Paul's letter to the Romans is easily discerned to be the most influential letter ever written in human history. It has had a significant impact on religious authorities, governmental authorities, and philosophies on God, human behavior, and societal order. There is no denying the great theological importance that the Epistle to the Romans has had throughout Christian history, especially since the Protestant Reformation.

Romans was written against the backdrop of both the Apostle Paul setting his ministry activity westward toward Spain, and the Roman Jewish Believers returning to Rome after the Edict of Claudius—and finding that things would not exactly be the same with the assembly of Messiah followers being majority non-Jewish. Paul's letter to the Romans was written as a presentation of his theology of the gospel, to a group of people with whom he was not directly acquainted, but also to issue some admonitions to their circumstances, so that all might get along. Romans is a key epistle for Pauline theology to be sure, regarding issues surrounding salvation, justification and righteousness, the Jewish people and the Kingdom of Israel, the nations, and the Torah of Moses. Yet, Romans is also about some significant First Century issues regarding the redemption of the Jewish people and the nations, and them functioning together in one Body of Messiah.

In much of Romans examination, only up until the past few decades, Paul's letter has principally been viewed as a theological treatise, and not as a letter written to ancient Messiah followers. While there are many useful perspectives and insights offered by those past voices who have considered Romans—the setting of Romans is quite important and most relevant for the broad, contemporary Messianic movement. Much of the ancient setting of Romans, with the Jewish Believers getting reintegrated into the fellowships of Believers, parallels much of what we see in our own faith community. The Messianic movement of the 2020s is now a majority non-Jewish group of people—yet both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers do rely on one another, and should be eagerly about "lov[ing] one another with mutual affection; outdo[ing] one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10, NRSV).

This Messianic study on Romans is definitely one produced for many of the challenges which the Messianic movement presently faces! Messianic Apologetics editor J.K. McKee offers a compelling examination of this letter, appreciating the perspectives of Law-positive Christian traditions which have preceded us, but one which is also engaged with some contemporary perspectives. These include proposals present via the New Perspective on Paul, studies and thoughts regarding the "I" of Romans ch. 7, egalitarian views regarding figures such as Phoebe and Junia in Romans ch. 16, and most especially some current Messianic handling of the topic of Israel in Romans chs. 9-11. *Romans for the Practical Messianic* is a commentary which you should welcome, as it interjects some well-needed information into our developing theology of both Paul and the mission of God.

Also included in this commentary is an exposition on Acts 28:11-31: Paul's arrival in Rome.

ROMANS

FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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J.K. McKEE

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.blog

ROMANS
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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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: *Encylopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: 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*
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)
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
MARV: Messianic Apologetics Revised Version*
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)

* This is a modified and adapted edition of the public domain World Messianic Bible (WMB).

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)

PROLOGUE

I have been ***extremely eager*** to conduct a Messianic examination of Paul's letter to the Romans, especially since finishing my M.A. coursework in Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary (2008). While in seminary, I took not one, but two, exegesis classes on Romans.[1] There are many valuable proposals being made in contemporary Romans scholarship, which today's Messianic people are not likely to have heard about. More than anything else, though, I think that each person in today's Messianic movement—Jewish or non-Jewish—is likely to be aware of the fact that much of what Paul's letter to the Romans communicated, to its ancient audience, is quite relevant for the changing contours and unique dynamics of our own faith community. *Unlike your typical Christian reader of Romans, this letter bears some rather timely importance for a Messianic reader*, as it actually parallels many of the on-the-ground circumstances and issues we are presently facing and wrestling through.

This study of Romans represents a significant rite of passage for the ministry of Outreach Israel. First of all, this study has the distinction of being the first and full, new, Wednesday Night Bible Study being entirely conducted in North Texas, following our family and ministry move in December 2012. Secondly, and I think more importantly, is that *Romans for the Practical Messianic* represents the first of three studies which will complete my examination of the Pauline Epistles as commentaries, as *Practical Messianic* commentaries on Galatians through 1&2 Timothy and Titus have already been completed. The amount of work leading up to this point has certainly been rather massive—between previous commentaries and other publications—as previous projects have given me the ability to already work through many of the difficult-to-understand vignettes of Paul's letter to the Romans, as well as collect my thoughts and notes on other Romans passages.

The Epistle to the Romans widely represents the Apostle Paul's presentation of the good news of salvation, to his own Jewish people and those of the nations, set against a backdrop of the circumstances which many in the early Body of Messiah were facing. Romans 1:16 is undeniably a major theme of not only his letter, but also the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Messianic movement: "For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts—to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (TLV). While Romans explains the many dynamics of this good news, in theological terms for Paul's ancient audience to understand—the venerable Apostle was not averse to issuing some corrective instruction to these people. Salvation history has a definite trajectory built into it—that "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26)—something which is to involve a massive salvation of the Jewish people and the consummation of the Messianic Kingdom, and which we are still

[1] One with Prof. Woody Anderson (Spring 2007), and another with Prof. Jim Miller (Fall 2008).

obviously waiting for today. Yet, getting to this point decisively means that each one of God's people must learn how to "love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10, NRSV). Paul did have to sort out many ancient prejudices which Jews, Greeks, and Romans had for one another—even in the Body of Messiah. We have prejudices today, even as Messianic people, which the Lord needs us to remove from ourselves.

Today's Messianic people, in my experience as a teacher and a writer, tend to have a great appreciation for Romans—but frequently because of the classic "salvation verses" which are quite quotable. "[A]ll have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, NASU); "having now been justified by His blood" (Romans 5:9, NASU); "...grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Yeshua the Messiah our Lord" (Romans 5:21, NASU)—are among the many spiritually uplifting statements which we have all heard and have been encouraged by.

