

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:

“For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay. Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:3-4).

Habakkuk wanted to know why God’s judgment had delayed, and so the Lord told Him to simply “wait for it.” His judgment will come, as it is only a matter of time. In the meantime, the righteous person is to live by faith (cf. Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11), thus fulfilling the call of His people. How some of the Sages of the Talmud interpreted these verses needs to be taken into serious consideration by today’s Messianic community:

“What is the meaning of the verse, ‘But at the end it shall speak and not lie’ (Hab. 2: 3)? **Said R. Samuel bar Nahmani said R. Jonathan,** “[Freedman, p. 659, n. 5: Reading the verse as, ‘He will blast him who calculates the end,'] **blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end [when the Messiah will come].** For they might say, “Since the end has come and he has not come, he will not come.” Rather, wait for him, as it is said, “Though he tarry, wait for him” (Hab. 2: 3). Should you say that we shall wait, but he may not wait, Scripture responds, “And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious to you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you” (Isa. 30:18). “Then, since we are waiting and he is waiting, what is holding things up? It is the attribute of justice that is holding things up. But if the attribute of justice is holding things up, why should we wait? It is so as to receive the reward for our patience, as it is written, “Blessed are all those who wait for him” (Isa. 30: 9)” (b.*Sanhedrin* 97b).³

The perspective offered here was not for people to calculate the time of the End, but for people to simply wait and to be rewarded for their patience. There may be a parallel between this sentiment and Revelation 3:10, where Yeshua says to the congregation at Philadelphia, “you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth” (RSV), which I interpret it as meaning that they do not have to face martyrdom at the hands of the antimessiah. Certainly for us as Believers, we are admonished throughout the Apostolic Scriptures to be on alert to the signs of our times and the possible return of Yeshua the Messiah. We are by no

³ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. MS Windows XP. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM.

means to ignore or deride the prophetic message! But no where are we told to devote our entire spiritual lives to the study of prophecy, at the expense of the more critical matters such as demonstrating God's grace and mercy to the world.

During the past decade and longer, our fledgling Messianic community has been plagued by a significant number of end-time predictions, all of which have failed. In fact we seem to be a faith community today which is sitting in too much of a holding pattern—spinning around and waiting for the Lord to return. As we spin around, though, we are not spending our time very wisely. Rather than invest the time and effort that we should in our study of the Scriptures, our theology, and refining our mission to the world—too many people often waste their time listening to nonsensical and ear-tickling teachings. Not only do these teachings have no significant value *as they pertain to enduring to the end*, they will not aid God's people in the here and now to accomplish their calling (Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 42:6). God's Torah is not emphasized enough as His standard of holiness and proper conduct that is to empower His people to be all the things that He wants us to be!

When predictions of the End and Yeshua's return do not come to pass, should we be surprised by the apostasy that occurs when various Messianic people deny Him and go into Judaism? Are you not aware that one of the principal reasons why people deny our Lord is because of failed end-time predictions? *This is why we must be so cautious in addressing prophecy.*

But it gets even more complicated, my friends. It can be safe to say that as the Lord restores His people, that "Israel" is indeed a timepiece, or a marker of where we may be on His prophetic timetable. But Israel is not a timepiece we are separated from; **Israel is a timepiece in which we all play a prominent part.** What we do today will affect tomorrow. Our choices today as the emerging Messianic community will affect the world as a whole. The pace of our development as a mature faith community, which can make a difference in the world, will determine *how soon* the Messiah will return.

