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Messianic Perspectives[®]

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

The Six Divine Accomplishments of Daniel 9:24

And How They Fix What's

Wrong With the World

by Dr. Gary Hedrick

Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

I have never met an atheist who wasn't mad at God. In some instances, it's because they prayed desperately for help and God didn't answer. Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley, for example, both famously blamed Him for the tragic deaths of their children.¹

A few years ago, a friend from church introduced my wife and me to a young Jewish woman from Belgium who was living with them. Shoshanna was part of a student-exchange program and was attending Roosevelt High School in San Antonio. Her mother and father were both university professors in Brussels. After a few moments of polite chitchat, she said, "Since you are a preacher, you may be interested to know that I don't believe in God. Does that offend you?"

I told her I wasn't offended, but it saddened me greatly that a person of Jewish heritage would choose not to believe in the God of Israel. She received my comments graciously, but went on to explain that her grandparents had perished in Nazi death camps during World War 2. She said, "I cannot believe that a good God would allow such horrible things to happen in the world." She said that her parents were also agnostics—and for the same reason.

This is a problem that Christian thinkers have wrestled with for nearly 2,000 years. How could a good God allow bad things to happen? For skeptics like Darwin and Huxley, and for that young woman from Belgium, the problem was insurmountable. To them, a good God could not coexist in the same universe with evil. They decided that they had to reject the existence of either one or the other. Since the existence of evil is obvious and undeniable, that left only God—so they rejected Him.²

If the problem of evil was a permanent one, some of us might be inclined to agree that it's incompatible with a good and benevolent God. In fact, the Bible itself tells us that God and evil are not compatible (1 John 1:5). But it also tells us that the world's current "fallenness" is a temporary condition—and it's the result of sin. Someday, sin and evil will be destroyed. In fact, the coming "restoration of all things" is a major theme of the Scriptures.³ A new world is coming! This should be a great encouragement to all of God's people.

Here in Daniel 9:24, we find a concise summary of how God will accomplish this restoration and renewal of the world. The process consists of six divine actions. The first three are aimed at taking away sin and, eventually, its effects. The second three have to do with the ushering in of God's reign of righteousness in the Messianic Kingdom.

HOW GOD RENEWS THE WORLD (Six Divine Actions in Daniel 9:24)	
ACTIONS	RESULT
1, 2 & 3	Taking Away Sin
4, 5 & 6	Bringing in Messianic Kingdom

Why 490 Years?

The six divine actions we will be discussing are said to take place over a span of 490 years. That's 70 heptads (i.e., 70 "weeks," or 70 sevens) of years (70 X 7 = 490; see the sidebar "Daniel's 70 Sevens").

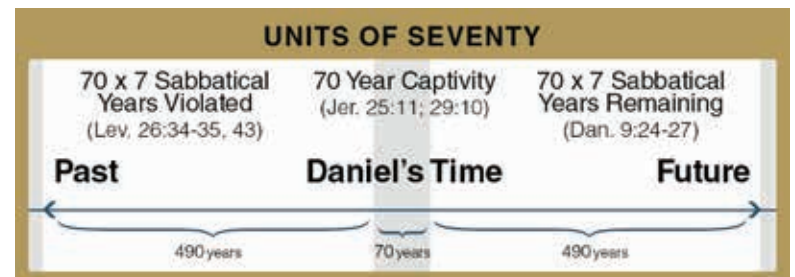
The Jewish people, of course, were familiar with Sabbath *days* because their lives revolved around the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11). But here we have Sabbath *years*—heptads of years, not days.

My Israeli colleague Gideon Levytam tells me that this is why "70 sevens" in Daniel 9:24 is *shavuim sheevim* in Hebrew rather than *shavuot sheevim*. Using the *-im* plural suffix, rather than the usual *-ot* plural ending, sets it apart from a week of seven days.⁴

No one can deny that literal heptads of years are found in the sabbatical cycles of the OT. This is not something invented by 19th- or 20th-century premillennialists to fit a prophetic scheme. On the contrary, it's imbedded in the fabric of Scripture itself.

Israel was taken into captivity for 70 years because of her failure to observe the divinely prescribed sabbatical years.⁵ During the 814 or so years from Israel's conquest of Canaan until she was carried captive into Babylon,⁶ the people had evidently observed the sabbatical year for only 324 years, or roughly 46 seven-year cycles. That left 490 years, or 70 seven-year cycles, during which Israel had been disobedient to God's command to allow the land to lay fallow (Ex. 23:11). The resulting "sentence" for Israel was 70 years (i.e., one year of punishment in exile for every sabbatical year they ignored).

Harold Hoehner, distinguished professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, charts it like this:⁷



Tommy Ice, associate professor of systematic theology at Liberty University and a well-known prophetic writer, notes that neither of the 490-year periods (before or after Daniel) consists of consecutive years. There are gaps in both of them (490/814 years before Daniel and 490/2,500-plus years after him).⁸ Dispensationalists believe the gap in the second set of 490 years falls between the 69th and 70th weeks.⁹

So, the 70-year Captivity in Babylon was Israel's punishment for 490 years of disobedience. God will also use this same amount of time (490 years) to usher in the Messianic Kingdom and fix what's wrong with this fallen world.

Messianic Perspectives®

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1. To Finish the Transgression

One translation renders this phrase, “To bring the rebellion to an end.”¹⁰ What rebellion or transgression will come to an end? To answer this question, we must first understand that God (through the archangel Gabriel) isn’t talking in a general way about doing away with sin. On the contrary, He has something specific in mind. In the Hebrew text the word has the definite article (הַפְּשָׁה, *ha-pesha*), so it’s “the rebellion” or “the transgression.”

This is most likely the Great Rebellion of the created order against God. Sometimes people say that the first sin happened in the Garden of Eden—but it actually didn’t. The rebellion started in Heaven with the revolt of Lucifer and his angelic entourage—and their subsequent fall from their exalted estate.¹¹

Next came the fall of the human race (vicariously, through Adam) in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and thereby joined the insurrection (Gen. 3:1-6). The Great Rebellion continued with the apostasy of Israel in the OT. God’s earthly people, the very ones “to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises” (Rom. 9:4), turned against Him. They worshiped idols. They ignored God’s laws. When He sent the Messiah, they rejected Him.

So the rebellion started in Heaven, spread to the earth (the Garden of Eden), and later seduced even the OT people of God (Israel).

The mastermind of the rebellion is, and has always been, the devil himself. And he’s not done yet! As we approach the Day of Messiah’s return, the NT predicts that there will be a great “falling away” from the faith within Gentile-dominated Christendom: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3).

Many of us believe that we are witnessing a precursor to this end-time apostasy in our generation as mainline “Christian” denominations abandon their commitment to biblical standards of right and wrong. These groups have adopted the mores and values of the world. They’ve rejected the fundamental doctrines of the historic Christian faith. The ancient foundations are quickly eroding.

Is it merely a coincidence that these same liberal, apostate religious bodies are also mostly anti-Israel? I don’t think so. There’s a certain consistency in this because the devil is ultimately the instigator of both (that is, religious modernism/liberalism and anti-Semitism).

So here we are, in the 21st century, still in the midst of the Great Rebellion. In fact, it’s gaining momentum. More and more, it seems as if we’re greatly outnumbered. The devil and his shrieking minions of darkness are on a rampage because they know their time is running out (Rev. 12:12). In the meantime, believers in Yeshua are like military commandos operating behind enemy lines in a vast civil war.¹²

But one day, the rebellion will be finished. It will be over. The Lord will be Victor over the powers of darkness!

In modern culture, we organize our years in units of ten. Ten consecutive years form a decade, ten decades constitute a century, and ten centuries round out a millennium.

In ancient Israel, however, time was organized in heptads, or units of seven. There were seven days in one week. Every seventh day was a time of Sabbath rest (Ex. 20:8-10). Every seventh year was a sabbatical year of rest for the Land (Lev. 25:1-7). Following every seventh seven-year cycle (that is, every fiftieth year), Israel observed a Year of Jubilee (*HaYovel*; vv. 8-12).

That’s why, when the Prophet Daniel refers to a period of “seventy sevens” (Heb., *shavaim shivah*), we understand him to be talking about seventy “sevens” of years—that is, 490 years.

We believe those 490 years are not consecutive, however, because God’s “master clock” only marks time while Israel is in her Land. During periods of exile, the clock is in stasis and prophetic time stands still.

Think of it as being similar to a football or basketball game where the clock only runs while the ball is in play. We all know that with timeouts and other interruptions, it can sometimes take 10 minutes or more to run only a minute or two off the game clock!

Likewise, it will take 2,500 years or so—from the command to rebuild Jerusalem (444 BC) until the future onset of the Millennial Kingdom, when the desolation of the Tribulation Temple is brought to an abrupt end (Dan. 9:27)—for 490 years to elapse on God’s prophetic clock.

2. To Make an End of Sins

While the term *pesha* (“transgression,” No. 1) implies a revolt against specific authority, the word *chattah* (“sin”) here is a more general reference to our “missing the mark” or “falling short” of God’s requirements.

It’s hard to imagine a world without sin. We earth-dwellers have lived with sin all around us for so long, we’ve begun to think it’s a normal state of affairs. But it’s not. Sin is an aberration. It’s a flaw. It’s an anomaly on the radar screen of God’s creation.

During the Kingdom Age, things will be different. Righteousness will be the norm and sin will be the rare exception (and later, in the Eternal State, it will be non-existent). The Great Rebellion will be suppressed during the thousand-year period (although it will rear its ugly head one final time at the very end; Rev. 20:8).



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Yeshua the Messiah made an end of sins when He died on Calvary 2,000 years ago. The Bible declares, “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (Eph. 1:7). What a glorious thought—God has made it possible for our sins to be forgiven!

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!¹³

However, the redemption that believers in Yeshua have experienced in the spiritual realm has yet to become a reality in the earthly realm. That’s why the Apostle Paul said, “*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*” (Rom. 8:22).

We pray for the coming of the time when God’s will is finally done “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Israel’s sin will be removed when the Messiah returns and the Jewish people who have survived the Tribulation turn

to Him in faith en masse (Ezek. 37:23; Rom. 11:20-27). Is it really possible that an entire nation could come to faith in one day? The Prophet Isaiah evidently thought so:

“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?
Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor,
She gave birth to her children” (66:8).

3. To Make Reconciliation for Iniquity

In this phrase, most modern versions have “to atone” rather than “to make reconciliation.” While it’s true that the Hebrew *kaphar* means “to atone” or “to cover,”¹⁴ I still prefer “to make reconciliation.”¹⁵

In legal parlance, the English term “reconciliation” means to bring parties together. If a couple files for divorce, for example, but they later change their minds and withdraw the petition, we say they have been reconciled. And that’s really what we’re talking about here—two parties (God and man) being reconciled.

You see, alienation from God has always been our biggest problem. In the Garden of Eden, the Lord enjoyed unfettered fellowship with Adam and Eve. But when sin entered the picture, sadly, everything changed (Gen. 3:8).

From that point on, our sin formed a barrier between us and the One who made us. Speaking about His relationship with Israel, the Lord said, “*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear*” (Isa. 59:2; cf. Jer. 5:25).

God wants us to enjoy fellowship with Him, but the sin problem stands in the way. Like a vast, stone barrier, more impenetrable than the Great Wall of China, it separates us from Him. If God compromised His holy nature for any reason, He would no longer be God. So He can’t just wink at sin. By protecting His own integrity as a holy Being, He protects us! That’s why the sacrifices were necessary. Sin had to be dealt with.

The OT sacrifices, however, had only limited effect. They were carried out in an annual cycle because the blood of animals only covered sins from one year to the next. The blood of the Messiah, on the other hand, atoned for our sins permanently, “once for all” (Heb. 7:27; 9:12).

The NT says that Yeshua did away with our sins (theologians call this “expiation”) and satisfied the requirements of God’s holiness forever (“propitiation”) rather than merely covering them for another year (1 John 4:10).

Notice the contrast between *annual* and *forever*.

That’s a huge difference! Today, non-Jews enjoy a relationship with God based on their faith in the Jewish Messiah. We have been grafted into the olive tree of Abrahamic faith (Rom. 4:1-16; 11:17).

But God has not forgotten the “natural branches”—the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom. 11:23-24). Even now, there’s a remnant of Jewish believers, “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Someday, however, “all” the People of Israel will repent of their sins and come to faith in Yeshua the Messiah (Rom. 11:26-27). As we have already seen, the entire nation will be born spiritually “in one day” (Isa. 66:8).

Now we come to the final three divine accomplishments, pointing us to the future Millennial Kingdom.

4. To Bring in Everlasting Righteousness

Here we have the millennial hope of Israel when the knowledge of the LORD will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

The Prophet Jeremiah refers to this future time when he says, “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (31:34).

The Hebrew form Daniel uses for “bring in” denotes causality. That is, it’s not a random occurrence. It’s something God deliberately *causes* to happen. It is God’s work and no one else’s.

This thousand-year Messianic Kingdom will be, in a sense, Second Eden. Like the old Garden of Eden, it will begin with a creative act of God—one that transforms the world and begins the process of reversing the ancient Adamic curse (Gen. 3:14-19; cp. Isa. 11:6-7). Also, the Kingdom Age will conclude with an act of rebellion (Rev. 20:7-10)—like the first Eden did.¹⁶



The Kingdom Age will transition into something we call the Eternal State (Rev. 21:1—22:5). With the “dissolving” of the physical universe (2 Peter 3:10-12), God will introduce an entirely new and different order.¹⁷ This is where the Lord says He will “make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). The Bible tells us very little about it—and that dearth of biblical data may mean that we are incapable of comprehending the Eternal State due to our frail limitations in mortality and space-time.¹⁸

All we can say for sure is that in the Eternal State, we will be with the Lord. That is really all we need to know!

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (vv. 3-4).

5. To Seal Up Vision and Prophecy

In ancient times, the author of a document could place his seal on it as a sign of its authenticity and authority.¹⁹ Only someone possessing authority greater than the author could break the seal. Even today, many types of legal documents—like deeds, wills, and records of financial transactions—require the seal of a public notary in order to be considered official.

Daniel says here that vision and prophecy are sealed up. That is, everything the prophets have foreseen and declared to the people will be fulfilled. The outcome is sealed and certain—it’s irrevocable. When God issues a prophetic warning, we’d better pay attention!²⁰

True prophecy is self-authenticating.²¹ When God says that something will happen, it will happen. No vision or prophecy can be unsealed or intercepted before it comes to pass.

The NT contains one of the most extensive prophetic visions ever given. We know it today as the Book of Revelation (1:10). The vision was given to the Apostle John by an angel.

Israel had a track record of not heeding the admonitions of God’s prophets. For instance, they mocked and attacked Jeremiah (1:9). Another prophet, Elijah, told the LORD, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life” (1 Kings 19:10).

So Daniel makes the point here that the visions and prophecies are sealed up—and will be fulfilled, no matter what. Israel should take it seriously—and the rest of the world should, too.

If you ever lament the fact that the fulfillment of end-time prophecies has been delayed for such a long time, simply remember that God hasn’t gone out of business. The prophecies have been “sealed up” and no authority in Heaven or on earth can cancel them. Every one of the predicted events will unfold perfectly and precisely as the Lord said it would. Every sentence, every word, and every jot and tittle will be fulfilled. You can count on it.

The late Gleason Archer said that the visions and prophecies in Daniel 9:24 refer to “that final stage of human history when the Son of Man receives ‘authority, glory and sovereign power’ (7:14) so that all nations and races will serve Him. This fulfillment surely goes beyond the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ; it must include his enthronement on the throne of David—as supreme Ruler over all the earth.”²²

6. To Anoint the Most Holy

There are several possible interpretations for this final phrase, so we will allow ourselves to be guided by the oft-quoted golden rule of biblical interpretation: “In passages where the literal sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.”

Sometimes, it’s okay to seek deep and mysterious meanings in a passage (within reason, of course); but there are many instances where the Bible simply says what it means and means what it says!

The most natural and unforced meaning here is that the Holy of Holies (*Kodesh haKodashim*) in the future, millennial Temple will be anointed (consecrated) for use in worship (Ezek. 40—48).²³

The phrase *Kodesh haKodashim* in the Bible uniformly refers to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. In its 39 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, it never refers to a person—not even the Messiah. So this is a prophecy that there will be a Temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium, and that Israel and the nations will worship the LORD there.

Many nations shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Micah 4:2).

Conclusion

These six divine accomplishments pave the way for the renewal of the world—and they will ultimately find their fulfillment in the coming Messianic Kingdom (Millennium)

and beyond.²⁴ They are a blessing not only for Israel, but for all people everywhere (Isa. 42:1-4).²⁵ This isn’t “pie in the sky” or pious wishful thinking. It’s a coming reality based on nothing less than the promises of Almighty God!

May every redeemed heart join voices with the early church in crying out, “*Maranatha*—Come, O Lord” (1 Cor. 16:22; cp. Rev. 22:20)! 

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ENDNOTES

¹Charles Darwin’s beloved 10-year-old daughter, Annie, died in 1851. Thomas Huxley’s four-year-old son, Noel, died of scarlet fever in 1860. Both men became hardened in their agnosticism following these heartbreaking experiences.

²The technical term for this issue is *theodicy*, which refers to defending the justice of God in light of the existence of evil in our world. The crux of the problem is that if God is a good and all-powerful God, why does evil exist? After all, if He is all-powerful, He can do anything—and that would include the power to do away with all forms of evil and its consequences. And if He’s a good God, He would surely want to do so, wouldn’t He? So then, why does God allow evil in the world? Ancient theologians like Augustine and Irenaeus proposed possible solutions to this dilemma almost 2,000 years ago. More recently, C.S. Lewis suggested that evil was allowed to enter the world so that free will could exist: “God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having” (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Harper Collins, 1980], 47-48).

³In a sermon recorded in the Book of Acts, the Apostle Peter referred to this coming restoration when he talked about Yeshua the Messiah, “whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (3:21). Paul, too, wrote about this restoration in Romans 8:18-25. The promised earthly transformation will begin when the Messiah establishes His millennial Kingdom on the earth and Eden-like conditions are restored (e.g., Isa. 11:1-9).

⁴The transliteration of the Hebrew words, which are found in Daniel 9:24 (“seventy sevens”) are ‘SHAVUIM SHEEVIM.’ Notice that it does not say ‘SHAVUOT SHEEVIM,’ but ‘SHAVUIM SHEEVIM.’ The interesting thing is that in Hebrew, when you say one week of days, you say SHAVUA. And when you’re talking about two or more weeks of days, you say SHAVUOT (like the Feast of SHAVUOT, or Weeks). But in this verse the Holy Spirit wrote SHAVUIM and not SHAVUOT, which means that it does not have a reference to weeks or sevens of days, but to weeks or sevens of anything else the context allows. In this case, it is seventy of sevens of years and not seventy of sevens of days” (Gideon Levytam in a private email dated Dec. 27, 2012).

⁵*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985) says, “. . . since Israel and Judah had failed to keep the sabbatical years (every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, Lev. 25:1-7) throughout her history, the Lord enforced on the land 70 ‘sabbaths’ (cf. Lev. 26:34-35). Thus 490 years would be required to complete 70 sabbatical years with one occurring every seventh year” (1361).

⁶These numbers are approximations that incorporate the conservative (early) date of 1406 BC for the Israelite conquest of Canaan along with the consensus date of 586 BC for the final deportation of Judah to Babylon.

⁷Graphic adapted from Dr. Hoehner’s *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 118.

⁸That is roughly 814 years were required for the first 490 years to elapse, and more than 2,500 years have been required (so far) for the second 490 years to conclude at the end of the yet-future Tribulation. See “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel, Part IV” by Thomas Ice, accessed at www.raptureready.com/featured/ice/70-weeks-4.html.

⁹One reason we believe there’s a time-gap between the 69th and 70th weeks (and that we’re living in that gap now) is that Daniel clearly says the Messiah will be “cut off” after the 69th week (9:26) but before the beginning of the 70th week (v. 27). The only way something could happen after the 69th week without being in the 70th week is if there’s an interval of time between those two sets of weeks.

¹⁰Translation is from the *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), 1451. The Hebrew word *pesha* (פּשָׁע) is most often rendered “transgression” in English translations; however, it comes from a root that means “rebellion” or “departure.” In *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979), Gesenius adds “defection, rebellion” as meanings of related terms (695).

¹¹Yeshua said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). Sometimes people forget that the Son of God is eternal and therefore lived in Heaven as a member of the Godhead long before He was born as a Man in Bethlehem. He referred on one occasion to an event He witnessed in Heaven prior to His earthly Incarnation: “And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven’” (Luke 10:18). Some commentators suggest that this verse resonates with a similar passage in Ezekiel 28:11-19, where a fleeting, shadowy glimpse of Lucifer appears to be superimposed over a description of the historic King of Tyre. Revelation 12 provides a possible allusion to the fallen angels who followed the devil in the initial stages of this rebellion—fully a third of the heavenly host, evidently (vv. 3-9). Messianic commentator Arnold Fruchtenbaum articulates this view quite

convincingly (and also makes a connection with Isaiah 14:12-14) in his voluminous work *Footsteps of the Messiah* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2003; 551).

¹²C.S. Lewis wrote, “Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage” (*Mere Christianity* [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001], 46).

¹³This stanza is taken from the well-known hymn “It Is Well with My Soul.” Lyrics by Horatio Spafford.

¹⁴For example, *kaphar* is the Hebrew word God used in Genesis 6:14 when He told Noah to “cover” the Ark’s outside hull with pitch (a sticky substance like asphalt or tar) for waterproofing.

¹⁵The NLT, NIV, ESV, NASB, and RSV all have “to atone.” The KJV, NKJV, ASV, Webster’s Bible, and the Hebrew Names Bible read, “to make reconciliation.”

¹⁶Some commentators object to our saying that the Messianic Kingdom has an ending. They argue that in the Bible, it’s specifically said to have “no end” (Isa. 9:7). Good point! That’s why we have no objection to saying the Eternal State flows out of the 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom as a perfected, transformative, final phase of the Kingdom of God.

¹⁷Peter describes a cosmic conflagration in which the universe dissolves and the elements “melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12). This could be a first-century description of a complete transformation of reality—right down to the molecular level and beyond. Time-space will be no more. Physics textbooks will have to be rewritten in the Eternal State—that is, if books will exist at all!

¹⁸“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him’” (1 Cor. 2:9).

¹⁹An ancient seal was typically an impression made in wax, clay, or any number of other available materials. Kings often used signet rings to make their royal impression on a seal (e.g., Esther 8:2). The NT tells us that the Roman authorities placed an official seal on the tomb of Yeshua (along with an armed guard) to ensure that it wouldn’t be disturbed (Matt. 27:66). However, an Authority greater than the Roman Empire broke the seal after three days, dispatched the soldier, and rolled the stone away from the entrance of the tomb so visitors could see inside (28:2).

²⁰Through the Prophet Isaiah, God warned about the people not heeding legitimate visions and prophecies: “For the LORD has poured out on you The spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers” (Isa. 29:10).

²¹The biblical test of a prophet’s authority was simple. If his words came to pass, he was a real prophet; if they didn’t, he was an imposter and should be treated accordingly (Deut. 18:21-22).

²²Gleason L. Archer, Jr., “Daniel” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 7: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 113.

²³Ezekiel 43:18-27 describes the consecration of the future, millennial Temple—a process that will involve anointing the altar with blood from sacrificial animals (v. 20). The consecration and cleansing of the Temple for worship was something familiar to ancient Israel. King Solomon, for instance, prayed an eloquent dedicatory prayer at the consecration of the first Temple (1 Kings 8:1-65). Nearly two centuries later, Hezekiah re-consecrated the House of the Lord with a similar service after it had fallen into disrepair (2 Chron. 29:1-7).

²⁴Some respected evangelical scholars don’t see a connection here with future prophecy. For instance, John E. Goldingay of Fuller Seminary applies Daniel 9:24 to events in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and concludes, “There is no reason to refer it exegetically to the first or second coming of Christ” (“Daniel,” vol. 30 of *The Word Biblical Commentary* [Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998], 257-60). Archer, however, offers a dissenting view: “But since all or most of the six goals seem to be as yet unfulfilled, it follows that if the seventieth week finds fulfillment at all, it must be identified as the last seven years before Christ’s return to earth as millennial King” (Ibid., 112-13).

²⁵André Laococque, professor emeritus of Hebrew Bible at Chicago Theological Seminary, affirms that Daniel 9:24 is a description of “eschatological (end-time) blessings” (*The Book of Daniel* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979], 191). The eminent 19th-century OT scholar/commentator C.F. Keil concurs: “From the contents of these six statements it thus appears that the termination of the seventy weeks coincides with the end of the present course of the world” (*Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968], 339). The late Joyce Baldwin, principal of Trinity College in Bristol, England, concludes that Daniel 9:24 sums up “the accomplishment of God’s purpose for all history” (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: “The Book of Daniel”* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009], 169). Stephen R. Miller, writing in *The New American Commentary*, adds, “These great acts will affect not only Israel but all of humanity” (Vol. 18: “Daniel” [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994], 259).

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Living Out GOD IS GOOD

by Sarah Hedrick



“God is good.”

For as long as I can remember, I’ve always been taught that this statement is true. “God is good.” But at what point did I begin to believe it—really, truly believe it?

I can remember sitting in my Sunday school classroom as a little girl, listening to my teachers repeat this over and over. They would point to a little felt board with illustrations on it to demonstrate this lesson to my classmates and me. We would create our own little pictures in crayon and colored pencils of what the phrase meant to us. We would write our names on them in our shaky six-year-old handwriting, take them home, and stick them on the refrigerator as a daily reminder.

My Sunday school teachers were ensuring that these words would sink deep down into our hearts and take root as the foundational truth of our lives, so that when the day came and all else failed us, this would be what we would hold onto—and, ultimately, what would hold us together.

“God is good.” It’s told in Jeremiah 29:11, 3 John 1:11, Ezra 8:18, Hosea 3:5, Mark 10:18, and countless Psalms. There’s no lack of scriptural proof that God is good.

But what about those moments my Sunday school teachers had prayed about—those inevitable times when my faith would be tested and tried? In the midst of my day of tragedy, when all of my emotions and circumstances tell me otherwise, would I remember that God is good?

Enter Aimee Bain.

First and foremost a devoted follower of Yeshua, Aimee is also the mother of seven children all under the age of 11—something that makes “every day an adventure,” according to her blog. She’s very active—an active hiker, biker, and runner, a blogger, and a homeschool teacher extraordinaire. She also has a deep reverence and love for celebrating the seven biblical Jewish feasts with her family. But the most recent addition to Aimee’s resume is a bit more difficult to swallow.

In June 2012, Aimee Bain became a widow.

Aimee and her husband, Bryan, had met while attending a Bible study at a local Messianic congregation, and it was there that they began to get to know one another. (This is how Bryan came to know the Lord—through studying the prophecies and the feasts.) It wasn’t long before they’d fallen in love, and on October 21, 2000, the sweethearts were married in a quaint, intimate ceremony in downtown San Antonio, Texas.

Aimee and Bryan loved children and knew they wanted a big family. Over the course of their nearly 12-year marriage, they had seven children, and Bryan was a dynamic father, husband, spiritual leader, and friend.

Together, he and Aimee celebrated the biblical Jewish feasts, instilling into their children the same passion they shared for God’s holidays.

“Well, we were studying historical Christianity and how things were done, and evaluating how we can worship the Lord through holidays. And we thought, ‘Well, people have to have holidays, but we don’t want man-made traditions, we want what honors God.’ So we looked at the Bible and started reading, and found the book of Leviticus. We thought, ‘Well, here they are!’ So we did them. We checked out a lot of library books, and the first one we did was a Passover Seder. It was definitely an offering to God,” Aimee laughed. “It took hours.”

Over the years, the Bains began to celebrate more of the feasts, starting with Passover, and moving into others like the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits. All the while, they had begun teaching their children—and learning themselves—the inherent, beautiful link between Christianity and Judaism.

“My and the kids’ favorite is Sukkoth. I like the cooler, fall weather, and the kids love building the tent,” she muses. “And Bryan’s favorite was Passover. He always loved making the connection of Jesus as our Passover Lamb. He saw it as a beautiful thing.”

In April 2012, after 11 years of marriage, countless feasts, birthdays, and so much laughter, Bryan began to fall ill. The journey was incredibly short—too short, Aimee said. “But,” she added, “God is good. Sovereign and good.”

