



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



SEPTEMBER 2023

THE END-TIMES

What Should We Expect?

PART 2



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

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OIM UPDATE

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J.K. McKee

The Abomination of Desolation

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION [Daniel 9:27] which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath” (Matthew 24:15-20, NASU).

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Yeshua directed His followers to watch for the Abomination of Desolation; it is considered to be *the sign* to anticipate, definitively indicating that the Last Days have arrived. He specifically warned those living in Judea and around Jerusalem to escape town immediately following this event, telling them not to worry about their personal belongings. This Abomination is the same one prophesied by Daniel:

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week {he} shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate” (Daniel 9:27, NKJV).

From the text of Daniel 9:27, it seems necessary that animal sacrifices must be present for the Abomination of Desolation to occur. As the NASU renders Daniel 9:27b, “in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering.” The grain offering very clearly cannot be allegorical as some may try to spiritualize this event, making it something that it is not.

One specific debate which exists among pre-millennialists is whether or not the Temple must be reconstructed for the Abomination of Desolation to take place. Arguably, when these prophesied animal sacrifices and grain offerings begin, they will not immediately occur in a rebuilt temple—but first at a sacrificial altar, then a tent-like tabernacle, and then finally a stone temple—if we follow

the pattern of the Ancient Israelites and what Kings David and Solomon did before the First Temple was constructed. The argument that a temple *must* be reconstructed partially comes from 2 Thessalonians 2:4, in reference to the antimessiah:

“[W]ho opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God [*ton naon tou Theou*], displaying himself as being God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4, NASU).

This statement from Paul leads many to conclude that the Temple will be rebuilt for the man of lawlessness to show himself as God. Current trends in the Mideast Peace Process and the steady practices of the Temple Mount Faithful, suggest that one day Orthodox Jews wanting to reinstitute the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system will be able to do so, and an ultimate goal of that would certainly be the reconstruction of the Temple. The specifics of how this will take place are anyone’s guess at the present time.

It is described how Messianic Jewish Believers in Jerusalem and in Judea will be affected when this event occurs (Matthew 24:16). They are told to flee and leave. A very intriguing phrase is “Pray that you will not have to escape in winter or on *Shabbat*” (Matthew 24:20, CJSB). It should not be surprising that in Israel today, the Old City of Jerusalem is widely closed to vehicles on the Sabbath. When this event does occur, whether on the Sabbath or otherwise, it seems likely that those fleeing will have to make their exit on foot and not car or bus.

Bible readers reach an impasse here with Yeshua’s warning of the Abomination of Desolation in Matthew 24:15-20, and the parallel accounts in the other Gospels. In Luke 21:20-24, the Messiah spoke of armies surrounding Jerusalem:

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24, NASU).

Some have interpreted this prophecy as already having occurred in the First Century, per the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. by the Romans. Although Jerusalem’s demise was certainly an important event in Jewish history, it was not the event prophesied in Luke 21:20-24, as Believers at this time did not flee to the mountains, and many had already left Jerusalem by the time of the Roman siege. Yeshua was simply telling His followers that at the time of the Abomination of

Desolation, there will be military forces surrounding Jerusalem. The “times of the Gentiles” will not be completed until Jerusalem is brought to its glory at the Second Coming of Yeshua (cf. Isaiah 62:7).

The Abomination of Desolation is the key event which faithful Believers are commanded to look for. This event signals the midpoint of Daniel’s Seventieth Week and the initiation of the Great Tribulation, or the “time, times, and half a time [*idan v’idani’n u’felag idan*]” (Daniel 7:25, NASU; 12:7; Revelation 12:14) in which the antimessiah will “make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Yeshua” (Revelation 12:17, NASU).

The Great Tribulation

“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22, NASU; cf. Mark 13:19-20).

Yeshua told His followers that the Great Tribulation would be like no other time the world has experienced, specifically stating, “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22, NIV). The details of the Great Tribulation and the events which *we can and should expect* are recorded for Bible readers in the Prophets, particularly in texts like Daniel and Zechariah, as well as in the Book of Revelation. This will be a time of great judgment upon the world for its rejection of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, and many will die. It is implied that not only will many die, but also that if the Messiah does not come back, humanity will inevitably annihilate itself.

The world currently possesses enough weapons of mass destruction to destroy the population of our planet several times over—and so it is quite surprising why we have not destroyed ourselves yet! Some think that the Messiah’s admonition of “except those days should be shortened” (Matthew 22:24, NIV), of the time period prior to His physical return, could mean that during the Great Tribulation days will be shortened from their current length of twenty-four hours. This is a possibility to consider due to prophesied Earth changes, and how there will be “a great mountain burning with fire...thrown into the sea” (Revelation 8:8, NASU).

