



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



MAY 2024

CURRENT STATUS

MESSIANICS AND ECCLESIOLOGY



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

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OLM UPDATE

May 2024

J.K. McKee

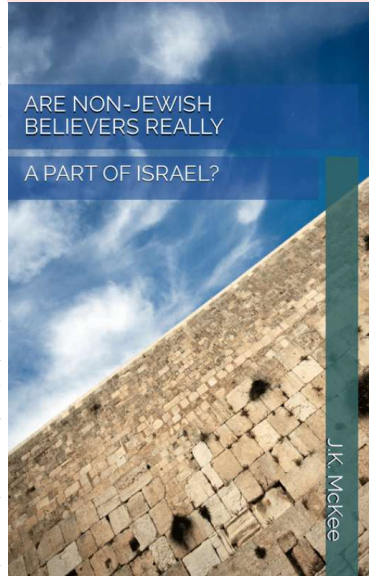
What is the current status of ecclesiology, within today's broad Messianic world? When the subject matter of the people of God, Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah, and their relationship to one another in something called "the Commonwealth of Israel" (Ephesians 2:11-13) is all brought up—what are you likely to encounter? Given the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all Messianic congregation or synagogue—and each assembly has to often be evaluated on a case-by-case basis—everyone's experience is likely to be different. Some people are going to be in congregations which try to be welcoming of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, representing themselves to some degree as "one new man" (Ephesians 2:15), co-laboring in common cause for the salvation of the Jewish people and heralding the return of Yeshua. Others are going to encounter groups which are going to emphasize Jewish identity and distinction, far more frequently, than the common identity we should all share as men and women, redeemed by the completed work of the Messiah on the tree.

A great deal has happened within the Messianic sphere of influence, since *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* was originally released in early 2013. Some of these things have been positive, and some of these things have been negative. All of us, at some point, have had to modify or fine-tune our theology, make concessions which we were previously unwilling to make, or even retract various statements and actions which were inappropriately issued. I myself have been profoundly affected by new experiences and encounters I have had in the Messianic Jewish community, which would have been impossible in 2013—especially if someone solely limited their

CURRENT STATUS MESSIANICS AND ECCLESIOLOGY

ARE NON-JEWISH
BELIEVERS REALLY

A PART OF ISRAEL?



J.K. McKee

Messianic Jewish interactions to what was published in books and articles. While I continue to believe that bilateral ecclesiology is not something taught or supported by Holy Scripture, I have had to recognize that there are leaders and teachers in Messianic Judaism who are hardly uniform on the matter of ecclesiology. On the whole, recognizing some of the variance which is present, has been more useful and positive than not.

A Progress Report? 2013-2024 Developments

As the original 2013 analysis of *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?* was closing, I summarized the three major sectors, at the time, which one was likely to encounter of “the broad Messianic movement.” These included Messianic Judaism, the Two-House sub-movement, and the One Law/One Torah sub-movement. What did I say, and was any progress actually made—away from some of the extremes which were too frequently encountered a short decade ago?

Messianic Judaism, while rightly emphasizing the Jewishness of Yeshua and that Jewish Believers do not have to give up on their Jewish heritage, is going to have to dispense with bilateral ecclesiology, and recognize non-Jewish Believers as their equals in the Lord, fellow citizens in an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel.

My family got involved in *Messianic Judaism* in 1995, we were involved in various independent expressions in the 2000s, and when we relocated from Central Florida back to North Texas in 2012, the Lord opened up doors so we could get reintegrated into the Messianic Jewish community. If one only encounters Messianic Judaism in the form of books and publications, then the academic Messianic Judaism one is likely to experience, is going to adhere to a bilateral ecclesiology.¹ Bilateral ecclesiology is still around, and the issue of Jewish and non-Jewish equality in the Body of Messiah is still present, both with their ongoing challenges and limitations.

Experienced Messianic Judaism, in congregations and synagogues—notably in Diaspora North America—can thankfully be much different from those who simply read what Messianic Judaism *might be* about, from scholars presenting it through their bilateral ecclesiology framework. One may indeed find, in visiting a Messianic Jewish congregation on *Shabbat*, a much more

¹ This can be broadly, although not exclusively, represented by resources such as: Mark S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005); David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts, eds., *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Jennifer M. Rosner, *Finding Messiah: A Journey into the Jewishness of the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022).

welcoming environment for non-Jewish Believers—with the frequent caveat being that non-Jewish Believers need to be uniquely called by the Lord into the Messianic movement, and participating in the Messianic mission of Jewish evangelism, outreach, and Israel solidarity. Many Messianic Jewish rabbis and leaders, while being ambivalent at times regarding what it means for Jewish and non-Jewish Believers to be a part of “the Commonwealth of Israel” (Ephesians 2:15), can indeed demonstrate degrees of disapproval to bilateral ecclesiology. They may consider it more of a dividing, than uniting, influence.

The **Two-House sub-movement**, while rightly acknowledging that there are unfulfilled prophecies involving the descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, is going to have to stop promoting the unsupportable idea that just about every non-Jew in the Messianic movement, must be one of those descendants, and instead look to pockets of people groups which sit within the sphere of influence of the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires.

While some fierce debates raged in the late 1990s and into the late 2000s, over the *Two-House* issue of Judah and Ephraim—it widely faded into the background throughout the 2010s. Today, one is actually not too likely to hear about a non-Jewish person enter into a Messianic Jewish congregation, and forcibly claim that he or she is some sort of “Ephraimite,” a long-lost member of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim. In the early 2010s, in no small part due to how a major proponent of Two-House openly began to promote polygamy as a valid lifestyle for men, many Two-House supporters began to move away from Ephraimite and Lost Tribes identity issues—and instead shifted toward what they considered a much better approach: Hebrew Roots.² Of course, Hebrew Roots in the mid-2020s means something much different than just examination of the Hebrew Scriptures or study of the Hebrew language. Many who once used the terminology Hebrew or Hebraic Roots with those things in mind, have had to use alternative terminology, such as “faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel.”

A number of related studies, some of them notably from a dispensational perspective, include: Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007); Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010); Amir Tsarfati, *Israel and the Church* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2021).

² This shift was broadly recognized, to various degrees, in IAMCS Steering Committee. (2014). *One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement, A position paper of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS)*. Available online via <<http://iamcs.org>>.

While many in Messianic Judaism continue to remain negatively disposed, when legitimate questions about the Divided Kingdom era of Ancient Israel are asked, and about seemingly unfulfilled prophecies such as Ezekiel 37:15-28—some worthwhile progress has actually been made in Messianic Judaism on the issue of the Lost Tribes. Jonathan Bernis, of Jewish Voice Ministries, has been a significant advocate of helping disenfranchised groups in Africa and South Asia, which have widely been considered legitimate descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom by authorities in Israel. The *Jewish Voice Study Bible* notably includes an appendix on “The ‘Lost Tribes of Israel,’” including a map which traces various dispersions one would indeed consider to be within the sphere of influence of the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Empires.³

The **One Law/One Torah sub-movement**, while rightly emphasizing that God’s Torah should be heeded by all of His people, is going to have to decisively recognize some post-resurrection era realities and changes, which have been directly affected by Yeshua’s sacrificial work, and recognize much of the judgmental legalism it has been responsible for promoting.

Many non-Jewish Believers have entered into the sphere of influence of things Messianic, throughout the 2010s to the present, who in some way have adhered to a **One Law/One Torah** theology. Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics, while agreeing with many supporters of One Law/One Torah, that Moses’ Teaching should indeed be heeded by all of God’s people—has nevertheless had very tenuous and strained relations with some of the major voices identifying as One Law/One Torah. Much of this has been over a great deal of the legalism and judgmentalism, which continues to persist in One Law/One Torah—along with a major lack of love and absence of the work of the Holy Spirit. When presented with the Biblical reality that native and sojourner in Ancient Israel, were not one-hundred percent identical, we have seen supporters of One Law/One Torah not be too open to theological correction.⁴ While we have benefitted, in the past, from some of the perspectives offered by One Law/One Torah, in the mid-2020s we do not at all believe that One Law/One Torah is adequately prepared for any of the major challenges being presented to the worldwide Body of Messiah.⁵

³ “The ‘Lost Tribes of Israel,’” in Kent Dobson with Jonathan Bernis, *Jewish Voice International Ministries NIV First Century Study Bible*, 2011 NIV (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), pp 1855-1856.

⁴ Consult the author’s article “Approaching One Law Controversies: Sorting Through the Legalism” (appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*).

⁵ Further observations are available in the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, “One Law/One Torah, Status of Movement.”

Unfortunately, as we have made some effort to distance ourselves from One Law/One Torah in the 2020s—more readily pointing out areas of difference and disagreement—Messianic Jewish supporters, of a bilateral ecclesiology, can be seen to castigate a wide number of non-Jewish Messianic people with the monicker of “One Law,” because they believe in the importance of a Torah foundation. So, those who may protest in being identified as “One Law,” may still nevertheless find themselves labeled as “One Law.” Our ministry does not consider this kind of posturing to be something too fair or reasonable.⁶

Within One Law/One Torah itself, another major development started being witnessed from 2020-2022, with the emergence of Pronomian Christianity. While throughout the 2000s and 2010s, One Law/One Torah was seen to be largely favorable to a wide number of traditional Jewish approaches to matters of Torah—in fact not too dissimilar to a wide part of Messianic Judaism—the arrival of Pronomian Christianity has seen to change a great deal of this. Technically speaking, small “p” pronomian simply means pro-law, as opposed to being anti-nomian or anti-law. But as a new, emerging sector, Pronomian Christianity, while wanting to greatly appreciate the contributions of various law-positive Christian theological traditions (in particular the Reformed tradition), has significant, ongoing matters it has to work through regarding Israel, the Jewish people, Jewish tradition, and Zionism. And in this regard, there are concerns not just as to whether or not it will have a supersessionist bend to it—but whether in light of growing anti-Semitism in our world, those identifying as Pronomian Christians will legitimately stand against injustices issued toward the State of Israel and the Jewish people.⁷

Bilateral Ecclesiology and the Future

Before our family relocated to the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex in 2012, much of my experience, with Messianic Jewish bilateral ecclesiology, was admittedly from reading books and publications. If your encounter with the Messianic Jewish movement, is only from what you see on paper, then your

⁶ This perspective is widely represented by David Rudolph. (2021). *One New Man, Hebrew Roots, Replacement Theology*. Available online via <<http://tku.edu>>; Dan Juster. (2021). *Messianic Jewish Movement Compared to Gentile Jewish Roots One Law Movement. Restoration from Zion*. Available online via <<http://restorationfromzion.com>>.

⁷ For some preliminary discussions, consult the author’s YouTube videos from 15 December 2021, “What is Pronomianism Going to Be? Will it be Messianic?”, and 05 November 2022 “Pronomian: A Short Observation - Today’s McKee Moment,” both accessible via <youtube.com/MessianicApologetics>.

approach toward it is going to be skewed. The Messianic Jewish community is a much greater plurality than many realize, and as I experienced throughout the 2010s. While there surely are Messianic Jewish rabbis and leaders who support a bilateral ecclesiology model—of the Commonwealth of Israel being composed of the two sub-groups of Israel/the Messianic Jewish community and the Church—there are others you will encounter who are not favorable toward it. Knowing about this, is frequently only going to come from elongated interactions, at a congregational level, as well as by attending larger conference level events.

North American Messianic Judaism is largely, although not exclusively, dominated by two large congregational and ministry affiliations: the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) and the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC). As a general rule, the UMJC is widely marked by stressing systematic theology, and with that may be seen to largely support a bilateral ecclesiology, and with many of its rabbis and leaders, a hardshell bilateral ecclesiology at that. A wide majority of the published Messianic Jewish theological books and publications you are going to encounter, come from those associated with the UMJC.

The MJAA is widely known for an emphasis on the spiritual gifts and evangelism, and while it does have rabbis and leaders who support a bilateral ecclesiology, there are many others who are ambivalent, and would instead support Jew and Gentile as “one new man.” The International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS) is its associated congregation and ministry apparatus. The MJAA/IAMCS is much more of a plurality, and as such there would be some who would support an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel approach, with the Twelve Tribes of Israel at the center, and enlarged borders to welcome in the righteous from the nations (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:15-18). The MJAA/IAMCS notably does constitute the majority of the Messianic Jewish community in North America, but it widely needs to be experienced in congregational and conference venues.

It is precisely because of the wider theological pluralism of the MJAA/IAMCS, that Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have been able to find compatibility. And over the past decade, we have had to adjust and recalibrate some aspects of our theology.⁸ This has appropriately included a greater emphasis on the original Messianic Jewish mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, Israel solidarity, and standing against anti-Semitism. It has also involved incorporating the common approach the Messianic Jewish movement has had toward non-Jewish Believers being involved: non-Jewish

⁸ Consult the March 2023 issue of Outreach Israel News, “A Spiritual and Theological Refitting.”

Believers have to be specially called by the Lord into the Messianic movement. While this will frequently begin by many being intrigued by matters such as “Jesus in the feasts,” or wanting to have a greater appreciation for things like *Shabbat* or weekly Torah study—it needs to translate into non-Jewish Believers serving as co-laborers with Jewish Believers in the salvation of Israel. *And along with that, I can totally agree that you do not want non-Jewish people in the Messianic movement, who are going to buckle and shake when difficulties come.*

A major difference, which should be noted between the MJAA/IAMCS and UMJC, is how the former will actually ordain non-Jewish men as Messianic Pastors and Teachers (and has now even started to license a few women). That non-Jewish Believers could even go through an ordination process for Messianic Jewish leadership, is itself evidence how a bilateral ecclesiology is hardly the only ecclesiology model present in the Messianic Jewish community of the mid-2020s.

Theologically, while a wide number of the Scriptural supports offered in favor of a bilateral ecclesiology can be reasonably addressed and answered—there are sociological reasons why many Messianic Jewish rabbis, leaders, and people adhere to a bilateral ecclesiology. The biggest concern or fear, perhaps more than any other, is that by eliminating a separate sub-group, i.e., “the Church,” from the equation—then all of a sudden today’s rather small, and even miniscule, Messianic Jewish community, would find itself outnumbered and overwhelmed by hundreds of millions, or even billions, of Christians.

A decade ago, stressing the importance of a bilateral ecclesiology, so that the independent integrity of the Messianic Jewish community could be maintained, would be entirely understandable. In the mid-2020s, however, with the emergence of Generation-Z, Generation Alpha—and most especially Wokeism, Ex-Vangelical, Affirming, and Deconstruction, among other negative forces—the need for the Messianic movement to more readily recognize itself as “the end-time move of God,” should start becoming more apparent. While we should expect a massive salvation of Jewish people coming to faith in Israel’s Messiah (cf. Romans 11:12), we should also expect a massive apostasy away from belief in God and the Bible (2 Thessalonians 2:3), to occur simultaneously. To be blunt: over the next two to three decades, we should expect a major contraction to take place in terms of religious faith, perhaps as high as seventy to eighty percent.⁹

⁹ Consult the author’s presentation delivered at the 2024 IAMCS Rabbis Conference, from 01 January 2024, “What Are the Younger People Really Talking About?”, accessible via <youtube.com/MessianicApologetics>.

If the Messianic movement is rightly considered to be “the end-time move of God,” and transitions into the new situations and purposes the Lord has for it, as we approach the Second Coming—then a bilateral ecclesiology will hardly be necessary.¹⁰ *That is how few true Believers there are going to be.* While we will tangibly see the end-time restoration of Israel at hand (cf. Acts 1:6), we will also be eager to find those few who will continue to express trust in the Messiah of Israel, Jewish and non-Jewish—especially those who we can rely upon and trust, as the conflict between the God of Israel and the Adversary approaches a culmination.

Ongoing Matters of Supersessionism and Identity

Those who are participants in today’s Messianic movement—because they are of the conviction that it has an important role to play in events leading up to the return of Israel’s Messiah—will have a very different orientation than those whose purpose is to see Messianic Judaism formally acknowledged as another branch of Judaism, and/or accepted within scholastic quarters. A person’s experience in attending a Messianic congregation, but more likely conference level events, will see those who gravitate toward a focus being on *when* we are in history—versus those who gravitate toward a focus being on the place of Messianic Judaism within Biblical academia (and even ecumenicism). It might be a few decades, until we see a mass apostasy away from God and Holy Scriptures begin to truly take shape. Yet, there are different perspectives—one more eschatological, one more scholastic—we do encounter within much of the Messianic community.

Within more academic circles of influence, is where one will find both Messianic Jewish and Christian supporters, of a bilateral ecclesiology. Given how throughout a great deal of Christian history, supersessionism or replacement theology has held to the position that God has finished with Israel and the Jewish people—and that the Christian Church is some kind of “New Israel”—it cannot be denied how moving toward a bilateral ecclesiology, is actually a huge step forward. While bifurcated, all of God’s people may be reckoned as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel, meaning that non-Jewish Christian Believers have a spiritual destiny interlocked with the prophetic destiny of the Jewish people. Christians need to support Israel, stand against anti-Semitism, and take spiritual lessons from the Old Testament. It cannot

¹⁰ One disturbing resource is Mark S. Kinzer, *Searching Her Own Mystery: Nostra Aetate, the Jewish People, and the Identity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), as it is tied to ecumenical dialogue between some parts of the Messianic Jewish movement and Roman Catholicism.

be denied how within academia, both Messianic Jewish and Christian advocates of a bilateral ecclesiology, have been seen to strongly oppose supersessionism.¹¹

No one in today's Messianic movement denies how, throughout a great deal of historic Christianity, it has been absolutely shameful, reprehensible, and even obscene—to see how Jewish people who have recognized Yeshua as Israel's Messiah, be somehow required or forced to give up on their Jewish heritage and traditions. The modern Messianic Jewish movement was first established to provide a place for Jewish Believers in Yeshua to continue to be Jewish. **Jewishness matters to the God of Israel!** But if the Messianic movement is a prophetic move of the Holy Spirit, with an important role to play in events to culminate in the return of Yeshua to Planet Earth—then it does require an ability to adapt and modify itself, as history unfolds.

One of the biggest issues, which has doubtlessly forced many to reconsider whether or not the Messianic Jewish mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity *is to be the sole focus*, has indeed been the wide numbers of non-Jewish Believers who have entered into the Messianic movement. Are the nations streaming to Zion, to be taught from Moses' Teaching (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4)? Are ten grabbing hold of the *tzitzit* of a Jew (Zechariah 8:23)? You will get a recognition, on the part of many individual Messianic Jews for sure, that this has been happening. Other prophecies have been intersecting with the Romans 9-11 trajectory of "all Israel will be saved."

Jewish identity and heritage are most definitely things worthy of preserving! Those who favor a bilateral ecclesiology model, think that their approach to the Commonwealth of Israel is what is required to keep Messianic Jewish Believers from intermarrying and/or assimilating all away into the mass of the nations generally.¹² And over the past decade, in no small part

¹¹ Some of this has certainly been witnessed in Gerald R. McDermott, ed., *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel & the Land* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016); Gerald R. McDermott, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Different about the People and the Land* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2017); Gerald R. McDermott, ed., *Understanding the Jewish Roots of Christianity: Biblical, Theological, & Historical Essays on the Relationship between Judaism & Christianity* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021); Stanley E. Porter and Alan E. Kurschner, eds., *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2023).

A debate between supporters and opponents of supersessionism, replacement theology, is offered in Michael F. Bird & Scot McKnight, eds., *God's Israel and the Israel of God: Paul and Supersessionism* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023).

¹² Consult the various observations presented by "Guarding Jewish Identity," in Jacob Fronczak, *Israel Matters: Putting the Jewish People Back at the Center of God's Plan* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2015), pp 117-123.

due to some of the approaches witnessed to 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 and “Paul’s rule in all the churches/assemblies”¹³—incorrectly approached as a vocational calling, rather than a calling to salvation and sanctification¹³—there can indeed be an over-emphasis witnessed on Jewish identity in various sectors, **at the expense of one’s identity in Messiah**. While Jewish identity is important, the identity all of us as redeemed human beings are to express in the completed work of Yeshua, sacrificed and resurrected for our sins, is much more important. A difficult passage, for many contemporary Messianic Jews to work through, are the Apostle Paul’s observations of Philippians 3:2-10:

“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilation; for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Messiah Yeshua and have no confidence in the flesh, though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Torah, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the assembly; as to the righteousness which is in the Torah, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, these have I counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. But even more so, I count all things to be loss for the surpassing value of the knowledge of Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them but refuse in order that I may gain Messiah, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the Torah, but that which is through the faithfulness of Messiah, the righteousness which is from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:2-10, author’s rendering).

Paul considered his human, Jewish pedigree and achievements, to be “rubbish” (NASU) or “dung” (KJV), in view of what Yeshua had accomplished on the tree. While often approached from many Christians, as meaning that Paul considered Jewish identity and heritage to be meaningless—his vantage point of contrasting his human and mortal, Jewish heritage, **to the death and resurrection of the Messiah**, and what this would have meant in a city like Philippi, with a high Roman patriotism—is frequently not acknowledged. Among Paul’s original Philippian audience, which may have included a wide number of retired Roman soldiers—he told them that if his human Jewish heritage and achievements were rubbish in view of the salvation work of Israel’s Messiah, then their pagan heritage and achievements *would have been even less than rubbish*.¹⁴

¹³ For a detailed verse-by-verse and Greek review of “Paul’s rule in all the churches/assemblies,” consult the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, “1 Corinthians 7:17-24.”

¹⁴ Consult the Messianic Theology Explained episode from 22 February 2024, “Identity”, accessible via <[youtube.com/MessianicApologetics](https://www.youtube.com/MessianicApologetics)>.

In the mid-2020s, among those supportive of or favorable toward a bilateral ecclesiology, has now been a growing emphasis on Distinction Theology.¹⁵ While wanting to appropriately emphasize the importance of Jewish identity and continuance, it is most probably going to end up resulting in differences among God’s people being more important than the common faith we share in the completed work of Yeshua the Messiah. Concurrent with this, is how one of the major Messianic Jewish organizations has been seen to widely claim (2023) that non-Jewish Believers may be educated in matters of God’s Torah—but that it is not God’s ideal for all of His people to be participating in outward matters of Torah, especially with what are traditionally regarded as various “sign commandments” such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, appointed times/*moedim*, and kosher dietary laws.¹⁶ Issues of whether a non-Jewish Believer is called into the Messianic movement, at its present stage of development, aside, this will probably cause yet even more schisms, divisions, mistrust, and disrespect. Fortunately, though, there are some Messianic Jewish voices within these arenas, who have already been seen to protest much of this, emphasizing that a much better way needs to be found.¹⁷

Nullifying Supersessionist Claims and Future Prophecy Taking Shape

Messianic people—especially non-Jewish Believers involved in things Messianic—who are not seen to support a bilateral ecclesiology, have been accused over the years by proponents of bilateral ecclesiology, of instead supporting some form of supersessionism or replacement theology. The main alternative, an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel model of ecclesiology based in Amos 9:11-12 and Acts 15:15-18, may be thought by supporters of bilateral ecclesiology to be at least a form of soft supersessionism. Yet, it is to be strongly recognized how the Messianic Jewish movement is not uniform in matters of ecclesiology, and many do recognize how the participation of non-Jewish Believers, genuinely called by the Lord, is a Divine sign of how future prophecies have begun to take shape. When we are in history, and the

¹⁵ A review of what this entails, is broadly offered in D. Thomas Lancaster, *The Holy Epistle to the Ephesians: Sermons on a Messianic Jewish Approach* (Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2022), pp 7-10; D. Thomas Lancaster. (2024). *There Is No Distinction*, 20 February, 2024. *Messiah Online*. Retrieved 29 February, 2024 from <<http://www.ffoz.org/messiah>>.

¹⁶ Consult David Rudolph, Russell Resnik, and Daniel C. Juster. (2023). *Gentile Believers and the Torah: Proposed UMJC Executive Committee Guidance Paper*. Retrieved 24 November, 2023, from <<http://messianicstudies.com>>.

¹⁷ Consult David Tokajer, *One New Man Revival: True Unity in the Body of Messiah* (Daphne, AL: Author, 2023).

role that the Messianic community should be playing, is going to influence us far, far more than what might be taking place in various ecumenical religious or academic venues.¹⁸

Throughout much of the 2000s and 2010s, Biblical scholarship and technical scholarship was the major focus on my own ministry activity. It will doubtlessly continue to play some role in the 2020s—especially as I update and expand older writings and publications—but will not play the role I might have thought it would, in terms of equipping people for the future. From my perspective, it does very little to expel the limited time, energy, and resources possessed by today’s Messianic movement—to either be acknowledged as another formal branch of Judaism, or for the tenants of the Messianic experience to be recognized as (somewhat) legitimate in academic circles. The fact is that as Messianic Judaism might be considered “okay” in various religious academic venues¹⁸—so are progressive manifestations of Judaism and Christianity being simultaneously recognized as “okay.” What good does it actually do, when some religious scholars might affirm Messianic Jews’ right to continue to live as Jews, in fidelity to matters of Torah—when some of the same might also be affirming progressive Christians’ identity as LGBTQ+? This is where a Messianic Jew’s affirmation needs to most especially come from the God of Israel, and not mortals (cf. Romans 2:29).

Over the past three to four years (2020-2024), there have been some significant global dramas, which the Lord has doubtlessly been using to get the collective attention of His people. *Many have been paying attention, and have been adjusting their lives accordingly. It is not “business as usual” any more.* Most probably because of the fallout, of a great number of false end-time predictions and expectations around the turn of the Millennium, the Messianic movement has been collectively slow to pay attention to the changes which have been taking place. Yet in 2024, due to the ongoing issues resultant from the Israel-Hamas conflict which began on 07 October, 2023, many in the Messianic community are realizing that a shift has started. This situation has helped many to see who some of the true friends of Israel and the Jewish people actually are, politically and spiritually-theologically—as well as flush out many as ranging from being apathetic on one end, and vehemently anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic on another end.

There has been no question, by anyone in Messianic Judaism, that a ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, stands with Israel, the Jewish people, and the Messianic Jewish community. There are Mes

¹⁸ An example of this might be Jennifer M. Rosner, *Finding Messiah: A Journey into the Jewishness of the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022), which was intended for broad distribution across much of the academic Christian world.

sianic Jewish rabbis and leaders, who know that we do not hold to a bilateral ecclesiology, and would hardly consider us to be supersessionist. *Why? Because we are standing alongside of Israel, the Jewish people, and the Messianic Jewish community as their friends and allies.* And we are co-laboring with Messianic Jewish Believers in the salvation of Israel and the Jewish people!

