

Messianic Bible Study: Why will Yeshua return? (II Part)
Beit Shalom Messianic Congregation, Pozzuoli, Naples, Italy

Part 2

Speaker: You see, during Yeshua's (Jesus's) first coming, when his disciples asked when he would return at the end of days, he also told them, "But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the father.

Preacher: Yeshua himself demonstrated the genuine Galilean tradition by saying not even the son knows the day and the hour. At the moment of his promise to the disciples that he's coming to take them, at the moment of his description of the end, he was telling his disciples no one knows the day or the hour.

Speaker: But although Yeshua (Jesus) himself says he will not know the exact time of his return based on prophesied events that would take place at the end of days, the gospels make it clear that we could know the approaching season in which the end of our age would take place.

Preacher: The day is drawing near, so he's got to get the feast out. But still, he doesn't know the day when it's happening. He's got a lot of help putting it together, because there could be 50 to 100 people attending the feast, and he has to feed them not just for one day but for several days.

The bridegroom is finished with the feast. He's finished putting it together. He has the room built. He calls upon his father to inspect it all, which is more of a formality. And the father finally says, Yes, son, it's ready to go. The son says, I want my bride. And the father says, I'll tell you when. But remember, this is a bridegroom who's waiting for the moment when his father says, go get her. He's excited!

And when Yeshua is in heaven right now, I can't even begin to picture what is going on, but he's got to be loving his bride, saying, I can't wait to come back and take you to be where I am.

Speaker: And although the groom has now completed the preparations, he still has to wait for the moment that his father will tell him to go get his bride. During this same time, the bride would also be prepared and waiting, equally as eager to be united forever with her beloved.

But as the sun sets on the town this evening, the time of waiting is nearly finished. The darkness of night approaches.

This brings us to a topic that's fiercely debated today. Since the origins of Yeshua's message left with the Galileans has faded into history, Yeshua's statements regarding not knowing the day or the hour of his return has ignited heated debate and growing misconceptions.

Preacher: The church has suffered from this. That is, there are those who want to set dates. And yet the Bible teachers both from Yeshua himself and from the apostles that no man knows the day or the hour. It is my belief that these date setters, so-called, have irreversibly damaged Bible prophecy. I grieve about the obsession of when will it happen, as far as day and hour. When you start setting days and then it doesn't happen, then you have millions or hundreds of thousands of disappointed people that, chances are good, they will walk away from that faith because it wasn't proved right.

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Speaker: And the result is that Bible prophecy is being systematically erased from Christianity all over the world.

Preacher: I am very surprised. I never thought I would see this in my lifetime that the greatest news in the Bible is now marginalized, jeopardized, and is simply coming under great criticism and skepticism. Then you talk to a pastor, and he'll say, you know what? I don't want to be identified with the fringe. There is a fringe. We don't know the day or the hour. Nobody has any special insight. It's a secret, apparently, only God the Father knows.

Look, when you live in this world and suddenly someone tells you you're about to be taken physically out of this world, then knowing the day is like hitting the jackpot. However, it saddens me that even though Yeshua said no one knows the day and the hour, why do we think that we need to know? It sends a clear message. We're not supposed to deal with the actual date. We are supposed to deal with the preparation for that day.

Speaker: In addition, with spreading misconceptions of biblical prophecy, more churchgoing Christians with each passing year no longer want to hear about these so-called fringe topics. And most churches have clearly recognized this trend.

Preacher: If you ask a pastor, he will tell you flat-out, "You know what? Talking about the world coming to an end is not going to grow my church. The fact that even Yeshua (Jesus) is coming back is not going to."

That is the number one reason, actually. It's really because pastors are themselves ignorant concerning Bible prophecy. They are also fearful. They're fearful that if they start teaching Bible prophecy, (meaning that they would be teaching the Bible, so how can you not teach the Bible, the whole counsel of God,) without also teaching prophecy as a standard? But they're fearful that it's going to be too controversial.

Christians always want to be accepted by the world. They are always ready to brace worldly views in order for people to like them. You sugarcoat everything. You become a motivational speaker rather than a pastor because if you come to an unbeliever and pull out this idea of the rapture, they are going to run away from you. They are going to think you're crazy.

Speaker: And this growing trend of marginalizing Bible prophecy is not merely an unfounded perception. It's proven to be happening and likely far worse than you believe.

Preacher: Let me tell you about a more qualitative study that was done several years ago. There were 450 sermons from different pastors, and they were just taken as a sample and looked at. Only 2% of those sermons were preached from a passage of scripture that would be a prophetic book of the Bible.

Speaker: Here's why this is a problem. The culmination of prophetic events make up almost 1/3 of the entire Bible. The findings that on any given day, only 2% of sermons contained anything prophetic means that churches are intentionally marginalizing the topic.

Preacher: I think that when you take 30% of the Bible and you ignore it, then your understanding of the other 70% is going to be flawed. The Bible cannot be dissected.

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You cannot just choose what you want. As to why it is that Christians today are dismissive of the Lord's return, I would connect the dots with Biblical illiteracy. And here is the important thing. I'm sad to say that it the fault of the pastor behind the pulpit.

Churches are going to tell you, you know what? I want to live my full life. I want to see my children grow up. I want to see my grandchildren. I don't want to think about end of the world issues. That is what really disturbs me, that the fact that the King is coming, we have a glorious home prepared for us, we're going to go to that place eternally, suddenly became negative, became something sad.

Speaker: But the bigger problem is that you cannot remove prophecy form the Bible without also removing the return of Yeshua (Christ).

Preacher: I absolutely believe that the rapture is a fundamental belief in the Christian faith. Eschatology, Bible prophecy, is of extreme importance. Since 30% of the Bible is prophecy, you cannot have the whole counsel of God without also having the prophetic word of God. It's the gospel. The gospel is that Yeshua came. He was crucified, buried, rose again on the third day, and is coming back again one day. If you take the return of Yeshua (Jesus) out of the gospel, you gut the gospel out!

Speaker: But even worse yet, the unintended result of prophecy being systematically removed from churches and educational institutes is that the world is forgetting why prophecy exists in the first place. It's so that God can prove to the world that he is God. The point to all of this is that if you remove prophecy from the Bible, you remove the proof that the Bible is from a divine source. It would place the remaining scriptures of the Bible on par with other religious teachings in the world. With all things perceived as equal, the Bible would be seen as no more relevant than any other so-called holy book.

Preacher: This is actually why it is that young people today want nothing to do with the church. The number one reason that many today don't believe is because there is no evidence. You know what's interesting is that Yeshua (Jesus) said, I have told you what's going to happen before it happens, so when it happens, you will believe that I am.

There is so much evidence, and the problem is that many today do not believe because they do not see the evidence that is there.

Speaker: And only one thing could come from this, a falling away of those that believe Yeshua (Christ) will return and even in the validity of the Bible itself, a terrifying trend that has already begun.

Preacher: The world of the past, say from the when it began until the 1990's is not the world of today. It has changed dramatically. There was a day when there was this knowledge of the Lord's return. If you talk about it today, and it almost reminds me of what Peter said about how that there is coming a day that they will mock and scoff any mention of the Lord's return. "Where is the promise of his coming? They've been saying that for generations and generations, yet he doesn't come."

I think that's all part of the end-time apostasy. Everything we're talking about, it was prophesied, it's happening right now. I think one of the things that plays into here is what the Bible calls the great falling away, the great fall from truth into apostasy.

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Speaker: And this is not simply a perceived social change from different generational perspectives but one that is being exposed through findings from various organizations, such as LifeWay Research, the Barna Group and Pew Research.

Preacher: We see that only about 15% are bought into evangelical teaching indicating that Yeshua (Jesus) is the only way to remove their sin and that he alone is how someone can see eternal life and that they ought to share that. More than 8 out of 10 people would have some hesitancy or maybe completely dismiss the core evangelical beliefs of putting the Bible first and believing in Yeshua (Jesus) alone.

Speaker: According to multiple in-depth studies from various research organizations, more than 80% of people no longer believe that the Bible is the complete word of God, a trend that isn't surprising when considering the proof for the validity of the Bible itself is being systematically erased. With all religions being viewed more with each passing year as being equal and without substance, a global trend of humanism is exploding. (Even the Pope is speaking of humanism as a religion and denying that Jesus is returning)

Preacher: We're up to almost one out of four people indicating, "I don't really feel like I'm a part of any religious group." On that same survey, we did ask whether people believe the world will end in their lifetime. And less than one out of five, 18% of the people, actually believe that the world will end within their lifetime.

Speaker: Since the return of Yeshua is synonymous with the end of the world as we know it, this may give some associative insight into the trends we're beginning to see in why most people no longer believe that Yeshua (Jesus) is going to return. And surprisingly, the scriptures foretold this, too, was going to happen.

