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# Messianic Perspectives<sup>®</sup>

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

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## ISRAEL: GOD'S TIMEPIECE PART 1

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

It seems as if everyone wants to know what time it is on God's calendar. "How much worse do things have to get before God intervenes?" "How much longer do we have to wait for Him to return?" These are just some of the questions believers are asking during these epic times.

And it's not just a shallow, escapist mentality on the part of people who spend too much time reading supermarket tabloids. These are not misfits wearing white robes while standing on mountaintops. They are solid believers who have families, go to work every day, and love the Lord Jesus. They are tired of all the wickedness, pain, and injustice in this world. With conditions worldwide rapidly deteriorating, and our own post-modern culture on the decline (that's actually an understatement), they are asking legitimate questions. So what time is it? Do we have answers?

Yes, we do. We can't set dates, of course; but God has nonetheless given us a "clock," of sorts, that provides powerful and compelling clues as to our general position on the prophetic timeline. But the clock won't help us if we don't know how to read it.

### Overreacting to the Date Setters

Some people shy away from prophetic discussions like this one because of the stigma of date setting—and that's unfortunate. Most of us would agree that prophetic date setting is an unfortunate and unwise practice. It's been

going on for centuries and has caused all sorts of problems. In fact, it's downright embarrassing when someone sets a date for the Lord's return, makes a lot of noise about it, and then that day comes and goes like any other.

Some theologians, however, swing to the opposite extreme and say that since the Bible doesn't mention any specific signs indicating the Rapture's approach (see sidebar on page 2), there's no way to know ahead of time when it might occur—not even approximately.

Therefore, our "no signs" friends say it's not only foolish to set dates, but it's also foolish to make any sort of connection between current events and the Bible's end-time prophecies.

### Signs or No Signs—That Is the Question

Granted, some prophetic teachers have taken their treatment of current events to ridiculous extremes. We all know that. But should we discard an entire field of legitimate prophetic inquiry (i.e., analyzing current events in the light of divine revelation) simply because of the excesses of a few? I don't think so.

The "no signs" people are suggesting, in essence, that the terminal generation (that is, those believers who are alive when the Second Coming scenario finally begins to unfold) will be completely clueless about the nearness of the Rapture until it actually happens.



## Are There "Signs" for The Rapture?

Several passages in the prophetic Scriptures describe the period immediately prior to Messiah's return to this earth. One of the most notable of these passages is the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24.

Those descriptions include certain prophetic indicators (e.g., a measurable spike in the number of earthquakes, worldwide military conflicts, famines, pestilence, the rise of false messiahs, etc.) that will signal the approach of the Lord's coming in glory, which we believe takes place seven years after the Rapture. During that seven-year period between the Rapture and His coming in glory, the world will undergo a series of judgment-events known as the "Tribulation" (see Matthew 24:21).

Strictly speaking, then, the indicators heralding His coming in glory to earth (which is described as public and world-shaking; see Revelation 1:7) don't necessarily apply to His coming in the air at the Rapture (which is described as being secretive and unexpected, like "a thief in the night"; see 2 Peter 3:10) seven years earlier.

On the other hand, however, observant and discerning believers will undoubtedly notice the stage being set for many of these Tribulation events even before the Rapture occurs. Plans for rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple, for instance, are underway now, even though the actual construction of the edifice may not take place until after we are gone (see Matthew 24:15).

And then there's that remarkable prophetic "clock"—the nation Israel—that provides yet another dimension to our understanding of God's plan of the ages and its approaching terminus. How do we use that clock to tell the time? That's the question.

To me, that's about as believable as suggesting that the fans in Chicago won't realize that the Cubs are going to win the World Series until after it has actually happened (for the first time since 1908, by the way). If you have ever lived in or around the Windy City, you know that diehard Cubs fans are already anticipating and planning for that crowning achievement someday! Every year, they watch carefully for indications that this might be the team that can get it done.

Cubs fans know that when the time comes, certain benchmarks will help them gauge their team's chances for success. The experts will analyze batting and pitching statistics. They'll study the roster. They'll size up their team's opponents. When conditions are right, the Cubs will win their division, the National League, and finally the World Series. None of this will take their fans (at least not the serious ones) by surprise. They will have seen it coming for months.

And yes, there have been times when the fans thought the conditions were right for a World Series—but it didn't happen. So there's room for human error here. Sometimes the indicators are misinterpreted, or unexpected factors (like injuries) come into play. But this doesn't mean the fans' hopes are ultimately misplaced. It just means the timing hasn't been right up until now.

Likewise, the Bible provides certain prophetic benchmarks that will indicate the nearness of the Lord's return. They include: natural disasters (like earthquakes), the rise of false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, and others. When those benchmarks occur during the Tribulation Period, they are known as "signs" (more about that interesting little word later). When they occur prior to the Tribulation, we refer to them as "trends" to distinguish them from actual Tribulation events.

To me, this is a much more reasonable approach than saying that no prophetic benchmarks will be discernible prior to the Rapture. For one thing, we surely don't want to leave anyone with the mistaken impression that there's no connection between the Bible and our

future. Nothing could be further from the truth! More than a third of the Bible pertains, either directly or indirectly, to prophecy; and many of the prophesied events still lie in the future. The prophecies have profound implications for each of our families and us—especially if the Rapture is going to take place during our lifetime. So do we really want to tell people, "You should study prophecy even though it has no direct application to you personally"? I hope not!



### Messianic Perspectives®

Dr. Gary Hedrick, *Editor in Chief*  
Rachel Zanardi, *Editor*  
Erastos Leiloglou, *Designer*



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Even now, I believe we can identify several pre-Rapture prophetic trends. To me, a lot of this is just common sense. For one thing, it's highly unlikely that every predicted end-time indicator could be compressed into a seven-year period. The rebuilding of the Temple, in fact, would have to happen in only half that time (that is, three and a half years) because it will be desecrated by the Antichrist halfway through the Tribulation. Not only that, but priests and Levites will

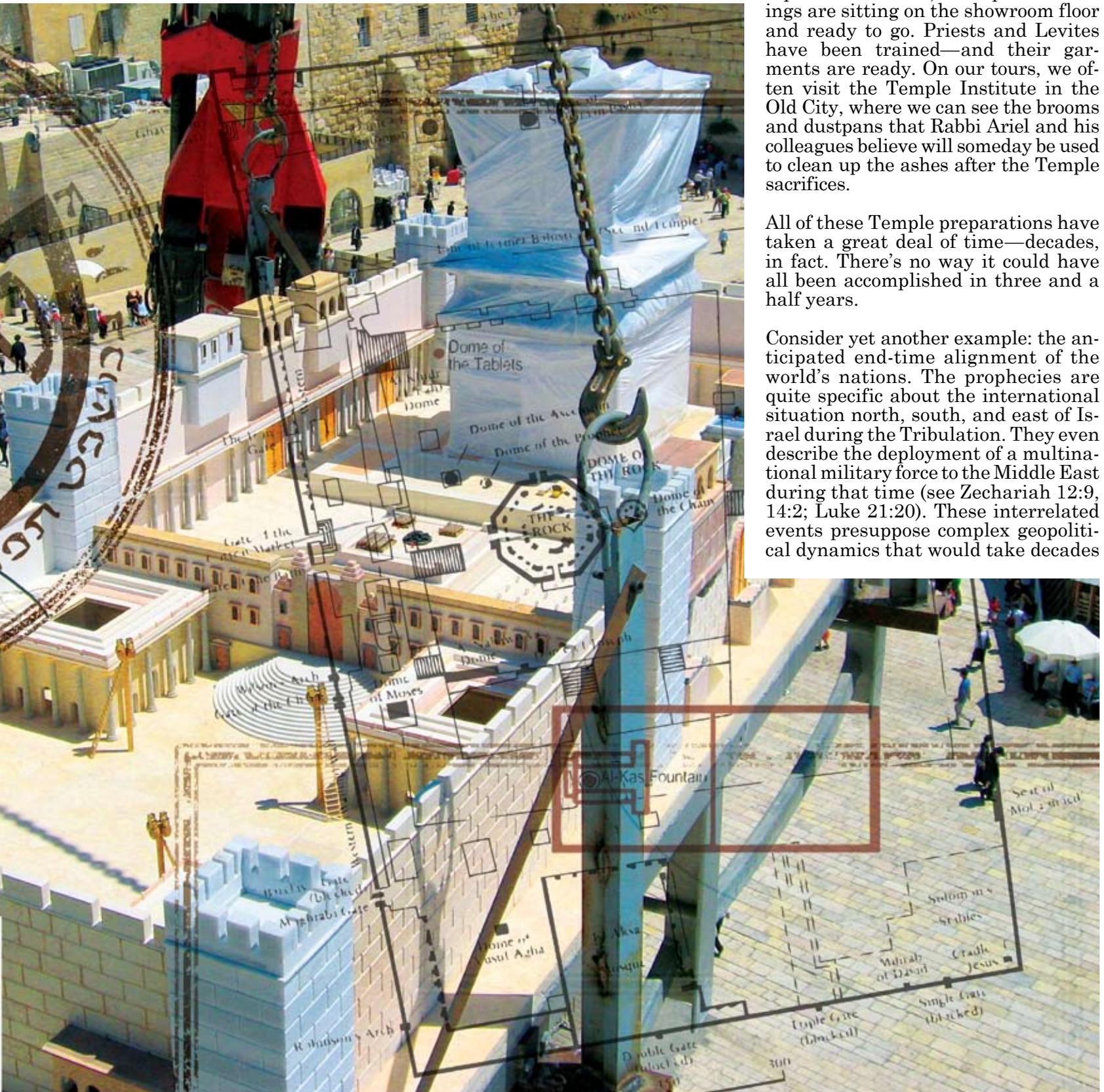
have to be recruited and trained. Their special robes must be woven from the halachically specified materials. The entire project will require some sort of formal approval—perhaps from a reconstituted Sanhedrin, or a similar body.

This, then, is a problem for the “no signs” people. The whole Temple-rebuilding scenario is just too complex to fall into place in only three and a half years. That's why many of us

view the current Temple-rebuilding movement in Israel as an important prophetic trend. Groups like Gershon Salomon's Temple Mount Faithful ([www.templemountfaithful.org](http://www.templemountfaithful.org)) and Yisrael Ariel's Temple Institute ([www.templeinstitute.org](http://www.templeinstitute.org)) have already used CGI technology to prepare 3-D images of the rebuilt Temple—and blueprints can't be far behind! Also, a preliminary Sanhedrin has been convened (although it remains to be seen if this particular group will gain broad acceptance in Israel). Temple furnishings are sitting on the showroom floor and ready to go. Priests and Levites have been trained—and their garments are ready. On our tours, we often visit the Temple Institute in the Old City, where we can see the brooms and dustpans that Rabbi Ariel and his colleagues believe will someday be used to clean up the ashes after the Temple sacrifices.

All of these Temple preparations have taken a great deal of time—decades, in fact. There's no way it could have all been accomplished in three and a half years.

Consider yet another example: the anticipated end-time alignment of the world's nations. The prophecies are quite specific about the international situation north, south, and east of Israel during the Tribulation. They even describe the deployment of a multinational military force to the Middle East during that time (see Zechariah 12:9, 14:2; Luke 21:20). These interrelated events presuppose complex geopolitical dynamics that would take decades



to evolve on a worldwide scale—making it highly improbable that these developments will not be detectable prior to the Rapture. In fact, many of us believe those dynamics are already at work—even now, prior to the removal of the Church. We believe the stage is being set today for the unfolding of the end-time drama.

### So What's the Problem?

Our “no signs” friends base their objections, in part, on their belief that looking for signs detracts from watchfulness. They'll say things like, “We're not looking for signs; we're looking for

The key, then, is to maintain a healthy balance and avoid the two extremes. We should be watching for the Lord Jesus and also remaining alert to trends and developments in the world around us that could be prophetically significant.

### It's All About Anticipation

Anticipation is an important part of our daily lives. Young people who are in love anticipate what that first kiss will be like. Before we take a bite of our favorite dish, we anticipate how it will taste. We get an education because we anticipate our need for credentials to get a good job. Anticipation can put us

failing to anticipate His first coming? They were either unable, or unwilling, to recognize the signs (Gk., *seimeia*) of their times. They were oblivious to indications all around them pointing to His arrival (see Matthew 16:1-4). This was inexcusable, especially in light of the fact that the pagan *Magi* traveled all the way from Babylon because they had somehow figured out when and where the long-anticipated Deliverer would be born (see Matthew 2:1-2).



Jesus!” While that little quip might stir the crowds from a pulpit, it's actually misleading because it incorporates the classic fallacy of the false dilemma. Looking for signs, and looking for the Lord Jesus need not be mutually exclusive—we can (and should) do both.

In fact, a Christian can be out of balance in either direction. He might be so heavenly minded, “just looking for Jesus,” with his head in the clouds, that he's oblivious to important developments taking place right under his nose. Or at the other end of the spectrum, he might be so caught up in turning news items from CNN or the Internet into “signs of the times” that it becomes an obsession and preoccupation—even to the point where the Lord's actual return becomes secondary.

in an advantageous position in sports when we know our opponent's next move. It's also important in the world of business and finance. A successful businessman knows how to follow and forecast market trends. The same thing is true in politics, and in many other areas of life. Anticipation is crucial!

So why should our approach to studying prophecy be any different? The return of the Lord Jesus the Messiah to this planet will be the single most important event in the last 2,000 years! It's something we should anticipate with great joy and expectancy (see 1 Thessalonians 5:6, and also 4:13, 5:4-5).

Do you remember how the Lord chided the Pharisees and Sadducees for



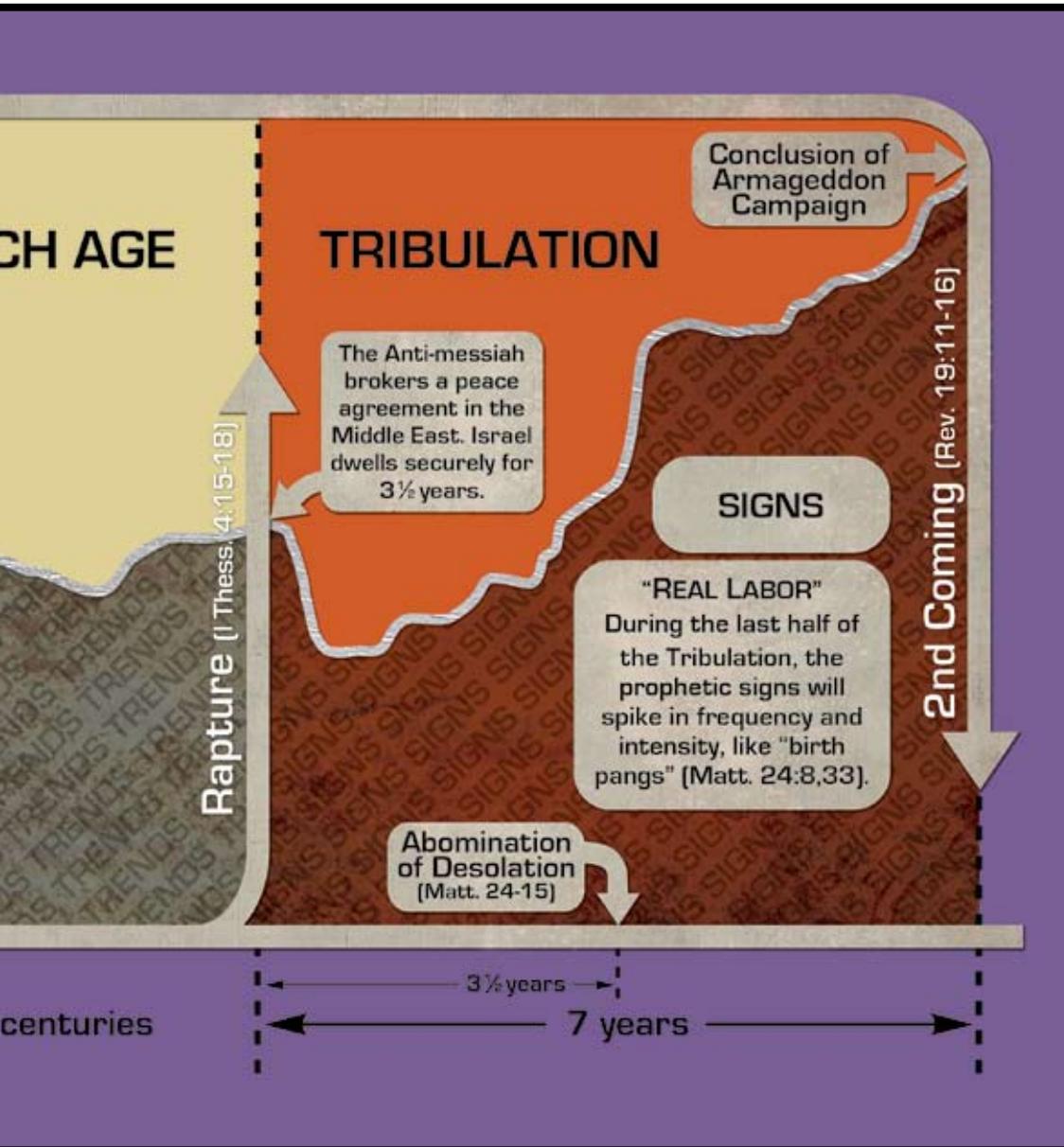
Yes, the *Magi* saw a “star” (probably the *Shekinah* glory of God); but how did they know what it meant? How did they know that they should follow it? A process of analysis and deliberation evidently led them to embark on that monumental expedition to Israel. They put their lives on hold for a year or longer during their long journey to honor the newborn King. But the religious leaders in Jerusalem, under whose very noses these events took place, missed it! We can learn a thing or two about *anticipation* from those ancient travelers from the east. When

the time comes, the terminal generation should be careful not to ignore prophetically significant events taking place right before their very eyes.

That Greek word *seimeia* (σημεία), translated “signs” in our English Bibles, is informative in this context. Bauer’s lexicon says that one of its meanings in ancient, non-biblical literature was to point out “marks in the landscape showing direction” (*A Greek-English*

these are not random occurrences. For Tribulation believers (see Revelation 7:9-10), these landmark events will assure them that God is in control—even during the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (see Jeremiah 30:7).

Once again, as I explained earlier, a sign can show up even *before* the Tribulation in the form of a measurable, developing trend (see our chart “Trends vs. Signs”).



*Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 747). The imagery here is both geographical and directional. Those ancient landmarks helped a traveler relate his immediate surroundings to his ultimate destination. When he saw one of the marks, he knew he was headed in the right direction.

That’s how a prophetic trend/sign works—whether it’s before or after the Rapture. It will help believers make sense of the chaotic events happening around them. They’ll know

### What About Imminency?

Notice how this distinction between trends and signs lines up favorably with the doctrine of *imminency* (i.e., the biblical teaching that the Rapture could happen at any time).

Virtually all of the signs during the Tribulation will consist of factors that have been present, at least to some extent, during the past 2,000 years. Earthquakes, for example, as well as pestilences, wars, and the rise of false messiahs (see Matthew 24:3-8) have



### Whatever Happened to the Rapture?

We don’t hear many sermons or read many books about the Rapture anymore. Even Bible-believing evangelicals don’t have much to say about it.

Maybe that’s because of the profusion of kooky prognostications about the Rapture back in the 1970s and 80s. People were actually standing on hilltops, dressed in white robes, waiting for (yes, you guessed it) the Rapture.

Yet, it’s clearly taught in Scripture. We believe it’s the initial phase of a seven-year series of events known collectively as the Second Coming.

The Apostle Paul said that those of us who are alive when the Lord returns will be “caught up” to meet the Lord somewhere in the atmosphere (see 1 Thessalonians 4:17). After that, we will never be separated from Him again.

The Rapture (that is, God snatching believers out of this world and taking them away) is not without precedent in the Bible. Enoch is a notable OT example: “*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*” (Gen. 5:24).

Some folks find *Star Trek* greatly entertaining. Characters routinely use a fictional transporter to “beam” people instantly from one place to another, but the biblical teaching of the Rapture somehow offends their sensibilities. Go figure!

If you’re put off by the fact that the word “rapture” itself doesn’t appear in our English Bibles (it actually comes from the Latin *Vulgate* version), then feel free to call it something else. What about the Removal or Snatching Up of the Church?

What we call it isn’t really important. But what we believe about it is.

all been characteristics of the past two millennia (and, in fact, have characterized much of human history). They don't become signs in a prophetic sense until they begin to increase measurably in frequency and intensity, like birth pains (or "sorrows"; Verse 8), and they occur in concert (Verse 33).

But we all know that it can be difficult to tell real labor pains from "false labor" (sometimes called Braxton Hicks contractions). The same thing is true of prophetic "contractions." There's an element of subjectivity in these measurements that makes it difficult to tell whether or not everything is coming together prophetically. We do not know if it's prophecy until a trend has actually morphed into a sign by spiking in frequency and intensity, and until all of the signs are happening simultaneously (we call this the principle of convergency; see Matthew 24:33).

Were there earthquakes, say, a thousand years ago? Yes. How about wars and rumors of wars? Yes, of course. And signs in the heavens (meteors, comets, eclipses, and the like)? Once again, the answer is in the affirmative. There were even Jewish people living in Palestine back in those days (not many, but a few), so that might have been seen by some as a scaled-back fulfillment of the restoration prophecies!

But these numerous indicators don't become true signs until (1) they increase measurably in frequency and intensity, and (2) they are happening simultaneously.

Since no one has ever known just how much sign convergency and intensity to expect, the Rapture has indeed been imminent—at least from a human perspective—for the past 2,000 years.

Like they say, "Hindsight is always 20/20." From our 21st-century perspective, it's easy to see that the prophetic trends have never been so evident as they are today. But the trends (or developing signs) would not have been quite so obvious to believers in past generations.

## Deferred Illumination

In Daniel 12:9, the Prophet Daniel has a vision in which an angelic being tells him, ". . . *Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*"

The Prophet introduces us here to the principle of *deferred illumination*. That is, God sometimes locks up the meaning of a prophecy until it's time for

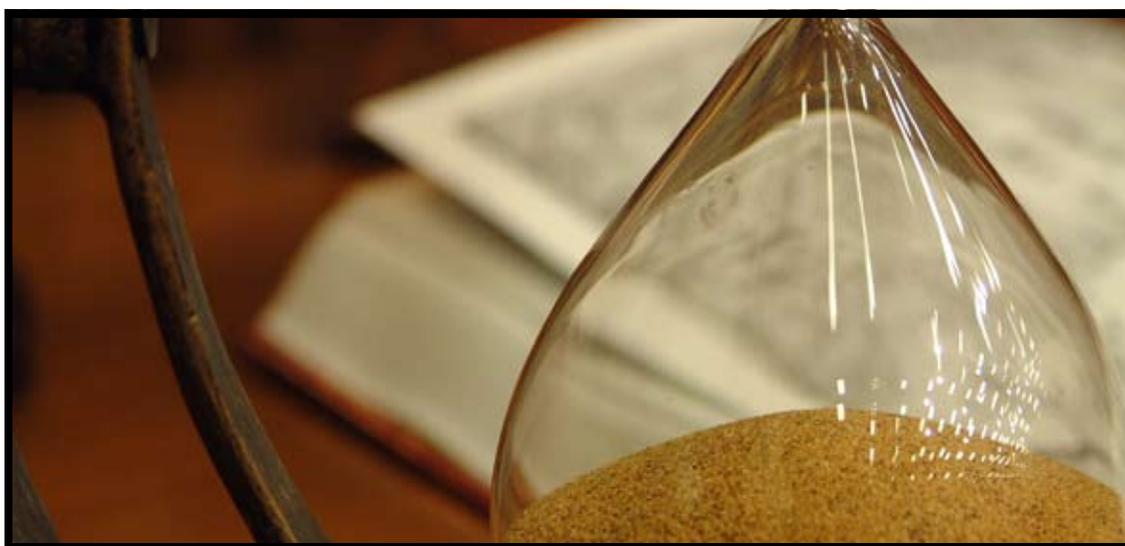
the fulfillment. It makes perfect sense because there is really no compelling reason to share specific information with generations to whom it has no applicability—especially if it might confuse them.

In this instance, Daniel's prophecies about Messiah's birth, death, and Second Coming represent a sequence of events that began in the first century and will culminate in the future—at a time yet unknown. And there were certain aspects of those prophecies that were locked up until the time of their fulfillment approached.

It's evident that even Daniel himself didn't understand much of what the Holy Spirit prompted him to write (see

until the Apostle John wrote Revelation? The late John Walvoord explains it this way:

In verse 9, Daniel is once again informed that the revelation given to him will not be completely understood until the time of the end. Daniel is not rebuked for his curiosity, as it is only natural to ask the questions which he raised. The primary purpose of the revelation, however, was to inform those who would live in the time of the end. The confirming interpretation of history and prophecy fulfilled would be necessary before the final prophecies could be understood (*Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* [Chicago, Moody Press, 1971], p. 294).



1 Peter 1:10-11). He asked the angel for an explanation and was told that the meaning would be sealed until ". . . *the time of the end*" (Dan. 12:9). Centuries later, another angel (or possibly the same one) told the Apostle John, ". . . *Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book* [that is, the Book of Revelation, which he was in the process of writing], *for the time is at hand,*" (Rev. 22:10). The time had come for the unlocking of Daniel's statements about the end times.

John's book, then, is not only a revelation of the Lord Jesus himself, but it also reveals (or unlocks) much of what Daniel said about the last days. The last days (also known in the Bible as the "time of the end" or "latter days") began in the first century (see Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2). Daniel and Revelation dovetail together to outline events that span the 2,000-year period from the Messiah's first coming to His Second Coming—and beyond (into the Millennium and finally, the Eternal State).

So why were certain aspects of Daniel's end-time prophecy not explained

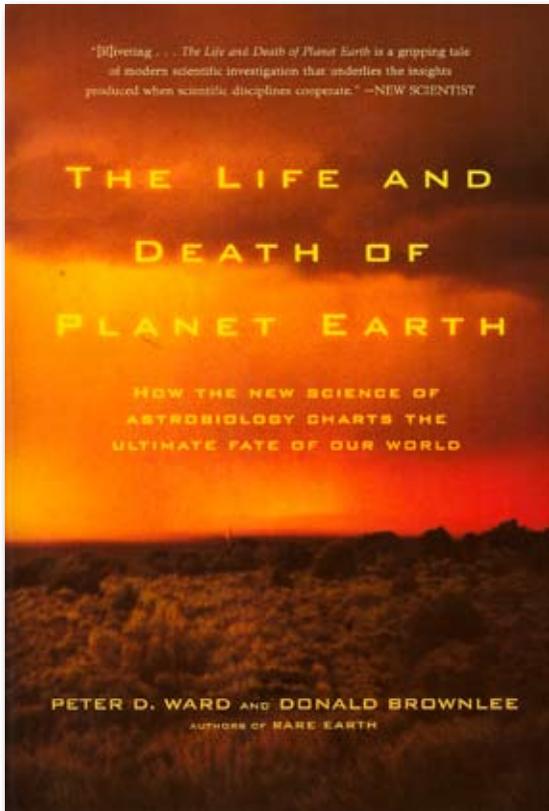
One aspect of prophecy that has been unlocked by the Book of Revelation is our understanding of the role of the earthly nation Israel in God's end-time plan (see Verses 2:14, 7:1-17, 12:1-17, 14:1-4, 21:12). Israel plays a central role in God's plan of the ages—past, present, and future.

## Living by the Clock

From the cradle to the grave, each of us lives by the clock. My birth certificate includes the exact date and time of my birth; and someday (if the Lord doesn't return first), my death certificate will give the exact date and time of my death.

Our alarm clock tells us when to get up in the morning. And from that point on, we're constantly watching the clock. It tells us when to be at work. If you're a student, it tells you when you should be in class. If you're in the military, your time is structured by your chain of command. It's all by the clock, and you'd better not be late!

At some point, someone got the brilliant idea that we should wear a clock



swollen and dying sun roughly seven billion years from now (see *The Life and Death of Planet Earth* by Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee [New York: Henry Holt Publishers, 2002], pp. 212-13).

At the same time, however, they warn that we could destroy *ourselves* long before the sun does it! One group of scientists has devised a “clock” that they believe reflects the nearness of Doomsday. They change the minute hand on this clock every few years to reflect the nearness of “midnight”—which, to them, represents the Apocalypse, or the end of the world. Their calculations are based on a formula that takes into consideration such developments as the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorists and rogue nations, climate change, and other factors that they believe are influenced by humanity.

To secular observers like these, history is lurching awkwardly forward with no particular purpose or supervision (other than what they see as natural selection’s uncanny knack for survival of the fittest). These scientists are painfully aware that humankind’s technical know-how has outstripped its ability to use that know-how responsibly. For the first time in history, we possess weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that—if they were all released simultaneously—could destroy most if not all life on Earth. And there are people (and in some cases nations) who are anxious to acquire these weapons so they can use them.

The scientists who devised the Doomsday Clock in the mid-20th century had helped build the atomic bomb that was unleashed on Japan (the Manhattan Project). Their clock was depicted on the cover of the first issue of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, published

in 1945. These experts had first-hand knowledge of the devastating effects of nuclear weapons—and they wanted to warn the world about them.

Now, however, the world faces the threat of not only nuclear weapons, but also chemical weapons (mustard gas, sarin, VX, soman, and tabun) and biological weapons (anthrax, botulinum toxin, plague, ricin, smallpox, tularemia, and viral hemorrhagic fevers), which can be just as deadly.

Terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda are actively seeking to develop or acquire these weapons. Osama bin Laden has reportedly purchased an inventory of “suitcase” and “backpack” radiological bombs that could be detonated in a densely populated area and kill hundreds of thousands of people within minutes—not to mention the long-term contamination of the area. Iran and its militant Jihadist regime are openly developing a nuclear capability. North Korea, another nation headed by a lunatic (but not a Muslim), already has nukes and is now working on its delivery systems. Pakistan, a moderate Muslim nation with a shaky government, is a nuclear power. Al-Qaeda reportedly sees Pakistan as its best short-term opportunity to seize control of an existing nuclear arsenal.

Little wonder, then, that *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* recently moved its Doomsday Clock up to five minutes before midnight.

If we had a secular worldview, the outlook would be bleak, indeed (see Luke 21:26). Believers, however, should not lose heart. God also has a “clock”—and His clock is the only one that matters. He is the One who controls the ebb and flow of history.

on our arm so we can watch the time constantly—hence, the term “watch.”

God, however, has given us another kind of clock—one that helps us tell the time prophetically. This world had a beginning and someday it will end (see 2 Peter 3:10-12). God’s clock can alert us when the end is approaching.

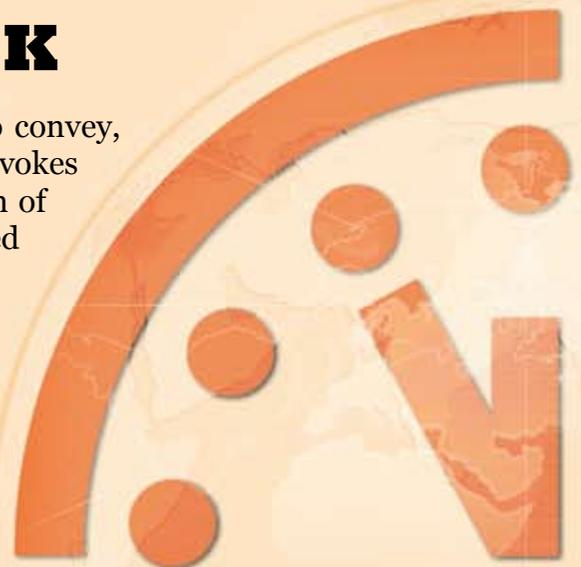
## Doomsday Warnings

Unbelievers even acknowledge that this world had a beginning, and that someday it will end. In an ironic sort of way, Darwinism now has its own eschatology, or end-time teaching. It’s espoused by evolutionary astrobiologists who prophesy that our planet will be consumed in a fiery conflagration by a

# THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK

In 1947, the Bulletin first displayed the Clock on its magazine cover to convey, through a simple design, the perils posed by nuclear weapons. The Clock evokes both the imagery of apocalypse (midnight) and the contemporary idiom of nuclear explosion (countdown to zero). In 1949, the Clock hand first moved to signal our assessment of world events and trends. The decision to move the minute hand is made by the Bulletin’s Board of Directors in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes 18 Nobel Laureates. The Clock has become a universally recognized indicator of the world’s vulnerability to catastrophe from nuclear weapons, climate change, and emerging technologies in the life sciences.

*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, [www.thebulletin.org](http://www.thebulletin.org)





## The Fourth Dimension: Under God's Control

According to the traditional space-time model of modern physics, our created universe exists in four dimensions—height, width, length, and duration (time). Take any one of these four dimensions away from an object or event and theoretically (according to the Minkowski model), it ceases to exist.

The Bible tells us that God is sovereign over our universe in all of its spatial and temporal dimensions, “*By faith we understand that the worlds [Gk., *aionas*; literally, ‘eons’ or ‘ages’] were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible*” (Heb. 11:3).

The Greek word *aionas* in this verse encompasses the entire created universe, including time (past, present, and future). Its Hebrew counterpart is *olam*, which we find in the divine title *Melech haOlam* (“King of the Universe”). *Olam* also occurs in the Hebrew translation of the New Testament, where “the King Eternal,” for instance, is *Melech haOlamim* (see 1 Timothy 1:17).

The writer of Hebrews, then, is saying that everything that exists in space and time was “framed by the Word of God.” He’s emphasizing God’s sovereignty over all dimensions of human existence—including the history of our world.

Notice the word “framed.” When a carpenter frames up a house, he’s setting the shape, size, and position of that house. There will be more work on it later, of course; but the framer determines the structure’s basic character and appearance. Those are things that won’t change.

The writer of Hebrews declares that the course of world history was framed by God. This doesn’t mean that our actions are meaningless or that we are mindless robots carrying out God’s decrees. On the contrary, Scripture makes it clear that we are responsible for our actions, “*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;*” (Deut. 30:19).

The fact that God framed the temporal universe simply means that He has laid out the broad scope, duration, and direction of human history. He elevates kings, nations, and kingdoms—and He brings them down according to His own purposes and plan (see Psalm 102:15, 110:5; Romans 13:1-2).

The writer of Hebrews goes on to say that “. . . *things which are seen were not made of things which are visible*” (11:3). That is, both space and time had a definite beginning and were created by God out of nothing. The history of the created universe doesn’t consist of an infinite cycle of random happenings; rather, the universe had a beginning and it’s moving deliberately and purposefully toward the climax that God himself has ordained.

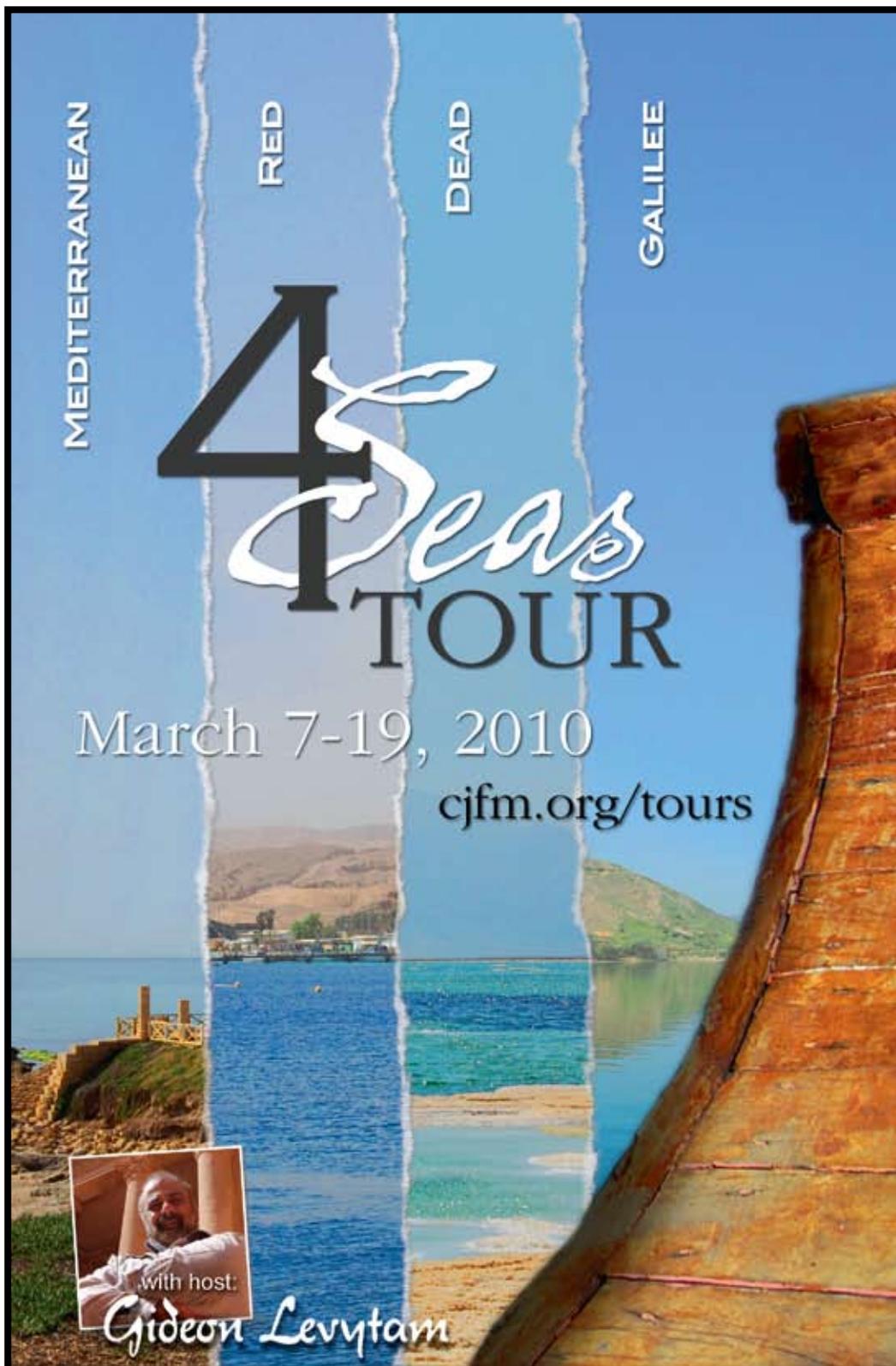
This means that God is on a schedule—one that He himself has established. Of the two most notable events on that timetable, one took place in the past (the first coming of the Messiah) and the other (Messiah’s Second Coming) is in the future.

No one knows the exact time of the Lord’s return. However, we can be reasonably certain that He doesn’t want us to be caught off guard while there are developments surrounding us, setting the stage for the Second Coming scenario. That’s why He has given us a special timepiece that can help us tell the time prophetically.

**Next Issue: Part 2 of Israel—God’s Timepiece and the Five Prophetic Convergences**

Dr. Gary Hedrick  
is president of  
CJF Ministries.





Join Gideon Levytam as he takes you on a tour of Israel featuring the "Four Seas." You will explore the beauty and biblical significance of the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Dead Sea, and the Sea of Galilee. You will also experience Israel from a messianic perspective as you travel through Jerusalem, Eilat, Jordan, and Galilee—to mention a few.

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## URGENT NEED IN ISRAEL

Our ministry in Israel has an immediate need for a newer van to transport people to and from the congregation in Karmiel.

Our 8-year-old Hyundai van has served us well over the years, but it is just worn out. The engine recently seized up while transporting a group of children to camp near Tel Aviv—and the old van is sitting in the shop right now. Our mechanic says that fixing it is just "postponing the inevitable."

Rather than putting more money into a worn-out vehicle, we have decided to replace it. The pastor in Karmiel, Yossi Ovadia, says a newer vehicle will cost at least \$10,000 (USD). The congregation members have given sacrificially and provided roughly half of that amount, so we would like to partner with them and provide the other half.

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# Exciting Encouragements from Elijah and Elisha

by John Turner

Consider these headlines:

“Families Face Unfathomable Financial Hardships”

“Poverty and Hunger Plague Region”

“Outlook Bleak, No End in Sight”

“Desperation Causes Families to Do the Unthinkable”

These headlines may sound as if they are from today’s newspaper, but you could have also read them back in 900 BC. The stories behind these headlines are recorded in great detail in 1 Kings 17—2 Kings 13. The central figures, God’s prophets Elijah and Elisha, were just like us—enduring incredible social, political, religious, and economic changes and circumstances. So, what words of encouragement might they offer us today?

**The journey is too great for you.** The prophet Elijah had experienced one of his greatest victories against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Shortly thereafter, he received “news” that Queen Jezebel wanted to snuff out his life. The Prophet fled and went through a deep valley of discouragement—fear made him panic. He allowed a negative message to influence his life (see 1 Kings 19:1-6). Can you relate? We turn on the news or pick up the newspaper, and cannot help but be overwhelmed by the negativity (some real, some exaggerated) that bombards us. We would do ourselves a great favor by listening less to the world and listening more to the Word.

As the Prophet hides out under a tree’s branches, an angel tells him, “. . . *the journey is too great for you*” (1 Kings 19:7). Most of us have heard that God will not put more on us than we can bear. But perhaps it’s that He allows burdens greater than our strength so that we will see our great need of Him.

“For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

First Corinthians 10:13 is often quoted to offer comfort in the promise that God “. . . *will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, . . .*” That verse has nothing to do with life’s trials, but rather with the temptation to do wrong. The temptation to sin will never be greater than our God-given ability to say no and walk away from it.

We are supposed to encounter problems greater than our personal strength because life requires God! Isn’t this a theme of Scripture? Noah encountered a flood greater than he could survive—without God. Moses encountered responsibility greater than he could handle—without God. David encountered a giant greater than he could defeat—without God. But “with God” we can “do all things!”

In these trying and difficult times, you may be encountering problems greater than you can bear. Don’t think it strange. This is the normal life of the believer. “The journey is too great for you,” but be of good cheer, you are not alone. The Lord is your Helper (see Hebrews 13:6), your Strength (see Psalm 27:1), your Source (see Philippians 4:19), and your very LIFE (see John 14:6)! You will make it with and through Him!

**God is in control.** Elijah and Elisha lived in times of great difficulties that included a 42-month famine (see 1 Kings 17—18). The situation was so dire that people were literally facing their last meal (see 1 Kings 17:8-16), and some had become so desperate that they were eating their own children (see 2 Kings 6). Not long after, another famine came that lasted seven years (see 2 Kings 8), but even in the midst of such destitution, God was still in charge. Elisha said, “. . . *the LORD has called for a famine*” (2 Kings 8:1).

Your life may seem “out of control,” but the hardship you are going through is under your kind and loving heavenly Father’s governance. All things truly are working together for good according to the counsel of God’s own will (see Romans 8:28, Ephesians 1:11).

Just as God may have called for a famine in our lives, He will also call for the famine’s end. That should encourage us! Perhaps today we will experience Elisha’s prophecy fulfilled as, “*For thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink.’ And this is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD; . . .*” (2 Kings 3:17-18).

May we not yield to our temptations to complain, despair, or panic. But may we ever trust in the One who truly “. . . *does great things which we cannot comprehend*” (Job 37:5).

**Expect the unexpected.** We live with certain expectations, and rely on our current sources of provision to always be there for us. We look to an employer, or a family member, or a pension plan, or an entitlement for sustenance. But the prophets have a different message—be open for God to do a new and different thing!



Who would have thought that God would send His prophet meals on the wings of ravens (see 1 Kings 17:2-7)? Who could have predicted that a widow and her son's last meal would actually provide for more than a year (see 1 Kings 17:12-16)? Who could have imagined that an angel's meal would sustain a prophet for 40 days (see 1 Kings 19:5-8)?

We are becoming so accustomed to hearing more and more bad news during these troubling days. So why don't we heed the message preached by the lives of Elijah and Elisha, and begin anticipating God doing ". . . *exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think?*" (Eph. 3:20)? It's time that we "lean not on our own understanding," realizing that God's "ways are higher than our ways" (see Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 55:8-9). Let's believe outside the box! Truly, God's heart shows us "great and mighty things" that we have not yet considered (see Jeremiah 33:3).

**The brook may be dry, but the well is still full.** After coming out of Egypt, the Jews asked, ". . . *Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?*?" (Psalm 78:19). Elijah and Elisha would answer with an emphatic, "Yes!"

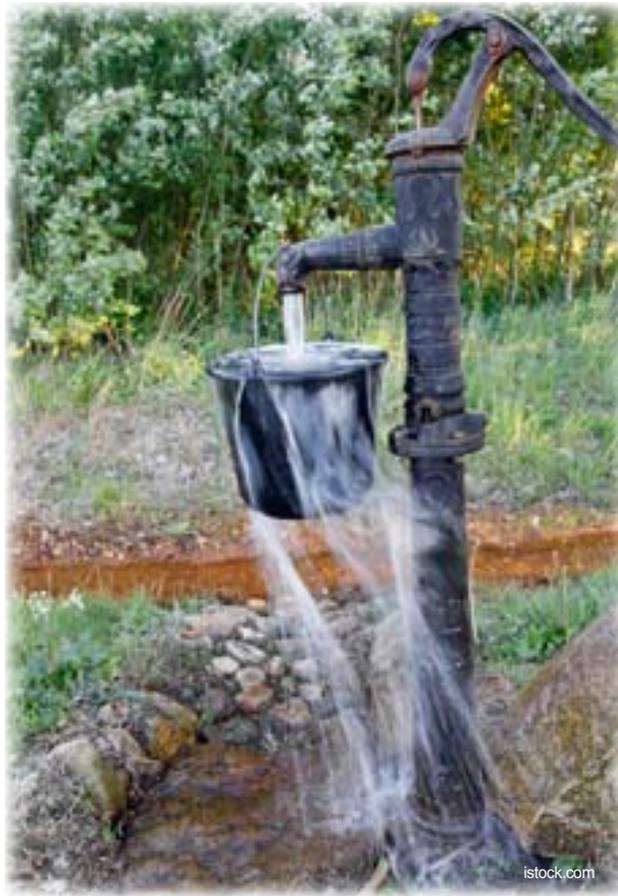
King David says that our kind and loving Good Shepherd "prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies" (see Psalm 23:5). Enemies can take many forms and shapes. Your enemy may not be man or beast. It may be unconquerable debt, impending foreclosure, unemployment, downsizing, possible bankruptcy, homelessness, or devaluation of your retirement funds. An enemy or a problem may be present, but this does not negate God's ability to provide.

Your brook may have dried up. Elijah experienced this in 1 Kings 17:7, but discovered that the well of God's provision was still full, and his needs continued to be met (see 1 Kings 17:8-16). We must come to grips with the reality that brooks dry up. Our temporary sources of income have an end, a culmination, a limit. But our true source, *Jehovah Jireh* (the Lord our Provider), is still "filling all in all" (see Ephesians 1:23).

God meets our needs out of His abundance and riches (see Philippians 4:19). The Jewish people learned that their provision came from Heaven while in the wilderness. They complained when they wandered through the barren and parched land and saw dry riverbeds. But when they looked to the God of Heaven for their provision, they experienced a continual feast.

After more than three years, the drought came to a halt when Elijah heard ". . . *the sound of abundance of rain*" (1 Kings 18:41). When Elijah's "meals on wings" program ended, it was replaced with the widow's never-ending barrel of meal. Likewise, the four lepers of Elisha's day were at death's door when they saw God provide so much that they had to share the good news with others (see 2 Kings 7:1-9). The well is still full today. God has not gone broke. He still has resources. There are still jobs available. Solutions are out there.

**When one door closes, God opens another.** When the newly widowed mother was about to lose her two sons to creditors,



she faced a very closed door. Her husband—who had been the family's sole provider—had just died. Elisha helped her see the open door within her own four walls—an oil-selling business (see 2 Kings 4:1-7).

When a door closes, it is not God's intention that we permanently stay in a position of dire destitution. Consider the words of Psalm 37:25, "*I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.*"

Paul reminds us that when a door opens, there are often many adversaries (see 1 Corinthians 16:9). Forces try to keep us from seeing, proceeding to, or entering the door God has opened, and we may have to conquer fear, helplessness, procrastination, indecisiveness, stubbornness, or pride.

A believer's life is a journey, and the Lord always has a next step for us to take (see Psalm 37:23). You may feel stuck in your current situation, but God has a step for you to take toward an open door.

**Life is cyclical.** It is evident from Elijah and Elisha's lives that life can change at any given moment. In one moment they are in a drought; in the next, there is an "abundance of rain." There is "death in the pot;" in the next, stew that tastes like Marie Callenders'. Two sons are headed to debtor's prison; in the next, these boys have joined their mother in a lucrative home business. Four lepers face imminent starvation; in the next, they are "sharing the wealth." The prophets ministered among the people as they encountered the ebb and flow, the ups and downs, the hills and valleys, and the seedtime and harvest of life.

Job reminds us of this truth: ". . . *The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;* . . ." (Job 1:21). Paul speaks to this as well: "*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*" (Phil. 4:11-12). Solomon reiterates this great truth: "*A time to gain, And a time to lose;* . . ." (Eccles. 3:6).

If we have found ourselves in the downside of this cycle, we must believe that the upside is coming! As we live the principles of God, we can have confidence in this night season that ". . . *Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning*" (Psalm 30:5).

**There is something you don't yet see.** In 2 Kings 6, during the night the enemy army surrounded the city where Elisha lived, and were ready to take the Prophet captive. When Elisha's servant arose early, and saw the vast military might of men, horses, and chariots gathered against them, he panicked. He could not help but ask his master, "What

*continued on page 16*



# Christian Palestinianism

by Dr. Thomas Ice

British Christian Zionist Paul Wilkinson recently included a chapter entitled “Christian Palestinianism” in his book *For Zion’s Sake*.<sup>1</sup> It’s about a movement that is the polar opposite of Christian Zionism, and he defines it as:

“a relatively new, largely intellectual, professedly Christian, anti-Zionist movement [that] has sprung up alongside [Christian Zionism], which I have classified as Christian Palestinianism.”<sup>2</sup>

“Naim Ateek essentially founded Christian Palestinianism in 1994 when he launched the Palestinian Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center known as Sabeel.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2004, Sabeel’s fifth international conference in Jerusalem, “Challenging Christian Zionism,” advanced a leftist agenda against Christians who support the modern state of Israel. Some of the conference attendees and speakers, who claim to be evangelicals, include Stephen Sizer, Donald Wagner, Marc Ellis of Baylor University, and Gery Burge of Wheaton College. Demonstrating its alliance with Islam, the entire group met with Yasser Arafat in his compound at Ramallah. The final statement issued at the conference included the following, “we warn that the theology of Christian Zionism is leading to the moral justification of empire, colonization, apartheid, and oppression.”<sup>4</sup>

## What They Believe

Christian Palestinianism is a system of thought that opposes Christian Zionism. Philip Saa’d, a Palestinian Christian who lives in Haifa, Israel, says, “In recent years a phenomenon of palestinization has also occurred among the Christian Arabs who live in Israel.”

Saa’d describes these recent developments in the following way: “liberation theology,” or “amillennialism, replacement theology and the Covenant of Grace theology.” It also includes a “strong rejection of dispensationalism and of a literal interpretation of the Bible.”<sup>5</sup> He notes that some Christian Palestinians “do not use the Old Testament as a source of their theology” and that, “some writers still use the Old Testament but selectively,” while

he characterizes them as all using “a spiritual hermeneutic.”<sup>6</sup>

Bat Ye’or, an Egyptian scholar, has an entire chapter in her recent book *Eurabia* about the Islamization of Christianity.<sup>7</sup> It is breathtaking to read her well-documented chapter in which she says, “Palestinian Marcionism (Palestinianism) paves the way for the Islamization of the Church as it prepares mentalities for an Islamic replacement theology.”<sup>8</sup>

How do they attempt to reach this goal? Palestinianism, which “presses for the removal of the Gospels from their Judaic matrix and their grafting onto Arab Palestinianism, thus bringing them closer to Islam.”<sup>9</sup>

After citing some of the organizations advocating such things, she notes: “The process of Islamization of Christianity is rooted precisely in this separation from Judaism and the Arabization and Palestinization of the Jewish Jesus.”<sup>10</sup>

“Many Christian Palestinians, like Muslims, do not admit to any historical or theological link between the biblical Israel, the Jewish people, and the modern State of Israel.”<sup>11</sup>

Melanie Phillips, a British Jew, has written a book entitled *Londonistan*,<sup>12</sup> warning England that Islam is taking over their country and culture—mainly because the Church has become pro-Islamic and against historic Christianity. She notes the rise of Christian Palestinianism as follows:

“So when Arab Christians reinterpreted Scripture in order to delegitimize the Jews’ claim to the land of Israel, this kick-started replacement theology, which roared back into the imaginations, sermons and thinking of the Anglican Church.

“This revisionism held that Palestinian Arabs were the original possessors of the land of Israel. The Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, Riah Abu el-Assal, claimed of Palestinian Christians: ‘We are the true Israel. . . .’”<sup>13</sup>

This new breed of replacement theology or supersessionism not only replaces Israel with the Church, but it is moving the Church toward Islamic subjugation. Ye’or declares that the Palestinian Christian movement is guilty of “‘de-biblicizing’ the Bible,” expelling “the Jews from their own Scriptures,” and reinterpreting it “from the viewpoint of the Qur’an.”<sup>14</sup>

Donald Wagner tries to argue that about half of Israel’s population at the time of Jesus was not Jewish, so that he can bolster his pseudo-claim that Arab Christians are racially descended from the original Church from Acts 2 in Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> There may have been a few Arab proselytes to Judaism at the birth of the Church, but the emphasis is clear that the earliest church was primarily Jewish. In fact, Eusebius (approximately AD 263-339) tells us in his famous *Ecclesiastical History* that:

“up to the siege of the Jews by Hadrian [AD 132-135] the successions of bishops were fifteen in number. He said that they were all Hebrews by origin . . . For their whole church at that time consisted of Hebrews who had continued Christian from the Apostles down to the siege at the time when the Jews again rebelled from the Romans.”

Eusebius then lists their names starting with James, the half brother of Jesus. He concludes his comments on this matter as follows, “Such were the bishops in the city of Jerusalem, from the

Apostles down to the time mentioned, and they were all Jews.”<sup>16</sup> Wagner’s attempt to disestablish the role of Israel and to exalt Palestinians into their place is typical of the movement.

It is common for those involved with the Palestinian Christian movement to demonize their counterparts—Christian Zionists—as having “a heretical interpretation of Scripture,” and being “racists,”<sup>17</sup> a “deviant heresy,”<sup>18</sup> and a “heretical cult.”<sup>19</sup> Palestinian Christians commonly believe that Christian Zionists are anxious for Armageddon<sup>20</sup>, when in reality we are anxiously waiting for Jesus and His return for us at the Rapture.

## Evangelicals

Such a movement would be somewhat easier to understand if it were composed of only liberals. However, many within the Palestinian Christian movement claim to be evangelical in their theology. It is amazing to see someone like Gary DeMar, director of American Vision, who normally espouses conservative theology and values, repeatedly giving voice to the Christian Palestinian movement. DeMar has recently had Stephen Sizer on his radio program to discuss the evils of Christian Zionism and recommends his books. He also promotes and sells Colin Chapman’s books.

Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute has had most of the prominent Palestinian Christian movement spokesmen on his daily national radio show, “The Bible Answer Man.” Englishmen Stephen Sizer and Colin Chapman, as well as Gary Burge and Brother Andrew Colin Chapman have appeared on Hanegraaff’s show. And when Hanegraaff deals with the issue of the current state of Israel in his non-fiction book on eschatology *The Apocalypse Code*, he primarily refers to Palestinian Christian advocates to make his case. It is because of his Palestinian Christian mindset that he labels Tim LaHaye and myself as racists because we believe the modern state of Israel has been brought into being by God.<sup>21</sup>

## Rewriting History

Hanegraaff further displays his Palestinian Christian mentality when he accuses Israel of “the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.”<sup>22</sup> He cites as his authority, discredited and revisionist Israeli historian Benny Morris who quotes David Ben-Gurion as saying, “We must expel the Arabs and take their places.”<sup>23</sup>

Hanegraaff is most likely unaware that Morris’s statement about Ben-Gurion is a total fabrication. It is hard to learn this kind of information when surrounded by Palestinian Christian advocates. Nevertheless, such is the case. Efraim Karsh, in the introduction of his book *Fabricating Israeli History*, explains how he first suspected Morris’s fabrications:

“The text in question was a book on the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem by Israeli academic Benny Morris. . . . While leafing through the book’s English-language version, I came across a quote from a letter, written by David Ben-Gurion to his son Amos in 1937, stating ‘we must expel Arabs and take their places.’ This rang a distant bell. Having read the book’s Hebrew edition several years earlier, I recalled the letter as saying something quite different. Indeed, an examination of the Hebrew text confirmed my recollection. It read as follows: ‘We do not wish, we do not need to expel Arabs and take their place . . . All our aspiration is built on the assumption . . . that there is enough room in the country for ourselves and the Arabs.’”<sup>24</sup>

Karsh goes on to examine Morris’s overall body of research and concludes, “To my bewilderment I discovered that there was scarcely a single document quoted by Morris which had

not been rewritten in a way that distorted its original meaning altogether.”<sup>25</sup>

The Bible teaches Zionism (see Psalm 132). It is becoming clear that when one rebels against God’s word on this point, it opens them to not only replacement theology, but to an increasing acceptance of Islamic viewpoints. As issues are further clarified, there is no place for neutrality where one can hide.

Maranatha!

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Paul Richard Wilkinson, *For Zion’s Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2007), xix, 308 pages.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson, *For Zion’s Sake*, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkinson, *For Zion’s Sake*, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Information about the conference taken from a non-published report by Paul Wilkinson who attended the conference.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Saa’d, “How Shall We Interpret Scripture about the Land and Eschatology? Jewish and Arab Perspectives” in Wesley H. Brown and Peter F. Penner, editors, *Christian Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2008), p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> Saa’d, “How Shall We Interpret,” p. 115.

<sup>7</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), pp. 211–24.

<sup>8</sup> Ye’or, *Eurabia*, p. 213.

<sup>9</sup> Ye’or, *Eurabia*, p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> Ye’or, *Eurabia*, p. 214.

<sup>11</sup> Ye’or, *Eurabia*, p. 214.

<sup>12</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), xxv, 237 pages.

<sup>13</sup> Phillips, *Londonistan*, p. 152.

<sup>14</sup> Ye’or, *Eurabia*, p. 215.

<sup>15</sup> Donald E. Wagner, *Dying in The Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000* (London: Melisende, 2003), pp. 41-50.

<sup>16</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), vol. I, pp. 309–11.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p. 205.

<sup>18</sup> Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, pp. 22, 259.

<sup>19</sup> Donald E. Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon: A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995), p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon*, (book title).

<sup>21</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), pp. xxii–xxiii.

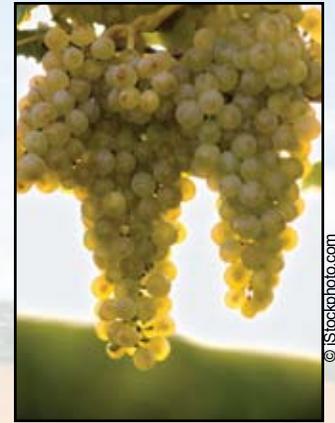
<sup>22</sup> Hanegraaff, *The Apocalypse Code*, p. 166.

<sup>23</sup> Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 25, cited in Hanegraaff, *Apocalypse Code*, p. 167.

<sup>24</sup> Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History: The ‘New Historians’* (New York: Frank Cass, 2000), p. xvii.

<sup>25</sup> Karsh, *Fabricating Israeli History*, p. xvii–xviii.

# Fruit from the Harvest



by Violette Berger

## God's Mindset

CJFM missionary Peter Parkas (New Jersey) invited an unsaved elderly Jewish couple, Stan and Sue, to a Passover Seder at his home this year. Ever since then, he has continued to meet with them; given them a Bible and messianic materials to read; and addressed their objections.

Their questions are standard for Jewish people: "Don't Christians believe in three gods?" "How can God have a son?" "How could a man become God?" The answers are obvious to believers but for Jewish people, since childhood, the New Testament is taboo and considered anti-Semitic. In addition, the Jewish people have endured persecution—particularly from the so-called "Christians" who perpetrated the Holocaust.

Hence, according to the Jewish mindset, Jesus is for "them" (the Gentiles) and not for "us" (the Jewish people). Recently, however, Peter said, "I showed the couple a video of Jewish believers who are Holocaust survivors. The video ends with an invitation to personally accept Yeshua as Messiah and Savior. Praise God that Stan prayed the simple prayer of faith and invited Jesus into his life as Lord and Savior."

Although Sue "isn't ready, yet, to receive Yeshua," both Stan and Sue continue to meet with Peter for discipleship and evangelism. Please pray for Sue's salvation and Stan's spiritual growth.

Peter writes about other prayers for salvation that have been answered. Brandon, who is now a believer, continues to be ministered to by Peter. Mordecai, an elderly Jewish man who is terminally ill with cancer, also prayed with Peter to receive Yeshua as his Savior. Peter states, "It is a true blessing to see people come to the Lord!"

## Just in Time

Michael Campo, CJFM missionary (Chicago) recently visited his wife's uncle in the hospital. "Sam" is 87 years old and

had suffered a stroke, but listened intently as Mike shared the Gospel message with him. When Mike asked him if he would like to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior, Sam answered with an emphatic, "Yes!" and prayed with Mike.

Mike then noticed that Sam's roommate had been looking and listening to them, so Mike asked him, "How about you?" After restating the Gospel message, Mike also had the privilege of leading "Arthur" to the Lord. Arthur is also 87 years old.

## Spiritual Truth

While passing out tracts during one of his evangelistic sorties in downtown Phoenix, CJFM missionary Richard Toviah (Phoenix) met "Andrew," a young man in his 30s who lives downtown. Looking at the tract that Richard had just handed him, Andrew asked, "What is this all about?" Richard told him it was about the most important news he would ever hear. Curious, Andrew asked, "What is that?"

Richard first asked Andrew if he knew the 10 Commandments, to which Andrew responded, "I used to." Richard then named four of the 10 Commandments, and asked Andrew how he thought he would fare on Judgment Day. Andrew responded, "Not that great!"

Richard then shared the Great News—what Jesus has done on our behalf. Andrew thanked Richard for spending time with him and said that he was interested in receiving Jesus as his Lord and Savior but that he didn't know how to pray.

Richard then led Andrew in prayer. As they parted, Andrew commented, "For the first time in my life, the Gospel finally makes sense."

*"that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5).*

# Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

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**QUESTION:** Should a person only use a name like *Yahweh*, *Jehovah*, or *Yeshua* when addressing God or Jesus?

**ANSWER:** We occasionally receive letters and emails from people who want to know why we don't make exclusive use of a certain divine name. Some people in the so-called "Sacred Name Movement" (SNM), for example, are critical if we use any name other than *Yahweh* or *Yah* for God in the Old Testament.

The Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) takes a similar position, except that they use the anglicized form "Jehovah," which many SNM people don't accept as a legitimate rendering of the divine name. Other SNM proponents object to the English names "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ" for the Son of God, insisting that only the original Hebrew names (like *Yeshua* or *Yeshua haMashiach*) should be used.

Here at CJF Ministries, we often use the Hebrew names of God; however, we do it simply to emphasize the Jewish roots of our faith—not because we think it's wrong to use the English (or any other language) equivalents of those Hebrew names. We think it's good for modern-day believers to be reminded that centuries before He was known as "Jesus Christ," our Lord was known as *Yeshua haMashiach* by His small but enthusiastic band of Jewish followers.

God's name is expressed in several different ways in the Bible. In Exodus 3:15, God himself says that *Yahweh Elohim* is "My name forever." 2 Chronicles 7:14 recognizes the term *Israel* as being a derivation of the divine name *El* ("... if My people

[Isra-El] *who are called by My name* [El . . .]"). Isaiah 42:8 and Psalm 68:4 employ the names *Yahweh* (in Hebrew, yod-hey-vav-hey) and *Yah* (yod-hey), respectively. It's evident, then, that when God refers to His name, He doesn't mean to convey the idea that we should refer to Him only by one particular name.

It's interesting that both Judaism and Christendom, over the centuries, have given rise to fringe groups making various sorts of claims about the divine name. The founder of Chassidic Judaism, for instance, was a prominent rabbi who became known as *Baal Shem Tov* (lit., "Master of the Good Name").

This gentleman lived in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe and claimed to have the ability to use his mystical understanding of God's one, true name to work miracles. (For more information, see the article at [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal\\_Shem\\_Tov](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal_Shem_Tov).)

Today, Orthodox Jews avoid pronouncing or writing the name *Yahweh* (or its shortened form *Yah*) because of their interpretation of the third commandment, which forbids the taking of God's name in vain. So they substitute either *Adonai* or "*haShem*" (lit., "the Name") for God (a common expression is "*Baruch haShem*," meaning, "Bless the Lord").

Some Jewish subcultures even forbid the writing of the words "Lord" or "God" in English (they spell them "L-rd" or "G-d" instead); however, this is a relatively recent development and is purely traditional. There is nothing wrong with this practice, certainly; but it has no basis in Scripture. All of the Hebrew names and titles of God are rich with meaning and

we have dealt with them extensively in our teaching ministry.

And it's true—especially based on its usage in the Torah—that God's personal and covenant-keeping name in the Old Testament appears to be *Yahweh* (or the shortened form *Yah*). Its essential meaning is "I am" or "I will be"—hence, the Self Existent One. The other Hebrew designations (e.g., *Adonai*, *Elohim*, and various compound derivatives) serve more as titles and descriptors than they do as personal names.

For New Covenant believers, however, there is no higher or more prominent divine name than that of *Yeshua* (Jesus) the Messiah. In Philippians 2:9, in fact, the Apostle Paul says this is "the name which is above every name." In this sweeping statement, the Apostle elevates *Yeshua* above all other divine names.

Let's remember that the key to knowing God personally has nothing to do with an esoteric knowledge of a specific divine name. It's accepting His son, Jesus the Messiah, as our Savior and Substitute. Paul made it clear that nothing was more important to him than his personal relationship with the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

He wrote: "*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, . . . through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*" (Phil. 3:8-10).

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shall we do?" Elisha, however, was filled with supernatural peace.

Don't we ask ourselves that same question today? As we look around our lives, in one direction we see job loss, debts rising, impending foreclosure, or insufficient resources, and we can't help but ask, "What shall we do?" Elisha told his servant, ". . . *'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them'*" (2 Kings 6:16).

Elisha told his servant that the battle was already won because superior forces were on their side. The servant must have thought the Prophet was crazy. Elisha prayed for his servant, ". . . *'LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see'*" (2 Kings 6:17). The young man's eyes were opened and he saw what Elisha had already seen.

We can go to the Scriptures and find many verses where we are told that we already have the victory, we're conquerors, we're defended by God, etc. But honestly, don't we feel like that young servant, who truly wants to believe it, but just doesn't see it? Elisha and his servant did not need anything added to their lives to produce victory. All that was needed was vision—the ability to see what was already there.

**You can still give.** When Elijah sought refuge and provision in the widow's home, she discovered that she could give even when she thought she only had enough for herself and her son (see 1 Kings 17:8-16). In times of financial hardship, giving is often the last thing that comes to mind for many people. Elijah and Elisha would have us test that mindset.

When the four lepers walked into the Syrian camp and discovered that their condition had just changed from death to life—they instantly became givers. They shared the good news and newfound resources with others (see 2 Kings 7:9). At the point of their discovery, they had no idea what the future held for them, but they still became givers.

We live in a day where the "name it and claim it" crowd abuse the doctrine of giving. Dr. Gary Hedrick refers to this as "blab it and grab it." This author affectionately labels these false teachers as those who "squeal it and steal it." Some erroneously teach that one can "give himself out of debt." May the Lord give us the grace to find the balance to keep benevolence in our budget.

**There's a better day coming!** Elisha sat with the elders in his house; the enemy nation of Syria was on the brink of attacking; famine and drought plagued the land; and the people were in great despair. The king blamed Elisha, and the Prophet encouraged the people, "tomorrow things will be different!" (see 2 Kings 7:1).

Other voices heard in the Scriptures also assure us that a better day is ahead. David tells us that, "goodness and mercy are following us." In other words, a better day is about to overtake us (see Psalm 23:6)! He also confessed, "*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living*" (Psalm 27:13). Solomon says in Proverbs 4:18, "*But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.*"