The Apostle Peter says we "ought...to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12). He employs the present active participle *spoudontas* (σπεύδοντας)—"hastening"—to describe this action. The righteous behavior of Believers affects "the coming of the day of God." What we do regarding our godly behavior, in obedience to the Lord, will "work to hasten its coming" (CJB), "speed its coming" (NIV), or be "hurrying

it along” (NLT). This is a very Hebraic principle that is paralled by what the Jewish Sages tell us:

“Said R. Yohanan in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai, ‘If the Israelites keep two successive Sabbaths in a proper manner, they will be saved immediately’” (b.*Shabbat* 118b).⁴

As God’s people it is our **holy conduct—or lack thereof—that will accelerate or decelerate the Second Coming of Yeshua**. How holy is today’s Messianic movement? Are we hastening the coming of righteousness? Are our current actions of faith and godliness helping prepare the world for the day when the King of Righteousness will return? Keep in mind that if the Rabbinic principle of keeping two Sabbaths is correct, then it would be keen for us to understand that remembering *Shabbat* is far more than just abstaining from our labors. *Shabbat* is to teach us important things about eternity (cf. Hebrews 4:1), undoubtedly to be known by those who observe it properly.⁵

It is significantly more complicated to live lives of holiness which will hasten the coming of righteousness, than looking for ethereal Date X.

And we have a long way to go! When I read Robert G. Tuttle’s comprehensive book *The Story of Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), over 400 pages of information and important data of faithful saints of the Lord since the beginning of time is provided. All the modern Messianic movement got was a single sentence, and not a very great sentence at that:

“For years Messianic Judaism has accepted Jesus Christ without calling itself Christian.”⁶

What this could be interpreted by many, is that at least one sector of the broad Messianic community is incapable of really working with their fellow brothers in sisters who recognize and know the same Lord and Messiah that it recognizes and knows. I certainly do not want our testimony among other Believers to be “without calling itself Christian,” nor do I wish us to be relegated to a mere (negative) footnote in the pages of religious history. We need to be working toward seeing more outside testimonies along the lines of:

“The Messianic movement helped spread the gospel to many Jewish people, and also helped bring great fulfillment and depth to those who wanted to partake of their Hebraic and Jewish spiritual heritage in a very real and meaningful way. It helped train people in the importance of understanding the Hebrew

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Consult the *Messianic Sabbath Helper* by Messianic Apologetics (paperback edition forthcoming), for a discussion of important topics relating to *Shabbat*.

⁶ Robert G. Tuttle, *The Story of Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 395.

Scriptures, and their realization and fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. It enabled people to see the continuity of God's salvation history from Genesis to Revelation in hands-on exercises like the Biblical feasts."

The time is absolutely ripe for us to fulfill the opportunities that are before us, especially given the moral dilemmas evangelicalism is facing, a renewed Christian interest in the Old Testament, and a true desire among Christians to have a more interactive and tangible faith. But *today's* Messianic movement is largely not up to the challenge. Given the current crises that face us, we have not only stifled the restoration the Lord wants to accomplish—we **may have even slammed on the breaks!** How much has the Messianic movement's reputation of holiness hastened the coming of righteousness? Friends, how fast *or* how slow we want Yeshua to return is not contingent on the latest calculations; it is contingent on our conduct. The Lord is not going to return for a people who are unready and unprepared. *Tomorrow's* Messianic movement has to be different.

I, for one, will rejoice in the day that the Messianic movement is no longer a "movement"—**but a force of righteousness and holiness to be reckoned with in the world!**

WHERE SHOULD THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT BE IN 2107?

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One-hundred years from now—should the Lord have yet to return—the world will be a much different place than it is today. It will be the Twenty-Second Century. Technology will have advanced much more than it has advanced in the past few decades with the rise of the personal computer and the Internet. Rather than having to dictate to a computer with a keyboard and mouse, interactive voice communication and some kind of artificial intelligence will assist people with their daily affairs. Travel between continents will become even more commonplace, and it is likely that man will probably have a permanent presence on Earth's moon, will have set foot on Mars, and possibly even other celestial bodies in the Solar system.

But will the ills that plague the human condition have changed at all? Will there still be poverty, disease, hunger, and discrimination? Will there still be global terrorism? How will the United States have changed? Will the center of world power have shifted from the West
