

Today's Messianic movement has arrived at a very important theological and spiritual crossroads. Much of our long term viability and effectiveness as a faith community will be determined by what takes place in the 2010s, and by our approach to a series of important issues surrounding the nature of the Messiah, the reliability of Holy Scripture, our communication style, and whether we want to see all people included and welcome within our assemblies or not.

Confronting Critical Issues is an important compilation book of some of Messianic Apologetics' key Confronting Issues booklets, as well as some major articles of substance. These are bound to answer some significant questions and controversies that all of today's Messianic Believers have encountered within their fellowships, congregations, and personal Bible studies. This publication is also bound to stir some of its own controversy, as it inquires how we can be a mature, growing Messianic movement which is able to accomplish all that our Heavenly Father wants us to achieve—or whether those among us are going to disregard our spiritual potential to make a difference.

Some of the subjects addressed in *Confronting Critical Issues* include:

- urban legends present in the Messianic movement
- the Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua
- the *Shema* and the plurality of God
- potential paganism witnessed in the stories of Holy Scripture, and how we are to avoid liberal theology
- the origin of the Apostolic Scriptures
- the negative influence of Jewish mysticism on the Messianic movement
- the Divine Name of God (YHWH/YHVH)
- a proper, edifying communication style for today's Messianic Believers
- the equality for Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, and both men and women in the Messianic community

This massive powerhouse of material is a must for every Messianic Believer's library!

CONFRONTING

Critical Issues

CONFRONTING CRITICAL ISSUES

**An Analysis of Subjects that Affects
the Growth and Stability
of the Emerging Messianic Movement**

J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

CONFRONTING CRITICAL ISSUES

An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement

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**The one who first states a case
seems right, until the other
comes and cross-examines**

Proverbs 18:17 (NRSV)

Table of Contents

Introduction	xiii
1 The Quest for Credibility	1
2 The Top Ten Urban Myths of Today's Messianic Movement	25
3 Answering the "Frequently Avoided Questions" About the Divinity of Yeshua	59
4 What Does the Shema Really Mean?	99
5 Answering the "Frequently Avoided Questions" About the Messiahship of Yeshua.....	121
6 The Highway to Perdition.....	165
7 Is the Story of Yeshua Pagan?	177
8 Encountering Mythology: A Case Study from the Flood Narratives.....	189
9 The Role of History in Messianic Biblical Interpretation	201
10 Can We Trust the Greek Scriptures?	219
11 The Hebrew New Testament Misunderstanding.....	229
12 Getting Beyond Strong's Concordance.....	283
13 The Effect of Mysticism and Gnosticism on the Messianic Movement.....	295
14 Sacred Name Concerns	347

15	Ephesians 4:29: How Are Messianics to Properly Communicate?	367
16	Galatians 3:28: Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement ..	381
17	Congregations Among Us	405
18	How Are We to Live as Modern Messianics?	417
	About the Author	431
	Bibliography	433

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 & 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 & 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> (Lidell & 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: <i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>

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

Many of us, both Jewish and non-Jewish alike, know that the Messianic movement has a great potential to make a difference in our world. As Yeshua (Jesus) Himself directed His followers, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). If we are able to demonstrate the love and grace of God to others, in a very concentrated and profound way—in obedience to His Torah or Law, no less—then those in our world should be able to see God’s blessings upon us, and strongly desire the salvation that we possess in His Son. The key missional aspects of Israel being a holy nation, and a light to the world around it (Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 42:6; 1 Peter 2:9), are things that the enemy certainly does not want to see us embodying to their fullest extent!

By the middle of the 2000s, because of some “things” that occurred within our broad Messianic community—both insiders and outsiders alike started to employ the rather negative moniker: Messy-antic. It would not be uncommon to hear things like, “*The Messy-antic movement is such a mess...*” Suffice it to say, there is an ongoing battle taking place within the broad Messianic world, for its very heart and soul—much of it relating to its long term future. This conflict is ideological, it is philosophical, it is theological, but above all **it is spiritual**. We have been plainly told, after all, “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). We are in a spiritual war for the eternal destiny of human beings.

One of the generally good things, for which many sincere people within today’s Messianic movement should be commended—whether they are Jewish or non-Jewish—is that they really and sincerely do *want to be taught*. They really do want to probe God’s Word, and let the Holy Scriptures mold their hearts and minds so that they can mature in Him. To a wide extent, many people want to advance beyond the rudiments of basic Biblical instruction, or more likely, they want to know why certain beliefs and doctrines have developed the way that they have. There are definitely people within today’s Messianic community, who are strongly suspicious of any form of Christian theology and/or Jewish theology. Yet, there are other people within today’s Messianic community, who recognize that we have a shared Jewish and Christian heritage, which while limiting at times because people are limited mortals—surely also has its many God-inspired and appreciable virtues which are to be honored. While we have to be willing to question many things, we also have to be willing to accept the authority of the Holy Scriptures and what they legitimately communicate.

Since I was a small child in the 1980s, I have been exposed to ministry activities, not only with my parents being active members in the leadership of our local church,

Confronting Critical Issues

but with definite family lines of professional clergy preceding me in history. I am no stranger to Bible studies, or to service within the *ekklēsia*. Yet, something that got me really started into apologetics and the defense of the faith—as important as it is for many evangelical Believers—was when I encountered an individual passing out his “literature” at a certain Messianic conference in 1999. The theological positions represented in the pamphlet I was given were *totally “off the wall,”* yet I made sure that I got a selection of the gentleman’s booklets, and I began investigating. From that point since, I have been able to detect some rather negative undercurrents within various sectors of today’s Messianic community. These are theological trends and ideas, which regard the nature of Yeshua the Messiah, our approach to the reliability of the Holy Scriptures, as well as our attitudes and the composition of the people of God. Many of these surround issues that often make us feel uncomfortable—**but a well-informed and capable Bible teacher does not have the luxury of ignoring the issues that matter.**

Too frequently, when the critical issues which need to be examined and dissected make themselves known, various Messianic congregational or ministry leaders do not take the required positions that are needed, in order to stop insidious teachings from spreading. In my experience in full time Messianic ministry since 2003, I have heard too many horror stories of people encountering bad teachings within their fellowships or assemblies, that could have been stopped if the right resources were available. Alas, though, those right resources generally cannot be produced, until a teacher knows what incorrect positions have to be dissected and reasoned through (thoroughly), and consequently proven fallacious. Proverbs 8:17 advises us how, “The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines” (NRSV). And to quote an anecdote, it might also be said that “The second mouse gets the cheese.” Too frequently, a little time has to pass before some decisive resolution, or a mediating solution, can be sought for a divisive issue.

Confronting Critical Issues: An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement is an anthology of articles from the Confronting Issues booklet series by Messianic Apologetics, as well as a series of additional articles which I have written and updated over the past three to four years. This massive work has also taken the liberty to produce, in their relative entirety, the contents of some of the most important *Confronting Issues* mini-books released in 2012. The topics considered range from addressing various urban legends that have circulated in the midst of much of the Messianic movement for far too long, to addressing the Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua, to considering the Sacred Name issue, and to challenge all of us on our manner of speech and how we welcome diverse groups of God’s people into our midst.

(Do note that as an anthology of materials over a number of years, there are various points on different subjects which you will find repeated. This should not be a problem if, after reading through this book, you use it as a reference source to turn to, when needing clarification on various issues.)

Introduction

More can definitely be said, and surely will be said, on each one of these subjects in the coming years as our faith community continues to grow and develop. I pray that if you have struggled at all with the *critical issues* which are considered here, that this publication will be a blessing and be most helpful, given the wide scope of areas which are tackled.

J.K. McKee
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