

ARE WE REALLY READY FOR THE END-TIMES?

MESSIANIC REFLECTIONS POST-2007

It is not uncommon at all in today's Messianic community to hear about what God is doing in "these Last Days" or "these end-times." I myself will admit to having used this phrase many times, as I looked at world events and considered the possibilities that might take place in conjunction with Bible prophecy. However, as things stand in 2007, I find myself being far more cautious in regard to world events and their possible relationship to prophecy. I find myself being tempered by Peter's usage of "the Last Days" in Acts 2:17—as "the Last Days" from God's perspective is a much longer period of time than we humans often perceive it to be.

Already, a short four months into 2007 I have been contacted by various individuals who think that this year is going to be "it." They have asked me to consider their different speculations, prognostications, timetables, and calculations. One person I encountered has even written a book where he claims to document every year since the Creation of the universe. Their communications often end with statements like, "...for such a time as this..."¹ Many believe that world events are converging, that the Middle East is a powder keg ready to explode, that the antichrist is just biding his time in some European café, and that before too long either the rapture or some kind of cataclysmic event is going to occur.

If you will indulge me for a few moments, allow me to take you back a few short years to 1997. In 1997 the same kind of prophetic atmosphere was at play. The Internet was a relatively new phenomenon: our mark of the beast cashless system. The euro was imminently forthcoming: our new global currency. The Middle East

¹ Cf. Esther 4:14.

Peace Accord signed in 1993 was reaching a three-and-a-half year point. Certain individuals noticing that INDIVIDUAL X was receiving publicity because of a tragic death among European royalty were concluding that this was it. The Bible Code software was released. And, Y2k was on the horizon: surely an event to bring about global government.

Is the environment today any different than it was in 1997? In some ways it is no different, and all prognosticators have done is change the venue from the events of 1997 to the events of 2007. The assumptions are still the same: people are coming to hastily drawn conclusions about the end of the world based on what is happening today. People make the assumption that they “must” be the ones who will see Yeshua return.

Now I would like to make it perfectly clear that I believe we need to be following global events. I think that anyone who *does not follow* what is going on in our world at the very least is uninformed and ignorant, and at worst can get caught off guard when tragic events take place. But, the start of the Great Tribulation need not be the only tragic event that can occur. When the attacks of 11 September, 2001 took place—no fulfillment of end-time prophecy was at hand (although some did assume Jeremiah 50 had been fulfilled). Yet, this was a very important event in the modern history of America and the Western world. Islamic terrorism was no longer an isolated occurrence involving a few dozen or a few hundred victims. As the twin towers of the World Trade Center collapsed, millions of people were terrorized.

When you saw this take place, what did you do? Did you suddenly think that the “end” was at hand? How did you handle the psychology of the death of about 3,000 in the buildings? Did you have fear? If you had great fear, then do you know that the terrorists succeeded in their mission? The chief aim of terrorism is to instill fear in others, so that terrorists can accomplish their objectives and see their demands answered.

How many of you after 9/11, contrary to being terrorized, stood as voices of reason and hope for others around you? How many of you, in a secular environment, tried to consider why Al Qaida attacked America? How many of you, in a religious environment, offered spiritual words of reason to those who were confused and fearful?

When we consider where we are today and the environment of prophetic speculation in which we often find ourselves—especially as Messianics—how much of that speculation is generated by fear of the world? In 2007, we do not find ourselves in a different situation than what existed with the prognostications that I saw in 1997. This certainly does not mean that we cannot offer opinions when we see

Europe continuing to come together, the rise of global terror, or the Middle East falling apart. But we may have to take a more long term approach to such things. However, if any of us were fearful and on edge when it came to 9/11—and the almost 3,000 who died in the World Trade Center—how on Earth are we going to be able to handle the Great Tribulation?

It was surely something horrific seeing a 767 aircraft fly into one of the twin towers live on network television. But how will any of us handle a nuclear bomb going off in a major world city? How will any of us handle a biological weapon being released upon a population? Are any of us spiritually and psychologically prepared to see hundreds of thousands of corpses rotting on television because something apocalyptic has happened?

I say this not because I want to see these things take place, but because I think that those making end-time prognostications today often do not consider the gravity of their statements. Saying that one needs to be aware of what is going on in the world is one thing; saying that the end is at hand is something else. While it might be easy for us to say that “this is what God is doing in these end-times”—are we even ready for those end-times? Are we truly prepared for God’s judgment to be unleashed upon Planet Earth?

And what of the spiritual motives of those who today have revised and updated their prophetic charts, have a new series of calculations for us to consider, and are proclaiming that “it’s coming down”? If they are following the pattern of the Prophets of Ancient Israel, are they calling people back to the Lord to repent of their sins? Are they calling people back to a life of obedience and holiness unto Him? How concerned are they with proclaiming the gospel message of salvation to those who could be engulfed in God’s anger?

