

# CHAIM TIMES

The Newsletter of CHAIM, "CHristians Announcing Israel's Messiah"

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## Seek First the Kingdom, No Matter What!

I've recently seen videos that claim what is going on with the virus and some of the government reaction is part of an end-times scenario. Some have suggested we are being prepared for a one-world oppressive government. I was recently in an online discussion with a number of academics and, since I am a Presbyterian minister, the host asked me what I make of all that's going on in terms of the question of the end times and the return of Christ. Here is the essence of my response with a bit of expansion.

First let me say that there are many different positions among Bible-believing scholars regarding the return of the Messiah. Good scholars of orthodox theology differ on the difficult topic of eschatology. All of them agree that the very same Jesus will return again to judge the world. The angels told the disciples in Acts 1:11, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will return again in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." All of the views of the return of Jesus also agree that there is a resurrection, a judgement, and ultimately paradise restored.

We can also learn a lesson from history. Many since the first coming of the Messiah have speculated about the second coming and calculated the date, etc. Those speculations have been colossal failures and have caused embarrassment to Messiah's cause. Therefore we must be cautious. Another very important point is that history does tend to repeat itself. We have always been in a struggle. There have always been rich and powerful men in elite positions who want to rule the world. Some believe the Beast of Revelation was Nero. It is fascinating that Nero's name translated into numbers comes out to 666 or 616 depending on the language. How interesting that some ancient

manuscripts have the number of the beast as 616 rather than 666.

That being said, Nero, or whoever is referred to, followed or will follow the pattern of Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, and Antiochus. Megalomaniacal tyrants always demand worship and hate those who refuse to bow down. Many at the time thought Hitler or Mussolini was the Antichrist. Were they wrong? Not necessarily. Those men were indeed antichrists, with a small "a." Hitler, Mao, and Stalin, and what we see going on today in China in the Chinese Communist Party are all manifestations of the *spirit* of antichrist.

Whether or not what's happening in the world today is in some way a preparation for some sort of final one-world tyrannical government is a matter of speculation. Will we soon see the return of the Messiah? No one really knows. I am personally convinced of a more optimistic eschatology and believe the Good News will prevail in the world, and in fact is prophesied to do so before Jesus returns. Based on Romans chapters 9-11, I believe God will restore the Jewish people to faith in Jesus, their own Messiah, before the end comes. Of course I could be wrong! Even if you believe that the Good News of Messiah will ultimately prevail, that doesn't mean we will not see very troubling times along the way.

End-time speculation can provide fodder for interesting discussions, but the real question is: "What do we do about it?" Are implanted RFID chips the Mark of the beast? I have no idea, but I'm not getting one either way! What I'm saying is it matters little whether current forces of oppression are indications of the final showdown between Christ and Satan, or whether they are simply part of the constant conflict we see occurring throughout history.

We need to remember what Jesus taught his disciples: in Matthew 6:31-34 “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Whether the return of Messiah is soon or much later, there are certain things we must do either way. Let me list these things that are commanded to do. I won't take time to give a verse for each one, but you can find them for yourself.

- We need to know the scriptures, because they are the words of eternal life that increase our faith and are our instructions in life.
- We need to persevere in the faith, and to continue in prayer, including prayer for government leaders.
- We need to keep striving, by the Spirit's enabling grace, to obey God's Commandments. Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments.
- We need to confess our sins and repent when we fail.
- We need to look to the grace and love of God, a love made manifest in the payment for our sin on the cross.
- We need, as I said earlier, to seek the truth of the Scriptures, but we should also seek truth from the light of nature. God has given us the ability to reason and we are to use sanctified reason.
- We are to strive to conform our thinking to truth and to make every thought captive to Messiah. We are to tear down every false philosophy that holds itself in opposition to God.
- We are to clearly and sensitively proclaim the good news “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile” and to be ready to give a rational defense for our hope.
- We are to make disciples, to teach them, and to baptize them.
- We are to keep meeting together as believers, to support God's work, and to work together to build up Messiah's kingdom. (The virus regulations have certainly made meeting together a challenge.)

- We are to love our neighbors, and even our enemies. We are to provide for our families and to help the poor.
- We are also called to expose the works of darkness and to speak prophetically to the political and social powers that be, as did the Hebrew prophets.

These are the things that we are called to do as disciples of Jesus, and that is quite a lot!

Are we focusing on these things? Regardless of where we are in terms of Messiah's return, these are the things we are to do. If Jesus were to return today, next week, next year, in 100 years or in 1,000 years does not matter. We are to *always* be doing these things.

Is the return of Messiah Jesus irrelevant? Not at all. If we firmly understand that he will return one day as the ultimate victor and judge, that he will right all wrong, that he himself is the resurrection and when he comes he will raise us from the dead, if we know and believe that he –through his Spirit– is with us until the end of the age, then dwelling on these promises will give us strength in the struggle until that great day of the Lord comes. –Director Fred Klett

## CHAIM UPDATES

Passover season was disappointing this year! A regional Seder was planned that would include people from several churches. Of course that was cancelled, as well as our Rock of Israel Seder and Resurrection Sunday program. We've continued with online worship services, though.

Rick Anderson was able to recently do some street preaching with a local church, but door-to-door work is on hold. We were going to the PCA General Assembly in Birmingham, but that was cancelled. Our newsletter service was closed, but now has opened up, so we are able to send this one out.

We just don't know what will happen with our yearly Independence Week outreach. It depends on Philadelphia's decision about festivities. We are working on a new street tract with the theme “Masks,” since we're all wearing them lately! Vitaly Kalinovsky and I have planned several hot dog barbeques for the Russian-speaking neighborhood. We hope that can still happen.

**WE ARE VERY THANKFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT DURING THESE UNUSUAL TIMES! PLEASE KEEP US IN YOUR PRAYERS!**