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# Messianic Perspectives®

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

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## WAITING & WATCHING FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

*“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matt. 24:42).*

I don't know about you, but I don't like to wait—for anything!

But whether we like it or not, waiting is an unavoidable part of our daily routine. We wait in line at the store. We wait on test results from the doctor's office. We wait for an answer after we have written to a loved one. We wait for the long-anticipated season opener of our favorite TV series to finally resolve the cliffhanger that ended last season!

God also tells us to wait—and we say, “What? You too?” But the truth is that it's an inevitable part of the Christian life. In fact, waiting is one of the hardest things God asks us to do. Isn't it ironic that in many cases, it requires more faith to wait and do nothing than it does to move out and take action?

But over and over again, the Bible tells us to wait on the Lord:

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope (Psalm 130:5).

But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint (Isa. 40:31).

Waiting is the ultimate expression of faith because when we wait on the Lord, we are submitting to His will. We are leaving the timing in His hands. And very often, like I said, that's not easy to do!

This is no less true with respect to prophetic events. The disciples, for instance, wanted the Lord to return within a matter of days or weeks. In fact, they didn't want Him to leave at all! When they asked Him if it was time to restore the kingdom to Israel, however, He told them to leave the timing of these future events up to God:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1:6-7).

So we're supposed to wait on the Lord and leave the timing of prophetic events up to Him. And while we're waiting, we should be watching. But what, exactly, does that mean? How are we supposed to do this?

And on a side note, *why do we have to wait at all?* Why hasn't the Lord already returned and put an end to all of this world's misery, suffering, injustice, and pain? What possible justification could there be for such an extended delay?



Let's begin our discussion of these issues by looking at the first of six interrelated aspects of biblical watchfulness.

## 1. Watchfulness means being expectant.

The first and most obvious aspect of watchfulness is expectancy. Do we really expect the Lord to return someday—and possibly soon?

Have you ever waited at a bus stop? For me, this allusion evokes memories from the late 1950s, when I was a little boy and rode the city bus with my grandmother. The route took us up and down Magnolia Avenue in Riverside, California, where we went shopping at Sage's Grocery Store and then returned home. It was a real treat for me! While we were waiting at the bus stop, I would scramble up on the bench to get a glimpse of that big bus as it made its turn onto the main road a mile or so away and then headed toward us. I probably said something like, "Look, Grandma! I can see the bus! It's coming!"

That's what expectancy means. I was just a little boy craning my neck to get a glimpse of that big, blue bus off in the distance. But even before I could see the bus, I had every confidence that it was on its way. The online version of the *Encarta Dictionary* says the word *expect* means, "to believe with confidence, or think it likely, that an event will happen in the future."

One reason my grandmother and I were confident that the bus would eventually arrive was that we knew it had come before. Those earlier arrivals provided us with a frame of reference—and that's why we believed the bus would come again.

Likewise, when we say we believe Jesus will come again, it's not an event without precedent. He's been here before! He was born in Bethlehem nearly 2,000 years ago, was He not? Anyone who doubts that God invaded our world in the first century hasn't been paying attention. Something remarkable happened in those days, and this world has never been the same since.

Consider this irrefutable fact: all of history is divided into BC ("Before Christ")

and AD (*Anno Domini*, or "Year of our Lord"). The great line of demarcation is the birth of that Baby in the manger. Could a myth or a fable have made such an indelible impression on this world? I don't think so.

Just as surely as He came the first time, then, He will come the second time. The difference is that He came the first time as a humble Servant. He was spat upon, beaten, and eventually suffered an ignominious death. But the next time He comes, it will be as King of kings and Lord of lords (see Revelation 19:16). This time, the Lamb will come as a Lion—the Lion of the tribe of Judah (see Revelation 5:5).

That's why the New Testament (NT) says we should always be "*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus [Messiah]*," (Titus 2:13).

If we are truly expecting the Lord to return, it should make a difference in our priorities and in the way we live. It doesn't mean that we don't use common sense and plan for the future; however, it means that we order our lives with the understanding that our plans could be interrupted at any time.

An old gypsy saying warned about pilgrims making their tents too permanent: "Don't drive your stakes too deep; we may be moving in the morning."

## 2. Watchfulness means being spiritually awake.

Another aspect of watchfulness is being alert to what's happening around us. The Apostle Paul told the believers at Thessalonica that when it came to spiritual matters, we should be awake rather than asleep:

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober (1 Thess. 5:4-6).

If we are awake, then we're alert, responsive, and aware of our surroundings. It's like a homeowner who stays awake because he's expecting a burglar.

If the burglar shows up, the homeowner is prepared and responds accordingly.

When we are slumbering, on the other hand, we are oblivious to what's happening around us. If a thief breaks in, he can take what he wants and be gone before we even know he's been there!

This is mainly talking about individual believers; however, there have been times when the Church has slumbered corporately. This is especially true with respect to the doctrine of the Second Coming. Virtually all notable church historians agree that the early believers felt a sense of urgency about the Second Coming. The venerable Philip Schaff wrote:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed . . . a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius; while Caius, Origen, Dionysius the Great, Eusebius (as afterwards Jerome and Augustin) opposed it (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 2, Chap. 12, §158).

So the predominant view in the early Church was that the prophecies of a coming, earthly kingdom would be literally fulfilled. That's what the ancient "chiliasts" believed. But gradually, over the ensuing centuries, the Church's prophetic fervor began to wane. With respect to prophetic understanding, she went into a deep slumber. Theologians like Augustine abandoned their belief of a literal fulfillment of prophecy. They came to regard premillennialism as a "Jewish fable," a holdover from erroneous rabbinic views. Other prophetic theories arose in the Church and replaced premillennialism (or "chiliasm").

It has only been in the last couple of centuries or so that the evangelical world has begun to recapture some of that first-century expectancy and zeal for the Lord's return.

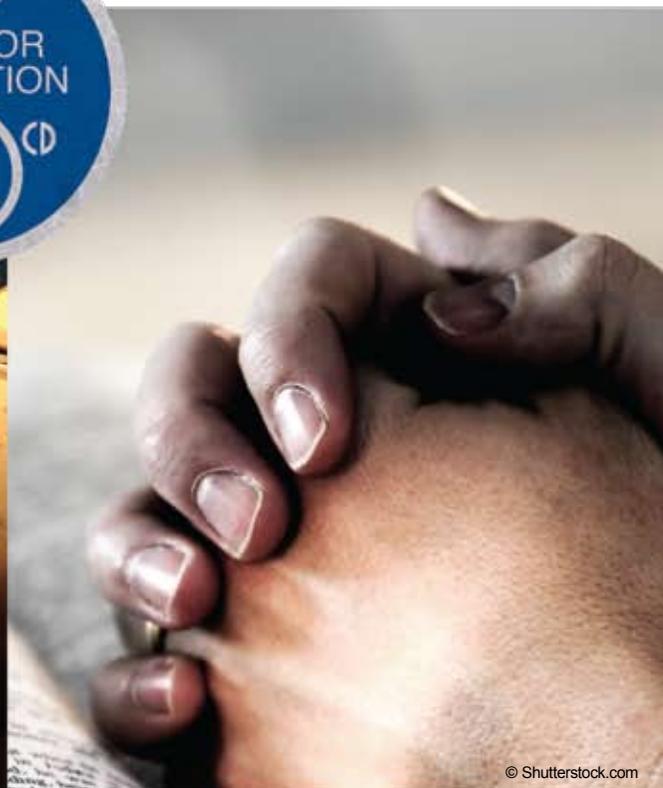
We should learn from those mistakes of the past. The passage of time does not dilute or diminish God's promises

### Messianic Perspectives®

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in any way. Jesus promised to return, and that promise is just as valid, and just as binding as it was 2,000 years ago. The Apostle Peter explained:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Peter warns us here not to mistake God's patience for an inability to keep His promises. In reality, the delay has been purposeful. It has provided an opportunity for more people to hear and respond to the Gospel. Although this Good News went first to Israel (the Jewish people, or *Am Yisrael*), it was subsequently taken also to non-Jewish people. More people—both Jewish and non-Jewish—have come into a salvation relationship with God through the shed blood of His son, Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah.

So the notion that the passage of time implies a weakness or deficiency on God's part simply does not hold water. Yet, skeptics sometimes appeal to a similar argument. They say there must not be a God at all because if there were, He would surely put an end to all of the evil and suffering in this world. They mistake divine inactivity for divine nonexistence.

In his 2008 film *Religulous* (Lionsgate), for instance, well-known comedian and profane HBO talk show host

Bill Maher—an avowed atheist—interviews an actor who plays Jesus at a Christian theme park in Florida. Here's an excerpt from the encounter:

Maher: "Why doesn't [God] just obliterate the devil and therefore get rid of evil in the world?"

'Jesus': "He will."

Maher: "He will? What's He waiting for?"

Now I think we can all agree that if Mr. Maher wanted a serious answer to his inquiry, he wouldn't have directed it to a theme-park employee. Nonetheless, the question itself deserves an answer. Why has God allowed the cosmos to continue for so long in its fallen condition? Just think of all the human suffering that has ensued for these thousands of years. Why didn't He stop it long ago?

God is a good God, and He's not capricious—so He always has a good reason for the things He does. In this instance, there is evidently a reason why He must allow evil to run its course before He destroys it. Maybe it's like a huge boil that's been lanced by the doctor—and now the poison must be allowed to ooze out of it before medicine is applied, and the final healing takes place (see Revelation 22:2).

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says the universe is at war and our world is the main battleground:

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 all

to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. . . . God has landed on this enemy-occupied world in human form.

You see, merely *alleviating* human suffering was never God's objective. His plan, instead, is to *eliminate* suffering completely, along with every other manifestation of evil. That's why He created this world and allowed it to become a combat zone. When the Lord Jesus entered this world the first time, He was landing in enemy-occupied territory! He successfully completed His mission when He died on Calvary (see John 19:30), and now we are fighting in the final stages of this war (see 2 Timothy 2:3-4). We are like the resistance operating behind enemy lines while we wait for our great General to return in force. And someday He will!

However, this still leaves us with the nagging question of why God has allowed this struggle between good and evil to continue for so long. Why didn't He put an end to it long ago? Well, that's tantamount to asking why the Lord Jesus hasn't returned before now. Aside from the fact that this delay extends God's mercy and gives more people an opportunity to respond to the Gospel, there must be something about the nature of evil that makes it necessary for it to run its course before God can finally destroy it forever. We trust that this is the case because we trust God. He would have ended this struggle long ago, if that was the best solution. Whether we understand it fully or not, we believe He is doing the right thing (see Genesis 18:25).

### 3. Watchfulness means being informed.

Occasionally, someone will say, “Gary, I don’t bother to read the newspaper or newsmagazines anymore. I hardly ever watch the news on TV, either. The news media is so liberal and biased—and the news is so depressing, anyway. So, I just don’t worry about it anymore—whatever happens, happens.”

This “ignorance-is-bliss” attitude reminds me of a 19th-century, Yale-educated Puritan preacher who had some simple folks in his congregation who didn’t believe in higher education. He was sending some of his more promising young people away to study at various universities—and this little clique in the congregation didn’t like it one bit. Finally, when he confronted them about it, they quoted 1 Corinthians 2:13, *“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”*

His antagonists interpreted this verse to mean that God doesn’t require man’s wisdom—and therefore, they reasoned, God doesn’t want us to be educated. The wise, old preacher answered, “Well, if the Lord doesn’t need our wisdom, He surely doesn’t need our ignorance!”

How true! God created us to grow, learn, and explore. He expects us to study our surroundings. He wants us to be informed rather than ignorant.

In the Old Testament (OT), God instructed His people to keep an eye on the world scene, *“Look among the nations and watch—Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you”* (Hab. 1:5).

Now if God wanted the people of ancient Judah to keep an eye on what He was doing on the world scene 2,600 years ago, how much more does He want us to do the same today?

Could any OT admonition possibly be more applicable to our generation? We are witnessing unbelievable upheaval among the nations—militarily (including the nuclear threat from North Korea and Iran, new alliances between Russia and dictators throughout the world, and much more), economically, socially, and in other ways, as well.

That’s why we need to be informed about developments on the world scene. We need to be able to recognize God’s hand as He works out His purposes in our world.

On one occasion when the Pharisees and Sadducees were “testing” the Lord, they asked Him to show them a sign from Heaven to prove that He was really the Messiah. This is how the Lord responded:

He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:2-3).

Here the Lord draws an interesting analogy between meteorological indicators, which can help us forecast the weather, and the prophetic signs of our times. In much the same way that a sea captain can look at the sky and predict the weather (“red sky at night, sailor’s delight; red sky in the morning, sailor take warning”), we should be able to look around us and recognize developments and trends that may be prophetically significant. It is uncharacteristic

of an astute and aware child of God to be taken off-guard by major prophetic developments.

### 4. Watchfulness means being protective.

“Watchman” is one of the world’s oldest, and most important vocations. In ancient Israel, for instance, the watchman was stationed on a city’s walls so he could keep an eye out for approaching enemies. If he saw a threat, he would blow the shofar as a warning of impending danger.

It was a serious responsibility. People’s lives were entrusted to the watchman. In fact, if he fell asleep and failed to sound the alarm, and people died as a result, the blood of the victims was required at the watchman’s hand (see Ezekiel 33:6).

Today, God has called some of us to be watchmen on the “walls” of western civilization. We see the enemy advancing and we are sounding the alarm. Up until now, not many people have been listening—even with the enemy on the move and the walls crumbling. Within evangelicalism, prophetic voices who cry out against sin and evil are sometimes considered shrill and extreme.

But all is not lost—at least, not yet. Vast segments of conservative Christendom are showing signs of awakening from their slumber. More people are starting to pay attention. Churches are getting involved, and pastors are making their voices count. Let’s hope and pray that this awakening continues—and that it spreads. If it doesn’t, and the Lord doesn’t come back soon, then our children and grandchildren may grow up in a much different world than the one you and I have known.



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## 5. Watchfulness means being discerning.

In Acts 20, we have the minutes of an emotional meeting between the Apostle Paul and the elders of the Ephesian congregation. He knew that his martyrdom was approaching, so he was preparing them for his departure. One of his biggest concerns was the dangers they would face once he was gone. Paul knew that false teachers would come in like wolves in sheep's clothing and try to ravage the flock:

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch [*there's that word again!*], and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears (Acts 20:29-31).

Notice from where he says many of these false teachers will arise: "from among yourselves." Now that's a sobering thought—these wolves in sheep's clothing will come from among our ranks. This is troubling, especially when we look around and study the 21st-century religious landscape. The greater danger today is not posed by heretics who make no pretense of espousing the historic Christian faith, but by pretenders who stay "under the radar" and operate from within our own ranks. They try to leave the impression that they're kosher (doctrinally), but they're not. They are deceptive and duplicitous—and that makes them dangerous.

That's why I'm not nearly as concerned about the Jehovah's Witnesses, Moonies, and Mormons as I am about pretenders who claim to be evangelicals. They're wolves, and their only interest in the sheep is what they can take from them. These charlatans take advantage of gullible, good-hearted people who are poor, unemployed, and/or sick. Many of their victims are socioeconomically disadvantaged, but they send in their welfare and unemployment checks, and even their grocery money because they are promised a financial return on their "seed faith" investment. The wolves are fleecing the sheep!

So Paul tells the Ephesian elders to be vigilant. After all, why does a wolf cover himself with a sheep's skin? He does it to convince the sheep that he's one of them. That way, they'll let down their defenses. What they don't realize is that the wolf doesn't really care about them. All he wants is some nice lamb chops for dinner!

Discernment, then, is a necessary part of watching for the Lord's return. It's critical that we exercise our powers of spiritual perception so we can tell the difference between good and evil (see Hebrews 5:14). This is more important now than ever before because of the multiplication and diffusion of religious error throughout our culture.

## 6. Watchfulness means being ready at all times.

Finally, the NT exhorts us to be ready for the Lord's return at all times. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins (see Matthew 25:1-13), for example, the Lord said the five virgins (or bridesmaids) who were not prepared for the bridegroom's arrival were "foolish" (see Verse 3).

Notice the storyline: These 10 bridesmaids were abruptly awakened in the middle of the night by a shouted warning that the bridegroom and his entourage were approaching. They quickly jumped up and sprang into action, straightening their clothes, and trimming the wicks of their lamps so they would burn brightly on the trek through the dark night back to the bridegroom's house.

That's when the five foolish bridesmaids realized that they hadn't brought enough oil with them. Their lamps were already flickering and about to go out. So they asked their wiser counterparts if they could borrow some oil. But there wasn't enough oil to go around, so the five foolish girls scurried away into the night to try to buy more (see Verses 9-10). While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived to pick up his bride and her party. Then, the entire procession returned to his house in a jubilant parade.

The five foolish bridesmaids missed out because they weren't ready to go when the bridegroom and his party arrived (see Verses 10-12).

The point of this story, then, is not that the bridesmaids should not have been sleeping. Instead, it's that they should not have gone to sleep without making adequate preparation for the bridegroom's coming. And furthermore, they should have anticipated a possible delay and been ready for him *whenever* he might arrive.

The application for us is obvious. First of all, prophetic date-setting, as tempting as it may be at times, is misguided. If we are truly ready for His coming at any time, there is no need for us to know exactly when it will be! The five



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wise bridesmaids were prepared, so it didn't matter to them when the bridegroom might show up.

Again, we should be ready at all times. Now, I realize that this is easier said than done. The pressure the world puts on us to conform makes it hard to live for the Lord. People who resist the culture are often mocked and ridiculed, whether it's in school, in a family setting, or in the workplace.

The pressure to conform is huge. Cosmetic surgery is a multi-billion dollar industry in our culture because people feel compelled to conform to someone else's air-brushed ideal. One poor woman who's in the news from time to time has suffered through dozens of cosmetic surgeries—and spent well over \$100,000—in her quest to look like Barbie (yes, the doll). More recently, media attention has been focused on another woman who has given birth to 14 babies (via artificial insemination) and has had a series of face-altering procedures because (according to some reports) she wants to look like actress Angelina Jolie. And they tell me that one of the new trends is for parents to give their teenage daughters plastic surgery as a high school graduation gift!

Is it any wonder, then, that we're in the mess we're in? The good news is that

help is available for anyone who doesn't want to be forced into the world's mold. The Bible says God overpowers *conformation* with *transformation*, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Rom. 12:2).

This ministry was founded in the late 1940s by a young Jewish man who became a believer in Jesus as his Savior and Messiah. The pressure to conform (from his own family and also from the Jewish community) was enormous. A family member offered him a large sum of money if he would turn away from Jesus. He was deeply and profoundly conflicted over it. But he stood up for his beliefs, paid the price, and God blessed him. The rest, as they say, is history.

It's a great legacy, and we don't take it lightly. By God's grace, we'll remain faithful to that legacy as we watch and wait for the Lord's return. May that Day come soon!

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CJFM has heard from many of you who have been personally and dramatically affected by the current economic crisis. You have sent prayer requests by phone, mail, and email. We are in this together, and continue praying. We have faith in our prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, and so should you. “. . . *The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*” (James 5:16).

We are to pray, but we are also to seek and knock (see Matthew 7:7-8). We are never to forget that “. . . *faith without works is dead*” (James 2:20). Let’s consider some action steps that can bring positive change into your current economic situation from the Messiah’s earthly life and first-century teachings.

**Do not fear because the Father is your source.** In the midst of trying times, the Messiah repeatedly told his followers, “Do not fear.” In times of economic crisis and collapse, it is easy to panic. Remember that the Father is our source. Your job may be eliminated. Your stocks and bonds may lose value. Your spouse and their income may walk out on you. But, you cannot forget who your true provider is. Your employer, the stock market, a spouse, your parents, and your children are only channels through which your Heavenly Father funnels His resources to you. Dear believing friend, knowing this simple truth will keep you from years of anger and bitterness. Every earthly thing you need comes down from your Heavenly Father. “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7).

The Messiah tells us that the “Father knows our needs.” Yeshua points to the animal and plant kingdom around us, the Father’s abundant provision for them, and encourages us that “we are of more value than they.” Our rabbi Yeshua teaches that our loving Father is not going to give stones to those who ask for bread, nor is He going to give a serpent to those of His children who need an egg. “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*” (James 1:17).

[See Matthew 6:8; 7:7-11; 10:26, 31; 14:27; 17:7; 28:10; Luke 12:6-7.]

**Be open to change.** Remember the message of Messiah’s forerunner, John the Baptist? In a word, his message was—repent. The Messiah’s message was the very same—repent. The Apostle Peter’s message was the same—repent. The whole concept of repentance is change.

Yeshua often confronted the Pharisees who were unwilling to let go of unbiblical traditions. He even had to confront the 12 with their issues of hard-heartedness. The Messiah would address the same issue today, even when discussing the area of our financial stability. Are we in an apparent, unchanging financial crisis because we are unwilling to make changes? We need to be like the Apostle Paul who said, “. . . *Lord, what do You want me to do?* . . .” (Acts 9:6).

We are living in trying times. All around us there is a spirit of despair and hopelessness. A spirit of being willing to change, can change everything!

[See Matthew 3:1-12; 4:17; 15:1-9; Mark 6:52; Acts 2:37-47.]

**Consider a move.** God’s message of relocation is all over the Bible. Abraham was told to *move* in order to receive the land that God had promised him. King Solomon constructed a fleet of ships to go for the gold required for his many building projects. The four starving lepers had to move into the enemy camp of the Syrians to receive their sustenance. When Yeshua was in Mary’s womb, an ordered census forced Joseph and Mary to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. While in Bethlehem, an angel told Joseph to relocate to Egypt to escape King Herod’s order to kill Jewish baby boys. Could it be that we could find financial safety and protection if we were open to the possibility of moving? Could it be that the provision God has for us is not where we are, but where He is going to lead us?

When the Messiah hand selected those who would become apostles, it is interesting to note that several of them were fishermen. Could it be that fishermen were chosen because they knew the truth of relocating? They knew that to be successful in the fishing industry, you have to go to where the fish are—the fish do not come to you.

[See Genesis 12:1-5; 1 Kings 9:26-28; 2 Kings 7:3-16; Matthew 2:13-23; 4:18-22; Luke 2:1-5.]

**Your situation may require a radical transformation.** Consider one of the first encounters Yeshua had with Simon Peter. Simon experienced several radical changes: First, Yeshua turned his fishing boat into a preaching platform. Second, the Messiah radically transformed Simon's work schedule from night to daytime fisherman. Third, the Messiah gave Simon a career change. Simon left the commercial fishing industry and became an apostle.

Maybe in your life, the Lord wants you to change the work shift or career that has become a part of your life. As the Messiah would have you consider some radical transformations, do not be resistant. Do not repeat the words of Job who said, ". . . *changes and war are against me*" (Job 10:17 KJV).

[See Luke 5:1-11.]



**Ask to receive.** The Rabbi from Nazareth taught a lot about asking the Father for things in prayer. That is a great place to begin. He also taught that when asking, it's important to also "seek and knock." Yeshua often spoke about possessing a spirit of humility. Be humble enough to ask. What help do you need? Do you need a job? Do you need a creditor to give you an extension on a payment? Do not be too proud to ask. "*Yet you do not have because you do not ask. . . .*" (James 4:3).

Yeshua was not above asking. He asked 12 men to be apostles. He asked Simon for the use of his fishing boat. He asked for the use of a donkey and her colt for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He asked for the use of a large upper room for the observance of Passover.

The person you ask may not have what you need, but that person may know someone who does. If you are looking for

employment, ask everyone if they know of any place hiring. Hanani told Nehemiah about Jerusalem's broken down wall. Nehemiah did not have the resources to help, but he did know someone who could help—King Artaxerxes. That relationship supplied everything necessary to rebuild the wall, and the people you know have similar connections.

[See Matthew 7:7-8; 10; 21:1-11; Mark 14:12-15; Luke 5:1-3.]

**Be willing to do anything.** In Luke 14:7-14, the Messiah told a parable of a wedding feast. He said that when you arrive, sit at the table farthest from the head table. In time, the person who invited you will say, "Friend come up higher. Move to the front." The practical point to draw from this is to be willing to take any employment position. Before you

get a job pushing a pencil, you may have to begin with pushing a broom.

Yeshua taught about being humble, and being a servant. Before Nehemiah became the governor of Jerusalem, he was a cupbearer. Before David reigned as king over Israel, his kingdom consisted of a few sheep. Simon Peter's job as a fisherman "stunk" long before he became an apostle.

Yeshua would no doubt quote Solomon's wisdom, "*A man's gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men*" (Prov. 18:16). Your giftedness will grow and expand allowing for more opportunities to bless more people. Many times the answer to our situation is in what we already have. Moses stumbled upon this truth. The prophet Elisha told the indebted widow that the solution was "in her house." When Yeshua fed the 5,000, the lad with the loaves and fish was

already there in the midst of the hungry crowd. However, Yeshua would remind us that the process rarely starts there. The starting place is humility. We begin with our emptiness, not our giftedness.

[See Exodus 4:2; 1 Samuel 16:11-13; 2 Kings 4:2; Nehemiah 2:1; 8:9; Matthew 4:18; 5:3; 20:20-28; John 6:9; 13:1-17.]

**You must be persistent.** The Messiah encouraged His followers to never give up. "*Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,*" (Luke 18:1). While teaching on farming, the Messiah taught the importance of sticking with the task until the harvest comes. "*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*" (Gal. 6:9). Yeshua chose fishermen because they knew how to be persistent—fish aren't always caught with the first cast of a net.

Proper persistence begins with the precepts of God. "*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*" (1 Tim. 5:8). God would not tell us to provide for our families, and then not provide a means for us to accomplish it. Work is a part of God's plan for man. "*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, . . .*" (Gen. 3:19). As a believer, finding a job should be an endeavor approached with faith. The belief that God has a job for you should prompt a relentless pursuit. "*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward*" (Heb. 10:35).

Yeshua told the story of the widow who went to the judge to be avenged of her adversary. The judge did not have time for her, but she was persistent. She did not give up her attempts to get the judge to hear her cause until she got what she wanted. We need similar persistence. Yeshua would remind us of His experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He prayed, He sweat great drops of blood. Medical doctors say this is a sign of total physical exhaustion. Blood vessels, veins, and capillaries have gotten so weak they leak blood into the sweat glands. Yeshua was at the point of death. He prayed, ". . . *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. . . .*" (Matt. 26:38). Yet in this state, the Messiah "went a little farther." This same strength resides in us. When you feel that you are just unable to make another call or go through another interview, tell yourself, "*I can do all things through*



[Messiah] *who strengthens me*” (Phil. 4:13). Don’t forget that “. . . *the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, . . .*” (Rom. 8:11).

[See Matthew 26:39; Luke 18:1-5; 22:44.]

**Live by the principle of fullness.** One major truth about Yeshua is that *“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;”* (Col. 2:9). The miracles of the Messiah were marked by fullness. When Jesus fed the 5,000, “they were filled.” When Yeshua turned the water into wine, He first commanded the servants to “fill the water pots with water.” When Yeshua performed fishing miracles, He brought in enough fish that “filled both the boats.”

Yeshua’s normal practice was to fill His day. *“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed”* (Mark 1:35). Without a doubt the Rabbi from Nazareth would share with us the wisdom of Solomon who said, *“In the morning sow your seed, And in the evening do not withhold your hand; For you do not know which will prosper, Either this or that, Or whether both alike will be good”* (Eccles. 11:6).

We must fill our days seeking solutions. It is so easy to allow excuses to prevent this. *“He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap”* (Eccles. 11:4). We can give excuses or we can steadfastly seek employment, but we can’t do both. As a person fills his days “casting his bread upon the waters” by making calls, sending out resumes, and pounding the pavement, he or she will “find [the solution] after many days.”

[See Luke 5:7; John 2:7; 6:12; Ecclesiastes 11:1.]

**You need a teacher.** Yeshua was seen as a rabbi, master, and teacher while He was on earth. By virtue of that fact, it is very important that we have teachers in our lives. In these days of radical change, you may face the real possibility of returning to school. “People are destroyed for a lack of knowledge.” A casual walk through the Book of Proverbs shows the power of wisdom and knowledge. Take the next 31 days to read and study every chapter in Proverbs. Mark all the verses on wisdom,

education, truth, and knowledge, and let God speak to you from them.

Yeshua is always in the process of gathering “disciples” (disciplined and dedicated followers and learners). Yeshua spent days teaching and training the 12 and the 70 before sending them out; and when they returned from a mission the Rabbi from Nazareth gave them a performance appraisal. The Messiah not only taught them, but corrected them. Yeshua would probably tell us today that we still need teachers in our lives—wise teachers willing to correct and rebuke us.

[See Hosea 4:6; Proverbs 12:15; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 4—10; Luke 10; John 1:38; Ephesians 4:11-12.]

**You must practice the golden rule.** *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of [Messiah]”* (Gal. 6:2). It is so easy to get caught up in our own problems and not see the problems of others. *“Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being”* (1 Cor. 10:24). Securing the well-being of others is a part of a believer’s responsibility.

Do you remember the Golden Rule? *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”* (Matt. 7:12). What if our gold, our well-being, is found in this rule? Yeshua often taught about the laws of the harvest. A major law of the harvest is that of sowing and reaping. *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* (Gal. 6:7). Could the key to finding your employment be in helping someone else find employment? Think about this: When you don’t get a job after an interview, maybe the Messiah allowed you the privilege of finding a job for your neighbor. Consider passing the information onto a friend. *“knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, . . .”* (Eph. 6:8).

[See Matthew 13.]

These 10 main points contain numerous action steps that you may have overlooked in your life. Highlight the steps and read the corresponding Scriptures, your financial freedom may be found in one of these small steps that you have yet to take. And bless others who are facing a financial crisis in their lives by passing along this article.

For additional information, visit [www.cjfm.org](http://www.cjfm.org) online and read John Turner’s blog.



# Fruit from the Harvest



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by Violette Berger

## Free Ad Nets Eternal Dividends

Passover, the first of the seven feasts of Israel, provides CJFM missionaries with opportunities to teach and evangelize through “Messiah in the Passover” presentations and Seders (dinners). It is always a blessing to hear how God touches hearts and brings many to a saving faith in Yeshua (Jesus).

The venues for “Messiah in the Passover” presentations or Seders are varied. **Richard Tovia**, CJFM missionary (Phoenix), shared a Passover presentation at a women’s Bible study meeting, which resulted in leading four women to salvation. Richard’s next Passover demonstration was on a Sunday evening at a church in a small Arizona town. Prior to the service, Richard met “Josh,” a Jewish man in his 30s who was attending the event. They exchanged small talk. At the end of the service, Richard gave an invitation, but no one responded.

As congregation members began cleaning up and taking down the tables, he noticed Josh was still sitting at his table. Richard sat next to Josh and asked him what he thought about the message. Josh answered that his heart was open, but he didn’t understand what it meant to invite Jesus into his heart. Richard then shared the Good News using the Law (the Ten Commandments).

After listening intently, Josh wept and prayed with Richard to receive Messiah Yeshua as his Lord and Savior. Josh expressed interest when the church’s pastor gave him a new Bible and invited him to the next men’s Bible study. Richard adds, “Josh came because of an ad that was placed at no cost in the local town paper. Praise the Lord!”

## Lord of the Harvest

In addition to speaking in churches, leading Beth Yeshua messianic congregation, ministering on the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) campus, witnessing at shopping malls and door-to-door, **Richard Hill**, CJFM missionary (Las Vegas), also trains volunteers in how to share the Good News with Jewish people. “Samson,” a recent newcomer to Richard’s evangelism team, is from Ethiopia. He has been living in Las Vegas for a year, and faithfully attends Beth Yeshua.

Samson started going out with the team after completing his evangelism training with Richard. During his third time out with the team on UNLV’s campus, he had the privilege of leading the first student he shared the Gospel with to the Lord. Richard writes, “What is especially noteworthy is that this was the first time Samson led someone to the Lord while speaking in English (his second language).” Samson then observed and prayed while Richard shared the Good News with another student, “Harry.” Although Harry had just begun attending a Bible church and had heard the Gospel preached, he needed a clearer definition of his options. Richard said, “Harry was like the fruit ready for the picking. He gladly received Jesus.”

*“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” (Matt. 9:37-38).*

## The Eyes of the Lord

**Michael Campo**, CJFM regional director (Chicago), has been blessed that, “God’s sovereignty has saved eight more souls from the penalty and power of sin!” Each of them came to faith during one of Michael’s church meetings. He would like to share one of these salvations, in particular, “because it is a testimony to God’s patience and long-suffering with all of us.”

At the end of Michael’s message, he always gives an invitation to repent and believe, asking for a show of hands from anyone desiring to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. Seeing no raised hands at the end of one of his church services, Michael proceeded toward the foyer following the service. A woman stopped him and said there was a raised hand that he did not see and pointed out the person. Michael immediately approached the woman to ensure that she understood the Gospel message. Confessing to Michael that she needed Jesus, the 83-year-old woman prayed to receive Him right there.

Michael reflects on Proverbs 15:3, “*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.*” He writes, “How thankful we must be for His all-seeing eye, because without it I would never have seen the eyes of faith in this dear lady.”

# Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

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**QUESTION:** *An acquaintance of mine is a member of a Sabbatarian group that worships on Saturday and believes Sunday worship is the “mark of the beast,” which the Book of Revelation forewarns. He says he doesn’t understand how we can claim to obey the Ten Commandments while violating the fourth commandment—because (he says) if we break one of them, it’s the same thing as breaking all of them (see James 2:10). This fellow is relentless, and I really need some help here.*

**ANSWER:** First of all, sabbatarianism includes not only groups that worship on the seventh day (Saturday), but also some groups that worship on Sunday and try to treat it like the Sabbath. Many Puritans, for instance, strictly limited their activities on Sunday and punished people who violated the Sunday “Sabbath.” Among the seventh-day variety, though, there’s a broad spectrum of beliefs, including some legalistic sects whose leaders make the claims you mentioned.

The late Ellen G. White, founder of the Seventh Day Adventist movement, taught that the “two great errors” of the end-time apostate church are (1) the immortality of the soul, and (2) Sunday worship (*The Great Controversy*, p. 588). And yes, some sabbatarians claim that Saturday worship is the mark of the New Covenant, much like circumcision was the mark of the Old Mosaic Covenant—and they conclude that “Sunday-keeping” is the mark of the beast.

However, not all seventh-day groups go to such aberrant extremes. For example, there are Seventh Day Baptists today

who are quite orthodox in their beliefs—and their congregations have gathered on Saturday for worship since 1671. And in the Israeli culture, Saturday is the day of rest and worship (from Friday night to Saturday night) and Sunday begins the workweek (like Monday does in our culture). Virtually every religious group in Israel conducts Sabbath services (on Friday night or Saturday), including the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Pentecostals, and others—in addition to their traditional Sunday services. So there is a cultural component to all of this, as well.

You should remind your friend that no one—not even Orthodox Jewish people in Israel—keeps the Mosaic version of the Sabbath today. That would require the sentence of capital punishment for anyone who did any sort of work on that special day (see Exodus 31:14). People couldn’t leave their homes on the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:29-30). They weren’t allowed to kindle a fire (see Exodus 35:3; and rabbinic authorities have ruled that an electrical spark—something that happens when you flip a light switch or turn on an appliance, for example—qualifies as a “fire”). So, we are all in a lot of trouble if salvation requires observing the Mosaic commandment (as some of the extremist groups claim), because no one keeps the Sabbath in the manner prescribed by Moses.

Even the Lord Jesus himself angered some of His Jewish contemporaries because He didn’t adhere to the Mosaic proscriptions. He kept the Sabbath in a more general way and didn’t give much weight to some of its traditional, rabbinic

trappings (see Matthew 12:1-12; Luke 13:10-16; 14:1-6; John 5:5-16).

On the other hand, there’s a rub for Christians who insist that Sunday is the only acceptable day for worship—and that is the fact that the Sabbath has never been changed. You will search the Scriptures in vain for any mention of such a change. The Sabbath has always been the seventh day of the week, not the first day (Sunday), and it still is.

Yes, the Early Church met on the “first day” of the week to collect offerings (see 1 Corinthians 16:2), but let’s not forget that the first day actually began on Saturday night (see Acts 20:7), not on Sunday morning. Those same early believers also met on the Sabbath (see Acts 13:14, 42) and on other days, as well (see Acts 2:46; 17:11).

It’s true that very early in church history, there was a largely successful “Christian” effort to replace Saturday with Sunday, Passover with Easter, and Israel with the Church (these were the roots of “replacement theology”); but not everyone (including yours truly) accepts the legitimacy of those sweeping changes. What we cannot avoid is that the Sabbath is described as “perpetual” (see Exodus 31:16). In fact, the OT prophets tell us that the Sabbath (and other feasts of the Lord) will be observed worldwide during the future Millennium (see Ezekiel 46:1-12).

Some non-sabbatarians point out that the Sabbath command was directed to Israel, not to the Gentiles—and that is

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true (see Exodus 31:16). However, it should be noted that the New Covenant itself was also directed to Israel (actually, to the houses of Israel and Judah; see Jeremiah 31:31). But I doubt that anyone would suggest that the New Covenant therefore has no applicability to the Church! Just because a promise or requirement was directed originally to Israel certainly does not preclude the subsequent participation of non-Jewish believers who have been grafted into the “tree” of Abrahamic faith (see Romans 11:17-24).

People who claim that the fourth commandment is the only one of the ten that’s not carried over into the NT are in error. The writer of Hebrews carefully weaves the Sabbath (Gk., *sabbatismos*) into a discussion where he says that salvation involves “resting” from our own works and relying wholly on what Jesus has done (see Hebrews 4:1-11; especially Verse 9). The highest and noblest expression of Sabbath-keeping, then, is the simple act of resting in the Lord Jesus for salvation. In this sense, then, it is impossible for a NT believer to break the fourth commandment!

Notice the striking OT-NT parallelism in this Hebrews passage. In the OT, the Lord God accomplished His work of creation by the power of His word—and then He rested and declared that it was finished (see Genesis 2:1-2). And in the NT, the Lord Jesus completed His work of redemption by shedding His blood—and then He rested and said, “It is finished” (see John 19:30).

This is really what the fourth commandment is all about. It symbolizes the central theme of the NT—redemption through the death of Yeshua the Messiah. That’s why the OT Sabbath requirements were so strict and inviolable. God was protecting the symbolism (or typology) of redemption. Nothing could have been more important than that.

What all of this means is that if we had to select just one day of the week to devote to prayer and worship, that day would be the ancient Sabbath, or Saturday. However, the NT nowhere demands such a choice. Instead, it assumes that the believing community is praying, serving, and worshiping God full-time, every day of the week. It also assumes that we understand the necessity of keeping the Sabbath by “resting” from our own works and trusting in the finished work of the Messiah on Calvary.

If a believer wants to try to observe a strict “Sabbath rest,” and he’s willing to stay close to home on Saturday and refrain from cooking, the use of electricity, and everything else that goes with it, I think that’s harmless enough—as long as he doesn’t feel compelled to impose this practice on others who may not agree with him.

In the NT, the Apostle Paul acknowledges that some believers (most likely those who are Jewish, although he doesn’t actually say that) consider one day more holy than the other six, while other believers (perhaps those who aren’t Jewish) view every day as the same. His conclusion is that these “camps” should respect each other’s cultural backgrounds and opinions (see Romans 14:5 and Colossians 2:16). That’s good advice for us today!



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