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A Messianic Jewish Approach to Eschatology:

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Introduction

Eschatology is a category within the field of Systematic Theology. Before, diving into it, we first need to define Systematic Theology. According to the Ennis,

The term theology is derived from the Greek *theos*, meaning "God," and *logos*, meaning "word" or "discourse"; hence, "discourse about God." The word systematic comes from the Greek verb *sunistano*, which means "to stand together" or "to organize"; hence, systematic theology emphasizes the systematization of theology. Chafer provides a suitable definition of systematic theology: **"Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works."**¹

Therefore, within Systematic Theology, there are various categories, such as:

Classic Systematic Theology Categories

- **Prolegomena: Introductory material involving the study and nature of systematic theology**
- **Theology Proper: The study of the being, attributes, and works of God**
- **Bibliology: The study of the Bible**
- **Christology: The study of Christ**
- **Pneumatology: The study of the Holy Spirit**

¹ Paul P. Ennis, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. [Print] (Moody Press, 1989), 147.

- **Soteriology: The study of salvation**
- **Anthropology: The study of humanity**
- **Angelology: The study of angels**
- **Demonology: The study of demons**
- **Hamartiology: The study of sin**
- **Ecclesiology: The study of the church**
- **Eschatology: The study of the last things²**

So, as you can see, when you want to engage in study of Systematic Theology, it is helpful to know which category of the field one wishes to discuss or study. Obviously, today, we will be studying Eschatology. Now, even within Eschatology there are “buckets,” where one may drill down even deeper. As Porter & Evans say,

The word eschatology was coined by Protestant theologians in the seventeenth century. It refers to the last things, which may be either the end of the world or the end of the individual and that which follows it. The range of the word has broadened over time to include any kind of teleology. In this article we will distinguish four kinds of eschatology: political eschatology, which envisions a definitive kingdom or other form of society; cosmic eschatology, which envisions the end of this world and a new creation; personal eschatology, which is concerned with forms of afterlife; and realized eschatology, in which the definitive future state is anticipated in the present.

1. Political Eschatology

² Rick Brannan, and Peter Venable, *Systematic Theology Cross-References: Dataset Documentation* (Faithlife, 2015).

2. Cosmic Eschatology
 3. Personal Eschatology
 4. Realized Eschatology³ VS. INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGY
 “ALREADY BUT NOT YET”...

Methodology

There are different methods that can be used when studying Eschatology. Ryrie says,

The study could be developed in a number of ways. One would be to separate the future for the individual from the future for the world. Another would be to catalog the future for the church, the future for Israel, the future for Gentiles, and the future for the world. Another approach might study the various teachings in their chronological order. A biblical theology approach would study the eschatology of the Old Testament, the eschatology of Jesus, the eschatology of Paul, the eschatology of John, etc.

No one method is necessarily superior to another. Most writers seem to combine various approaches, and so shall I. Some of the topics, such as resurrection, will be discussed from the individual viewpoint. Others, such as the Tribulation, will be outlined chronologically. **The three basic approaches to eschatology—premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism**—need to have a more systematic treatment in order to see their distinctive approaches as a whole. Because of the contemporary debate concerning the relation of the Rapture of the church to the Tribulation, this will need special attention.⁴

For our purposes and for the purpose of my dissertation, I have chosen to work within the three basic approaches by adding a fourth: A Messianic Jewish Eschatological Model. Before we define what that is or “will be,” let’s first quickly define what the other three are, which should all be familiar to you. However, consider this a short refresher. First, let’s look at

Premillennialism.

³ *Dictionary of New Testament background: a compendium of contemporary biblical scholarship*, electronic ed.

⁴ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Moody Press, 1999), 509-10.

Premillennialism is the view that holds that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium, which will see the establishment of Christ's kingdom on this earth for a literal one thousand years. It also understands that there will be several occasions when resurrections and judgments will take place. **Eternity will begin after the thousand years are concluded.** Within premillennialism there are those who hold differing views as to the time of the Rapture.⁵

So, it is also safe to say that within Premillennialism, there are generally two camps. 1) Pretribulationists, (those who believe the Rapture will occur “PRIOR” to the Tribulation, the Parousia, and the Millennium); and 2) Posttribulationists, (those who believe the opposite, that the RAPTURE occurs “AFTER,” or “post,” Tribulation). In other words, they believe we will live through the Tribulation before Messiah comes. It is important to note that this category of Eschatology places a significant amount of focus and weight on Revelation 20, where John specifies details of a 1,000 year reign of the Messiah, while Satan is bound during this period of time.

The next category is **Postmillennialism**. Not to be confused with Post-Tribulationists, who are Premillennialists, **“According to this view, Christ will return after the millennium.**

The postmillennial view may be represented as in this figure.”⁶ Basically, it is the idea that we are living within the millennium at this very moment. It identifies the “Church Age,” as the millennium. Grudem says,

According to this view, the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church p 1111 will gradually increase, so that a larger and larger proportion of the world's population will be Christians. As a result, there will be significant Christian influences on society, society will more and more function according to God's standards, and gradually a “millennial age” of peace and righteousness will occur on the earth. This “millennium” will last for a long period of time (not necessarily a literal one thousand years), and

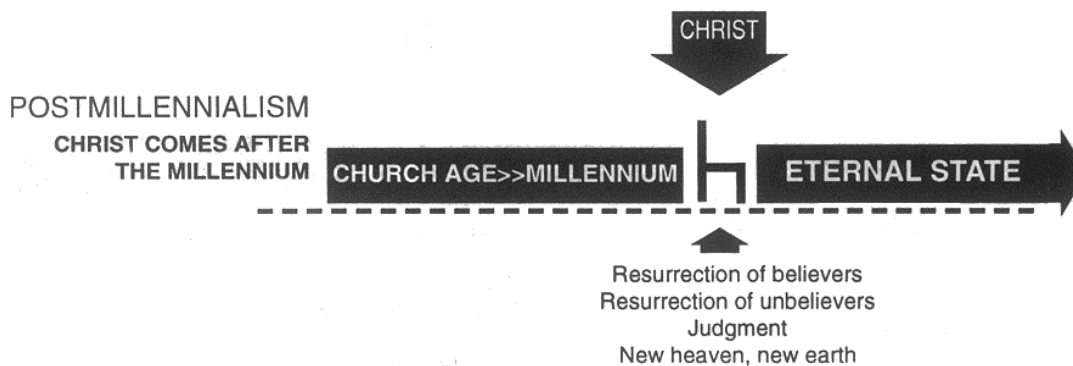
⁵ Ibid, 522.

⁶ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 1110.

finally, at the end of this period, Christ will return to earth believers and unbelievers will be raised, the final judgment will occur, and there will be a new heaven and new earth. We will then enter into the eternal state.

The primary characteristic of postmillennialism is that it is very optimistic about the power of the gospel to change lives and bring about much good in the world. **Belief in postmillennialism tends to increase in times when the church is experiencing great revival, when there is an absence of war and international conflict, and when it appears that great progress is being made in overcoming the evil and suffering in the world.** But postmillennialism in its most responsible form is not based simply on the observation of events in the world around us, but on arguments from various Scripture passages, which will be examined below.⁷

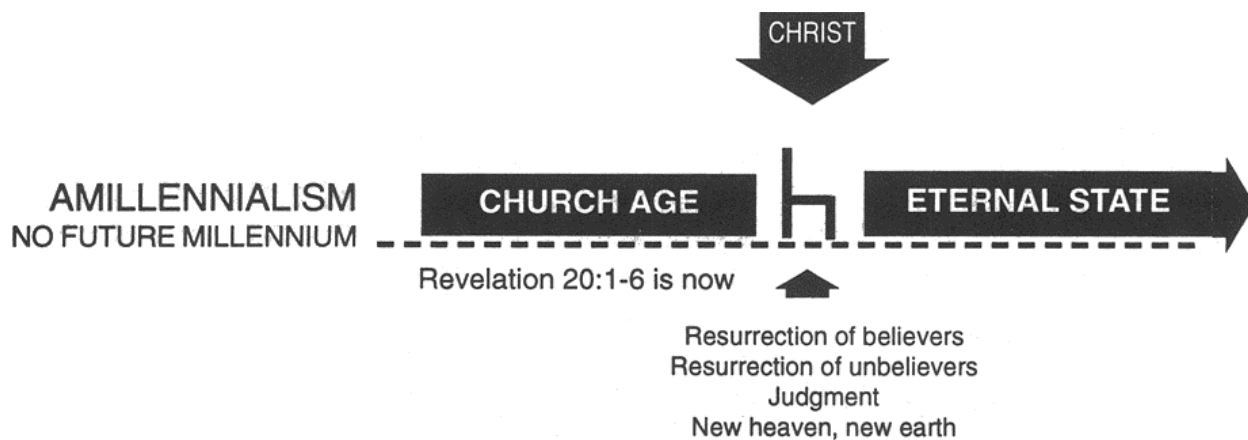
This worldview, as the author says, seems to have taken hold in response to the success of the Gentile Church as “Christianizing” much of all of Western society and culture after Hellenism and post-First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. This worldview also tends to be more liberal in its approach and more reliant on metaphorical approaches rather than literal interpretations since the fact is, if we are in the Millennium, it should’ve ended 1,023 years ago. The fact its been two millennium now, kind of defeats a literal argument for this worldview. Another tough position that Postmillennialists find themselves in now is the fact of the increasingly Postmodern and Post-Christian world that they are finding themselves in. Globalism and society has drastically changed and we are no longer living within a dominant WASP culture where Christianity



⁷ Ibid, 1111.

influences our culture and its worldview. These factors make it difficult to support a Postmillennial position.

The third category of Eschatology we've identified is Amillennialism. Ryrie does a great job of defining this worldview. He says, **“Amillennialism is the view of last things that holds there will be no Millennium before the end of the world. Until the end there will be a parallel development of both good and evil, God’s kingdom and Satan’s. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.”**⁸ Generally speaking, this view is quite simple. There is no millennium at all, John 20 is virtually ignored and when Jesus comes, we just all fly up to heaven and live with him forever. Time ends and we enter into the Final State or Final Status. Ryrie says, “Among conservative Amillennialists two views exist concerning the Millennium. One sees fulfillment of millennial passages to be in the present age by the church on earth (e.g., Allis and Berkhof). The other finds fulfillment by the saints in heaven now (e.g., Warfield and Floyd Hamilton). Both views agree that there will be no future earthly kingdom.”⁹