I am sorry to have to say this, but among some of the latest things that have come across my desk I have not seen *any* of the current end-time prognostications be concerned with seeing people transformed by the good news of Yeshua. Most of what I have seen is people in their spare time trying to figure things out so that they can be the ones with the so-called answers. I do not doubt that some of these people are sincere, but some of them likewise do not consider the ramifications of their statements. I prefer to be more tactful and suggest that while Yeshua *can return* in my lifetime, I do not want to find myself subjecting God to timetables which He might not keep. I would prefer to talk about the end-times in a way that others who come after me can build upon.

Today’s Messianic movement has seen a great deal of end-time speculation. Much of the growth of the Messianic community has come because of various end-time teachings. But how many of us

have used the excuse of the end “imminently forthcoming” to put aside some of the important, daily work of God’s Kingdom that has yet to be accomplished? How many of us have failed to consider the issues that are taking place in today’s society—that will lead to the end—and have done nothing to offer solutions to the lost? How many have decided that making the investment and time in living life is not necessary because Yeshua may return this year or next year?

A sizeable sector of Messianic Believers today is not that much different than the Ancient Thessalonians. Paul had to write two letters to the Thessalonians. In the first letter he described the return of the Lord and how it should be a great blessing to consider the resurrection of loved ones who have died in the faith. In the second letter he had to clarify some misinterpretations that had taken place from his first letter, and confront misinformation that was circulating. Some of the Thessalonians were no longer working to support their families as they believed the end-times were imminent. Paul tells them, “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies” (2 Thessalonians 3:10-11).²

Do you know anyone you would classify to be like this? Certainly, there have been groups of people which have acted like this throughout history—*not just including particular segments of today’s Messianic movement*. But how much important work has yet to be accomplished in today’s Messianic movement because of this attitude? How much work should have been accomplished in the past ten years? Is the Lord going to be faithful to “busybodies” who look like they are doing something—but really are not?

Are we really ready for the end-times? This is only a question you can answer. If you respond in fear to the death of several thousand and are not a voice of clarity and reason, *we may not be ready*. Likewise, if you fail to see that the emerging Messianic movement *does need* to mature significantly in areas of spirituality, discipleship, and theology, *we may not be ready*. Most importantly, if you fail to see the need to proclaim the good news and that people get right with the Lord, *we may not be ready*.

Will we ever be ready for the end-times? Probably not. But we can certainly be more prepared than we currently are—and that will take some more time. **We need to take advantage of this time of relative peace in the world**—compared to what is supposed to come. We have

² For a further review, consult the author’s commentary *1&2 Thessalonians for the Practical Messianic*.

to remember that as limited humans God sees time and space much differently than we do, and we cannot subject Him to any datebook that He does not intend to follow. We have to be about the work of God's Kingdom so that should the end come in our lifetimes, we find ourselves discerning and reliant upon Him and still helping to spread the message of salvation, being active in making disciples.

THE HASTENING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It seems like every year our family has been a part of the Messianic community, we have witnessed that we are confronted with yet another teaching or prognostication about why we are nearing the End of the Age, or why we must be the last generation. Now, being a political science undergraduate, I am the last person who is going to say that we should not be paying attention to the goings on of today's world. We should! Unfortunately, though, a great deal of fear is present throughout the Messianic movement as it pertains to the future—fear that the enemy has been able to capitalize upon again and again. Too many of us forget the meaning of Paul's words to Timothy: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV). How we learn how to truly use God's power and the mind that He has given for the benefit of His people (Ephesians 1:17-19) is a great challenge for us.

Much of today's Messianic movement has been bombarded over the past thirteen years with various calculations regarding the end-times. There are many people who believe that they know the date of Yeshua's return. They have picked Date X. They believe they have "astronomically and agriculturally correct" Biblical calendars. They believe they know the exact time of the Second Coming. They believe their data and method of sorting through *their* facts is correct.

Some of you are not going to like this, but do you know what most of these people have done? **They have wasted your time, my time, and the Messianic movement's time.** While some have gone out on their sideshow roadshow clown acts, they have failed to tell you that there is not a single Scripture verse in the Bible which tells God's people to look for Date X. The Scriptures instead admonish us to look for political, social, and spiritual signs which indicate that the return of the Messiah is nearing. *That is significantly more complicated.*

So why do we suffer from those among us who have gone out and have marketed teachings on Date X, raking in the bucks? It is because we do not know the Scriptures! Consider what the Lord has to tell the Prophet Habakkuk:
