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The Fervent Expectation of Messiah

"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am [Messiah]; and shall deceive many." – Matthew 24:5

By Mike Wingfield

It is not an accident that the expectation of the coming of the Messiah of each of the world's three monotheistic religions is at an all-time high. I believe that the anticipation of the coming of Messiah among Jews, Muslims, and Christians has never been as great in my lifetime as it is at this very moment. Jews are looking at the events in the Middle East, and especially the predicted invasion by Russia and Iran mentioned in [Ezekiel 38-39](#), as a sign that the Messiah is about to come. Muslims are expecting their long-awaited Mahdi [messiah] due to the specific events that are unfolding in Syria and Iraq. There is a lot of chatter in Christian circles about the potential for the return of Jesus Christ for His church in the next few weeks. What are we to think about all of this? Let us examine the evidence in the light of God's Word.

First, we must understand that the Bible has the final answer, and really the only answer, concerning this subject! It doesn't matter what the Jewish rabbis, Islamic imams, or Christian theologians, preachers, or authors say. The Lord has total authority and control over all things, visible and invisible. The Bible emphatically declares and

illustrates repeatedly that the Lord *"works all things after the counsel of his own will."* ([Ephesians 1:11](#)) He is the one and only true God. There are no other gods. He has declared: *"I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me."* ([Isaiah 45:5](#)) He is the only true and holy God who is eternal, has all power, all knowledge, and is present throughout all of His creation. He is self-sufficient and does not need anyone or anything to exist or rule over all that He has created. While speaking about Jesus, the Bible declares: *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [have their being]."* ([Colossians 1:16-17](#))

All statements made by ancient or current leaders of all religions must be analyzed on the basis of the unchanging Word of God. Jesus said: *"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."* ([Matthew 5:18](#)) While speaking about His return, He said: *"Heaven and*

earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35) The creation is in a process of degeneration, but God and His Word are unchanging and eternal. (Psalm 102:25-27; 119:89-91, 160) God's purposes are eternal. (Ephesians 3:11) He has said, *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips."* (Psalm 89:34)

Not only is the Bible unchanging and eternal, it is also complete and final. The Bible is the complete and final divine revelation given to man. The final verses in the Bible warn everyone to not add to or take away *"from the things which are written in this book."* (Revelation 22:18-19) The 66 books of the Bible are all we need to be completely and adequately equipped to know what to believe, and to serve God. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Jesus told His apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them *"into all truth."* (John 16:13) The Apostle Paul later declared that the Holy Spirit had revealed God's truth to the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:5), who were the unique and only *"foundation"* of the church, Jesus Christ *"being the chief cornerstone."* (Ephesians 2:20) When the apostles passed from the scene in the first century, God ceased to give man any further revelation. There are no apostles and prophets in the church today! God is not giving mankind new revelation. Those who claim to be receiving new revelation from God are out of bounds with the declared statements of Scripture and are walking on dangerous ground.

Anyone who has ever studied the Bible as it relates to the Second Coming of Christ knows that there is a great difference of opinion among Christians with regard to the timing of His return. I believe, in light of the detailed chronology of the book of Revelation, that the ultimate and final visible return of the Messiah, called *"the Revelation,"* will not take place until the end of the Tribulation Period. (Revelation 19:11-21) This will be after the Gog and Magog invasion and the destruction of Russia, Iran, Turkey, and their Islamic allies. It will be after seven long years of deadly judgments as an expression of the wrath of God upon a godless and wicked generation, culminating with Armageddon. This final and visible glorious return of the Messiah to earth will be recognizable to all living inhabitants of earth. (Revelation 1:7) However, this event cannot be the same event that will include the sudden snatching away of the Bride of Christ *"in the twinkling of an eye."* (1 Corinthians 15:52)

In the Rapture, Jesus will come down to the clouds to snatch away the church to heaven to be with Him for seven years. (John 14:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) In the Revelation, following the marriage feast of the Lamb in heaven (Revelation 19:4-9), the church will descend from heaven with Jesus to earth, where He will establish His kingdom upon the earth for 1,000 years. (Revelation 19:11-20:6) It is important to have this Biblical overview of the coming of the Messiah as we look at the following expectations of the coming of Messiah that are permeating the global culture at this time.