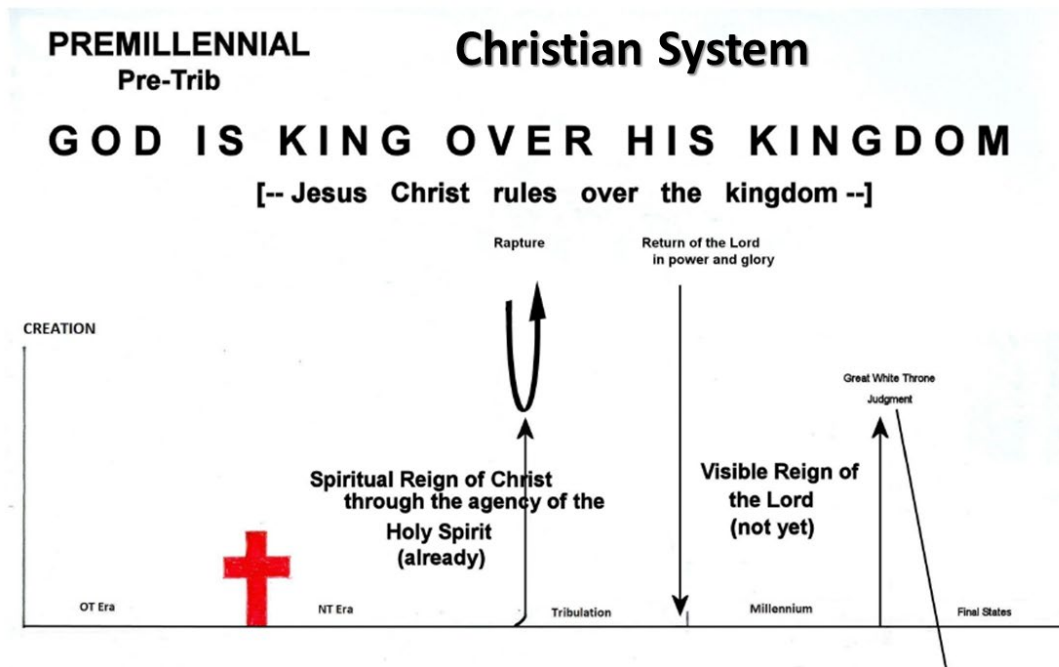


⁸ Ryrie, 516.

⁹ Ibid.

Now please notice, if there is no earthly kingdom, how do you that impacts the Jews? I want you to see one thing that all of these worldviews have in common.

3



What is wrong with this picture?

There is absolutely no mention of Israel, the Jewish people at all. They just simply do not exist.

This fact underscores how narcissistic Gentile Christian scholars can be. As I prepared to do my doctoral work, I looked at this and said, this is just wrong and we need a Messianic Jewish Model that incorporates more into our eschatology. What do I mean by incorporating more?

Largely, all three of these dominant systems all rely on similar and limited exegetical and sometimes eisegetical methodologies. Due to the historical fact of the variations of doctrine within the Gentile Christian Church, over time, these theologies developed. The general methods uses were a mixture of hermeneutical (interpretive) practices, adding in philosophy and of course adherence to Church Doctrine. These were the basic elements of their methods. Very little

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documented history was examined prior to the advent of the Gentile Church. No one considered what Jewish believers wrote or thought prior to the Separating of the Ways. A Supersessionistic approach was traditionally taken which consulted nothing of Judaism, and preferred a reliance on New Testament Scriptures over the inferior “Old Covenant” which was becoming obsolete and disappearing anyway.¹⁰ Another area of resource and evidence that is largely ignored by these Gentile Christians Eschatological models is anything outside the pale of Biblical literature. There are mountains of evidence of what early Jewish believers believed and thought and wrote about eschatology leading up to the first three centuries BCE. Additionally, there are mountains of Rabbinic literature that all contribute towards an outlook and worldview of the very first followers of Yeshua, long before there was a Gentile Church. The problem as I see it is that once the Parting of the Ways took place, after the Second Jewish Revolt, mid-first century CE, and post 70 CE, the church was decapitated from its Jewish headship and now was left to itself to figure out its own doctrine and theology devoid of anything “Jewish.” This created a political environment where these large amounts of historical data along with theological commentary and Jewish Biblical culture went out the door. Once the Biblical canon had been established, virtually nothing outside of it could possibly speak into the formation of doctrine and theology. Forget the culture behind the Bible – forget the lifestyle and practices of the people who were originally given those Scriptures that those patristics claimed were inspired. The Bible now would be stripped and emasculated from its proper Jewish historical, cultural, native “context.” Therein lies the problem and the need for a Messianic Jewish Model of Eschatology. A model

¹⁰ This from a faulty interpretation of Heb. 8:13 “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” (KJV).

which will consider not only all of these neglected areas, but also the current events that directly impact how Eschatology needs to be considering the last seven decades of the State of Israel.

Organization and Research Strategy

“How, one goes about researching, organizing and publishing a scholarly thesis for a Messianic Jewish Systematic Eschatology is the first step of such a project. This all begins with asking the right questions. First, we must define our topic. Our topic is our study of Eschatology, it is obvious. There must be an overriding research question that will guide the entire project. This step alone, developing the Research Question, itself can take weeks to accurately prepare with the aid of one’s mentor and professor. The RQ that I finally concluded on was, **“To what extent is it possible to develop a coherent eschatological framework from a Jewish perspective?”** This is my RQ. We cannot assume that this is possible. It very well may not be possible. However, it doesn’t take long within the research to answer this question.

The next step and equally important is the Rationale. This answers the question of “why.” Why am I studying this topic? Here is my Rationale statement: “To help my readers understand the role of the Jewish people in God’s redemptive plan.”

Finally, we need to consider the significance of this rationale. After answering “why,” we must answer the critical question of, “so what?” What good is a research project if there is little to no significance to it? Great, you’ve published a dissertation – so what? Did you accomplish anything? The Significance statement can be: “So that they can accurately evaluate the modern Messianic Jewish movement.” Or I could add, “So they can also understand the world they live in and how Messianic Jewish eschatology will affect them.”

Now, we put all of this together in what we call a TQRS statement. Topic, Question, Rational and Significance statement. Here is what it sounds like. **“I am studying the doctrine of eschatology, because I want to find out the extent to which it is possible to develop a theological framework for that doctrine from a Jewish perspective, to help my readers understand the role of the Jewish people in God’s redemptive plan, so that they can accurately evaluate the modern Messianic Jewish movement and spiritual condition of the world around them.”**

The next step in organizing our research is to brainstorm and list several Operating Questions. **Operating Questions** will guide our research and support our overall RQ. These are a.k.a., OQs.

- 1. What work have scholars previously done on the topic? (a.k.a., “Precedent Research)**
- 2. How has the Body of Messiah throughout history understood the eschatological role of the Jewish people?**
- 3. What is Biblical teaching on the eschatological role of the Jewish people?**
- 4. To what extent does the Biblical teaching on eschatology inform a coherent Jewish perspective on the doctrine of eschatology?**
- 5. To what extent does the modern Messianic Jewish movement’s approach to eschatology align with the biblical teaching on eschatology?**
- 6. What are the implications for the contemporary Body of Messiah?**

Of course, each of these OQs will produce multi-faceted answers which may even produce more OQs.

Once we have the TQRS statement, the RQ and our OQs established, we are now ready to begin answering the first OQ. What is Precedent Research, or in other words, what have others published on this topic. It's always good to start there, so one knows where to find the gaps. When you find gaps in PR, that is where you find our own niche. That is where you identify areas where your own unique research work can make the most significant contribution. This step starts with amassing an enormous bibliography and occupying yourself with massive amounts of ferocious reading and note taking. Once you've amassed a good bibliography, you'll spend months analyzing it and notating all of it pulling out the areas that will be most useful to your research, i.e., evidence and citations.

The researcher needs to be able to summarize the mountain of sources one has in his/her bibliography. Here is an example for our purposes:

1. One category of precedent research focuses on a survey of Messianic Jewish eschatology, especially the words of Harvey. Messianic Dispensationalism, and Messianic Amillennialism, Studied Agnosticism (Maoz), Present & Future Tension (Nichol), and a reordering of Messianic Jewish Canonical Narrative locating eschatology as part of this narrative. (Kinzer)

2. Another category of precedent research focuses on the resurrection, even one Orthodox Jewish source that accepts the historical fact of the event (Lapide), as well as Messianic Jewish sources such as (Rudolph).

3. The third category of precedent research focuses on views of eschatology from among differing and opposing viewpoints between Rabbinic Judaism (Morgenstern), Messianic Judaism (Harvey, Fruchtenbaum, etc.), and Gentile Christianity (Reason, White, Troost-Cramer & Bock).

B. Hole(s) in research: While much of the precedent research surveys and covers what exists in the three areas of eschatology, (Messianic, Rabbinic, & Gentile Christian); there does not seem to be any new models being introduced from the Messianic perspective. They all seem to take a side among the various Gentile Christian views, but simply put more emphasis on Israel.

C. How research addresses: The Messianic sources all address the need by placing more emphasis on Israel and the Jewish experience than the Gentile Christian models; however, more work is needed to drill down further and place certain historical events as central in the eschatological narrative, (i.e., the chart).

With this kind of summary, the researcher is reinforcing the need and helping him/herself focus on the gaps to make the most significant contribution to scholarship.

Establishing One's Own Methods

Upon successfully completing all the tasks aforementioned, it is wise to list one's own research methods. How am I going to research, study and write this dissertation? How will I reach my conclusions? What will I do with the data that I find? Here are my methods.

- 1. Bibliographic review and summary of precedent research. (PR = Secondary Sources).**
- 2. Historical theology analysis of the writings of selected figures in church history. (Primary Sources).**
- 3. Biblical theology analysis of key Scripture passages. (Primary Sources).**
- 4. Systematic theology synthesis of the biblical data. (Primary Sources).**
- 5. Correlation theology assessment of the modern Messianic Jewish movement. (Secondary and Tertiary Sources).**
- 6. Practical theology reflection on eschatology, the Jewish people, and the contemporary Body of Messiah. (Conclusions)**

Now we appear to have a road map. We can begin with the organization of all of this data and how we will formulate it.

The **organization of the project** will look like this...

Introduction

Chapter 1 Survey of Secondary Sources on Messianic Jewish Eschatology from the first to the Third century, approximately AD 45—320.¹¹

¹¹ This is the time frame we want to anchor this project to.

Chapter 2 Historical Analysis of Rabbinic Jewish Eschatology.
Chapter 3 Historical Analysis of Messianic Jewish Eschatology.
Chapter 4 A Comparative Analysis.
Chapter 5 A Theological Synthesis Comparing Historical and Biblical Eschatology.
Chapter 6 Is There a Messianic Jewish Model of Eschatology? Conclusion Further Research.

Summary of Precedent Research

This is where the fun begins. We begin with Chapter One and we begin summarizing what others have found on this topic. This is where we learn and where we identify gaps. So here are some examples of PR that I have identified that will tremendously contribute to my research project. First, is **Daniélou, Jean Cardinal *The Theology of Jewish Christianity***. London: Darton, 1964. Within this source we find Daniélou identifying various early groups of Jews in the first century who all claimed to follow Yeshua or were contemporary groups that also influenced the earliest known Jewish followers of Yeshua. These groups are what Daniélou calls **“Heterodox Jewish Christianity.”** These Heterodox were mostly primitive Messianic Jews, with usually heretical ideas. Daniélou says,

The background common to both orthodoxy and heterodoxy is the Judaism or the apocalypses, which itself includes both an orthodox tradition and various heresies. The forms of expression which characterize this apocalyptic were also employed in its speculations by Jewish Christianity; but this in its turn took on various forms with the passage of time. There was orthodox Jewish Christianity, which has already been considered; but, in continuation of heterodoxies in Judaism various streams of heterodox Jewish thought also developed.¹²

We know there were many “Judaisms” at this time existing in the first century. Messianic Judaism wasn’t just “one of them,” you could more accurately describe it as differing streams of

¹² Jean Cardinal Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, 1964), 55.

Messianic Judaisms existing among many other Judaisms. **The first group he discusses is the Ebionites.** They apparently originated from their leader by the name, Ebion meaning “poor.” This is established by early church writers such as Epiphanius, as well as Irenaeus. According to Daniélou, “(Adv. haer. I, 26:2), and by **Origen (Contra Celsum II, 1). It consisted of Jews who rallied to Christ but saw in him only the greatest of the prophets and not the Son of God. This is the position of Moslems today, and it is possible that they came into contact with Ebionites in Transjordan.**”¹³ Further, Daniélou says,

The question arises, are there any Ebionite works which provide firsthand information about their teaching? Epiphanius has some interesting remarks on this point: 'They accept the Cove! of Matthew and use only that, calling it the Gospel According to the Hebrews. But the Matthew which they possess is not complete, but falsified and mutilated' (XXX, 3 and 13). Now in his account of the he states that the Gospel According to Matthew which they kept was a very full version. The other then must be a different text, but it is probably not quite correct to speak of a different gospel. More likely the Ebionites had the same text as the Nazarenes and also a version of the text altered in a heterodox sense, perhaps simply a commentary on certain parts. This is the text known as the Gospel of the Ebionites.¹⁴

This leads us to our next source, the Nazarenes, also mentioned by Epiphanius, who separated from the rest of the Church because they regarded the Jewish observances of Sabbath and circumcision as still of obligation.” Daniélou also says, “Jerome came across these Nazarenes in Beroea, a city in Syria in the fourth century.”¹⁵

Another group, which may sound new to you is the Elkesaites.

¹³ Ibid., 56.

¹⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹⁵ Ibid, 56.

According to Danielou, Elkesaism, one of the most interesting heterodox Jewish groups, is fairly closely related to Ebionism. The sect is known from notices in Origen, Hippolytus and Epiphanius. The first two were acquainted with it at first-hand in Alexandria and Rome, where it was spreading at the beginning of the third century. According to information given by Hippolytus, however, the revelation made to Elkesai took place in the third year of the reign of Trajan (Elench IX, 16), and this date is fully confirmed by the archaic character of the doctrine. Epiphanius gives the further detail that Elkesai ‘came from Judaism and thought as a Jew’ (XIX 1:5). Finally, the Christian elements are certainly primitive.¹⁶

Elkesaites and Ebionites are very close to each other doctrinally. Both were faithful to Jewish customs, both groups believed that all believers were obligated to keep the Law of Moses and to be circumcised. Epiphanius reported that they also required their adherents to pray facing Jerusalem. The Elkesaites did practice sacrifices but forbade eating meat. They were strict vegetarians. This separated them from the Essenes of the Qumran community who as Jews condemned the sacrificial system of the Second Temple by the First Century because they saw it as corrupted; and they were not far from the truth on that matter concerning the Sadducees.

Daniélou also identifies the Messianic Jewish Zealots, these were Jewish Zealots who also followed Yeshua, however unlike Yeshua’s disciple Simon, or Shimon the Zealot, these Messianic Jews continued in their ideology of bringing the kingdom by force and military action against Rome. He says their form of...

...messianism that was both political and religious; and they have shown that there is no mistaking the fact that such tendencies also came to light in Jewish Christian communities. The question must now be asked whether there was any other branch, besides Ebionite Jewish Christianity, which appears to have been drawn into this Jewish nationalist current with its this-worldly aspirations? Of the given by the ancient shows that such groups did exist.¹⁷

¹⁶ Daniélou, 64.

¹⁷ Ibid., 68.

Then there was Cerinthus who was Messianic Jewish leader of what appeared to be a Zealot group. He had things in common with both Ebionites as well as Elkesaites. He saw Yeshua as an ordinary man on who the Messiah spirit descended at his mikveh. Danielou says,

It [Cerinthus] was quite definitely this heterodox Jewish Christianity in Asia which St. John was concerned to combat. It appears from Eusebius that Cerinthus was in fact a partisan of a very markedly materialistic millenarianism: 'This was the doctrine which he taught, that the kingdom of Christ would be on earth ; and he dreamed that it would consist in those things which formed the object of his own desires (for he was a lover of the body and altogether carnal) in the full satisfaction or the belly and lower lusts' (IIE III, 28:4).¹⁸

Cerinthus supported the reconstruction of the Temple and restoration of sacrifices. Uniquely however, was his belief that the world was created by angels. Most like due to the rabbinic interpretation of Elohim in Genesis 1, being in the plural and the explanation that God consulted the angels when He said, “Let us make Man in OUR Image.” He kept circumcision and Sabbath and only accepted the Gospel of Matthew from the New Testament.

In addition to much of this Heterodoxy, we must not forget the Hellenized Jewish followers of Yeshua who were also steeped in Gnosticism. **According to Yamauchi,**

Impressed by the great number of ‘Jewish’ elements such as the use of the Old Testament and midrashic interpretations in the Nag Hammadi texts a number of scholars are now maintaining the thesis of a pre-Christian ‘Jewish’ Gnosticism, that is, a Gnosticism which somehow developed from within Judaism itself. B. Pearson, the scholar who has been most effective in ferreting out traces of Jewish traditions in the Nag Hammadi texts, is convinced that Friedländer was correct in postulating ‘that Gnosticism is a pre-Christian phenomenon which developed on Jewish soil’.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Edwin Yamauchi, “Pre-Christian Gnosticism, the New Testament and Nag Hammadi in Recent Debate,” *Themelios* 10, no. 1:25 (1984): 25.

Some scholars reject the idea of any presence of Jewish Gnosticism, but they mainly base this on the fact that much of the Gnostic writings of the First Century were brutally anti-Jewish.

However, it is not unreasonable to understand how a Hellenized Jew could be also a self-hating Jew, as we see even in our own day; Jews who are anti-Jewish.

On the flip side of the Heterodox, we must not forget the obvious existence of the **Messianic Jewish Orthodox**. This would be our actual forefathers. This would be what Acts 15 and Galatians 2 refer to the Community in Jerusalem. Of the true Orthodox Messianic Jews, (a.k.a., 'Jewish Christians', as Daniélou calls them), he says,

Certain features are typical of Jewish Christianity. Thus, James is given a prominent role; it is he 'for whose sake the heaven and the earth were brought forth' (12). There are allusions to apocrypha! accounts of the childhood of Christ. (4) Logion 22 on 'the height which becomes the depth' is paralleled in the Odes of the pseudo-Clementine Homilies, the Acts of Peter and the Gospel of the Egyptians and will call for further attention at a later stage.²⁰

The mention of James also brings up another Messianic group that would fall within the Orthodoxy category, known as the Desposynoi, of which James and even Jude himself would represent. **According to Richard Bauckman,**

There is good evidence that a considerable number of members of the family of Jesus, from the earliest period of the church down to the early second century, were prominent leaders in the Jewish Christian movement in Palestine and perhaps also were missionaries outside Palestine (see Jewish Christianity). Jesus' brother James, whose importance as a Christian leader of the first generation is equaled only by that of Peter and Paul, quickly became prominent in the leadership of the Jerusalem church and then its unique head until his martyrdom in 62. Since the Jerusalem church was the mother church of all the churches and by many early Christians accorded a central authority over the whole Christian movement, James played a key role throughout the Christian movement. In the letter of James he writes from this position of central authority in Jerusalem to Jewish Christians throughout the Diaspora. Many references to

²⁰ Daniélou, 24.

him (e.g., Gos. Thom. 12) and works associated with him in early Christian literature outside the NT also attest the remarkable impact he made.

After James's death (whether immediately or after 70 is unclear) his cousin Simeon son of Clopas succeeded him as leader of the Jerusalem church. Simeon occupied this position for at least forty years, until he was put to death by the Roman authorities on a charge of political subversion, since he belonged to a Davidic family (either between 99 and 103 or between 108 and 117; Hegesippus, quoted in Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 3.11; 3.32.6; 4.22.4). It is possible but not certain that the third leader of the Jerusalem church, named in the Jerusalem bishops' lists as either Justus or Judas, was also a relative of Jesus.²¹

The bottom line of this summary is that the early Messianic Jews were as diverse and divided in their doctrine and practices as we are today, mostly likely even more so.

“STORY OF JUDE’S GRANDSONS”:

[an]...incident with a persecution of the church [Messianic Jews] ... the grandsons of Jude were accused not of being [Messianic] Christians, but of being Davidides. This accusation fits well into the context Hegesippus himself has provided for it, according to Eusebius, HE 3:12. Eusebius there reports Hegesippus as saying 'that Vespasian, after the taking of Jerusalem, gave orders that all the members of the family of David should be sought out, so that none of the royal tribe might be left among the Jews; and that for this reason a most terrible persecution once more hung over the Jews.'¹⁴⁶ In this context, the people who, according to Hegesippus, inform against Zoker and James would be exploiting the Roman authorities' suspicion of Davidides, rather than a Roman policy of action against Christians. Leaving aside the vexed question of the extent of a Domitianic persecution of Christians, the connection of this story with such a persecution seems historically gratuitous and likely to be due to the apologetic and hagiographical motives already mentioned....²²

The reply of Zoker and James to Domitian requires fuller discussion. It is a statement designed to rebut a Roman political misunderstanding of Christianity, according to which the kingdom of Christ would be understood as a worldly kingdom in competition with Roman rule and for which Christians would therefore plot and fight to overthrow the Roman Empire. Consequently Zoker and James make clear that Christ's kingdom is not worldly, or earthly, but heavenly and angelic. Moreover, it is not a present rival to Roman power, but will appear only at the end of the age, when Christ comes in glory to judge all

²¹ *Dictionary of the later New Testament and its developments*, electronic ed.

²² Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (London, UK: T&T Clark International, 1990), 100.

humanity. While not altogether evading the early Christian belief that the kingdom of Christ is in some sense an alternative to the Roman Empire, since it will replace all earthly kingdoms at the parousia, the statement succeeds in showing that allegiance to Christ's kingdom does not make Christians political revolutionaries intent on overthrowing the Roman state.²³

What Was Their Eschatology?

Once we know who they were, we can also learn about what they believed about eschatology. We learn it from their writings and the primary sources that informed them. Writings from the first few centuries BCE that directly informed their Eschatology. In other words, we read Jewish Eschatology from not only Tanakh, but also Jewish Apocrypha and Jewish Pseudepigrapha. In addition, we would layer Mishnah, Gemara, Midrash, Aggadah, as well as Jewish commentaries on the Targums as well as LXX. We also have the Masoretic Text as well as, let's not forget, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Talk about an eschatological group! We have so much to draw from for our research that it is unfathomable how the historical apocalyptic doctrines of the Gentile Christian Church have virtually all but ignored these ancient Biblical as well as extra-biblical sources to aid in their systematic theology. Basically, if it's not in the NT, then according to them, it wasn't factored in at all. From there one can only speculate why then we have such theologies that are not only unfounded in Scripture but also completely void of its Jewish context.

In our strategy, we are anchoring what these early Messianic Jews knew and believed and wrote about eschatology and comparing it with our own, and building a model of a true Messianic Jewish Eschatological system. I do not have the space or time to exhaustively cover all aspects of what the earliest Messianic Jews believed about Eschatology. However, there is

²³ Ibid., 100-01.

one area where Messianic Jews contributed the most towards this field. **More than the Rapture, more than the Tribulation, more than even the Parousia; the number one area where Messianic Jews influenced Christian Eschatology the most was by far, Millenarianism, (a literal earthly 1,000 year reign of the Messiah, in Israel from Jerusalem).** Daniélou says,

...the belief that there will be an earthly reign of the Messiah before the end of time, is the Jewish Christian doctrine which has aroused and continues to arouse more argument than any other. The reason for this, however, is probably a failure to distinguish clearly between the various elements of the doctrine. On the one hand, it seems hard to deny that it contains a truth which is a part of the common stock of Christian teaching, and which occurs in the New Testament in 1-11 Thessalonians, in I Corinthians and in the Revelation of John. This truth is that of the Parousia, Christ's return to this earth at the end of time to establish his kingdom, a belief which was attacked by Marcion, and which Tertullian rightly defended against him. It implies no more than that there is to be a period of time, ... which in the last days cover the return of Christ, the resurrection of the saints, the general Judgment and the inauguration of the New Creation.²⁴

Not only did the Messianic Jews utilize the NT cannon as Daniélou rightly states, but they also had access to and used other non-canonical apocalyptic sources such as I Enoch and 11 (4) Esdras 6:20—28, and 11 Baruch describes the Messianic reign in the imagery of Paradise (XXIX, 4—8). The Revelation of John made use of the same material to describe the times of the Parousia.²⁵ Danielou says,

Saint Jerome alludes to this kind of millenarianism when he writes: 'The Jews and the Ebionites, heirs of the Jewish error, who have taken the name of the "poor" through humility, understand all the delights of the thousand years in a literal sense.'⁵ Here, Jerome underlines two important features: first, the influence exerted upon this school by Jewish messianism—point which must be referred to later—and secondly, the interpretation of the prophecies. Jerome's evidence seems to be confirmed by an earlier witness to which attention does not appear so far to have been drawn, namely that of the Clementine Recognitions.²⁶

²⁴ Daniélou, 377.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Daniélou, 379.

To summarize this point, an article from the AYBD says,

The materialistic and sensual aspect of millenarianism, **the belief in an earthly paradise lasting about one thousand years. Illustrative of this belief is 2 Baruch 29–30, a Jewish work of the early 2d century C.E. It says that the earth will yield “ten thousand fold,” the vine will have a thousand branches, one grape will produce a cor (= 55 gallons) of wine, and manna will fall from heaven.** This concept is employed and developed by a number of early Christians. Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260–ca. 340) states that the gnostic Cerinthus (ca. 100) taught a crude chiliasm which included belief in an earthly kingdom replete with sumptuous banquets, marital bliss, feasts, “sacrifices and slaughter of victims” (thysiais kai hierieion sphagais): presumably he means animal sacrifices (Hist. Eccl. 3:28; 7:25). Here Eusebius is quoting Dionysius of Alexandria (died ca. 264), who opposed the teaching of Cerinthus. Teaching similar to Cerinthus is attributed to Nepos of Arsinoe (Eus. Hist. Eccl. 7:24). He thought that the “divine Scriptures should be interpreted” **“after a more Jewish fashion”** (Joudaïkoteron), that is, **according to the model of certain Jewish interpretations which anticipated an earthly paradise.** Another exponent of chiliasm was **Apollinarius (ca. 310–390).** **Epiphanius (anac. 77:36–38) states that Apollinarius expected persons to rise with resuscitated physical bodies and to observe both male circumcision and the Jewish dietary laws.** Chiliasm is found in one of its most crass forms in **Lactantius (ca. 224–ca. 320).** He states that the righteous will have multiple offspring; celestial bodies will shine seven times more brightly than in this world; mountains will drip with honey; there will be streams of wine and milk and animals will cease to be carnivorous; there will be no need for commerce or agriculture. Dyeing of wool will not be necessary because the sheep will be of different colors (Lactant. Div. Inst. 7:24; cf. Verg. Eccl. 4:21–45). **Commodianus (3d century or later)** takes an approach similar to **Lactantius** and adds that there will be no rain or cold and that Jerusalem will be 12,000 furlongs square and reach as high as the heavens. **The righteous shall beget children for one thousand years. Methodius of Olympius (died ca. 311) in Banquet 9 views the millennium as the fulfillment of the Jewish feast of Tabernacles.** However, he states that there will be no begetting of children.²⁷

So, as you can see, ideas such as a bodily resurrection, from Ezekiel’s dry bones, and Zechariah’s prophecy about the Feast of Tabernacles being observed even by the Goyim, all contribute towards a Messianic Jewish Eschatological worldview, and one aspect of this eschatology was a Millennium that had the most significant impact on Christian doctrine to this

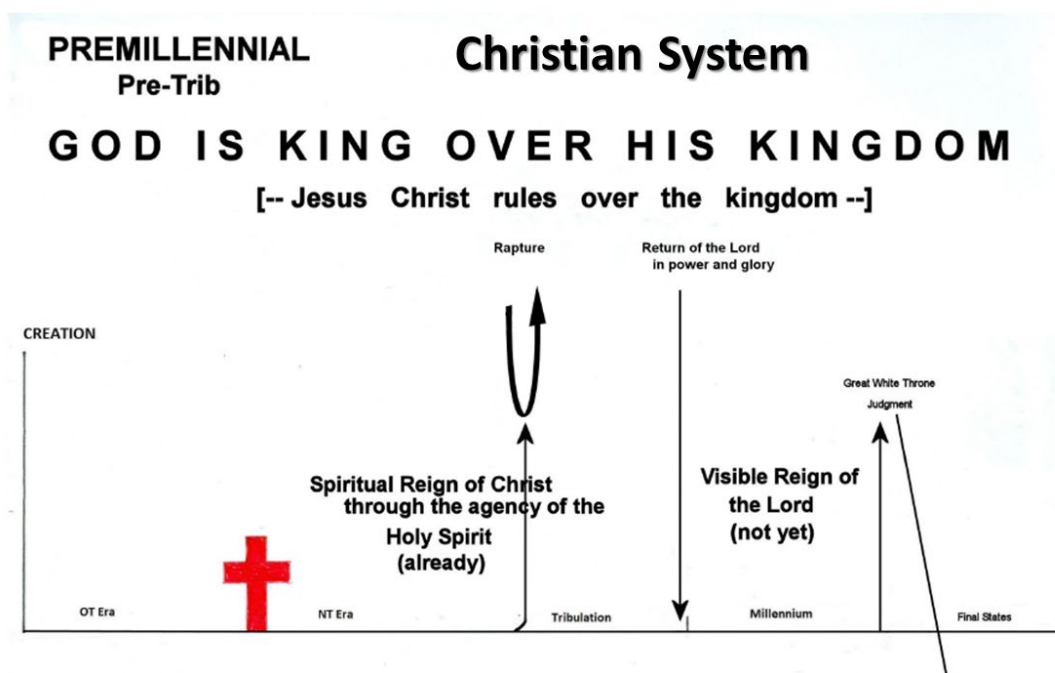
²⁷ *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary.*

very day. So then, how do we see the early Messianic Jewish Eschatology comparing to ours today.

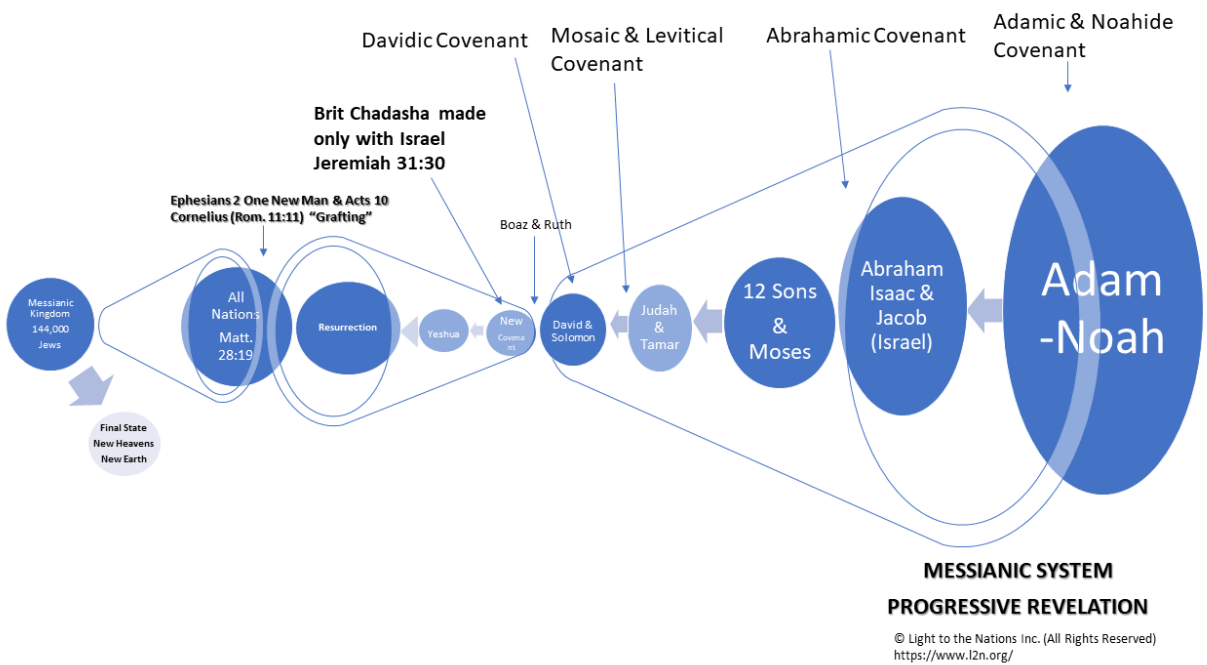
A Messianic Jewish Model*²⁸

First, let's go back and compare one of the Christian models:

3



²⁸ Subject to further research and correction.



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