

INTRODUCTION TO THINGS MESSIANIC

**An Introduction for Newcomers
to the Messianic Movement**

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Introduction to Things Messianic

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Cover Image: JMWScout via Istockphoto

ISBN 979-8316753604 (paperback)

ASIN B00685T1FG (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

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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: *Encyclopaedia 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*
IVPBB: *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)

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Thinking Big Picture: Does Today's Messianic Movement Truly Think Salvation Historically?

It is declared in Psalm 8:3-5, “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor” (NRSV).¹ Given the vastness of our universe—with its billions of stars, planets, nebulae, and galaxies—our Creator pays close attention to His human creations. Not only does our Creator pay close attention to His human creations, by listening to their prayers and pleas for intervention, but He intends to see redeemed humanity rule as His viceroy, right beside Him in the New Creation.

Every one of us has had a different spiritual or theological experience, when it comes to us as mortals relating to our Eternal God. I suspect, though, that far too many of us—including various leaders and teachers—gloss over the statements of Psalm 8:3-5, and we just pay attention to human uniqueness, set against the animals (Psalm 8:6-8). Our Eternal God, who is concerned with everything in Creation—from the microscopic atom, to clusters of thousands of galaxies—actually takes the time to have a relationship with us as humans. *But how often do we properly reciprocate?* How often do we fail to consider our place, as His human creations, within His large cosmic plan? Or, are we so focused, at times, on our own little worlds or universes, that we fail to step back and consider the role that we,

¹ This article originally appeared in the March 2022 issue of Outreach Israel News.

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as members of the Body of Messiah, are to play in the wider series of events?

“The purpose is that through Messiah’s community the multi-faceted wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, which is in keeping with the eternal purpose that He carried out in Messiah *Yeshua* our Lord” (Ephesians 3:10-11, TLV).

All of us at one point or another, have heard or have been told that we need to have a **Big Picture View** of something. Perhaps you have heard this at school, in business, or even in religion. When we think about the Creator God, His universe, the future return of *Yeshua* to Planet Earth, and how what is happening on Planet Earth is intended to conclude the wider cosmic conflict between good and evil—**having a Big Picture view of the universe is absolutely imperative!** But, all of us have been guilty of failing to recognize that while God looks at our massive universe of over 100 billion galaxies, and yet pays attention to us—how we mortals often lack the willpower to consider His plan beyond our own individual or family lives. Many of us, although genuinely forgiven of our sins, born again, and citizens of the Kingdom of God—actually have little to no idea what it means to be participants in salvation history. While it is easy to conclude that many evangelical Christians have little concept of salvation history, it pains me to say that too many of today’s Messianic people also do not properly consider how important salvation history is.

What is Your Trajectory of Salvation History?

A few of you have probably encountered the term **salvation history** used once or twice, here or there. Most of you have not encountered the term salvation history. And, this should not be surprising; you cannot pick up most theological dictionaries or encyclopedias and find “salvation history.” This is because this term originated during the Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, and hence tends to more frequently go by its German designation of *Heilsgeschichte*. A resource like the *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines it as,

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"A term used by some biblical scholars to mark the history of Israel and the subsequent Christian church as 'holy history' being worked out as God's plan in the midst of human history as a whole."²

A fuller definition is offered by the *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*:

"*Heilsgeschichte* is a German term meaning 'history of salvation.' It sees the Bible as essentially such a history. While the Bible says much about other matters, these are merely incidental to its single purpose of unfolding the story of redemption. It traces in history and doctrine the development of the divine purpose in the salvation of men. Considered as a somewhat different approach from the 'proof text' method, which uses the Bible as the raw material for the shaping of a systematic theology, *Heilsgeschichte* stresses a more organic approach."³

Most of us, subconsciously, probably do think of God's activities from some sort of salvation history perspective. We believe that at some future point, Yeshua the Messiah is going to return from Heaven, the dead will be resurrected, and that we will all be with Him. In short, many of the things that we will be looking for, as they concern future salvation history, focus around 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18:

"For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yeshua. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, NASU).

Of course, there are more things that salvation history is concerned with—especially as they involve the final answer to the Apostles' question of Acts 1:6: "When they were together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore self-rule to Isra'el?'" (CJB). Salvation history also encompasses what we see at the end of Revelation: "and He will wipe

² Donald S. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 126.

³ John H. Gerstner, "Heilsgeschichte," in Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 265.

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away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4, NASU). Many of us have various thoughts and ideas about these things, but we have often not sat down and sketched out what we believe God’s movements are. Yet, many different theological traditions have certainly developed entire systems based on a **trajectory of salvation history**.

In its most basic sense, anyone’s trajectory of salvation history is going to be centered around the work and activities of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah: His death, resurrection, ascension, anticipated return, and final reign. This is something that today’s evangelical Christians and Messianic Believers do agree upon. Things significantly diverge, however, when many Christian theological traditions (although not all), affirm that God’s plan for Planet Earth is centered around His representatives who compose the Church. Often this is based in a supersessionism which sees “the Church” as the new people of God that has replaced God’s plan and purposes for Israel. Messianics, in stark contrast, would affirm that God’s activities for Planet Earth are centered around His dealings with Israel and with the future restoration of Israel, anticipated in the Apostle Paul’s salvation historical words of Romans chs. 9-11. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers who recognize Israel’s Messiah, together compose the “one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15) and Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13). Yet, God’s dealings with humanity on Planet Earth are seemingly also wrapping up the greater cosmic conflict in the universe between good and evil, the angelic forces of light versus the demonic forces of darkness. So, we are not solely involved in matters on some small, Pale Blue Dot.

A basic salvation historical trajectory is something that many of us have been exposed to, even in rudimentary teachings from Sunday school: **Creation, Fall, Redemption**. God created a good world, human sin marred His good intention, and a Savior had to come to repair the damages. A slightly more involved salvation historical trajectory that many of us have been exposed to, might be something like: **Creation, Fall, Israel, Church, New Creation**. The answer to the sin introduced by the Fall would be through the arrival of the Messiah of Israel, and then the new people of God, the Church, would declare the good news or gospel to the world. A much more involved salvation historical trajectory, that you are more likely to find in various theological works or surveys of the Bible, could be: **Creation, Fall, Exodus, Promised Land, Exile, Messiah, Death-Resurrection, Gospel, Resurrection, New Creation**. This takes into account many more details, as they involve Ancient Israel being delivered from

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Egypt, brought into the Promised Land, the Kingdom of Israel split and the people exiled by Assyria and Babylon, the Messianic promises emerging from a vacancy in the Davidic throne, the death and resurrection of Yeshua of Nazareth, and the future resurrection of the dead and Eternal State in view.

If we were to modify some of the customary evangelical Protestant approaches to salvation history, for our own unique Messianic needs, we might see something like: *Creation, Fall, Exodus, Promised Land, Exile, Messiah, Death-Resurrection, Restoration of Israel Begins, Gospel Proclamation, Full Restoration of Israel, Resurrection, New Creation*. As Messianic people, we definitely see God's activities on Planet Earth focused upon the prophesied restoration of Israel. Somehow involved are the anticipated works of Daniel 9:24: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place" (NASU). While many details can elude us, we are aware of how these activities are intended to bring about the Second Coming of the Messiah, and the full emergence of His Kingdom reign from Jerusalem.

There are, to be sure, significant questions that arise from a person thinking about salvation history, and how human civilization is basically moving from Creation to the New Creation. There is a challenge to each of us when we read the Bible from a salvation historical standpoint: *something* was lost at the Fall, *something* starts to be recovered at the Exodus and the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel in the Promised Land, *something* has been restored by the Messiah's sacrifice and resurrection, and *much more* is to come with the future general resurrection and Second Coming. Many of us, unfortunately, do not look at our lives in the Messiah from this vantage point: what we are involved in as redeemed sons and daughters of God! Many tend to be exclusively focused on terrestrial and temporal matters.

The cosmic significance of salvation history is something that most of us completely miss. Yeshua the Messiah was resurrected as a human, and it is in that permanent human form that He sits at the right hand of the Father (1 Timothy 2:5). The focus of God's dealings on Planet Earth are on the restoration of Israel's Kingdom. Beyond this, God's dealings on Planet Earth are concluding the wider, universal conflict between good and evil.

Far too many well meaning, sincere Believers, read their Bible as though it is some collection of love letters or devotions written personally to them from God. While I do not want to downplay the necessity of any of

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us to meditate on God's Word, many do not read the Bible with the intention of seeing it as *Heilsgeschichte* or salvation history. Many do not read the Bible from at least a **Creation-Fall-Redemption** vantage point, and ask the Lord how they are to specifically participate in His plan for the ages. In the vastness of our known universe, our Eternal Creator does take the time to pay attention to us as mere mortals. It is not inappropriate for us to each be challenged to reciprocate, and ask Him the part that He would have us play in His great and awesome plan. *What do you think about salvation history, and the trajectory that God has placed in it as we anticipate the future?*

The Gospel is About More Than Personal Salvation

One of the main reasons why many people have difficulties zooming back, seeing in the Big Picture of what God is doing, and trying to think salvation historically—is that far too many have a very limited and restrictive view of salvation. When many people we know think about the good news or gospel, what do they think about? When you have heard the “gospel preached,” what was the message declared? In all likelihood, the message that was spoken was something along the lines of: *Jesus died for your sins. Accept Him into your heart and be saved.* For many sincere people, the gospel is simply about receiving Jesus into your heart and going to be with Him in Heaven when you die. And it is stressed, to be sure, that each of us, upon receiving the Lord, needs to make sure that this message is declared to as many people as possible. But this is a very incomplete message, even if one just looks at the New Testament. Paul declares in Romans 8:19-23 that the redeemed are indeed to be looking for something greater to take place:

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:19-23, NASU).

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Why have things gotten so diluted? Why, in far too much popular preaching, has the good news or gospel almost exclusively become "Accept Jesus into your heart and go to Heaven when you die?"

For certain, there are many varied answers that we can each offer to this, each conditioned by someone's experience. What I have witnessed—and the Messianic community is hardly immune to this—is that a main, contributing factor to why the good news has become so simplified, is due to **the vast number of deathbed salvations** that many have been facilitating. Over the past several years, I have personally seen two elderly parents (and grandparents) of a Messianic Jewish family, make a confession of faith in Yeshua as Israel's Messiah, shortly before death. I have also witnessed a number of elderly relatives, in my extended family, acknowledge Jesus, shortly before death. It is entirely understandable, when dealing with aged loved ones—who have been resisting God (and even His existence) for most of their lives—to want to make the message of salvation as simplistic and as easy for them to understand. *Get them to acknowledge Jesus before their physical lives are over.* Certainly we should be grateful and rejoice over how many people, who we have prayed for—and invested countless hours in testifying to of the Lord—who recognize Him in their final days! Yet, the good news or gospel is about far, far more, than going to Heaven.

What was the good news to the disciples of Yeshua? The good news that Yeshua declared concerned the Kingdom of God as an ever-present and active force: "Go and report to John what you hear and see: *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT* [Isaiah 35:5ff] and *the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM* [Isaiah 61:1]. And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me" (Matthew 11:4-5, NASU). The good news to the disciples involved their famed question of Acts 1:6 and the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, resolving the seeming vacancy of David's throne. Paul would affirm, "For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20, NASU), and how "He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13, NASU). As redeemed men and women, we are not only to be regarded as forgiven of our sins and sanctified by the Holy Spirit; we are citizens of the Kingdom of God and have access to significant supernatural power! We have authority granted to us by our Creator, that we often do not even realize that we have.