Preacher: I know you have a little strength. This describes the church in the last days prior to the return of Yeshua (Jesus) as just hanging on. There are a remnant of believers today that are hanging onto that hope. And they are few in numbers and growing fewer with each passing day.

Yeshua said that when he comes back, will he even find faith on the earth? We know that in the last days, there's going to be a diminishing of people believing. I believe that what is happening in Europe and America especially is that the westernized version of, can I say, a man-made Christianity, is failing. It's failing in faith. It's failing in its ability to engage the culture. It's failing to be ready, to be busy about our Father's business. It's failing in evangelism. Why is this? Because there's no sense of urgency. And so we live in a time when there are those saying that they believe in the Bible and believe in Yeshua (Jesus). I have to ask the question, what Bible are you reading, and which Yeshua (Jesus) are you talking about?

When you're completely detached from the word of God, then the rapture seems crazy. Although the same people who may reject God will believe in aliens. They will believe in going to the psychic and hearing from the dead and all of that. They believe in so many things. But when you talk about Bible stories, they will immediately say these are fairy tales. And it's interesting because we found physical evidences to almost every single miraculous story in the scriptures.

Again, the Bible declares that in the last days there's going to be those who will say, where's the promise of his coming? Everything has been continuing on since the beginning. And they mock. The Bible says in the

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last days there's going to be mockers, and there's going to be those that make light of the return of Yeshua (Jesus).

Not only is it going to get worse, it's going to get exponentially worse.

Speaker: Considering these trends, it's not surprising that this is precisely why the scriptures famously warned that in the last days, Yeshua will return as a thief in the night into a world that is unbelieving and unprepared.

Preacher: Yeshua warned his disciples to be ready for his second coming. Regarding the times and the seasons, my brethren, you have no need that I should tell because you perfectly know. The day of the Lord indeed will come to this world as a thief in the night. But it will not come as a thief in the night to you, because if you're ready, you're ready. And we can only be surprised and we can only suffer from it if we're not ready. He's going to come as a as a thief in the night to those who have been bogged down and weighted down with what Yeshua (Jesus) said are the cares of this life.

Speaker: Yeshua returning as a thief in the night to those unprepared in the last days appears self-explanatory. And for years, theologians interpreted the meaning at face value. But you see, in ancient Galilee, we know that only the father of the groom knew the day and the hour that the wedding would take place. But what researchers have now discovered is that the hour would be in the middle of the night.

Preacher: Well, even the idiom of, "no man knows the day or the hour," the idiom of, "as a thief in the night," they in that day would absolutely understand exactly what Yeshua was saying when he used those expressions. They knew it was literally going to be as a thief in the night, and it would be in the night, which again was why they had to have oil in their lamps and their lamps lit so that it would not be as a thief. They were ready, dressed and ready.

Speaker: This was the ultimate surprise twist on the Galilean wedding, and Yeshua, who lived among them for years, knew this all too well, that the groom would come for the bride in the middle of the night.

Preacher: The bride's life was pure. She slept in her wedding dress. Her bridesmaids were dressed in their white linen garments, and they were ready to help her out should the bridegroom come, which he was coming unexpectedly at an hour she didn't know, so that she could be ready to meet him.

They would do that in the middle of the night for a reason. It's to basically declare that it can happen when everybody else are not necessarily ready. It is deliberate. And that's why only the people that have an active part in the wedding are excited and are ready. But those that are not are completely asleep! They are literally asleep. That's why we're told not to fall asleep as others do. That's why one of the reasons, I think, Christians should always look for is, what are the signs that Yeshua (Jesus) gave to his disciples, and are we seeing them?

Speaker: And though Yeshua returning as a thief in the night was directed to the unprepared world, he also gave another warning directed more to those that would be waiting for his return at the end of days, a parable that warns how even those that believe they are prepared can end up left in the dark. Yeshua spoke

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about 10 bridesmaids in the night prepared and with oil burning in their lamps waiting for the arrival of the groom, which would come at any hour.

Preacher: So you've got the parable of those with the oil in the lamps. You have 10 of them. All 10 started, but not all 10 finished. Some say, "yeah, they did.", but no, they didn't. The Bible says that at the time of the midnight cry, they all jumped up and trimmed their lamps, but only five had enough oil to continue on. This is the key. Symbolically in scripture, the oil is a reference to the Holy Spirit in your life. So you can be a believer, listen carefully, Yeshua said these are they who believe for a while. It doesn't mean you are born again to believe. Has your belief brought you to faith in Yeshua (Jesus)? So these virgins were religious. They were ready and waiting. They had lamps. They had oil. But only the ones that had enough oil made it to the end.