Another possibility is that the Lord saying if the Great Tribulation were ever found to be longer than its specified length of 1,260 days (Daniel 12:11; Revelation 11:3; 12:6), no one would survive. Given that we are trying to interpret future events, we must consider both of these possibilities.

False Expectations

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe *him*. For false Messiahs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe *them*. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather” (Matthew 24:23-28, NASU; cf. Mark 13:21-23).

The Messiah has repeated how His followers need to be on guard against false prophets and false signs which will be present in the time prior to His return. In relation to the Great Tribulation, a particular figure, known as the false prophet, will come and demonstrate signs and wonders pointing to the antimesiah/antichrist as being the true “anointed one”:

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:11-15, NASU).

Yeshua the Messiah has admonished, “Behold, I have told you before” (Matthew 24:23, KJV). He has also made the critical statement, “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe *it*” (Matthew 24:26, NKJV). The CJSB renders His critical admonition as, “if people say to you...‘Look, He’s hidden away in a secret room!’ don’t believe it.” Many contemporary Christian people are actually expecting a secret return of the Messiah before the beginning of the Tribulation period.

Paul indeed spoke about “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him” (2 Thessalonians 2:1, NIV), and from this, one sees how that **both** the holy ones or saints being gathered to meet the Messiah in the clouds, **and** His physical return to Planet Earth, are all part of *the same event*. If this is the case, then the return of Yeshua, according to His own words, “will be like light-

ning that flashes out of the east and fills the sky to the western horizon" (Matthew 24:27, NIV), **and it will not be a secret event.**

Yeshua warned His followers directly that those who would speak of a secret coming would be speaking falsehoods. Could this possibly be a reference to the popular pre-tribulation rapture doctrine? Not wanting to accuse many of our pre-tribulationist brothers and sisters of being "liars," I would simply hope that pre-tribulationists are not hard and fast with their beliefs, and are open to different interpretations should the scenario they expect to not totally play out.

The words of the Messiah direct His followers not to expect a secret return to Planet Earth. He will return from Heaven in the same way He entered into Heaven, meaning "every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7, NASU), as opposed to Him only being visible to Believers.

The Gathering of the Elect

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky [Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15], and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER [Zechariah 12:10, 14; Daniel 7:13-14] His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:29-31, NASU; cf. Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:27-28).

Yeshua's words of Matthew 24:29-31 vividly describe both the Second Coming and what many call "the rapture." Matthew 24:32 details Yeshua the Messiah sending His angels to gather the elect, or all Believers dead and alive, with the sound of a trumpet call. These verses parallel the Apostle Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52:

"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, NASU; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Many believe that the Messiah's gathering of His own into the clouds occurs at the beginning of the Tribulation period, but according to the Olivet Discourse, **this cannot be.** The idea that Yeshua is *only* speaking in reference to His physical arrival to Earth is very much dependent on *who* the elect are identified to be. Pre-tribulationists widely advocate that God has two groups of elect, Israel and "the

Church.” And by this same logic they assert that those gathered at this event are those of Israel into the Holy Land, not a gathering of the holy ones or saints into the sky to meet the Messiah in a post-tribulation event.

Our ministry is not of the position that God has two groups of elect, nor are we of the position that Israel and “the “Church” are separate entities. Dispensationalists may claim that the text of Scripture we have just analyzed (Matthew 24:1-31) is strictly for the Jewish people, because “Jesus was speaking to the Jews.” Yet by this same logic, anything Jesus said to Jews is not for non-Jewish Believers in Him, so those who are not Jewish should likely ignore most of His teachings in the Gospels. (And not surprisingly, there are ultra- and hyper-dispensationalists who do advocate such false doctrine.)⁵

What these people first fail to recognize is that if they are born again and have faith in the Messiah of Israel, Yeshua, they have been made a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or grafted-in as wild branches to Israel’s olive tree (Romans 11:16-18). There are only twelve gates to enter into New Jerusalem, for the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12), and there is no gate for a separate “Church.” And certainly, *all Believers* will be ruling and reigning with Him from this city. In the eschaton, all of the righteous will somehow be incorporated into the community of Israel, be they physical Israel or not, by the King of Israel.

Believing that the event spoken of in Matthew 24:29-31 is for Israel is somewhat correct. What pre-tribulationists (and even many post-tribulationists) do not understand is that if they are redeemed, they are a part of the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16)—the redeemed Kingdom of Israel which will rule and reign with the Messiah from New Jerusalem.