In my experience—and perhaps your experience is different—far too much of the contemporary Messianic movement, promotes the common,

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diluted Christian gospel. Such a message is just cosmetically changed, perhaps, to: *Accept Yeshua into your heart, and when you die you will go to Heaven*. Is there an emphasis on how the power of the Kingdom of Heaven, is accessible in the lives of God's people? Perhaps there is some. How much of an emphasis is there on the greater plan that God is working out, both here on Earth as well as regarding the cosmic conflict between good and evil? I don't know. And these are things that are clearly specified and available to those who just read the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament. Yet in the Messianic community—a distinct movement with a specific mandate to declare the good news of Israel's Messiah to the Jewish people—the good news we declare has to involve the issue of Israel. At the 2022 IAMCS Rabbis Conference, one of the presenters noted a few of the unique aspects of the message we are to be concerned with:

“The fault line is God's ongoing purpose and destiny for Israel. This destiny is embodied in the hope for a restored Jewish Jerusalem under the reign of God's Davidic king...[T]oday among Christians who believe that the Jews remain special in God's eyes, this belief has no discernible connection to the 'gospel' these Christians affirm and proclaim. The death and resurrection of Jesus still have no positive bearing on the historical life or eschatological destiny of Jews as a priestly nation” (Rachel Wolf).⁴

While it is absolutely true that there are many people who are dying without a knowledge of the Savior—and they may only understand salvation in terms of just going to Heaven—**this is hardly the message that mature Believers are to be theologically affirming**. Mature Believers in Yeshua know that a redeemed individual, once set on a course of faith, is to begin a lifetime of spiritual growth in holiness, certainly involving study of Holy Scriptures, and in becoming more and more like Him. Furthermore, and especially for a Messianic movement that publicly affirms the future restoration of Israel in the end-times, as we all grow in faith, our understanding of what this involves is to surely deepen and become more enhanced. The questions that the Jewish community asks about the world, humankind, and the greater universe—are the same questions that society as a whole asks. But when we make salvation *only*

⁴ Rachel Wolf. (2022). “Reframing Our Gospel Message by Reclaiming the Biblical Prophetic Good News of Jewish Eschatological Hope,” in IAMCS 2022 Rabbis Conference Information Packet.

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about receiving Yeshua and going to Heaven, we may not have the answers that we think we have regarding life on Earth right now.

I do not believe it is impossible for people to move beyond thinking of salvation in simplistic, individualistic terms—also recognizing the massive Kingdom dynamics of the present and future. But I do believe that we will not be able to discern a greater scope of God's will and purposes, if we do not recognize those corporate aspects of God's salvation, the restoration of Israel, and the cosmic conflict between good and evil.

Participating in Salvation History

It should not be too surprising to all of you, that I think a great deal about the Messianic movement! *I'm the editor of Messianic Apologetics, after all.* I want the best for the Messianic community. I want it to achieve all of the things that it can. I want every person, Jewish or non-Jewish, male or female, to contribute to what we can do together.

Twenty-six years ago (1996), to this month of March, our family was irrevocably changed. We went on a Spring Break roadtrip, and while we were already attending a Messianic Jewish congregation—we were still nominally involved in church, and we had not fully committed to the Messianic lifestyle. Yet, when we returned home, it all began! Individual and family investigations into various Christian traditions and practices started! While 1996 was not always the easiest of years for me, it was a necessary turning point. In 2002, our family was called into full time Messianic ministry. We have seen a great deal and experienced a great deal—and I hardly think it is over!

This journey, for certain, has involved a massive amount of stress, anxiety, and tension. As a limited human being, I admit that I have had some days when I have wanted to give up. *Like all people in ministry, I have my limits.* But we are still here. And why are we still here? **Because we are participating in salvation history.** We are participating in not just the salvation of the Jewish people and the restoration of Israel's Kingdom—but the conclusion to the conflict between the Forces of Light and the Forces of Darkness. Given the massive, universal scope of what we are involved in, you have to always press on and never give up!