However, today's Messianic people do struggle with a number of Romans passages. We need a better handle on Romans 10:4, which in most Bibles reads, "For Christ is the end of the law..." (NASU). Romans 7:4 is commonly skipped over, "you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Messiah" (NASU). There are details in Romans chs. 9-11 which need to be probed a bit more deeply, and no longer skipped over. We tend to just not know what to do with the whole scene of Romans ch. 14, per the issue of eating and sacred days. Paul's letter to the Romans has various passages which have been traditionally interpreted as anti-Torah, and which require further attention on the part of Messianic Believers.

While there have been many good studies conducted on Paul's letter to the Romans by Messianic congregational and fellowship leaders, and even a few commentaries released, *Romans for the Practical Messianic* is a commentary which has been released decisively for the circumstances of the 2010s. Much has happened in the broad Messianic movement, in just the past five years or so (2009-2014), both theologically and spiritually, which an examination of Romans will provide many answers and solutions for—even if we might be at some pains, or even a loss of sorts, to implement them! Many of you who have already had some answers on Paul's perspective of "works of law," "circumcision," "justification," and Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in the Body of Messiah, from my preceding volume *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, will doubtlessly appreciate *Romans for the Practical Messianic*. Just like Galatians, there are various places in Romans where we will need to reorient our approach from thinking that the Apostle Paul was writing directly to modern people, as we place ourselves back into considering his perspective in composing this letter, understanding what its original recipients were being told, and then proceed to deduce a proper application for our own circumstances in the Twenty-First Century.

This resource has been produced for far more reasons than just to "plug up" a few holes in our Messianic boat, providing some more detailed analyses of the common places where Messianic people struggle (i.e., Romans chs. 7, 9-11, 14). *Romans for the Practical Messianic* has been produced to provide some more information on various passages and issues, which

others in our faith community have not addressed in sufficient detail, have avoided, or have glossed over without realizing it. Most especially, though, this commentary has been produced to issue some key admonitions about our attitudes and spirituality, as Paul's letter to the Romans has some unique instructions and corrections to be received by Twenty-First Century Messianic men and women. I believe that if we can truly heed and appreciate Paul's letter to the Romans, then we will be exceptionally equipped for the unique purpose and work God has for today's Messianic people!

I present *Romans for the Practical Messianic* to you, the Messianic reader, with the major intention being "that the requirement of the *Torah* might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4, TLV). May we each learn important lessons from Romans, which many have rightly thought is the most influential letter ever written in human history.

J.K. McKee
Editor, Messianic Apologetics
February 2015

This update of *Romans for the Practical Messianic* (2025), mainly involves a refresh of the material, as well as a smoothing over and streamling of some arguments. I have surely had to consider some theological and spiritual developments, which have taken place within the Messianic community. These most especially include some of the experiences our family has had in getting reintegrated into the Messianic Jewish movement (2013-present), and our being called into various levels of service and leadership within Messianic Judaism, both locally and beyond. This includes my being ordained as a Messianic Teacher with the IAMCS (2022), and me getting to better know a number of Messianic Jewish pioneers and their stories. I hope and pray that this commentary can continue to be a useful resource for many.

INTRODUCTION

Among the scope of texts found within the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans[1] (Grk. *Pros Rōmaious*), undeniably stands out as being quite significant. Romans is the longest, single sustained piece of writing which originates from the Apostle Paul, and as such is listed as the first among the Pauline corpus. While there are certainly words of admonishment, correction, and even rebuke encountered in Romans, there is also a significant eloquence found from Paul's personal faith in Israel's Messiah, his philosophy of ministry, and his deeply held convictions about God and His Creation. Many people, both religious and not, have had to consider the significant impact the Epistle to the Romans has had on Western civilization—probably in more ways than Paul himself ever intended.

Before delving into Paul's letter to the Roman Believers, have any of us ever stepped back a few paces, and really wondered what we are preparing to get ourselves into? Having taken multiple seminary classes on Romans, and certainly having to reflect on the content of Paul's letter throughout my own ministry experiences over a number of years, it is no understatement to recognize that: **Romans is the most influential letter ever written in history.** Romans has influenced historical Christianity and its theology to be sure, but Romans has also, in turn, influenced the views of those in civil law and politics. How Europeans of the Middle Ages and into the Protestant Reformation approached the authority of God, the placement of man in God's Creation, the role of various human authorities, and God's intended purpose for people—was certainly influenced by various passages in the Epistle to the Romans. Whether various historic figures in religious or political leadership properly applied Paul's words or not, that Romans has had an influence on much of our Western way of life, is a fact which has to be recognized.

If there is one good thing which many modern Biblical interpreters do try to be conscious of, it is that we have to interpret a text like the Epistle to the Romans, as best as we can, *first* from the perspective of its original recipients—and *then* try to extrapolate a fair degree of modern application for our contemporary circumstances. In doing this, modern Believers desiring to be true to God's Word are going to find some significant words of relevance for Twenty-First Century life. Lamentably, human beings going after false gods and conducting

[1] Please note that in spite of the common reference to Romans as "the Book of Romans," I am going to purposefully refer to the text as either the Epistle to the Romans or Paul's letter to the Romans, and not use this reference. By failing to forget that this text was a letter written to a specific audience in a specific setting, we can make the common error of thinking that this was a text written *directly to us*. Our goal as responsible interpreters is to try to reconstruct what this letter meant *to its original audience first*, before applying its message in a modern-day setting.