

The Beginning and the End

The End Times

In my last post, we looked at **The Mysterious Festival of Hanukkah**. Today, I am starting a new series which I have entitled **The Beginning and the End**. This is a series about the **End Times**. I have never been much of an eschatology buff. Yeshua declared: ***"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away. However, when that day and hour will come, no one knows — not the angels in heaven, not the Son, just the Father. Stay alert! Be on your guard! For you do not know when the time will come"*** ~ Mark 13:31-33. I knew that many people ignored this passage and tried to calculate exactly when the **End** would come; all failed.

Shortly after committing myself to the Lord, I read Hal Lindsey's *"Late Great Planet Earth"* and was convinced a pre-tribulation rapture of the church would occur soon. Then going through the entire Bible, I became a mid-triber hoping the pre-tribers were correct. I devoured Tim LaHaye's *"Left Behind"* series. I thought it was a great fictionalization of the **End Times** and didn't have too many concerns from a scriptural standpoint. But, once again the idea of studying eschatology didn't trip my trigger.

It now appears that God has cocked that trigger. As I think I've shared before, my personal study in God's Word this year has been through the Brit Hadashah (New Covenant), Tehillim (Psalms) and Mishlei (Proverbs) using the English Standard Version Study Bible. In addition to the Olivet Discourse which I blogged on earlier this year, I kept running into passages in the Brit Hadashah by Sha'ul and Kefa that mention the **End Times**. My Tuesday Skype group has also been studying the **End Times** and the Pastor at our church who leads the Senior Adult Ministry (Prime Time) has just finished a study on Revelation. Ok, Lord, you got my attention.

Two Common and Opposite Errors When Studying the End Times ¹

Sometimes, examining the **End Times** degenerates into endless debates and unwarranted speculation about specific details. Other times, **End Times** curiosity comes to a screeching halt as people throw up their hands at what they've begun to feel is an impossible and fruitless enquiry.

- 1. THE SLIP INTO UNWARRANTED SPECULATION** ~ A slip into the rut of unwarranted speculation and guesswork results in a desire to wring more detailed data out of Scripture than Scripture clearly provides. The prophetic passages in Scripture are inflated until the rest of what Scripture has to say is marginalized, pushing Yeshua and the Besorah to the edges and corners of each page.
- 2. THE SLIP INTO SHOULDER-SHRUGGING CYNICISM** ~ A slip into the rut of shoulder-shrugging cynicism about the **End Times** results in downplaying or ignoring **End Times** texts. (That describes me until recently.) A balanced understanding seems unattainable, so Messianics abandon careful study of the **End Times**.

¹ Material in this section was taken from Rose Guide to End-Times Prophecy.

These two possibilities represent two dangerous ditches in any study of the **End Times**. During this series, I will do my best to build guard rails that will protect us from slipping into either of those ditches.

As we go verse-by-verse through the ***Revolution of Yeshua the Messiah to Yochanan***, we will scour the rest of Scriptures to bring clarification and background information to provide the best possible understanding to what we read. Where there is more than one viewpoint, I will present the most recognized explanations.

I want to cover the **End Times** from the beginning of the Tanakh to the end of the Brit Hadashah. As I have heard it said many times, the Bible is the story of creation and redemption. The Tanakh announces the coming of the Messiah and the Brit Hadashah assures us the Messiah has come and He will be coming back to judge us all.

In the Beginning

Let's start in the beginning! B'resheet 1:1 says, ***"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*** We have already seen that the Ruach is God. So, He was there I the beginning. Yochanan (John) 1:1 also indicates that Yeshua was there as well. ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*** [The **"Word"** (GK *logos*) is a title for Yeshua in the Brit Hadashah.] So, we see in this very first verse of the Bible the three persons of God – Father, Son and Spirit. B'resheet 1:2 offers additional proof that the Rauch was present at the time of creation. ***"The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water."***

It is almost impossible for me to quote B'resheet 1:1 without giving a little more background information. Some of you may have never heard this before.

In Hebrew, B'resheet 1:1 reads (Hebrew is read from right to left):

הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֵת אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא בְּרָאשִׁית:

Transliterated (transcribed into English pronunciation) it reads: ***B'resheet bara Elohim et hashamayim ve'et ha'arets.*** For me, belief in the truth of this one simple, yet utterly profound statement hangs all the validity of the entire Bible and serves as the basis for a belief in creationism. If we cannot believe this one simple truth, then nothing else is relevant. If we cannot believe the veracity of this one simple statement, then the entire rest of the Bible is merely words with no lasting meaning.

I want to share two interesting tidbits about this verse.

1. In Hebrew, ***bara*** (בָּרָא) means "to create." This verb is of profound theological significance, since it has only God as its subject. Only God can "create" in the sense implied by ***bara***. The verb expresses creation out of nothing, an idea seen clearly in passages having to do with creation on a cosmic scale.² Now, we all know that all of us can also create, but we can't create out of nothing. We must start with some raw material. In Hebrew, the word for that kind of creation is ***asa*** (עָשָׂה).³

² Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.

³ Ibid.

2. No English translation of the Bible attempts to translate the Hebrew word **et** (אֶת). It is a preposition before the noun **hashamayim** which means "the heavens." Now, I'm certainly not a grammar scholar in any language, but this is what I find fascinating about this word in the first verse of the Bible. The first letter in the Hebrew alphabet is **alef** (א) and the last letter is **tav** (ת). Consequently, **et** is a pictorial representation of the first and the last. Where have we heard that before? "I am the Alpha and the Omega ⁴, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." (Revelation 22:13)

We read in B'reshet 3 that because of the Fall, Adonai already had a plan in place to redeem mankind. ***"Adonai, God, said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all livestock and wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and eat dust as long as you live. I will put animosity between you and the woman, and between your descendant and her descendant; he will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel'"*** ~ Genesis 3:14-15.

In my next post, I want to re-cap what we learned earlier from Yeshua in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 ~ 25) so its fresh in our memories.

⁴ Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet.