

This Paul Harvey 'Prophecy' Would Even Get the Devil's Attention

Paul Harvey never claimed to be a prophet. But, in 1965, the well-known and beloved broadcaster did a piece on his radio program, *The Rest of the Story*, that even Bible scholars and prophets would approve.

The piece, titled "If I Were the Devil," caused quite a stir more than 50 years ago. But the words of Harvey, an adamant believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who passed away in 2009, ring truer today more than ever. Here is a short excerpt, and you can listen to it in its entirety here:

"If I were the devil ... If I were the prince of darkness, I'd want to engulf the whole world in darkness. And I'd have a third of its real estate, and four-fifths of its population, but I wouldn't be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree—thee. So I'd set about however necessary to take over the United States. I'd subvert the churches first—I'd begin with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: 'Do as you please.

"To the young, I would whisper that 'The Bible is a myth.' I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what's bad is good, and what's good is 'square.' And the old, I would teach to pray, after me, 'Our Father, which art in Washington. ...

"And then I'd get organized. I'd educate authors in how to make lurid literature exciting, so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies and vice versa. I'd pedal narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills. ... "

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Messianic Rabbi: Mood Rings, Pet Rocks, Friendship Jewelry and The Half Shekel

One of the many fads of my youth along with the mood ring and the pet rock were friendship necklaces or bracelets.

For those unfamiliar with friendship jewelry, the basic idea was that each pendant was cut into two pieces; one would be worn by the person who purchased the necklace, and one would be gifted to someone they wanted known as their best friend forever.

Like the mood ring and the pet rock, the marketing plan was brilliant. Although, unlike the mood ring or the pet rock, the friendship jewelry actually has a biblical basis, even though the designers and marketers may not have known that their symbolic display of oneness was in fact G-D's idea, not theirs.

We find the idea of using half of something to show that you are incomplete without the other half in the book of Exodus 30:11-13 (TLV):

Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, "When you tally the sum of Bnei-Yisrael by numbering them, then every man must pay a ransom for his soul to Adonai when you count them, so that no plague will fall on them. Everyone among them who crosses over must give half a shekel according to the Sanctuary shekel (which is 20 gerahs): half a shekel as an offering to Adonai.

When G-D commanded Moses to count the people, the means of counting was unique. Every man would give a half shekel. No one could give more than a half shekel, and no one could give less than a half shekel. There are reasons scholars have provided for why it was only half a shekel. Some say it was because the men were being counted, and by providing only a half, they were reminded that it was not good for man to be alone.

Others state that the half represented the individual, and this was to reinforce the need to be part of a whole. In other words, no one in Israel was complete without remaining connected to the other half, the rest of Israel. Still, others claim that one half represented the regular Israelites and reminded them that they are incomplete without the Levitical tribe, which served an intercessory role for the nation. This thought is based upon knowing that the Levites were not included in those counted by half shekel in Exodus 30.

While each of these are good thoughts and may each in their own way be accurate reasons for the use of only a half shekel for this count, I believe a deeper meaning is found in the Hebrew words found at the beginning of Exodus 30:12: כִּי תִסַּא עֵת רֹשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂלַח מִן יָדוֹ כֹּסֶפֶת הַשְּׂכֵל הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְעֹשֶׂת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

Ki tisa et rosh B'nei Israel. This is translated as "when you tally the sum of the children of Israel," but literally, the words mean "when you lift up the heads of the children of Israel."

Lifting up the heads means to give value, to encourage. The half shekel was not as much designed to count the people as it was designed to make them count. It wasn't intended to show that they were incomplete, but rather it was designed to show them that they were a complete part of something larger. Just as the friendship jewelry was not designed to say that each person was incomplete, instead it was designed to say that together we are complete. Maybe it was this idea that brought about Yeshua's (Jesus') prayer in John 17:20-21, as He spoke of His complete unity with G-D:

"I pray not on behalf of these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their message, that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me.