Speaker: The application for this today is quite clear. With recently exposed social trends, many believe that this prophetic warning from Yeshua himself regarding the church in the last days is already coming true.

Preacher: I think the remnant is keeping watch. It's a small sliver of Christianity, some estimate between 1% and 10%. They're watching. They're waiting. They're looking at headlines and current events. But I think that's a smaller and smaller portion of the church today.

Speaker: As we head back to the time of Yeshua, the sun has now set on the town of Cana. And just as Yeshua warned the world will fall asleep in the last days, tonight so have many of the Galileans. But tonight, the groom's hour has finally come. The bridegroom knows the day is coming. But he sleeps with his groomsmen, they are all on the floor, perhaps in a small room, and the father makes a decision, now is the time. The father has decided that now is the hour his son will retrieve his bride. He wakes him and says, "Go get your bride."

Preacher: The son leaps to his feet, and he grabs a shofar, a ram's horn trumpet, and he lets go a blast to wake up the entire village. It's a marvelous scene. But it's meant to wake up not only the village, but the bride and her family.

It was during hours of unexpectedness that it would have been in the very early hours of the morning, even at midnight, where the bride would be hearing that cry. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." And she was to rise up. She was to get her lamp trimmed. She was to be now executing her preparedness.

Speaker: The wait is over, and the groom is finally on his way to be united with his bride. As they move through the town streets, shofars sound loudly to not only wake the bride, but also the guests that were invited to the wedding feast. Only those that were prepared could quickly rise and join the concession.

Preacher: The bridegroom and his groomsmen now exit the house. They go out of the compound, begin to go through the streets of the village, until finally they come near the bride's house. And as the bride comes into view, what a shockingly beautiful scene it must be! There in the middle of the night, you have a row of women with the bride in the middle, all the bridesmaids dressed in their white linen robes, and in the center, the bride dressed in her beautiful bridal gown.

Speaker: After a year of preparing and waiting, they are finally together again, reunited as one forever. The parade led by the bridegroom now rushes up towards the bride and her family, and all the people that are standing there, the bridesmaids, and the two men with the litter set the litter down on the ground in front of

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the bride. And she very modestly steps onto the litter, and lowers herself down. The bride did not simply follow her groom back to the father's house, but she was lifted into the air.

In fact, the ancient Galileans referred to this moment as "flying the bride to the father's house."

Preacher: She's lifted up off the ground. She's escorted with him back to that place of preparation. It speaks, it shouts, all about God's grace. It's not her efforts. She was just to be ready because she loves him. She borne aloft. She's taken away with him. It's all about the grace of God. It's about the grace of God from the beginning all the way through to now, to the end.

Speaker: There are multiple chilling similarities between this cultural practice and descriptions throughout the Bible regarding what theology has called the rapture, a moment that believers are caught up in the air to be with the returning Messiah in the end of days.

Preacher: This makes me think of something, that when the bride is lifted off the ground, and they carry her off the ground, as it were, flying her to the father's house, doesn't this sound like Yeshua (Jesus) collecting his bride off the earth to join him in the air? Without question I believe that. The clues that were given in scripture all speak with specificity to this exactly being the rapture.

This is the reason why he's coming to take us. Why would a bridegroom come and take the bride unless it's to marry her? From that moment on, we will always be with the Lord, just like a husband and a wife are one. They cannot be separated anymore. This is why I believe the rapture is such an amazing thing.

Speaker: After the bride is flown to the father's house, the long-awaited conclusion has begun, the beginning of a wedding feast joined and witnessed by all of those that were prepared and heard the call during the darkness of night. And Yeshua(Jesus) made it clear to his disciples that this, too, is a picture of what will happen at the end of days.

Those that are caught up to be with the returning Messiah will partake in what the Bible refers to as the marriage supper of the lamb, the lamb being a clear reference to Yeshua himself as the sacrificial lamb crucified on the cross. In fact, the apostle John references this wedding feast when the believers are reunited with Yeshua (Jesus) as written in the Book of Revelation. To those in the final generation, he writes, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to him, for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready."

Preacher: The father's house in a Galilean wedding is the perfect picture of heaven. Together as a married couple, bride and bridegroom, united forever, living in the bridegroom's father's house. Why this is so important is because this is our destination, that we are chosen as the bride of Yeshua (Jesus) and to dwell with him for all eternity. And everything here on earth is a foreshadow, a picture, of that which is to come. It's interesting, at the Last Supper, twice Yeshua says this, "I eagerly await to partake with you when this finds its fulfillment in my kingdom."

