely independent, and sometimes rogue, Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement.

GOSPELS
AND
ACTS

GOSPEL OF MARK

Approximate date: late 50s or early 60s C.E.
Time period: the ministry of John the Immerser to the ascension of Yeshua
Author: John Mark, secretary of the Apostle Peter
Location of author: Rome
Target audience and their location: predominantly Roman, later Alexandrian

In past theological history, the Gospel of Mark was often thought to have only been a kind of abridgment of the Gospel of Matthew, and so it was not given a huge amount of examination, or even in some cases thought to have that much value. This significantly shifted among theologians in the Twentieth Century, with now the Gospel of Mark believed to contain one of the earliest testimonies to the ministry of Yeshua (Cranfield, *IDB*),¹ actually having been composed first among the Synoptics. So much attention has been given to Mark in the past half-century, that “the number of written works...over the past forty years [to 1992]...rivals and may well surpass that written on Matthew and Luke combined” (Guelich).²

At least ninety percent of the material of Mark is repeated in Matthew, and this is often viewed as evidence regarding how important Mark was to the authors of Matthew and Luke,³ and the primacy of this text to these other works. In recent years, previous neglect of Mark has now been replaced by a renewed interest in Markan studies. Some specialty translations of the New Testament produced, notably including that by classic scholar Richmond Lattimore,⁴ now may place Mark as the first Gospel before Matthew and Luke. A large number of conservative scholars are in agreement that the Gospel of Mark was the first of the four Gospels to have been written, with the authors of Matthew and Luke borrowing extensively from it.

The authorship of the Gospel of Mark is widely confirmed by conservatives to be John Mark (Acts 12:25; 15:37), although some liberals may say that this is an arbitrary assignment. The Apostolic Scriptures indicate that John Mark was the son of Mary, whose house provided a meeting place for the Believers in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), and was a companion with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). Mark deserted Paul and his party at Perga in Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). He is described as being Paul and Barnabas’ “helper,” and there was a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas about taking him on their second journey (Acts 15:36-39), which resulted in them splitting up. Paul seems to have become extremely displeased about Mark, but later extends greetings to him (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24), indicating that he had regained his trust and the two had reconciled. Paul also sent for Mark prior to his death (2 Timothy 4:11). In the closing greetings of the Epistle of 1 Peter, Peter delivers the message, “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark” (1 Peter 5:13, NASU), with Babylon being widely agreed as a code term for the city of Rome.⁵

While not stated in the text internally, it was unanimously agreed by the Church of the Second Century C.E. that John Mark authored this Gospel. We do see from 1 Peter 5:13 that Mark was the traveling companion of Peter, and was with him in Rome, likely until the time of Peter’s death.⁶ In composing his Gospel, there are traditions that attest to Mark actually having transcribed Peter’s oral account to him, thus making the Gospel of Mark as the life of Yeshua the Messiah as told to him by the Apostle Peter. Irenaeus communicates, “Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter” (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1).⁷ Justin Martyr makes a reference to Peter’s “memoirs” (*Dialogue with*

¹ C.E.B. Cranfield, “Mark, Gospel of,” in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:267, 269.

² R.A. Guelich, “Mark, Gospel of,” in Joel B. Green Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 512.

³ R.P. Martin, “Mark, Gospel of,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 3:249.

⁴ Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The New Testament* (New York: North Point Press, 1996), pp 3-45.

⁵ Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.15.2.

⁶ Cf. Guelich, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 515.

⁷ Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 414.

Trypho 106),⁸ and how the Messiah had changed the name of some of His Disciples, with such “memoirs” being the Gospel of Mark (presumably making light of Mark 3:16-17). Of particular interest is how the Fourth Century historian Eusebius, testifying to the works of Papias, details how Mark transmitted his Gospel via Peter:

“Mark being the interpreter of Peter whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy but not however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but as before said, he was in company with Peter who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord’s discourses: wherefore Mark has not erred in any thing, by writing some things as he has recorded them; for he was carefully attentive to one thing, not to pass by any thing that he heard, or to state any thing falsely in these accounts” (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15).⁹

That the Gospel of Mark was composed via the oral accounts of Peter, can be detected at times as Peter is depicted as being a little embarrassed or rebuked (9:5ff; 14:29ff, 66-72). If Mark indeed compiled his Gospel from Peter’s recollections to him, then this would naturally have included a few reflections on Peter’s limitations in the service of the Lord.¹⁰

It would seem reasonable to conclude that if the Gospel of Mark was composed from Peter’s accounts, that it was written sometime close to the Apostle’s death or immediately thereafter, allowing for a dating range sometime up to the mid-60s C.E. Some of the dating of Mark can depend on an interpreter’s eschatological presuppositions, though. If we accept that Yeshua the Messiah can predict the future as He predicted the fall of Jerusalem in Mark 13:2, then the composition of Mark can be placed before 70 C.E. If Mark pre-dates the composition of Matthew and Luke-Acts, then its composition should likely be dated in the late-50s or early 60s C.E. Evangelical Christians who tend to be pre-millennial in their outlook favor Mark being written during this period.¹¹ Those who conclude that the scene of Mark 13 depicts the fall of Jerusalem after the event, naturally favor a dating of this Gospel into the 70s C.E. or possibly later.

The historical background necessitating the composition of Mark is generally agreed to have been directed at a Roman audience during the time just prior to the persecution of Believers in the Empire, starting with those in Rome itself. Compared to the Gospel of Matthew, there are far less

quotations from the Tanach (Old Testament) in the Gospel of Mark. This would suggest that its primary audience would have been Greek and Roman, and that they would likely have not required extensive quotations from the Tanach to prove the Messiahship of Yeshua, as much as a primary Jewish audience would have. Mark goes to some length to explain various Jewish customs of the First Century, and provides internal translations of Aramaic words. Mark also uses a number of Latin-specific terms as well. Eusebius does record how later Mark was sent to Egypt, and “proclaimed the gospel there which he had written and first established churches at the city of Alexandria” (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.16.1).¹² This tradition indicates that after composing his Gospel, Mark was sent to Alexandria and used his written Gospel to proclaim the good news and establish congregations in Egypt.

There are those in the Messianic community who believe that the Gospel of Mark was originally written in Hebrew, or possibly Aramaic. Yet they probably fail to take into account the reliable traditions regarding where Mark was written, and its initial target audience.¹³ But even more so, advocates of a Hebrew or Aramaic origin for Mark do not weigh in the fact that the name of the Gospel is actually *Markos* (Μάρκος) or *Markus*, a name of Latin origin—a fact retained in modern Hebrew translations such as UBSHNT, which uses *Marqos* (מַרְקוֹס). This does not mean, though, that Mark is entirely a product of the Greek, as it does include significant Semitic influences. “We have good reason to speak of an Aramaic background to the Greek of the Gospel.” However, “the existence of Aramaic sources” are probably “oral; and we can speak of the Evangelist’s use of a tradition which ultimately is Aramaic; but to say more is speculation” (Martin, *ISBE*).¹⁴

Any Semitic sources used in composing the Gospel of Mark are likely oral at best, indicated by the author’s usage of the term “translated” or with translations provided (i.e., 5:41; 14:36; 15:22, 34) for Greek readers. “Some Aramaic expressions, which are retained in the text, are interpreted into Greek and this seems to be evidence that Mark’s readers would not otherwise have understood them. This seems to rule out any possibility of Aramaic-speaking

⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea: *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C.F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), pp 105-106.

¹⁰ Martin, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *ISBE*, 2:250.

¹¹ D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, “Mark,” *An Introduction to the New Testament*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 182.

¹² *Ecclesiastical History*, 50.

¹³ Some of the earliest usage of the Gospel of Mark appears in the late First Century Roman work *1 Clement* 15:2, referencing Mark 7:6.

¹⁴ Martin, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *ISBE*, 3:249.