The message to Israel in Exodus 30 and to the followers of Yeshua in John 17 were not telling either that they were incomplete. Both, like friendship jewelry, were intended to point out that we are not incomplete; we are part of something greater that is complete. {eoa}

Eric Tokajer is the author of *Overcoming Fearlessness, What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?, With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity, OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry, #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer, Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians and Galatians in Context.*

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When Your Why Becomes Bigger Than Your What

Many Americans are concerned about the policies of the new administration.

Most of the concerns are coming from conservatives and Christians. Both groups are surprised and alarmed by the decisions of the White House and President Joe Biden.

Troubling times are not new to Christians. Believers have suffered cultural wars in every generation. As Christians, we must trust the Lord with the things that trouble us.

We don't have to look too deep in the Scripture to discover the previous tests and trials against Christians.

In fact, the Christian faith is known for its trials. During test and trials, we search for answers. We wonder what is happening.

Trials help us discover our why—especially when it looks like the enemy has us in his clutches. When the devil believes He has the upper hand, he often overplays his cards. If we read the Bible stories to the end, we see God's people come out on top.

Let's use the story of David and Goliath as an example. Goliath was huge and strong. He was boastful and arrogant, and many believed that Goliath was unbeatable. This wasn't true.

As we know, the little shepherd boy, David, defeated the mighty warrior with a sling and a stone. David defeated the giant. The story is the ultimate good versus evil triumph.

Second Corinthians 2:14 says, "Now thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph in Christ and through us reveals the fragrance of His knowledge in every place."

God is always leading us to triumph. That means we win—always.

Some say the fight is fixed. Our God has no rival and no equals.

While it's true we know who wins, we must understand why we win. This is not the time to back down or crawl into a fetal position. It may look like we are losing the war, but we aren't.

It is time for the church and all believers to get informed on the issues and unite. Yes, the government has earthly power, and the church carries divine authority.

It is quintessential for the church to realize the power of prayer. It is also essential for believers to understand that we serve a divine plan.

So, my first piece of advice is simple.

We must know we have a divine purpose.

The Bible character David is a great example. David was not just a shepherd boy or a giant killer. David was a servant of God. David knew his time on earth was for advancing God's kingdom and God's purpose.

Like David, God designed our future according to His purpose. We must make sure we are living for the right purpose. This earth is temporary, and so is our time here. Our time on earth is like a vapor and measured by eternity; years on the earth are only a fraction of our afterlife experience.

Living for this earth is secondary to the higher purpose of living for the kingdom of God.

This is the reason we must discover our “why.” David discovered his “why” ... why he was born.

Mark Twain said, “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born, and the day you find out why.”

Discovering our “why” is paramount. If you have not found your “why”, then take it seriously. It matters. To know your “why” is the difference between surviving and thriving. It is the difference between just living and having a life.

My best opinion is that your “why” starts with knowing God.

Jesus came to give us life and unlock our purpose.

“The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

So, to discover your divine purpose begins with an earthly decision—the decision to follow Jesus.

How do we receive Jesus? We confess with our mouth and believe in our heart.

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved, for with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:9-10).

It all starts there. {eoa}

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Bible Scholar: 6 Blessings Await You Today

David was probably an elderly king when he wrote Psalm 37, and he had the wisdom to know the principles of life. He knew that there are consequences for our actions.

The six promised blessings found in Psalm 37:1-9 will be yours when you do the six things mentioned in these verses. You don't even have to take them by faith; all you have to do is what David said, and the blessings are yours.

Please do not misunderstand. Without faith, it is impossible to please God—but faith kicks in when you cannot see your way, you cannot do anything about your circumstances, but you act anyway. David gave us six things we can do to receive these six blessings:

1. **“Do not fret ... nor be jealous” (Ps. 37:1, MEV).** No doubt, when David was a younger man, he fretted and dealt with jealousy. But David “practiced what he preached,” and so learned to control his passions, temper and spirit. He learned that the reason we need not fret about the power evil people gain, nor be jealous of their prosperity, leads to the first blessing: “They will quickly wither like the grass, and fade like the green herbs” (Ps. 37:2).

The righteous flourish as fruitful trees and receive God's blessings, but the wicked wither and fade as grass and herbs. When the wicked are destroyed, we can see their prosperity outwardly fading. The wicked bring judgment upon themselves by their own actions, and after that, they have to face God's judgment. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God

as a wicked person.

2. **“Trust in the Lord, and do good” (Ps. 37:3a)**. We are to trust God in all things and at all times, not merely when the going gets tough. To trust God and do good is to live in His ways, think His thoughts and see people through His eyes. To do good is to do His works, fulfill His mission and help other people, expecting nothing in return—no strings attached. When you are kind to people for no reason, they may wonder what you want from them, and they may not be thankful. Nevertheless, trusting in the Lord and doing good leads to the second blessing: You will “dwell in the land, and practice faithfulness” (Ps. 37:3b).

Like the sparrows, you will not worry about your subsistence, for God provides for those who trust Him and do good. This is a principle of life. What goes around comes around. You reap what you sow. If you sow trust and goodness, you will reap trust and goodness. All that is good comes from God, and we simply receive with outstretched arms of faith. Religion without faith is useless, but the life of a faithful believer rests in a trusting relationship with God.

3. **“Delight yourself in the Lord” (Ps. 37:4)**. Delighting in the Lord is the key to finding God’s will for our lives. To delight in Him is to be joyful in all that He requests of us, including obedience, reading Scripture, praying, godly relationships and being willing to do what benefits others and the Church. When you delight in all the things of God, He will give you the third blessing: “the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4b).

The reason this principle is the key to finding God’s will is because God does not place desires in our hearts that are contrary to His will. In other words, when we take joy in all the things of God, we can trust the desires in our hearts. We can trust that God placed them there as our roadmap to meaning

and fulfillment in life and know that we are meant to pursue these desires with all our hearts. The pursuit of the desires of an obedient heart will lead us on paths that cause us to be salt of the earth and lights of Christ to the people only we can reach.

The desires of our hearts will lead us to move by faith to fulfill His purposes for our lives. This is equivalent to God's "calling" on our lives. The calling is within our hearts. We discover that calling as we consistently take joy in all the things of God.

4. **"Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him" (Ps. 37:5a).** Now that we have found that it's biblical to pursue the desires of our hearts, which we can think of as a calling or roadmap, we must then commit our journey in this pursuit to the Lord. And He will then grant us the fourth blessing: "He will bring it to pass. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday" (Ps. 37:5-6b).

One reason many Christians do not experience this breakthrough is not because they are not living for the Lord or because they are not "good" enough to receive from God. Rather, it is because they have been taught they cannot pursue the desire of their hearts, because their hearts are evil and deceptive. They don't understand that believers have a "new heart" and that God's will is embedded in the desires of their hearts. They ignore the calling on their lives, because they have been taught that their hearts cannot be trusted. While that is true of the unregenerate heart, it is not true of the heart of one who is taking delight in the Lord. If you are obedient to God's word, step out by faith and follow the desires He has placed there, You can trust them. This is the key to fulfilling God's will and calling on your life.

5. **"Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, do not fret ... let go of anger" (Ps. 37:7a, 8a).** Command five repeats

command one that says not to fret. If you have obeyed the Lord in command one and stopped fretting, and have noticed evildoers fading and withering, by the time you get to command number five, you have only to rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and release anger in order for evildoers to be cut off by a stroke of divine justice. Release all your anxieties to the Lord and receive the fifth blessing: "Evildoers will be cut off" (Ps. 37:9a).

6. **"Hope in the Lord" (Ps. 37:9b).** When the righteous place their hope in the Lord, they inherit what evildoers gather. Our part is to watch, pray and keep our gaze on the one who is the author and finisher of our faith. The ill-gotten gains that evildoers have garnered will eventually flow away from them and dissipate. They will not be what they once were, and we will soon be what we not yet are. When we obey the second command and trust in the Lord, we will dwell in the land. That's like renting the land, a house or an apartment. But when we hope in the Lord, we will own the land. So place your hope in the Lord and you will receive the sixth blessing: "You will inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:9c).
{eoa}

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Why God Wants to Woo You Into a Covenantal Relationship

After the amazing Exodus from Egypt—where the Israelites were freed after generations of slavery in Egypt, and they witnessed their oppressors drowned in the very sea they had crossed through on dry ground—God had their attention. So He began to teach His people who He was.

He revealed Himself as their provider as He miraculously provided them with water, then daily bread and meat. He also revealed Himself as their healer—He would take care of all their needs.

He then called Moses up the mountain, where He proposed a covenantal relationship with His people. He said that if they would keep His covenant, then out of all nations, they would be His treasured possession. The people of Israel accepted, so God gave instructions on building a tabernacle where He could dwell in their midst.

God wanted fellowship with His people. But they had to approach Him with purity because of His holiness and righteousness, entering His presence in worship and reverence.

He still wants fellowship with His people. After He has freed you from sin and saved you, He wants to woo you into a covenantal relationship. If you will follow Him and obey Him, you can be part of His treasured people out of all nations. All you have to do is say “I do!” and then enter His presence in praise.

For more encouragement from God’s Word, join me on our *Walk Thru the Bible* series. Join me today by downloading our Bible

reading plan and get started reading right away! Invite your friends and family to join us. I can't wait to *Walk Thru the Bible* with you! {eoa}

Dr. Susan Michael is USA Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and host of the Out of Zion podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.

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Messianic Rabbi: Why We Are Each Equally Different, While Being Uniquely the Same

The Bible provides within its pages many important lessons for G-D's children. As we read the history of Israel, we see on page after page G-D instructing His people in how to live their lives.

G-D established marriage and family with Adam and Eve. We learn about worship, offerings, love and hatred through the story of Cain and Abel. That lesson continues as we read about Noah and the Tower of Babel. We continue to learn about family, community and nations through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As Israel leaves Egypt, we read of the rebirth of the Hebrew people as a sovereign nation and the establishment of the Aaronic Priesthood. G-D, in His Word, established an organized priesthood or ministry team whose purpose was to assist the

rest of G-D's people in their worship of G-D. The establishment of the priesthood or ministry brought about new lessons for the people of G-D, some of which the body of believers are still trying to learn today.

As believers today, we are still wrestling with the same issues about ministry that the children of Israel wrestled with thousands of years ago. When Aaron was chosen to be the high priest, his calling was challenged by Korach, or Korah, and his followers. The words of Korah's from Numbers 16:3 (TLV) echo through time:

"They assembled against Moses and Aaron. They said to them, "You've gone too far! All the community is holy—all of them—and Adonai is with them! Then why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of Adonai?"

Korah and his followers were caught in the same snare that catches too many people today. This deadly trap can become a snare not only to congregation members, but to leaders also. Let me try to explain. The body of Messiah is a unique entity, one where everyone is the exactly the same, while at the same time, everyone is different. In the body of Messiah, there is no male or female, and no Jew nor Greek. Yet at the same time there are biblical distinctions for men and women and Jews and Greeks. Within G-D's sovereign and perfect design, G-D made us all equal, or as Korah said, "All of the community is holy," and yet G-D also raised up leaders such as Moses, Aaron, David, Paul, Jacob and whoever is the rabbi or pastor of your congregation today.

It is this strange dichotomy that Korah struggled with and one that we, too often, struggle with today. The reason we still fight this same fight today that Korah fought way back in the book of Exodus is because we have allowed the same spirit of jealousy to take root. Congregants get jealous of their leader's position, and leaders get jealous when they feel their position is being challenged. Neither of these things

should happen, but too often they do, with the result being either a split congregation or a leader that in fact does exalt himself above the role G-D called him to serve.

The answer to the problem is found within the Torah in the very place where G-D first established the priesthood. Take a look at Exodus 28:1:

“Bring your brother Aaron near with his sons from among Bnei-Yisrael, so that they may minister to Me as kohanim—Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.”

Notice the wording as Aaron is ordained by G-D to minister as a Kohen (priest): “Bring Aaron your brother ... from among Bnei-Yisrael (children of Israel)…” In His wisdom, G-D told Moses that ministers within the people of G-D would be from among the people. Ministers do not become outside of the body; they remain among the body. They were always to be equal in community relationship, while at the same time, fulfilling the unique intercessory role of ministry.

If we ever learn this lesson, our congregations will welcome the leadership of our rabbis and pastors because they will understand that every rabbi or pastor is simply the sheep leading the way. And every rabbi or pastor will serve in full accountability as an equal sheep of His pasture and not as some kind of a royal monarch who barks commands with a “do as I say, not as I do” attitude. {eoa}

Eric Tokajer is the author of *Overcoming Fearlessness*, *What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?*, *With Me in Paradise*, *Transient Singularity*, *OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry*, *#ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer*, *Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians* and *Galatians in Context*.

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A Purim Message for the American Church

The Jewish world will celebrate Purim this month and remember the heroism of a young Jewish woman who saved the Jews of ancient Persia from annihilation almost 2,500 years ago. Most people are familiar with the biblical story of Esther and how she risked her life to plead with the king on behalf of her people who were being targeted for annihilation by the evil Haman.

The book of Esther does not explain the true significance of this story, and we often read it as though it is about a local subgroup of Jews: the Jews of Persia. However, the Persian Empire was so large that Haman's attempt to destroy Persian Jews was an existential threat to the entire Jewish population at the time.

If Haman had succeeded with his evil plan, the Jews would have ceased to exist. And 500 years later there would have been no Jewish Joseph and Mary in Nazareth to have birthed the Messiah.

God knew this and that all of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were at risk. His plan of world redemption rested on this people to whom He had bound Himself in covenant, revealed His holiness and righteousness, and given the law, the prophets and the promises. They were the ones He had taught about the consequences of sin and the need for atonement. And through them He was going to bring about the Messiah and His atoning death on behalf of the world.

Everything was on the line. We do not know how much of that Esther understood. But her uncle Mordecai knew she had to act

and encouraged her in her calling. As a result, Esther is the premier example of someone lobbying her government on behalf of her people.

Herein lies the lesson for the American church today: we must be willing to be like Esther and Mordecai, who remained uncorrupted by the politics and culture that surrounded them yet found the courage to selflessly take a stand in the place where God had called them—the halls of government.

This is not the time to retreat in anger, disillusionment or intimidation from the powers set against us. If we shrink back into apathy and political correctness, the American church will lose its voice, and the country will descend into an abyss of immorality.

Yes, we should pray and use times of introspection to keep our ways right before the Lord. Esther herself pulled back for a time of fasting and prayer. But then the time came to step forward to lobby against the evil schemes of Haman and secure the future of her people.

Our future rests on our own shoulders. And as Mordecai would say, we were born for such a time as this. May we be as courageous and pure as Esther. {eoa}

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3 Significant Events That Must Happen Before Our Lord Returns

Note: For part one of this article, [click here](#).

Again, we must ask “How soon is ‘soon’?” Is there a prophetic sequence or significant signs which can help us clarify God’s timetable for these end-times events and His promised second coming?

The Season of God’s Wrath

The Bible refers repeatedly to a future, end-times season of God’s wrath on the ungodly as the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18).

A literal interpretation of Revelation 16 reveals that this long-prophesied, judgment season of God is different from the tribulation vengeance and persecution of the Antichrist (Rev. 6:1-6) and the Great Tribulation (Rev. 6:7-11).

Jesus taught that these tribulation events conclude before the “gathering of the elect” (Matt. 24:29-31, Rev. 6:9-11) and the wrath of God (Rev. 6:12-17, 8:1-5, 9:13-21). This season is also called the Great Day of His Wrath, The Terrible Day of the Lord or the Bowl Judgments of God and it will rapidly end Satan’s rebellion.

The Pre-Wrath Return of Jesus

Revelation’s mysteries are summarily linked to our Lord’s Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. Comparing the scroll and seven seals of Revelation 6 with the revealed events or features of

Matthew 24, one finds these subjects in this sequence: the beginning of birth pangs, the Great Tribulation, the gathering of the elect and the wrath of God.

Again, the eschatological teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:29-31 clearly places the timing of the great harvest of God's chosen ones after the tribulation and just before the wrath of God being poured out on His enemies from something like bowls or vials (Matt. 24:48-51).

Likewise, comparing the cosmic calamities of these verses and the synoptic scriptures of Mark 13:24-27 and Luke 21:25-28 with Revelation 14:14-16, one notes that earth's harvest or "gathering together" of the saints occurs "after the tribulation." Do you also see the timing and stated correlations with the "catching away" or "rapture" as revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18?

Why is This Important?

This is important because each individual member of the body of Christ who is diligently preparing for the Bridegroom's coming must prepare him or herself to stand strongly against the inevitable persecution of believers by a wicked society, the Antichrist and Satan (-12) in the last days. In fact, Paul and Peter urged believers to consider it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ and to do so with prophetic and persistent perseverance.

For well over a century, most evangelical Protestants have been taught a pre-tribulation theory of deliverance for believers before the days of persecution—and even beheadings—by the unholy trinity of Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet. Some well-meaning advocates insert this doctrinal paradigm into every passage they can, and when one won't logically or literally fit, they carefully skip over it or assign it to a different "dispensation" of God's dealings with man.

The Noble-Minded Bereans

After Paul and Silas escaped from religious zealots in Thessalonica, they went on to the Macedonian town of Berea, where he found “fair-minded” Jews in the synagogue there who received his teachings eagerly and were “daily examining the Scriptures, to find out if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

In a similar way, we should always seek to understand the context of any scriptural passage and any obvious figurative language. Then, we should allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. The best way to interpret the Bible is to understand its pages literally, except those passages which obviously communicate figurative significance. As one Bible scholar has said, “Where the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, we need seek no other sense.”

As the “time of the end” draws closer, biblical predictions will become clearer and our understanding will increase (Dan. 12:4). While one might speculate on various implications that can be found for teaching an “imminent” return of Jesus Christ, where He could come “at any moment,” this prophetic teaching-point is not specifically taught in any Scripture. Rather, a literal, comprehensive study of the Bible clearly points to certain signs, or events, which must occur before our “coming King” comes.

3 Significant Events before the ‘Coming of our Lord’

For instance, in 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul told the confused believers that there must first be a significant apostasy (falling away) of insincere believers and then “the man of lawlessness” will be unmasked or revealed (2 Thess. 2:1-2, MEV) before we are “gathered together” at “the coming of our Lord.”

Second, that can’t happen until “he who now restrains” steps aside and, third, releases the “son of destruction” to begin his devilish deeds (2 Thess. 2:3-8). He will begin by

displaying himself as “god” in a rebuilt temple of Jewish worship and sacrifice, which will have to be built first.

So, in this one passage (2 Thess. 2:1-8) are three significant events that must occur before our Lord Jesus returns.

Living in the Last Days

As we live in these last days, we are not only told to look for His appearing (1 Thess. 1:10), but we are to also love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8), while “hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet. 3:12, NKJV). It seems that the timing of our Lord’s return is related directly to the spiritual condition and committed activity of the church and its members individually (2 Pet. 3:10-11)!

The Christian life is a walk or a journey of spiritual progress: hearing God’s Word, trusting its promises and applying it through faith-filled obedience. In these last days, may we continually increase our scriptural readings, teachings and witnessing of our “soon coming King,” until that day when, as Dottie Rambo wrote, “We shall behold Him, face to face, in all of His glory!” {eoa}

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Messianic Rabbi: One of These Things Is Not Like the Others

One of the things I love about the Bible is that every time that you read a book, chapter or even a verse, you can find something that you never noticed before. When I study, I read with the purpose or intention of finding things that are missed because, while they are an important part of the greater biblical narrative, they are often lost within the context of the text of which they are a part.

I came across one such example this week while reading Exodus 25:12-15 (TLV):

“You are to cast four rings of gold for it, and place them in its four feet. Two rings will be on one side, and two rings on the other side. Also make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. You are to put the poles into the rings on the sides of the Ark, in order to carry the Ark. The poles are to remain in the rings of the Ark, and not be taken from it.”

These verses are a part of the instructions that G-D provided to Moses as he prepared to supervise the building of the tabernacle. Specifically, these verses are a portion of the description of how to build the ark of the covenant. From these words, we can imagine just how beautiful the ark was: built of wood covered in gold with intricate ornamentation. The ark's elegance is conveyed in such detail that, when we come to the verse above, they seem almost unimportant compared to the verses that surround them.

After all, these verses only speak about the rings and poles used to carry the ark. They are merely functional and utilitarian, and not very meaningful compared to the ark,

which would become the home to the tablets of stone engraved by the very finger of G-D, or the atonement cover, often referred to as the mercy seat.

Or are these rings and poles more important and meaningful than a simple reading would imply? When we read about these rings and poles, the wording is very similar to the wording used to describe the rings and poles for the table of the bread of His presence (Ex. 25:27-28), the altar of sacrifice (Ex. 27:4-7), and the altar of incense (Ex. 30:4-5).

But there is one significant difference between the wording concerning the ark above and the instructions given for the other three pieces of furniture noted above. That difference is found in Exodus 25:15: "The poles are to remain in the rings of the Ark, and not be taken from it."

This commandment that the poles should not be taken from or removed from the ark of the covenant is unique to this single piece of furniture. This seemingly insignificant difference is easy to overlook as we read, but it may contain symbolism that isn't only relevant to the Israelites of that day, but also may be of great importance and value to us as believers today.

Let's look a little deeper. The commandment specifically required two poles. These poles could represent the two parts of the nation Israel: Judah, the lower kingdom, and Israel, the upper kingdom. Or they could represent the two parts of the covenant: the Tanakh (Old Testament) and Brit Chadashah (New Testament).

Or, maybe they represent humanity made up of Jews and Gentiles. I believe the poles are meant to represent Jews and Gentiles because the other two don't fully fit. When the commandment was given to Moses, the nation had not been divided yet, and at that time, the only covenant that had been given was the Torah, written on the tablets that were commanded to be placed inside of the ark within the same

chapter.

But, does the idea of it representing Jews and Gentiles fit the symbolism? Well, wood in the Bible often represents humanity. In this case, it's encased within gold representing G-D's covering. These poles had one specific purpose, and that was to carry the ark which contained the word of G-D, the two tablets of stone. Well, the idea that the poles would represent Jews, or Israelites, makes sense because they were chosen by G-D to carry and preserve the Word of G-D.

But, what about the Gentiles? If we look back to Exodus 12, we find that a mixed multitude left Egypt along with the children of Israel and both the Israelites and the mixed multitude together heard G-D speak from the mountain, and they all together entered into covenant with G-D at Mount Sinai. So, it does fit and make sense to see the two poles in terms of one being the Jewish people and one the Gentiles, who had committed together to carry the covenant of G-D.

If this symbolic picture is correct, then we see that G-D commanded those who would carry His covenant to never be removed from the ark itself. Why so specific that the poles not be removed from the ark when no such commandment was given concerning the other pieces of furniture? I believe that this commandment to not remove the poles from the ark was a prophetic warning that those carrying the ark should never be separated from the ark and its contents.

However, over the centuries since, that is exactly what happened. Both Jewish and Gentile followers of G-D have, in a real way, removed themselves from the Ark and the complete covenant that it represented. The Jewish people held strongly onto the Tanakh and the covenants within its pages, and the Gentiles held onto the Brit Chadashah and the New Covenant. Instead of both groups remaining attached to the fullness of G-D's covenants contained in both the Tanakh and Brit Chadashah, we see thousands of years of division and

separation.

The warning provided in Exodus 25:15 was ignored as the two poles were removed from the ark. But the good news is that in these last days, we have seen a restoration of the unity of Jewish believers and Gentile believers as they are becoming the one new man spoken of in Ephesians 2.

Not only are the poles being restored to their place of attachment to the ark, but the body of believers is restored to carry the covenant of G-D. Other promises contained within the ark are also restored: Aaron's rod that budded, representing life from the dead, and the bowl of manna, representing G-D's miraculous provision for His people.

But, unless the poles remain connected to the ark carrying the covenant, G-D's people cannot carry the covenant, life from the dead and miraculous provision to those who desperately need them. {eoa}

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Effective Methods to Hack Your Way Out of Stress

One of our greatest enemies in 2021 is stress.

Stress is a thief. Anxiety steals our peace, robs our creativity and holds up our progress.

For maximum effectiveness, we must learn how to keep our anxiety at minimum levels.

We live at a time where stress and worry are at an all-time high. Many Americans are riding the waves of emotional change. We are suffering from depression and loneliness.

We can hack our way out of this. Here are some healthy suggestions.

Prayer

Prayer builds our faith, and faith drives out worry and fear. Prayer calms our fears and releases anxiety. Praying to our Creator calms our nerves and builds our trust.

“Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad” (, NKJV).

Prayer acknowledges that God is able.

“Therefore, I say to you, “whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24).

Cooking

I don't know the science behind cooking and stress, but I know

it helps. I enjoy cooking. I am sure it is connected with my love language—acts of service.

The activity of cooking helps us forget, at least for a little while, about the less pleasant aspects of life.

Research shows that cooking makes people happy. The creative part of cooking a new recipe and the act of cooking take my mind off of stressful things.

According to a study published in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, people feel happier after practicing “everyday creative acts,” like cooking.

Psychiatrist Carole Lieberman says cooking makes people feel good because it’s a way for them to nurture others.

Just try cooking for a stress hack. It works.

Coffee

Coffee is my drink of choice. Great coffee makes for a great life. I despise and refuse to drink a bad cup of coffee.

Coffee turns a mediocre experience into a great one. Drinking a delicious cup of coffee is a stress buster—and even more so when mixed with morning meditation or reading the Bible.

But watch out for other side—caffeine can add to stress.

Pay attention to how you use caffeine and how it affects you.

Reading

Reading a great book with a grade 10 cup of coffee is relaxing and comforting. A plush chair and a great book are not a welcoming place for stress and worry. It is extremely useful for relieving stress.

Just do it. Find something you need to read or love to read and brew a cup of coffee and froth some whipping cream.

Delicious and stress-busting for sure.

Exercise

Exercise is a release for those who are stressed or tense. When you exercise, your body releases endorphins—feel-good hormones that naturally boost your mood.

Scientists have found that regular participation in aerobic exercise has been shown to decrease overall tension levels, elevate and stabilize mood, improve sleep and improve self-esteem. About five minutes of aerobic exercise can begin to stimulate anti-anxiety effects.

Discover what type of exercise works best for you and when. For me, vigorous aerobic exercise is best.

“For bodily **exercise** profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

According to some studies, regular exercise is just as effective as medication. Some people experience reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.

For you worry-warts, give exercise a chance. Daily exercise is a great tip to reduce stress decrease worry.

Sex

There is no reason to shy away from the truth that great sex can alleviate great stress.

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—For your love is better than wine” (Song 1:2).

Suggesting sex for stress release is a little touchy to some. But sex is a powerful stress buster—especially for married men. Let’s make sure we stay within the bounds of biblical behavior.

Just like any physical activity, healthy sex is good for your heart. A study published in January 2015 in the *American Journal of Cardiology* found that men who had sex twice weekly or more had less risk of cardiovascular diseases, like stroke or heart attack than those who had sex once a month or less.

A healthy sex life is one of the great joys of life. Cuddling with someone you love reduces stress levels and releases beneficial endorphins.

For the married couples, I am sure you will enjoy giving it a try.

Order

Order creates order. Order is the arrangement of things.

Disorder creates stress and anxiety.

In a survey conducted by the National Association for Professional Organizers in 2015, it found that over a third of readers were overwhelmed by their clutter.

We do not realize the negative effects of clutter in our lives and stress levels.

It is proven that messy homes leave us feeling anxious and overwhelmed. Yet, organization is rarely recognized as an effective stress reliever.

One person said, "Clutter distracts you, competes for your attention, and can visually overstimulate you. All of which makes it hard to focus and can interfere with your productivity. Not to mention, when you have too much stuff to take care of, it can feel like you're fighting a losing battle with a never-ending to-do list."

Stress and worry try to cripple us in our everyday lives, but we can fight back and seek solutions that are practical and effective against stress and worry.

I suggest that you add one step per day for the next seven days. The coming weeks will be better and better. {eoa}

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