Here's the question that has to be asked, why did God make everything? Why did he let the world fall? Why did he send his son? Why did his son have to die? Why did his son have to rise from the dead? And then

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why did his son ascend in heaven? Why is his son coming back? This may be the most important event in the entire history of eternity when god brings a bride to his son.

Speaker: Because of this, Yeshua (Jesus) promised that he would return for his bride to all that have and will accept his promise until the day he returns, to not only be united with, but to save his bride from the wrath that is to come upon the world in the last days.

But Yeshua (Jesus) warns that many will not accept his offer to attend his wedding feast, that there will many that choose to be separated from him for all of eternity, those that will be left behind.

Preacher: When they get to the father's house, everybody piles into the compound now, and the feast is set and ready to go, and the door is shut behind them. No one leaves, and no one comes in, for seven days and nights.

Speaker: In ancient Galilee, if you were locked out, there was no getting in.

Preacher: There are so many people who know about it, believers and non-believers. "Oh yeah, I've heard about the rapture. Oh yeah, Yeshua (Jesus) is supposed to come back. I've heard about this." Listen, hearing about it's not enough. In fact, we know from Galilean experience in the first century that you not only had to be ready, you had to have enough oil, you had to get in. You had to get into that wedding feast. And then the door was shut. By the way, once the door was shut, it was shut! Those who were out were out. And you think about the incredible, terrifying reality of knowing that Yeshua (Jesus) said he would come back, and to then be shut out, to be left out? And yet Yeshua was warning us in those parables. He was warning.

Speaker: And just as with an ancient Galilean wedding, Bible prophecy warns that those who missed the second coming of the Messiah are destined to partake in the wrath of God that will be poured out upon a rejecting world.

Preacher: And the righteous will be removed from the earth, because the Lord says in Isaiah 26, "I will put them in their place, I will shut the doors behind them in these inner chambers, while I pour out my indignation, wrath, upon all those who dwell on the earth."

The fact that the church escapes God's wrath is so important. The church does NOT escape man's wrath, and we can see that going on, terrible persecution going on in various parts of the world. But the church, biblically, scripturally, God says that he's going to spare us from the wrath to come.

When you look at the whole picture, the Galileans are really the key to understanding the why and what of the second coming of Yeshua (Jesus). Yeshua used this illustration that they knew so intimately over and over again, that you have a bride who is loved by the bridegroom, who is betrothed to his bridegroom. And the bridegroom is going to make a covenant with her, and then he's going to go away. And eventually, when they don't know, he's going to come back to take her to him where he is. This is an amazing thing, and it all emerges from what the Galileans understood. Yeshua talked to the Galileans like they were Galileans, so that they would understand what he meant when he said, this is what it's going to be like when I return.

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There are many people who profess to be Christians that that are really not digging into the details of what God revealed about himself. After all, that's what scripture is.

Speaker: The number of those looking to the return of Yeshua (Jesus) are diminishing with each passing year, and it's never been more important to speak up about why the Messiah is coming back. And to the pastor's, you need, in fact you must tell your congregations.

Preacher: The influence of pastors for those who attend church on a regular basis, it is still very strong. When a pastor suggests something, and not just the passage the pastor mentions in the sermon, but when a pastor suggests, "go home and read this", that has a big impact. We need to hang in there and keep encouraging the church and encouraging pastors. They have one of the toughest jobs on the planet.

Speaker: And those with media influence need to speak out.

Preacher: Yeshua died for his church. He loves his church.

Speaker: We all need to tell the ones we love. If they choose to ignore it, it's their fault. But if you never warned them, that's your fault. Their blood will be on your head.

Followers of Yeshua are choosing to remain silent. WE must be prepared to tell others why Yeshua is coming back so they too can make a choice.

Preacher: It is our choice. Yeshua (Jesus) is not forced on anyone. It is our own free will and our choice that we choose to accept our proposal from Yeshua as our bridegroom. We can take the cup or refuse it. This is why Satan hates particularly Christian marriage, he hates marriage of any type because of what it represents. It's a microcosm of what awaits in heaven. We are the family of God, our Heavenly Father. We are brothers and sister, siblings in Yeshua. It is a microcosm, a picture, of that which has yet to be fulfilled when it comes.

Speaker: Before the day of wrath, before the feast begins, before the rapture, before the thief comes in the night, back to when it all began, to the moment that you are offered his cup, the question is, will you accept it?