Martin makes specific light of Semitic influence via usage of “the paratactic *kai* [καί] in preference to the use of subordinate clauses” and “the use of *ἔρχατο* [ἤρξατο], ‘he began,’ before the verb” (*Ibid.*). Cf. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), pp 94-95 who makes light of “Mark’s Greek [being] ‘translation Greek,’” meaning that the written Gospel of Mark was composed in Greek, but with Semitic oral understandings behind it.

readers” (Guthrie)¹⁵ among the main audience. Mark’s Gospel also employs a fair amount of Latinisms,¹⁶ which would easily account for a Roman audience. Mark’s immediate Roman audience would have been familiar with Koine Greek, as would have the larger audience that would have used it in the Eastern Mediterranean, including any Egyptians he would have taken it to. While Mark’s audience needed some explanations of various Jewish customs and practices, pointing to a largely non-Jewish audience (i.e., 7:3-4),¹⁷ this does not at all mean that Mark’s Gospel is removed from the messages of the Tanach Scriptures or the culture of Second Temple Judaism. One cannot avoid that the Tanach is quoted or alluded to in Mark.

There is certainly discussion within Markan scholarship about what Eusebius meant when he said that Mark was “the interpreter of Peter” (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.83).¹⁸ Does this mean that Mark would have just translated what Peter spoke to him in Hebrew or Aramaic into Greek? Or could it mean that Mark communicated the good news via Peter with skill and precision, conveying the message appropriately? Scholars are divided. Guthrie notes the options: “The relation between Mark and Peter must be determined by the meaning of the word ἑρμηνεύτης [*hermēneutes*].” He continues, “Whereas this could mean either translator or interpreter, most scholars agree that the former must be the meaning in this context.”¹⁹

It is possible that Mark understood and wrote Greek much better than Peter, and that Peter needed him in order to better communicate the evangelistic message he would compose, as he would have had a better grasp on vocabulary, various clauses, and verb tenses. “The Semitic flavor [of Mark] is unmistakable. But the Greek of the gospel, through it reflects strongly the influence of Aramaic and though it is certainly rough and colloquial, is not incompetent; that Mark had a reasonable grasp of the language is indicated by his careful use of the tenses” (Cranfield, *IDB*).²⁰ It is further to be observed, “The Greek style of Mark’s gospel is simple and straightforward and full of the kind of Semitisms that one would expect of a [man] Jerusalem-bred” (Carson and Moo).²¹ The transcribed Greek of Mark’s Gospel is surely to be taken as being the authoritative text for evangelism and doctrine, and should be what we principally

appeal to—but it is by no means something removed from Yeshua’s ministry in First Century Israel.

For those who opt for “interpreter” relating more to the message of the good news, rather than Mark serving as Peter’s secretary, “Mark was in a position to have accurate knowledge of Peter’s understanding of the gospel” (Achteemeier, *ABD*),²² and he adapted Peter’s words to him accordingly. Furthermore, recognizing that Mark did have an association with the ministry activities of Paul as well, some distinct Pauline teachings or approaches may have affected how he chose to focus parts of his Gospel.²³

Any reader of Mark’s Gospel will notice that it is a very active text—a “gospel of action”—recording less of the sayings and teachings of Yeshua the Messiah than the other Gospels, but more of His miracles and mighty works. It is notable that throughout the source text of Mark, one will find the term *euthus* (εὐθὺς) or “immediately” used quite a bit.²⁴ Mark begins with the ministry of John the Immerser (1:1-13), and ends with Yeshua’s execution (14:1-15:47) and the arrival of the three women at His empty tomb (16:1-8). “[T]he vividness of the style gives the impression of a quickly-moving drama with the cross as its climax” (Guthrie).²⁵ There are certainly discussions in Markan studies regarding the style of its composition, especially if Mark simply compiled a first hand account of Peter’s oral testimony to him. Did Mark bother to really sort through the data? This is not the impression we get from Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15). The point of Mark’s Gospel, to be sure, was to communicate important things about the Messiah:

“The order is thematic. The stories and teachings are sometimes clustered around common themes...The Markan presentation is largely guided by literary and theological interests. Jesus is presented as a remarkable, even stunning figure” (Evans, *ECB*).²⁶

From this point of view, the Apostle Peter gave Mark a record of what struck him personally as the most important substance of the good news and the experiences he had with Yeshua, and Mark wrote it just as Peter communicated it.²⁷ Recognizing Peter’s authority, Mark would have done little to try to change it.

This Gospel’s primary message is to convey what Yeshua did, and was probably written in a time when the new Believers in Rome needed significant encouragement. Some expositors place its composition at 64 C.E., and assert that possibly Mark

¹⁵ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 71-72; cf. Paul J. Achtemeier, “Mark, Gospel of,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:542.

¹⁶ Martin, “Mark Gospel of,” in *ISBE*, 3:249-250; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 72.

¹⁷ Martin, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *ISBE* 3:254; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 71; Guellich, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 515.

¹⁸ *Ecclesiastical History*, 105.

¹⁹ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 83.

²⁰ Cranfield, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *IDB*, 3:276.

²¹ Carson and Moo, 175.

²² Achtemeier, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *ABD*, 4:542.

²³ Carson and Moo, 175.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 169.

²⁵ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 61.

²⁶ Craig Evans, “Mark,” in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1065.

²⁷ Achtemeier, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *ABD*, 4:542.

was written just prior to the fire in Rome when Nero set the city ablaze and blamed it on the “Christians,” the Believers in the Messiah Yeshua.²⁸ Others think that Mark was written in conjunction with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., or at least at the beginning of the Jewish uprising in 67 C.E.²⁹ The main thrust, more than anything else, is that its recipients needed their faith in the Messiah (re)assured, and with this background it is probable that Mark wanted to prepare his readers for the inevitable suffering they would endure for believing in “the Jewish Messiah,” possibly implied in the text (cf. 8:34; 10:30; 13:9-13, 19-20).³⁰ By recording and featuring the miracles and works of Yeshua, Mark reveals that this Savior is indeed all-powerful and worth believing in to those who are skeptical. The material in Mark was understandably widely drawn upon by Matthew and Luke, for the composition of their Gospels, and expanded with additional material to be employed for their main respective audiences. Mark’s place has been assured in the Apostolic canon because of the ancient traditions which attest to Mark having been the traveling companion of Peter, one of the original Twelve Disciples (cf. Matthew 16:18).

The main area where today’s Messianics have some weakness with Mark is largely centered around ch. 7. This is commonly viewed as Mark’s “interest in the cessation of the ritual elements in the Mosaic law” (Carson and Moo),³¹ and in particular what the phrase *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα) means (7:19)—as either “Thus He declared all foods clean” (NASU) or “purging all the foods” (LITV). This is a passage where understanding the particular traditions present in Second Temple Judaism regarding handwashing (7:3-5), will affect one’s interpretation of whether Mark 7:19 speaks of Yeshua nullifying the cleanliness or dietary laws of the Torah, or is just speaking of excretion via bodily functions.

Within much of today’s Messianic examination of the Gospel of Mark, it should not be surprising that even though this text is only sixteen chapters, it probably does not receive as much attention when compared to Matthew, Luke, or John. Would it be useful for our faith community to learn to better appreciate Mark’s role in terms of presenting a miracle working, dynamic Messiah? Just like many theologians in the past half-century have, to a degree, been able to “rediscover” Mark—perhaps Messianic Believers too need to learn to recognize

the special place it has among the Gospels as well. Mark 1:1-3 and its definite quotation of Isaiah 40:3, should certainly pique our interest in how Mark does rely on the Tanach. All Messiah followers need moments in their lives when they can be reminded of Yeshua’s ultimate power, and affording Mark a higher place than it has had in our Bible studies and teachings, would be a good thing for Messianics to do.

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²⁸ Cf. Tacitus: *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. Michael Grant (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), pp 360-367.

²⁹ Evans, in *ECB*, 1065.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1066 actually contrasts the language of Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God,” with language from the Imperial cult: “the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning for the world of the good news.” The Jewish Messiah Yeshua, then, is thought to ultimately reign and be superior to Caesar.

³¹ Carson and Moo, 183.