



## The Benefits of Looking Forward to the Coming of the King

*"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'Yahweh's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these: Leviticus 23:2*

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Entering a Festival Season

1. The fall festivals are primarily about the return of Yeshua
2. Dress Rehearsals
  - a. Micro dress rehearsals; what do you do in dress rehearsals? You practice for the real thing.
  - b. Macro: looking forward to the season of the Lord's return
3. Regular focus on Yeshua's Return: three times a year God has this as a focus – the fall festivals, hanukkah, and Purim – over 150 chapters in Scripture where the majority of the chapter is about this timeframe
4. Why is this important? Many of the imperative commands in the Apostolic Scriptures has a future focus; it is crucial to our faith that we teach about this future coming
  - a. the past is generally (and biblically) not a good motivator for present-tense obedience and endurance. We are to personally be thankful and call to mind God's faithfulness and goodness in our lives as a catalyst and to focus on what Yeshua has done on the cross for us, but the Scriptures are full of examples where the future Coming is to be a present-tense motivator for our endurance, joy, and obedience. Examples: 1 John 3:2-3; Colossians 3:1-7;
5. Revelation 14:12 - We have need of endurance: to stay obedient and keep our faith in Yeshua.
6. Yeshua won't return this year – while the prophetic markers are becoming more pronounced, significant, necessary ones are not yet in place: Gospel of the kingdom not yet to all people groups, can't have the abomination of desolation without a rebuilt temple – but these are YHWH's appointed times that we would be wise to commemorate

**B. Revelation of the Future:** YHWH in His great love for us has revealed to us the future so that we don't need to be shocked or taken by surprise as to what is coming. Daniel and Jeremiah speak of full understanding and clarity for God's people related to this coming day. People of understanding will lead many to righteousness

1. He's a good Father who loves His children

### II. THE MONTH OF ELUL

**A. Month of Elul Summary:** Elul is the Hebrew month preceding the fall festivals that start with the Feast of Trumpets on Tishrei 1.

1. *I Am My Beloveds:* The four Hebrew letters of the word Elul (aleph-lamed-vav-lamed) are the first letters of the four words *Ani l'dodi v'dodi lee* – "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3). This has been Yah's desire all along—for us to know and experience the wholehearted love that He has for us and for us to respond with our love towards Him. The month of Elul is a special time to focus on that relationship. This divine love received and given is to be the foundation and motivation as to why we would want to return to Him, repent, and take a spiritual accounting. Without this, then the following objectives are dry and lifeless religious tasks. These are to be objective tools to personally apply **because** we love Him in order to awaken greater love.
2. *Teshuvah:* Elul is the 6<sup>th</sup> month in the "Biblical Calendar." The first day of Elul marks the beginning of the 40 *days of awe* that lead us to Yom Kippur, the most solemn day on the Hebrew Calendar. Elul is traditionally known as a month of Teshuvah (meaning "returning") or Repentance. It is a time for us to prepare physically for the Fall Festivals and spiritually for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. *I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.* Do you feel His wooing calling you back to be with Him as in previous times?
3. *Spiritual Accounting:* During Elul, many perform a daily spiritual accounting where we step back and look at ourselves critically and honestly, with the intention of improving. Elul has historically been associated with

repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. *I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.* These are not to be sterile exercises but motivated by love and a heart-ache to have anything hindering our relationship to be purged for the sake of love. Abba, what in my life is displeasing to You? What can we specifically leave behind during this time to have a more wholehearted focus on You?

4. *Arousing to Repentance*: In order to arouse us to the task of repentance, one Hebraic custom is to blow the shofar every morning after prayers during the month of Elul. This is meant as a call to awaken ourselves to repentance, a warning to remember that judgment is coming and we must be sober-minded. *I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.* He is my focus, and I desire to be active in “rousing myself to take hold of Him” (Isaiah 64:7). I want to be zealous and repent in response to His loving dealings. I want things out of my life that grieve Him or hinder that love-connection. I want to draw near to Him to better experience His joy and pleasure that comes from being with Him.
  5. *Psalm 27*: It is also a modern convention to read Psalm 27 daily during this month. David's heart was that God would be his “one thing” (27:4). If I could choose one thing, would it be Yah? *My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me.” And my heart responds, “YHWH, I am coming.”* Psalm 27:8 *I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine.* Do you hear Him beckoning you to come closer? Yah has done all the heavy lifting, but He will not do our part.
  6. *The King is In the Field*: The month of Elul is a time of spiritual workdays. We have the holy task of preparing for ourselves for the coming fall festivals, but without any holy days in the month. The traditional Jewish understanding is that YHWH is more accessible during this month. The picture used is one of a king who visits the workers in the field. In that setting there is a different protocol for the king as He is more accessible and visiting us “in our work environment” than if we as the workers as is more normative were visiting the king in his own palace.
- B. Biblical Occurrence:** Historically, this month has great significance, because it was on the first day of Elul that Moses—following the sin of the Golden Calf—ascended Mount Sinai to receive a new, second set of stone tablets. Forty days later—on the seminal Yom Kippur—Moses returned to the people with tablets in hand, signaling a repair of the breach between the Jewish people and God. In light of this, in Jewish history, these days have retained special significance as a period of divine grace.

### III. DANGEROUS PITFALLS

#### A. Introduction: My own journey

1. *Premature triumphalism*: bought into this over the years – I've wanted the righteous “good guys” to prevail.
2. *Being rescued*: I think most of us have a desire to be rescued. It's only that our rescue is coming after the tribulation.
3. Those peoples embracing suffering seemed to be a fatalistic, passive copout and an excuse not to stand up against oppression.
4. *The Love of God* – a loving Father is telling us the difficulty that is coming beforehand.

#### B. Rescued Out of Difficulty (Pretribulation Rapture): This is the prominent belief in western culture Christianity that the Believers will be raptured before the great seven year tribulation

1. *What is the rapture?* – The rapture describes what happens to the saints worldwide when Jesus appears in the sky at His Second Coming.

For *the Lord will descend from heaven* with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air... (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

- a. Pre-tribulation – Views the rapture as occurring seven years before Jesus' Second Coming.
  - b. Post-tribulation – Views the rapture as occurring after the tribulation at the Second Coming of Jesus.
2. *Not preparing for difficulty*: If you're not going to be here for great difficulty what do you not do? You don't prepare

Corrie Ten Boom, who suffered through the terrible atrocities of the German concentration camps in WWII, had these sobering words to say about the tribulation– “I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China the Christians were told: ‘Don't worry, before the tribulation comes, you will be translated, raptured.’ Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of

Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a bishop from China say, sadly: ‘We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first.’ Turning to me, he said: ‘Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes – to stand and not faint.’ I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation. Since I have gone already through prison for Jesus’ sake, and since I met that bishop from China, now every time I read a good Bible text I think: ‘Hey, I can use that in the time of tribulation’ Then I write it down and learn it by heart.”

3. If I’m wrong, what happens? Nothing really; If a pretribber is wrong, what happens? Sets one up for a great offense. (Matthew 24:10)
4. *Resources:* ([https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ\\_QEG0Ojk80Bsj0VokEbkJh7wmUfz\\_g5](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZ_QEG0Ojk80Bsj0VokEbkJh7wmUfz_g5)) Frontier Alliance International with Joel Richardson has an excellent resource called The Rapture & the Endurance of the Saints that has 30 video lessons so far that teaches about the fallacies and dangers of the pretribulation rapture.

**C. Triumphant Over the Difficulty** (Premature Triumphalism): This is the idea that there will be significant global breakthroughs in the seven mountains of society: church/religion; the family; government/law; education; science, health & environment; business; media & arts. I believe while there may be pockets of breakthrough (and that we are to hope and pray for these breakthroughs) that these areas will be increasingly globally godless in the days that precede Yeshua’s return. We are to live primarily for the age to come. We want to make a difference in each of our spheres of influence, but the Scriptures indicate that we will not ultimately be successful at having the kingdom triumphant in a substantial way globally prior to Yeshua’s return.

1. I’ve been swept up in this over and over again. I’ve looked for a political savior to “rout the bad guys” and win the day. There is a natural cry in our heart for a hero and a Savior. We will not be ultimately rescued until Yeshua rescues us at His return.
2. *Resources:* Apocalyptic Gospel Podcast (<https://www.apocalypticgospel.com>) with John Harrigan, Bill Scofield, and Josh Hawkins: great resource that teaches about the apocalyptic nature of the Bible and that the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous rewarded at the return of Yeshua.

#### IV. PREPARING FOR PERSECUTION/SUFFERING

##### A. Persecution Is Allowed For The Benefit Of God’s People

1. Persecution is both a demonic attack to hinder our spiritual growth and a divine gift to enhance it (Mike Bickle)
2. God granted persecution (Phil. 1:29) that they may be transformed by it for their benefit in this age (1 Pet. 4:1, 14) and in the age to come (2 Cor. 4:17).

*<sup>1</sup>...for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup>that he no longer should live the rest of his time...for the lusts of men...<sup>14</sup>If you are reproached for the name of Christ,*

*blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory...rests on you...[and] He is glorified. (1 Pet. 4:1-2, 14)*

*<sup>17</sup>Our light affliction...is working for us a far more exceeding...weight of glory... (2 Cor. 4:17)*

3. Most of us have not yet suffered persecution for our identification with Yeshua in any consequential way.

**B. Free-Will Lovers:** God has always desired (and will ultimately have [Hosea 2:16, Revelation 22:17]) a “spousal” partnership with humans who choose Him of their own free-will. He provided the opportunity for forgiveness through Yeshua’s sacrifice that is the only entry point (John 14:6) providing a relational connection between a holy God and a sinful people. Israel was the people who this Promised Seed was foretold to come through. The beginning place of response to God’s invitation is for a person to realize their need before Him.

**C. The Storms of Difficulty:** The free-will opportunity God provides at its most basic level brings about the evil and difficulty in the world. For people to have the opportunity to love God, means they must also have the subsequent opportunity not to love and serve Him—with real consequences for our choices. Otherwise, we are all robots. The resultant storm proceeds from God’s gift of free will; it is the collision of high and low pressure systems. The high pressure of the redeemed who love God and want to walk in His ways colliding with the low pressure system of those who hate God, His people, and who detest His ways. The clash of these two groups of people is not neutral or passive and always produces a storm. God’s intention is that this storm wakes up the

people and shakes them off the fence and into one of two clear camps—either to love and serve Him or to hate Him with its resultant negative actions.

- D. Spirit's Outpouring:** The Spirit's outpouring comes in conjunction with the supernatural signs and the call to prayer. This outpouring comes in response to consistent corporate prayer and is a sign to the Believers and the world that God is real and longs for all to submit to His love and lordship.
- E. A Real Devil:** The devil is real and hates YHWH, His plan, and humanity. The devil and fallen angels have been active from the very beginning at trying to thwart God's plan to and to hurt and corrupt His creation.
- F. Biblical Examples of a Future Hope:** each of these examples had bad external circumstances
  - 1. *Daniel*: He was an Judean exile to Babylon and possibly a eunuch who was forcibly removed from his family and nation to serve the king who had taken him and his friends into captivity.
  - 2. *Jeremiah*: In the book of Lamentations (commonly attributed to Jeremiah as the author), Jeremiah describes the sorrow of having lost substantially everything, but in the middle of that loss declared YHWH as his portion (Lam 3:21) and that because of this reality he did not lose hope.
  - 3. *Micah*: Micah describes (in Micah 7) the breakdown of society, the rise of the wicked, and him sitting in darkness under the chastisement of YHWH. In this place Micah expresses hope for God's vindication and restoration.
  - 4. *Habakkuk*: This prophet expressed his pain and initial confusion of YHWH using a most wicked nation (Chaldeans) to judge Israel. At the end of the book Habakkuk expresses hope even in the midst of desolation because of having a picture of the coming of Yeshua (Hab 3:3-16).

## V. CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

- A. Coming Challenges:** A coming great global challenge precedes the return of Yeshua (Matthew 24:4-31)
  - 1. God will allow the end time church to be sifted - Sifting exposes our heart
  - 2. Ultimately we have exactly the opposite (of triumphalism); the antichrist wears out the saints (Daniel 11:33)
  - 3. A great falling away is coming before Yeshua's return (Matthew 24:10-12; 2 Thes 2:3)
    - a. Deception, betrayal, and the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:10)

*What will we do with this difficulty?*
- B. "You are my Portion"** (Psalm 16:5; Lamentations 3:24) was David and Jeremiah's expression of trust in YHWH
  - 1. Think of what Jeremiah had lost (Lam 3:1-20) in the midst of him making the statement, "You are my portion"
  - 2. What are our offense points?
    - a. Something will always not be working in our lives
    - b. Most of us have not yet had persecution for the Gospel; sometimes we struggle with our suffering and blame God
    - c. What dynamics have to be in place for us to serve God?
    - d. What unconscious deals do we have with God? What if we had a Job moment where we lost everything?  
Is He our everything?
  - 3. Are we looking at the Gospel to primarily provide for us better friends, more resources, more anointed ministries, etc. or is He our portion regardless of what externally happens.
  - 4. *Run the simulator*: imagine losing important things but having God as your portion
- C. The Positives**
  - 1. A great harvest of souls; what comes during and after the harvest is the long road of faithfulness in the midst of difficulty—this might be in conjunction with great difficulty; that's what's happening in China, Iran, and Afghanistan: great difficulty in the midst of great harvest.
  - 2. We succeed in bringing the gospel of the kingdom to every ethnic people group (Matthew 24:14) – we're successful with that but ultimately we're going to suffer for our identification with Him.
  - 3. We are to be vibrant, shiny love-filled witnesses of whom the world was not worthy within the context of challenge and difficulty; we have what we need to be these types of people
- D. Watch & Pray:** Growing in our secret history with God; watching and praying among a community
  - 1. Pray: Time and words in an individual and corporate expression

2. Watch – growing in our awareness of the biblical story and growing in a general awareness of what’s going on around us

a. meditating on the Scriptures – can prayerfully go through Lamentations 3 & Micah 7; Habakkuk 3

**E. Develop a Future Focus on the Coming One:** Bible pushes us to look forward towards the great coming day

1. Why is looking at, and prayerfully studying this coming day important?

a. It’s about Him and His leadership

2. If we’re prayerfully walking in growing awareness of this coming reality, we’ll be able to better partner with God’s plan and be less prone to fear, offense, lust, or deception.

3. Elul – the month of preparation for these festivals starts in a little less than three weeks.