Who goes through the Seventieth Week of Israel? *Israel*. It should not be overlooked how the Greek noun used throughout the Scriptures commonly translated “church” is *ekklēsia*—the same term which is largely used throughout the Septuagint, or ancient translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, in regard to the *assembly* or *congregation* (Heb. *qahal*) of Israel. Knowing these things can force one to not only reevaluate the timing of the Second Coming, but also deal with who is *gathered* at that time. If we can establish that “the Church” and Israel are *not* separate entities, then other pre-tribulation arguments lose a huge amount of support.⁶

It is very important to note that the Hebrew name *Yisrael* or Israel means “God prevails.”⁷ This is the Divine mandate upon the redeemed in the Messiah. Paul wrote, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Yeshua” (Philippians 3:14, NASU). One could argue from this, that if

⁵ A significant example of this kind of theology is represented by C.R. Stam, *Things That Differ* (Germantown, WI: Berean Bible Society, 1985).

⁶ For a further review of ecclesiology or the study of God’s elect, consult the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers a Part of Israel?*

⁷ J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1960), 124.

you are not somehow a part of the elect of Israel, then you are not part of the elect at all. Today's born again Christian Believers certainly are of God's elect, but many simply do not recognize that their faith heritage within God's Kingdom of Israel is something waiting for them to take a hold of and be blessed by! Even more difficult for them to see, is the need to be overcomers in the difficult times prophesied to come.

Those who have died in the faith and those who are alive at the Messiah's appearing will be brought up into the clouds to meet Him in the air, as the Scriptures clearly attest. The issue which will continue to baffle many evangelical people is not necessarily the event itself, but the timing of it and just who is involved.

What should we expect?

Yeshua the Messiah has issued the following warning: "There! I have told you in advance!" (Matthew 24:25, CJSB). As Believers in Him, we have no excuse not to heed His warnings of the impending judgment which is to befall Planet Earth, nor are we to spurn His admonition that "this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14, NRSV), which includes *both* the good news of personal salvation *and* the news of the Millennial restoration of Israel. The Apostle Paul's words should further encourage us:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8, NASU).

There are many other Scripture passages in relation to the Last Days or end-times, such as the Book of Daniel or the Book of Revelation. I chose Matthew 24:1-31 for this article, because it provides a valuable outline of end-time events, and it makes an excellent starting point for those who want to examine Bible prophecy in more detail. Its warnings are also important to heed, as they come directly from the Messiah Himself.

As we continue into the Twenty-First Century, many claiming Yeshua or Jesus as their Savior believe that "life as we know it" is going to end at a moment's notice, and many outside of the faith believe we stand at the dawn of a "new age." Many are expecting apocalyptic events to occur, and then many others believe that nothing will happen. *A mature follower of Israel's Messiah tries to be ready for whatever might occur.* Knowing about the end-times is an important part of our spiritual arsenal.

Yeshua Himself has said, "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*" (Matthew 24:44, NASU), because He will come in a time when most will expect least. Although

this verse is usually used erroneously to support the idea of an any-moment pre-tribulation rapture escape, Matthew 24:44 does certainly imply that God's people need to be ready at all times for the return of the Lord. We can each individually go to meet Him at any time (i.e., Philippians 1:21-23), and we do need to be aware of the signs which He warned His followers about which will herald His return.

From the late 1990s through to the 2010s, many have spoken presumptuously about Biblically prophesied events—and a number of them have been associated, in some way, with the Messianic movement. As a result, many others have chosen to ignore prophetic Scriptures. Such an attitude is ill-advised and non-Biblical. Rather, a mature Messiah follower must be objective in his or her approach to the subject matter and be on the alert. Various world events have been set in motion that *can* result in the fulfillment of major Bible prophecies, but there is no guarantee that they *will*. Matthew 24:1-31 is only the starting point. A discerning Believer should be able to approach this subject matter with a cool head and a steadfast heart.

So as a Believer in Yeshua the Messiah, what should you expect pertaining to the Last Days? Certainly, one should be aware of the "birth pains" of wars, rumors of wars, and natural disasters. God's people are also commanded to watch out for false prophets, false teachers, and those who would say that the Lord's return will come in secret. A definite sign to watch for is the Abomination of Desolation in Jerusalem. Today's Messianic Believers should be aware of how the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom—a message involving the salvation of the Jewish people and Israel's total restoration—is also an important "end-time" sign. Arguably, *it is this final element that has been the most overlooked* (and will be the most complicated to consider).

The need to address issues which surround the emergence of a mature and impactful Messianic community will be on the rise as we move closer to Yeshua's Second Coming—whether it takes place in our lifetimes or not. If the latter is to be the case, then let us take advantage of the opportunities we possess in this time of relative tranquility to prepare posterity for His return! Let us be those who have the answers that the world is seeking. For, it is the righteous behavior of the holy ones or saints which will finally herald final redemption (2 Peter 3:11-12; cf. b.*Shabbat* 118b). We have to know our place, and such a place is to be vibrant men and women empowered by God, accomplishing His tasks!