“Shortly after our big Passover Seder at church, Bryan started having pain in his neck. He went to the doctor, but they didn’t see anything on the x-rays. He’d had bone and joint pain in the past, so the doctors weren’t really concerned. But it started spreading, and he started feeling very sick, so on May 29th—Memorial Day weekend—he went into the hospital. That’s when they realized that his calcium levels were very high and that the bone marrow was cancerous,” she said.

“That kind of cancer moves very quickly—the bones were being eaten by the marrow, releasing calcium into the blood, so it wasn’t long before it went to his brain. The doctors operated at once, so Bryan was able to come home for Father’s Day weekend, which also included his birthday. He was feeling great. We were on track to begin chemo, because at that point, the doctors said the chances were about 40 percent that it would work, and we thought, ‘Let’s do it.’ But he started getting confused, so we took him back to the hospital. Within a couple of days, he wasn’t able to communicate, and after that, it just went downhill. I made the decision to bring him home on hospice. He was with us for one more week, and he passed on the 29th of June. So from the time he went into the hospital to the time he passed was one month.”

One month.



Think on that for a moment.

The love of your life, the father of your children, the spiritual leader of your home, your provider and caretaker here on earth—in the span of one short month—is gone. God takes him Home. And you're left with seven children, a mortgage, no job, and hospital bills. Would it be hard for you to see God's goodness in the midst of this kind of situation? I asked Aimee this difficult question, and she responded:

"C.S. Lewis said something along the lines of, 'We don't doubt that God has good for us. What we question is how painful is that good going to turn out to be?' That really is the way life is, and that's why it's very important that your faith not be based on your feelings. That's also why it's so important that you get a full picture of God and His plan, and recognize that yes, God loves us, He cares for us, but that doesn't mean that He's always going to do what we want, or what we think is best, or even what would seem like—to our human perspective—the right thing.

"He is sovereign, He's bigger than we are, and so is His master plan—it covers all of eternity. At the same time, He is concerned with the details of our daily lives, and He does love us. But His plan is unfathomably big. So for me to try to comprehend all of the small details as they work themselves out on the timeline of eternity . . . that's really a task that is just beyond me. My perspective is so limited.

"I didn't become a believer because I thought God was going to do stuff for me and make me happy all the time and make everything in my life wonderful. I became a believer because it's just . . . right. He is God, He created me, and I am called to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The truth is that He is good, and I won't stop believing that because of my circumstances and emotions. Yes, He does give many blessings and happiness, and I forget to thank Him for so many things. But another truth is that we live in a fallen world, so things are going to happen. One day it will be set right, but that's difficult to comprehend through hard times. But He's still good, and He's still sovereign. That's really all I have to cling to."

The months since Bryan's passing have been about finding a "new normal." In an August 30 blog entry, she wrote about the challenges of finding a place of "settling" and "comfort," and according to Aimee, they're starting to get there—slowly but surely.

"Children tend to live in the moment, which has been very helpful in all of this. When they're sad, they're just sad for a moment, and then they move on. They don't think about the future, and they don't dwell on the past. That's been a great help to me, just watching them continue to grow. It's one of the best parts about being a mom—watching them grow," Aimee said. "It's one of the biggest things I get to look forward to now. But, you know, the 'settling' thing . . . It'll probably be a while before we feel truly settled and comfortable. And that's okay."

She paused. I heard a brief hesitancy in her voice before she said, "If I may, I would just like to say something to all the families out there." She went on:

"The moments really matter. Bryan was so good about the 'little things.' The story-reading, the chess games, the hugs, the 'Push me on the swing, Daddy!' moments. Now that he's gone, it's the 'little things' we miss the most. So I would say to all the families, do them. Get messy. Bring home a kitten for your daughter, or go sledding with your boys. Do all the taste tests at H-E-B. The little things you do and the traditions you establish become part of your godly legacy, and that can outlast even your life on this earth, because it lives on through your children.

"Bryan loved prophecy, it was his absolute favorite thing. He loved the sovereignty of God to be able to work so many small things together throughout eternity to display His glory and goodness. I may not be able to see it right now, but I know I will one day."

Aimee Bain is an incredible example of a godly, faithful woman—and she manages to keep up with her seven "little people," as she calls them, very well. They recently packed up and headed out to Lost Maples in Texas for a day of hiking, and made a weekend trip to Houston for her daughter Megan's gymnastics competition. They also go on walks and bike rides to stay fit and active, and continue to invest in their local church family in Bulverde, Texas.