The Current Jewish Expectation of their Messiah

As Jewish people witness the ongoing in-gathering of Jewish exiles from the nations of the world, the mounting global assault on their occupation of the Holy Land and Jerusalem, and the nuclear threat of Iran with the aid of Russia (viewed as a foreshadow of the Gog and Magog war in Ezekiel 38-39), they believe the coming of Messiah is imminent.

According to a report from *Breaking News Israel*, here is one example of the Jewish expectation of the imminent coming of their long-awaited messiah. "Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, a leading authority in mainstream Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, has been giving clear and unequivocal messages recently that the coming of the Messiah is imminent. He is urging Jews to make aliyah as soon as possible. Aliyah, the Hebrew verb for 'going up', refers to immigrating to Israel, which is seen as higher spiritual action that can help herald the coming of the Messiah.

"It was reported that the Rabbi Kanievsky was presented with a pamphlet, written by Rabbi Yitzchak Ben Tzvi from the city of Bnei Brak, dealing with the End of Days and many other related prophecies. Rabbi Kanievsky, who is a pillar of the Jewish community and known for his authoritative books on Torah law, read the pamphlet carefully. After a short consideration, he told those around him that the pamphlet needed to be distributed and that Jews living outside Israel should return to their ancestral land.

"In yet another instance of Rabbi Kanievsky's call for aliyah, author Rabbi Yekutiel Fisch revealed advice that was given to his cousin, a teacher at a prominent

Lakewood Yeshiva who visited Israel recently and went to Rabbi Kanievsky to receive a blessing at the end of his visit.

"The Rabbi told him that he should not leave Israel because the Messiah would be arriving very soon. The teacher responded that he had 700 students waiting for him in Lakewood. Rabbi Kanievsky told him that he must bring all of the students to Israel. Upon his arrival in Lakewood, the story spread quickly, creating quite an impression on the students who all revere Rabbi Kanievsky.

"After a lifetime of immersing himself in classical Jewish texts, Rabbi Kanievsky's study partner informed various media sites that the Rabbi is talking about the messiah 'all the time.' Since last summer's war in Gaza, the Rabbi has been spreading this message of imminent return. In one instance, Rabbi Kanievsky instructed a Jew from Argentina who asked for a blessing that he should 'gather your family and come to Israel. Otherwise, there won't be enough room for you on the airplanes.'

"When asked about the timing of the Messiah's arrival, Rabbi Kanievsky answered, 'At the end of the Sabbatical year.' Several people have asked the rabbi to verify this and he has given the same answer each time. This year is the Sabbatical year and it will be ending on the 29th day of Elul, which, by the Gregorian calendar falls on Saturday, September 12, 2015." (<http://www.breakingisraelnews.com/44534/leading-israeli-rabbi-messiah-imminent-jewish-world/#BHRh3ihKB5vGPfKW.99>)

Many Jews in Israel and in the nations are taking these words very seriously, and making spiritual preparations for the coming of messiah. I must caution you to understand that most Jewish people have a completely different view of who their messiah will be, and what he will do when he arrives on earth. Many believe that he will be just an ordinary godly man that will lead Israel to military victory over the nations that are currently threatening to destroy the Jewish nation. They believe he will usher in an era of peace and prosperity that will be centered in Israel. He will rule the world from Jerusalem. Justice will permeate the world as the knowledge of God will be made known in all nations.

The Current Islamic Expectation of their Messiah

Much to our shame, there is probably a greater expectation among Muslims for the coming of their messiah than among Jews and Christians for their respective messiahs. Since the revival of Islam that began with the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, there has been a growing expectancy of the sudden appearing of the Islamic messiah, the one they call the Mahdi.

According to Joel Richardson, a Biblical scholar of the end-times, 672 million of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims believe that the coming of the Mahdi is imminent. (www.joelstrumpet.com/?p=3842) *World Net Daily* reports: "In the latest evidence of this messianic fervor, a mainstream Sunni Muslim website has decreed that the Islamic messiah, called the Mahdi, will appear this year or in 2016 and that the Muslim Jesus will return in 2022 to conquer the world for Islam.

"*DiscoveringIslam.org* and the *End Times Research Center* have calculated that the 'first phase' of the end of time will begin soon and lead to the 'Day of Judgment' in seven years.

"The estimates were derived from 'the latest research' into numerical analysis of the Quran, Hadith, Arabic words and historical events," according to *DiscoveringIslam.org*." (www.wnd.com/2015/03/mahdi-to-return-by-2016-followed-by-jesus/#QAm4Fy08VD7m7Tfk.99)

In addition to all of this, the recent capture of Dabiq in Syria by ISIS has heightened the messianic fervor within the Islamic world. Many believe this explains why so many Muslims from around the world are joining ISIS in their war efforts. According to Islamic tradition, Dabiq is the equivalent to the Biblical Armageddon that will usher in the Islamic messianic era. Muslims believe their Islamic forces will engage a massive military force at Dabiq in the final days of judgment. It will be a blood bath for both sides, with Islam defeating the West and ushering in the Islamic global kingdom ruled by the Mahdi. They are hoping the U.S. will send troops into Syria to fulfill this Islamic expectation.

All of the radical Islamic terrorist groups (like ISIS, Hamas, Lebanon, Islamic Jihad, Al Qaida, and Hezbollah)

and radical Islamic regimes, such as Iran and elements in Turkey and Sudan, are being driven by their expectation of the imminent coming of the Mahdi. They believe that according to their holy writings a global destruction must take place and their Mahdi will then appear to bring global justice and peace, establishing a global Islamic government. The Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Islamic State that is expanding across the Middle East, are currently leading this effort.

This is what makes the nuclear deal with Iran so dangerous. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continuously warned the West of the apocalyptic dreams of Iran to bring in the golden era of the reign of their Mahdi. On March 3, 2015, while speaking to the U.S. Congress, Netanyahu said: "Iran and ISIS are competing for the crown of militant Islam. One calls itself the Islamic Republic. The other calls itself the Islamic State. Both want to impose a militant Islamic empire first on the region and then on the entire world. They just disagree among themselves who will be the ruler of that empire.

"In this deadly game of thrones, there's no place for America or for Israel, no peace for Christians, Jews or Muslims who don't share the Islamist medieval creed, no rights for women, no freedom for anyone. ...

"The difference is that ISIS is armed with butcher knives, captured weapons and YouTube, whereas Iran could soon be armed with intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear bombs. We must always remember -- I'll say it one more time -- the greatest danger facing our world is the marriage of militant Islam with nuclear weapons. To defeat ISIS and let Iran get nuclear weapons would be to win the battle, but lose the war. We can't let that happen." (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/03/03/full-text-netanyahus-address-to-congress/>)

I personally have been shocked to hear the response of the liberal U.S. political leadership and pundits to Netanyahu's warning. While ignoring the facts, they call Netanyahu a warmonger and cozy up to the radical leadership in Iran. The intellectual foolishness and political blindness of the West at this hour is absolutely astounding! Many political analysts are comparing these developments to an eerie repeat of the ridiculous appeasement efforts by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain after his conference with Adolf Hitler before World War II

erupted. The conflict with Hitler and his Axis powers lasted about seven years and killed more than 73 million people. During the war years, the Nazis systematically murdered one-half of the world's Jewish population in their concentration camps.

It is not a coincidence that according to the prophetic Scriptures, the world is facing another global war that will last seven years. During these war years, the Antichrist, who will probably be the Islamic Mahdi, will kill two-thirds of the world's Jewish population. ([Zechariah 13:8-9](#))

The Current Christian Expectation of their Messiah

There is a remnant of true believers in this world that are longing and looking for the coming of the Lord. Many of them may not agree on the time of the Rapture, but they recognize that we are moving through the final phases of the last days.

We must recognize there are no signs for the Rapture of the church. It is imminent. It can happen at any moment. However, all of the signs of the end-times should be viewed as preparations for the time of judgment that is coming upon all the inhabitants of earth, called the Tribulation Period. Some of us are Biblically focused upon these signs as commanded by our Lord. He said: *"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."* ([Luke 21:28](#)) When the Tribulation unfolds, the following conditions (only to name a few) will be in place: A time of great spiritual deception and darkness will cover the earth. ([Isaiah 60:2](#); [Matthew 24:5](#)) A time of economic and political upheaval will lead to a one-world government that will eventually be controlled by the Antichrist. ([Daniel 7:7-8, 23-25](#); [Revelation 13:7](#)) The Jewish people will return to their land, leading to wars and rumors of wars over their possession of the Holy Land and especially Jerusalem. ([Ezekiel 36:1-7, 24](#); [Zechariah 12:1-9](#); [14:1-3](#); [Matthew 24:6](#)) A peace process over the struggle for the possession of the land of Israel will finally lead to a covenant that will be forced upon Israel by the Antichrist, leading to the beginning of the Tribulation Period. ([Daniel 9:27](#)) Geological upheaval will increase in frequency and magnitude. ([Isaiah 2:10-22](#); [24:1-23](#); [Ezekiel 38:19-22](#); [Matthew 24:7](#); [Revelation 6:12-17](#); [8:7-9](#); [16:17-21](#)) Celestial and atmospheric disturbances that will threaten life on earth will escalate. ([Luke 21:25-26](#);

