

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

© 2013 John Kimball McKee

All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: brazzo via Istockphoto

ISBN 979-8316521173 (paperback)

ASIN B00GU2QMNQ (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

P.O. Box 516

McKinney, Texas 75070

(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog

messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

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

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

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107>

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

**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	57
4 What Does the Shema Really Mean?	97
5 Answering the "Frequently Avoided Questions" About the Messiahship of Yeshua.....	119
6 The Highway to Perdition.....	161
7 Is the Story of Yeshua Pagan?.....	171
8 Encountering Mythology: A Case Study from the Flood Narratives	183
9 The Role of History in Messianic Biblical Interpretation	195
10 Can We Trust the Greek Scriptures?.....	213
11 The Hebrew New Testament Misunderstanding	223
12 Getting Beyond Strong's Concordance.....	275
13 The Effect of Mysticism and Gnosticism on the Messianic Movement.....	287

14 Sacred Name Concerns	339
15 How Are Messianics to Properly Communicate?	357
16 Biblical Equality and Today's Messianic Movement	371
17 Congregations Among Us	395
18 How Are We to Live as Modern Messianics?	407
About the Author	421
Bibliography	423
Statement of Faith	435

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*

AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*

ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)

Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament

Ara: Aramaic

ASV: American Standard Version (1901)

ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)

b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)

B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.

BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)

BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*

C.E.: Common Era or A.D.

CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)

CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)

CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)

CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)

CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)

DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition

DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls

EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*

EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*

ESV: English Standard Version (2001)

Ger: German

GNL: Greek New Testament

Grk: Greek

HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)

HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)

Heb: Hebrew

HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible

IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*

IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*

ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

IVPBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*

Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)

JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)

JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

KJV: King James Version

Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)

LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)

LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)

LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)

LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)

LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)

LXX: Septuagint

m. Mishnah

MT: Masoretic Text

NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)

NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)

NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*

NEB: New English Bible (1970)

Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*

NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament

Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Introduction

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, but with definite family lines of professional clergy preceding me in history. I am no

Confronting Critical Issues

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.)

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

Introduction

publication will be a blessing and be most helpful, given the wide scope of areas which are tackled.

*J.K. McKee
Editor, Messianic Apologetics
September 2013*