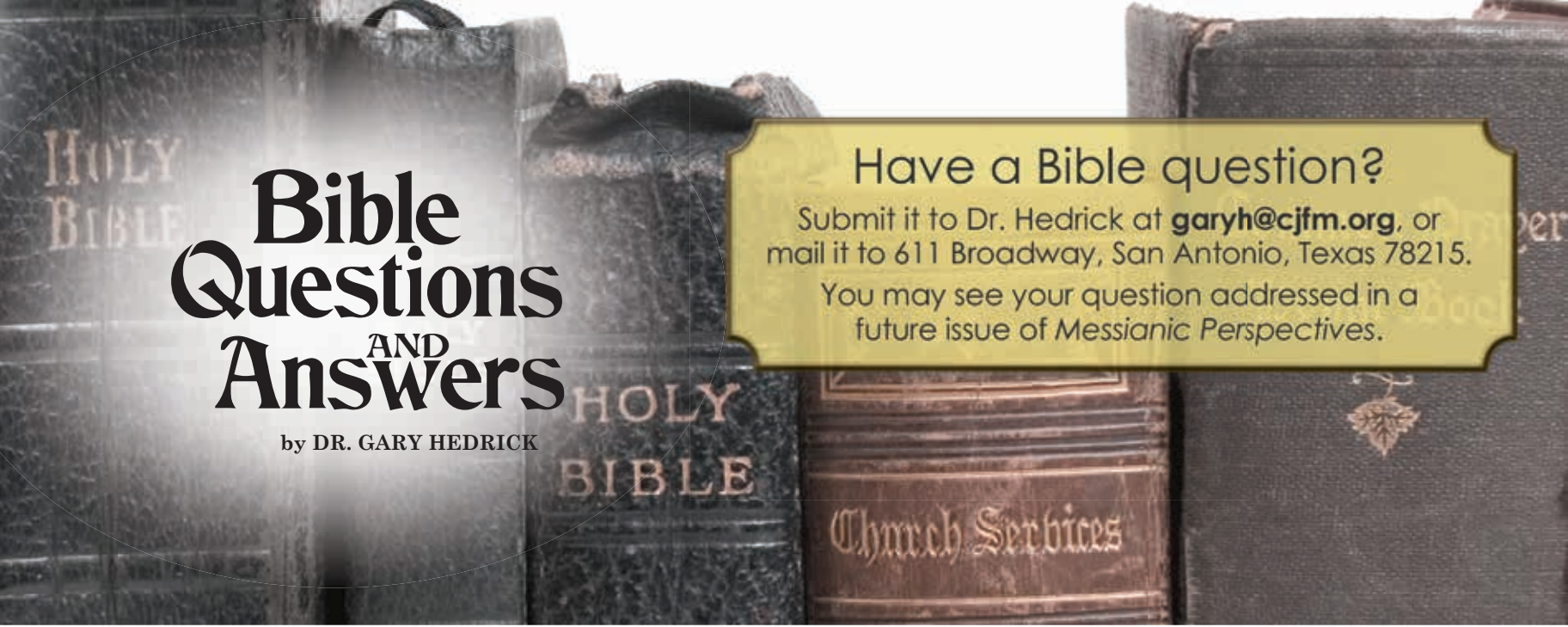
Aimee faithfully documents her family's journey on an online blog. She is a gifted writer, maintaining an honest outlook on circumstances, but keeping it good-natured and God-centered; sprinkling in well-placed humor and fun narratives between the more solemn journal posts.

"We're doing alright. We're blessed with a wonderful community and church family. They're taking care of us, doing little chores around the house. They've helped us make it through this. It's really a great example of the value of going to and becoming part of a community of believers within your actual physical community. They've been here for us. We're really well taken care of. We're so thankful," she said.

The Bain family still celebrates the biblical Jewish feasts, lives life as an adventure, invests in their church community, and always, always, always chooses to see God's goodness in the midst of this broken and fallen—yet sometimes beautiful—world.

For me, this brief conversation with Aimee Bain made that little felt board from Sunday school come to life. Thank you Aimee and Bryan, for encouraging me and our readers to choose to trust in His goodness, no matter what.

If you would like to keep up with the Bains, please feel free to visit her blog at bainsteradventure.blogspot.com.



Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at garyh@cjfm.org, or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

QUESTION: *I was surprised to hear you say that the spirit goes to Heaven immediately upon death. Aren't there many Scriptures that indicate otherwise? For example, Psalm 6:5 says, "For in death there is no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give you thanks?" Further, Psalm 88:10-12 indicates that the dead cannot arise and praise God—presumably because they're dead! Ecclesiastes 9:5 declares, "For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten."*

You quoted Paul's statement that to be "absent from the body" is "to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8), but isn't it more likely that he's talking about a future hope (someday, after the resurrection) rather than a present reality? I'm afraid I'm having difficulty reconciling your statements with Scripture.

ANSWER: When the Bible speaks about dead people "sleeping" in their graves, it's talking about their bodies (the physical part of man), not their spirits (the immaterial part). In *Revelation: An Expository Commentary* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1919), Harry Ironside rightly observes, "What is death? It is the body without the spirit: 'The body without the spirit is dead.' There is no such thing in the Bible as soul sleeping. The spirit of the man is not in the grave. The body goes down to the grave. But the spirit is in the unseen world. Hades is the condition of the spirit without the body. Christ has the keys of both death and Hades" (pp. 31-32).

Yes, of course, there are numerous passages, particularly in the OT, that refer to the dead "sleeping," including the great Messianic prophecy in Daniel 12:2: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt." But again, as Dr. Ironside pointed out above, it's their bodies that sleep in graves (and awaken at the resurrection), not their spirits.

It's not wise to use the Bible's poetry books—which abound in compelling imagery and literary devices—as a basis for theology. After all, you can "prove" almost anything you want to prove by twisting and mishandling Scripture. If I wanted to prove that God is a bird, for instance, and that His ultimate goal is to make each of us a lovely piece of fruit, I might quote Psalm 17:8: "Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings." But if I did that, I would not only be mistaken, but I would also have missed the point of the verse entirely!

You quoted a passage from Ecclesiastes that says the dead don't know anything (9:5); however, the same book also says the dead are happier than the living (4:2)! So let's not over-interpret Ecclesiastes and superimpose our own ideas on it.

One of the striking features of Hebrew poetry is its parallelism—and throughout Ecclesiastes the writer compares and contrasts two human experiences: life and death. We should live life to the fullest because when we die, earthly opportunities are gone. As long as we're alive, we're thinking, reasoning, and interacting with our fellow travelers in this journey—when we die, we're not. That's the gist of what he's telling us. He's paralleling life and death, not delivering a treatise on theology.

Another passage you mentioned was 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 where Paul says, "So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Groups that teach the doctrine of "soul sleep" explain this passage by suggesting that since the dead are unconscious in the grave, they're not aware that they're dead. So in their experience, they close their eyes in death—and the next thing they know, they're rising up to meet the Lord on the great resurrection day. If this was the only thing Paul had to say about the issue (i.e., what happens to the believer's non-material self at death), I'd have to admit that the "soul sleep" interpretation, although a bit quirky, doesn't seem outrageously unreasonable.

However, Paul had more to say about it. For example, he told the Messianic believers at Philippi: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:21-24).

Notice that here Paul explains he faces two prospects. He is in prison (1:13-14) and he can either (1) submit to the eventuality (under Roman law) of execution, in which case he will "depart and be with the Messiah" (v. 23); or (2) take advantage of the legal process (for Roman citizens) to prolong his life to continue serving as a teacher and mentor for the fledgling congregations.

Paul is speaking nonsense in this passage if he was teaching anything like soul sleep. He would have been saying that he would rather die and lie unconscious and oblivious in the grave rather than spend more time with his beloved brothers and sisters at Philippi. Do you see how ridiculous this is? Paul was in a quandary because he had to choose between (1) dying and departing to be with the Lord, or (2) remaining in his body ("tabernacle," vv. 1-2) and spending more time with the Philippian believers. He concluded that the second option was "more needful" for them (v. 24).

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Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



A blessed and healthy New Year to everyone! On behalf of the CJFM missionaries in North America and throughout the world, we thank you for your financial support and prayers as we press on to bring the Good News to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” May God continue to bless you with His promise, “I will bless those who bless you” (Gen. 12:3).

A Miracle of the Heart

CJFM missionary David Lovi (Chicago) looks forward to distributing evangelistic tracts on the north side of Chicago. Devon Avenue is the Midwest hub for East Indian shops; it’s located in the center of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community that also includes Muslim and Asian stores and restaurants. Needless to say, it is always bustling with activity—a kind of crossroads—and David finds it easy to engage in meaningful conversations. One such conversation began when an East Indian gentleman accepted a tract and David asked him what he thought about Jesus. “Arman” responded, “I don’t know about Jesus, but I have always believed in the God of Moses as the one true God because of what I have heard about the amazing things, the miracles, God had accomplished.”

David offered to explain what the God of Moses said about sending a Savior. But Arman retorted, “I won’t listen unless I see it for myself in writing.” David opened his Bible and as he read he showed Arman Scripture from Isaiah 53, John 3, and Romans 5 and 8. Arman listened intently while David further explained John 3:18-21 concerning sin and salvation.

“Wow, I had no idea Jesus said those things,” Arman exclaimed. He appeared convicted and asked many interesting questions. Arman then commented, “I, too, want to believe in this Jesus from the Bible!” So he joyfully prayed with David to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior, and also expressed a desire to attend the Olive Tree Congregation, a Messianic fellowship.

David also had an unexpected dialogue with two Muslim men after he ducked into a Muslim bookstore just to get out of the rain. In the course of their discussion about Scripture and sin, they told David, “You’re a Jew! All Jews are demons!” David continued sharing Scripture with them. One of the men was the bookstore’s owner, and despite their disagreements, he was open to a future conversation with David. Please pray for the Spirit of God to also work in this man’s heart.

A Soul-Searching Story

Rob Styler, CJFM director of missions (Phoenix), travels extensively to speak in churches and various other venues sharing his biblical stories. Many times, it is a cultural experience. Recently, while in Moscow, he was invited to speak at a

local church. Russian church services are quite long, usually running two-and-a-half hours. Rob said the service consisted of two or three sermons, poetry readings, prayer requests, and sharing. Rob told the story of the leper (“From Rags to Riches”) during the service’s second sermon. A man was so moved by the story that he came to the front of the church, stated that he wanted to confess his sin, and asked people to pray for him. Rob wrote, “I cannot tell you how humbled I felt. God used me to reach across the culture and language barriers to reach another person’s soul.”

Another Miracle of the Heart

CJFM missionary Michelle Beadle (New Orleans) received a phone call from a Jewish businessman she had met on an airline flight in 1997 while traveling home from CJFM’s Jewish Evangelism Training Program in Phoenix. They had spoken the entire flight; Michelle shared her faith in Yeshua with him, and he shared the trials he was experiencing in his life. Since he also lived in New Orleans, Michelle invited him to attend her 12-lesson Bible study series on Messianic Prophecy. He completed the course, but did not make a decision to receive the Lord.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, he moved to another state. They kept in touch only sporadically until the unexpected phone call in which he stated, “Michelle, I think I’m ready to accept Jesus, but do I have to believe he is God?” Michelle reports, “A long conversation ensued and he prayed to receive Jesus as his Messiah and King, God in the flesh—what a miracle! And what a privilege it was to pray with him and encourage him as he walks with Yeshua and is on fire for the Lord. Now I can say that every Jewish person who has gone through my *Messianic in the Tanakh* series has invited Jesus into their life.”



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The word “depart” (v. 23) is instructive in this regard. In Greek, it’s *anulusai*, an aorist active infinitive of the verb *anulo*, which literally means “to unloose” or “to undo again.”

The late professor Kenneth Wuest, an eminent authority on NT Greek, comments: “It meant ‘to depart.’ It was a common expression for death. It was used in military circles of the taking down of a tent and the departure of an army, and in nautical language, of the hoisting of an anchor and the sailing of a ship. Paul uses the same word in Philippians 1:23” (*Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970]).

This raises the issue of the intermediate state (i.e., between the moment of death and the time when our bodies are resurrected immortal, and our spirits are reunited with those glorified bodies), when we are evidently in Heaven in a disembodied state.

Paul says this disembodied state is like the spirit being “naked” (2 Cor. 5:3). On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appeared with Yeshua, Moses was most likely in a disembodied state since his physical body had been buried on the other side of the Jordan centuries earlier (Deut. 34:6). So, the disembodied state is not without precedent in God’s Word.

It’s clear that Paul anticipated a great adventure when he died—not a cessation of function, consciousness, and experience. Like a great sea vessel that pulls up its anchor, sails off, and eventually disappears over the horizon, he would be making a glorious journey to Heaven—not reposing unconscious with his mortal body in its grave.



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