There have been many questions, though, about a broad silence regarding current matters, witnessed from many of those identifying with labels such as Hebrew Roots, One Law/One Torah, and Pronomian, among others. What good does it do for non-Jewish people to claim to be a part of the polity of Israel via Messiah faith, and then be relatively quiet when the State of Israel and Jewish community need friends and allies? *These are the venues where some kind of supersessionism are more likely to be found.*

Human history has been placed on a Romans 11:26ff trajectory of “all Israel will be saved,” something which involves a massive salvation of Jewish people coming to faith in Yeshua (Romans 11:12), and will ultimately culminate in the return of Yeshua Himself to reign from Jerusalem. The main key or lynchpin to this taking place, is how Paul stated, “For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the nations has come in” (Romans 11:25, author’s rendering). The arrival of a group of non-Jewish Believers, “the fullness of the nations,” begins en masse, the acceleration of “all Israel will be saved.” If *plērōma* or “fullness,” is approached as being qualitative in Romans 11:25—as it surely is qualitative earlier in Romans 11:12 regarding the salvation of Jewish people—then non-Jewish Believers being “the fullness of the nations” should involve their service as great vessels of God’s grace, love, and mercy to a Jewish people which has widely dismissed Israel’s Messiah at present. As Paul stressed in Romans 11:30-31,

“For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy” (Romans 11:30-31, NASU).

Non-Jewish Believers, in today’s Messianic movement, have an important role to play in the salvation of Israel. *They are to be vessels of mercy to the Jewish people, who need to know their Messiah.* Rather than involving anti-Semitic attitudes of replacement theology, social and spiritual displacement, and a nullification of the unique place of Israel proper in human history—it is to involve repentance from past sins and crimes committed against the Jewish people, a greater level of understanding for the Jewish experience,

and in truly standing in lockstep with the Jewish and Messianic Jewish communities through difficult times. Things are going to get much, much more difficult—and indeed, many non-Jewish people, who have been involved in the Messianic movement, are very likely to peel away and fade off. A critical part of non-Jewish Believers having a Ruth calling, though, is in recognizing the requirement to stand with Israel proper, even if it costs you your life (cf. Ruth 1:17).

As the future unfolds, supporters of a bilateral ecclesiology are likely to stress and (over-)emphasize matters of Jewish identity, and now Distinction Theology. The future, however, requires Messianic Jewish Believers to take into greater consideration, **Jewish destiny**. This involves something far more serious and severe, than various Messianic Jewish scholars wanting to be accepted as “legitimate” in academic and ecumenical venues. Jewish destiny involves seeing the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob return to their ancestral home in the Land of Israel—and being prepared to participate in events to culminate in the return of Israel’s Messiah. It involves nothing less than seeing the 144,000 sealed servants of Revelation being prepared to serve during the seven-year Time of Jacob’s Trouble.

The composition of the people of God, is a definite place where some critical thinking and reflection are surely needed by today’s Messianic people. Ecclesiology is not an area of theology which enough adequately understand the importance of. Yet, given the end-time or eschatological significance of today’s Messianic movement, ecclesiology is something many need a better handle on.

For today’s Messianic movement, ecclesiology affects how Jewish and non-Jewish Believers read the Bible, and the instructions which God wants them to follow. Ecclesiology undeniably affects the unity of Jewish Believers and Believers from the nations as one in the Body of Messiah.

Is the *ekklēsia* an actual separate entity known as “the Church”? Or, is *ekklēsia* no different than the assembly of Israel itself—which takes Bible readers back to the mixed multitude of physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *and* the welcomed persons from the nations, who received His Ten Words and Instruction at the base of Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 12:38)? Did Yeshua the Messiah come to found a separate group of elect called “the Church,” or did He come to rebuild and restore His Father’s assembly of righteous ones (cf. Matthew 16:18; Jeremiah 33:7, LXX), restoring the Kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6)?

The basic choices of ecclesiology today’s Messianic people have are rather striking: either God (1) has two groups of elect, or sub-peoples: Israel and “the Church”; or God (2) recognizes all as a part of an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel. How are we to approach non-Jewish Believers in the Messianic movement, and things like the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13), the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), or being grafted-in (Romans 11:16-18)? There is much which we need to be considering from the text of Scripture, as we evaluate what our future beholds.