Revelation 8:10-13; 16:8-11, 21) The global professing church will experience a time of apostasy and apathy. (Luke 18:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 2 Timothy 4:1-4) The Gog and Magog coalition will begin to take shape. (Ezekiel 38:1-9) And, immorality, violence, and wickedness, all accompanied by demonic influences and possession, will permeate the nations as it did in the days of Noah. (Matthew 24:11; Romans 1:18-32; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Revelation 9:20-21)

As fall approaches, with the Jewish feast days in September, there are many of us who are experiencing a heightened expectation that something is about to happen. We cannot be dogmatic about this, but an examination of God's program illustrates that many times significant events on God's calendar of prophetic events have unfolded on the Jewish feast days. Consider this. Jesus died at Passover. He resurrected at the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The church began on the feast of Pentecost. So, one does wonder, is it possible that some big event or events will unfold on the Jewish New Year, and during the Feast of Tabernacles or Yom Kippur? There has been a lot of chatter in Christian circles about all of this in recent years and months. We must be very careful in these considerations. We must respect the sovereignty of our God and His plan. He has chosen to not reveal the exact dates connected to the end-time events. (Matthew 24:36) Our sovereign God has not told us everything, but only what we need to know. *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed [divine written revelation] belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."* (Deuteronomy 29:29)

It is very sad to realize that the overwhelming number of professing Christians in the United States are not interested in looking for the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. They have, at best, fallen asleep. (Romans 13:11-14) Their leadership has told them that studying Bible prophecy is a waste of time. Rick Warren recently stated in one of his blogs that studying Bible prophecy is futile. He stated that we only need to focus on evangelism, not Biblical prophecy. (www.cbn.com/spirituallife/churchandministry/warren_evangelism0206.aspx)

The dangers and pitfalls that lead to apostasy grow out of our modern day many-centered version of Christianity. The central focus of the Bible is not redemption, but the

Redeemer! We are not to focus only on the creation, but on the Creator! The central purpose of the Bible is not the salvation of man, but the Savior of mankind! I am not saying that the salvation of man, the evangelism of the lost, and the defense of the truth that God created everything out of nothing are not important. This is all significant, but it is not the major theme of the Bible. The Bible is all about the glory, worship, and praise that belong to our triune God. All of God's work is focused upon His Son, Jesus Christ, having the *"preeminence."* (Colossians 1:18) When we finally get to heaven we will cry out in worship: *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* (Revelation 4:11)

I do not personally understand how any student of the Bible can reach the conclusion that the consideration of the Second Coming of Christ is irrelevant or insignificant. What do we do with all of the commands by Jesus and His apostles to be ready for His coming? How can we explain that the Holy Spirit has given us a revelation that is saturated with the expectation of the coming of the Messiah? Are we to ignore the examples of the prophets of the Old Testament, the apostles of the New Testament, and Jesus, who constantly spoke of the coming of the Messiah and the events that would accompany His coming? Are we to disregard the final book of the progressive revelation of God that ends with the revelation of Jesus Christ? Should we avoid a doctrine that declares *"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"*? (Revelation 19:10) Are we to discount the fact that the Holy Spirit directed the Apostle John to end the divine revelation with the prayerful invitation: *"Even, so, come, Lord Jesus"*? Revelation 22:20)

The entire Bible is built around the coming of the Messiah. It is the central message of the Bible. He is foreshadowed in the appearances of the angel of Jehovah, and in the divinely mandated worship in the Tabernacle and Temple in the Old Testament. The prophets gave us the amazing predictions of His first coming, and the apostles wrote of the fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament. Both Old and New Testaments are filled with hundreds of detailed prophecies concerning His Second Coming and the events that surround that event. Finally, the Holy Spirit directs all of humanity to the crowning event in all of God's eternal plan, the

supernatural, yet physical, unveiling of His Son to the entire world at the end of this age. That is why the final book of the Bible is named *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ."* (Revelation 1:1)

Isn't it alarming to realize that most of the world is looking for the Antichrist, rather than Jesus Christ? In essence, they are helping to bring about the appearance of the Antichrist and his jihad march around the world. The U.S. and the West are currently standing on the wrong side of evil! They are rejecting the moral, historical, and sane warning of the leadership of Israel about Iran's developing nuclear program. They have chosen to forget about the current terrorist activities sponsored by the cultic and apocalyptic Iranian regime throughout the Middle East. They have elected to turn a deaf ear to all of the chants of "Death to the U.S. and Israel" in Iran. Instead, they are trusting the word of a nation that promotes deception in the name of their god. They refuse to hear the cries of the Jewish people who have returned to their homeland in fulfillment to the call of the God of Jacob as promised in the Bible.

It is very apparent that if this deal is allowed to stand, there is a very serious day of reckoning coming for the nations. While it is too early to tell, it does appear that in some way this deal has set in motion the events that will precipitate the Gog and Magog war mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. It is only a matter of time!

It is not just a coincidence that Jews, Muslims, and Christians are all looking for a different messiah to appear at any moment. Remember that Jesus taught that one of the signs of the end of this age would be the appearance of many messiahs. He said: *"For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ [same word as Messiah]; and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."* (Matthew 24:5, 24)

I personally believe that on the basis of these verses and many others, the great deceiver, Satan, is setting up everything for the great deception at the end of this age. There is only one true Messiah, and we know who He is -- Jesus Christ. Near the end of the first century, the aged Apostle John wrote: *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now*

are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (1 John 2:18) While there have been false Christs during the last two millennia, I believe that the deception at the end of this age will produce two major false messiahs. Notice that the book of Revelation focuses upon only two men of deception -- the Antichrist and the False Prophet. (Revelation 13) Both of these men will be antichrist figures during the Tribulation Period.

Revelation 13 is filled with symbolism. All symbolism in the Bible must be interpreted in light of the Biblical context. Notice that the Antichrist and the False Prophet are symbolically referred to as *"beasts."* throughout Revelation 13. It is significant to note that the first beast, the Antichrist, symbolically rises up out of the sea. However, in sharp contrast, the second beast figuratively rises up *"out of the earth [land]."* In the Bible, the sea symbolically represents the wicked Gentile nations. (Isaiah 17:12-13; 57:20; Revelation 17:15) The land represent the land of Israel. Ray C. Stedman, a well-know pastor and Christian author of several books, adds the following explanation: "The land or the earth, is used frequently as a symbol for Israel throughout the Old Testament. Israel is viewed as a nation with stability because it had God as its head. It had structure, order, and foundation, and so it was depicted as *'land.'* But the sea is used many places in Scripture to describe the Gentile nations (pagan nations, by and large), which had no inner stability because there was no recognition of the authority of God. They worshiped idols and held to pagan concepts which rendered them unstable and uncertain in their conduct of human affairs." (<http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/revelation/to-jew-and-gentile>)

In light of all of this, it is amazing to note that Muslims are not only looking for their Mahdi to come, but they also believe that he will be accompanied by Isa, their name for Jesus. I believe the Antichrist will be a Muslim (Daniel 11:36-45), and will probably be the Islamic Mahdi. Therefore, the False Prophet will be a false Jewish messiah from Israel. Jesus said to his fellow Jews: *"if another come in his own name, him ye will receive."* (John 5:43) As both Jews and Muslims look for their respective messiahs, the stage is set for the great deception. Be ready for the shout that will take us out!

Last call for Mike's 20th tour to the Holy Land this Fall

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Mike's Upcoming Speaking Schedule

Please pray for these meetings. Please call your family and friends who live near these meetings and encourage them to attend. It is very important for God's people to have a proper Biblical world-view. Please pray for the Lord to send an awakening!

September 13-15	Listie, PA	Grace Brethren Church	814-443-2365
September 17	Roanoke, VA	Monthly Bible Study at Grace Baptist Church	540-798-5110
October 4-6	Kenai, AK	Kenai Grace Brethren Church	907-567-4346
October 10	Salem, VA	Faith Baptist Church	540-798-5110
October 15	Roanoke, VA	Monthly Bible Study at Grace Baptist Church	540-798-5110
October 18-20	Tipton, PA	Tipton Baptist Church	814-684-4941

Check out our website for directions and more information: www.ptnews.org