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Messianic Perspectives[®]

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

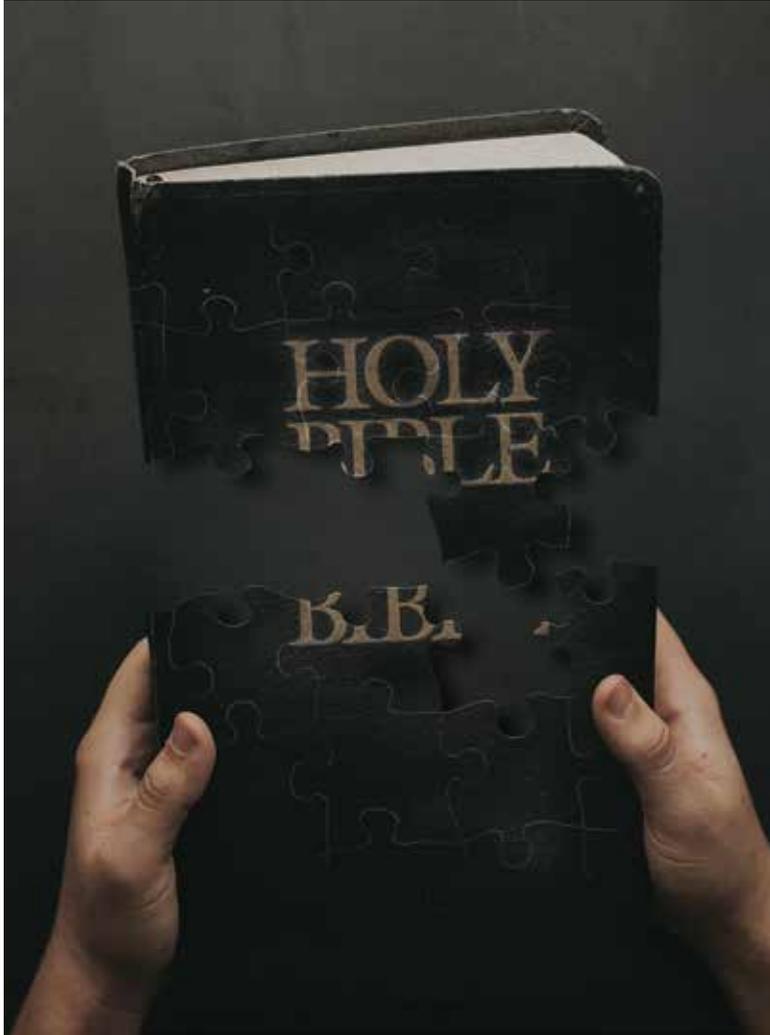
**WHO
IS**

HE?

Putting the Messianic
Puzzle Together

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

When my wife and I were younger, one of our favorite pastimes was putting together large puzzles. Marcia would spread the tiny pieces (sometimes thousands of them) out on the dining room table and start connecting the ones that matched. Family members passing by would pull up a chair and join in for a while—until their attention span waned. It was fun to watch (often over several days) as the chaos that came in the box gradually came together to form an artistic masterpiece.



There are “puzzles” in the Bible, too. The inspired writers provide us with the pieces, and we must figure out how they fit together. One such puzzle has to do with the identity of the Messiah. Who is He? When will He come to fulfill the promises about *Tikkun Olam* (lit., “repairing the world”) and *Olam HaBa* (the eschatological “world to come”)?

Also, although Orthodox Judaism and Bible-believing Christianity both affirm a literal, prophecy-fulfilling Messiah, we differ on the issue of timing. Has He already come, or is He yet to come? Or both? This adds yet another dimension to the puzzle.

Is The Messiah Just An Idea?

Before we talk about putting the pieces of the prophetic puzzle together, however, we should first acknowledge that there’s an ongoing scholarly debate over the “Messianic idea” in Judaism.¹ The consensus in some quarters is that the apocalyptic concept of a coming Deliverer was not an original teaching in Scripture, but rather arose in response to Israel’s circumstances (persecutions and exiles) and evolved in stages over many centuries. Over time, we are told, some wishful thinking kicked in. The sages began to envision the coming of a great Jewish champion who would arrive on the scene and lead the armies of Israel to victory over her enemies—“the sons of darkness” or “sons of Belial.”²



As we alluded to earlier, one thing that traditional Jews and Messianic believers have in common is that we both take the Messianic prophecies literally. While liberal deconstructionists (both Jewish and non-Jewish) dismiss Messianism as apocalyptic “wish fulfillment,” we believe it’s a real thing. The Messiah is an actual Person who has already been here (in the first century) and who will come again someday to deliver Israel (and indeed the whole world) from a looming confluence of threatening disasters at the hands of the forces of darkness. It’s a thrilling narrative, and it’s real. The end-time restoration of a nation of Israel, the rise of the anti-messiah (Antichrist), the peace covenant of Daniel 9:27, the subsequent battles of Armageddon and Gog and Magog, and the Messiah descending from Heaven with His armies to vanquish His enemies, are actual events. The scenario is real—all of it. But we have to put the pieces of the puzzle together correctly.

The Messiah (lit., “Anointed One”) will come and restore the world to its original Edenic state, like it was prior to the great, cosmic Fall in the Book of Genesis (3:1-7). He will bring peace, harmony, and prosperity with Him as He begins to reverse the effects of the Adamic curse (v. 17).

Messianic Perspectives®

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Our (Literal) Messiah

Messiah's first coming was literal. He was a real Baby born in a real stable in Bethlehem to a very real Jewish couple—Miriam (Mary) and Yosef (Joseph). That Baby grew up and became the LORD's "Suffering Servant" (Isa. 53), so He could deal with the world's sin problem. There's no denying that Yeshua of Nazareth was a historical figure—a real, living, breathing Man who walked on this earth for 33 years or more. His followers wrote books about Him. Historians have acknowledged Him. His birth divides all of human history into two parts—"BC" meaning "before Christ" and "AD" meaning "the year of our Lord" (Lat., *Anno Domini*). No figment of the imagination could ever have had this kind of impact on our world and its history.

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village
The child of a peasant woman
He grew up in another obscure village
Where He worked in a carpenter shop
Until He was thirty

He never wrote a book
He never held an office
He never went to college
He never visited a big city
He never travelled more than two hundred miles
From the place where He was born
He did none of the things
Usually associated with greatness
He had no credentials but himself

He was only thirty-three

His friends ran away
One of them denied Him
He was turned over to His enemies
And went through the mockery of a trial
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves
While He was dying,

His executioners gambled for His clothing
The only property He had on earth

When He was dead
He was laid in a borrowed grave
Through the pity of a friend

Nineteen centuries have come and gone
And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race
And the leader of mankind's progress
All the armies that have ever marched
All the navies that have ever sailed
All the parliaments that have ever sat
All the kings that ever reigned put together
Have not affected the life of mankind on earth
As powerfully as that one solitary life

© Dr. James Allan 1926

The fact that He came as a literal Man the first time leads us to conclude that His Second Coming will be just as literal. This, in fact, is exactly what the attending angels told His disciples after He had returned to Heaven: *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:10-11, emphasis added).

So, What's The Problem?

The earliest followers of Yeshua (Jesus) were Jewish. We've already seen that His family was Jewish. His ancestry on both sides (maternal and paternal) was traceable back to King David. Sometimes people wonder why the New Covenant (New Testament) provides so much painstaking detail about His genealogy (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). The answer is that it's not just a genealogy—it's a *royal* genealogy. Any claimant to the Davidic throne would have to prove his hereditary right to rule. He had to be a direct descendant of King David.

Since the official genealogical records were (presumably) destroyed with the Temple in AD 70, the genealogy of Yeshua that's preserved in the New Covenant (along with the complementary genealogies in the *Tanakh*) may be the last surviving written record of royal ancestry. If so, that means Yeshua was the last King of Israel who could document his right to the throne of His ancestor David.³ In Matthew, the genealogy is manipulated (a very Jewish thing to do) to show a triad of "fourteen generations" (1:17)—and in Jewish gematria, the numeric value of David's name (D-V-D) is fourteen.

You see, Yeshua wasn't a Christian. He was a Jewish Rabbi who lived in Israel. He preached and taught in synagogues, not churches. His texts were from the *Tanakh* (the Christian "Old Testament"), not the New Testament (which didn't exist yet). He spoke Hebrew, Aramaic, and (most likely) some Greek and Latin—the languages spoken in first-century Israel.

Why, then, do the Jewish powers-that-be, even to this day, write Him off as "the God of the Gentiles"? The most common explanation is that He couldn't have been the true Messiah because He didn't establish the Messianic Age. When He came in the first century, He didn't do away with war and suffering, and usher in the promised "new heavens and new earth" (Isa. 65:17; 66:22). Therefore, they say, He couldn't have been the Messiah.

One Or Two Messiahs?⁴

**MASHIACH BEN YOSEF—
WILL COME TO DIE
(BATTLE OF GOG AND MAGOG)**

**MASHIACH BEN DAVID—
WILL COME TO REIGN AS KING-MESSIAH**

What they're missing is that the Scriptures clearly present two distinct profiles of the Messiah—that is, two different Messianic job descriptions. One is *Mashiach Ben Yosef* (Heb., "Messiah Son of Joseph"), who sacrifices Himself for His people, and the other is *Mashiach Ben David* ("Messiah Son of David"), a ruling and victorious King.

The rabbis have attempted to resolve this dilemma by saying there are two Messiahs, each of whom comes once. One dies at the Battle of Gog and Magog (at the end of days) and the other reigns over an earthly kingdom. Messianic believers, however, have a different take on it. Instead of saying two Messiahs come once, we say **one Messiah comes twice**. The first time, two millennia ago, He came to die as the LORD's Suffering Servant; the second time, He will come to rule and reign as Messiah Son of David, King of Israel.

False Messiahs—Lots of Them

All of this has been made more complicated by the fact that there have been numerous Messianic claimants during the course of Israel's long history. Each of these "messiahs" garnered a following; however, they all turned out to be imposters. In some cases, the results of their deceptions were tragic.

MOSES OF CRETE

For instance, in around AD 450, a man named Moses (who lived on the island of Crete in the Mediterranean) drew attention to himself with his claims about being the Messiah. Roughly four centuries earlier, the Romans had destroyed the Temple and sent Jewish survivors fleeing for their lives to the four corners of the known world. So, the Jewish people (especially the ones on Crete, evidently) were ripe for the appearance of someone who could offer them hope and lead them back home to the Promised Land.

Moses of Crete traveled the length and breadth of the island, spreading his Messianic claims far and wide—and he was obviously quite persuasive because many Jewish people of Crete believed him and embraced him as their long-awaited Messiah. Larry Epstein picks up the legend from there:

Many Jews [in Crete], ready to receive the Messiah, reacted wildly. They abandoned homes and businesses, and prepared to be led to their promised land.

Moses . . . led most of the Jews of Crete to a point overlooking the sea. Hundreds of people, most carrying all the possessions they could hold, followed him.

At the water's edge, he raised his arms. He ordered that the sea part. Then he told the people to march forward, armed with their faith in him. His followers began to march.

The sea failed to part, and many drowned. Fishermen in the area did save some. Survivors sought revenge, but Moses of Crete had vanished, never to be heard from again.⁵

SON OF THE STAR

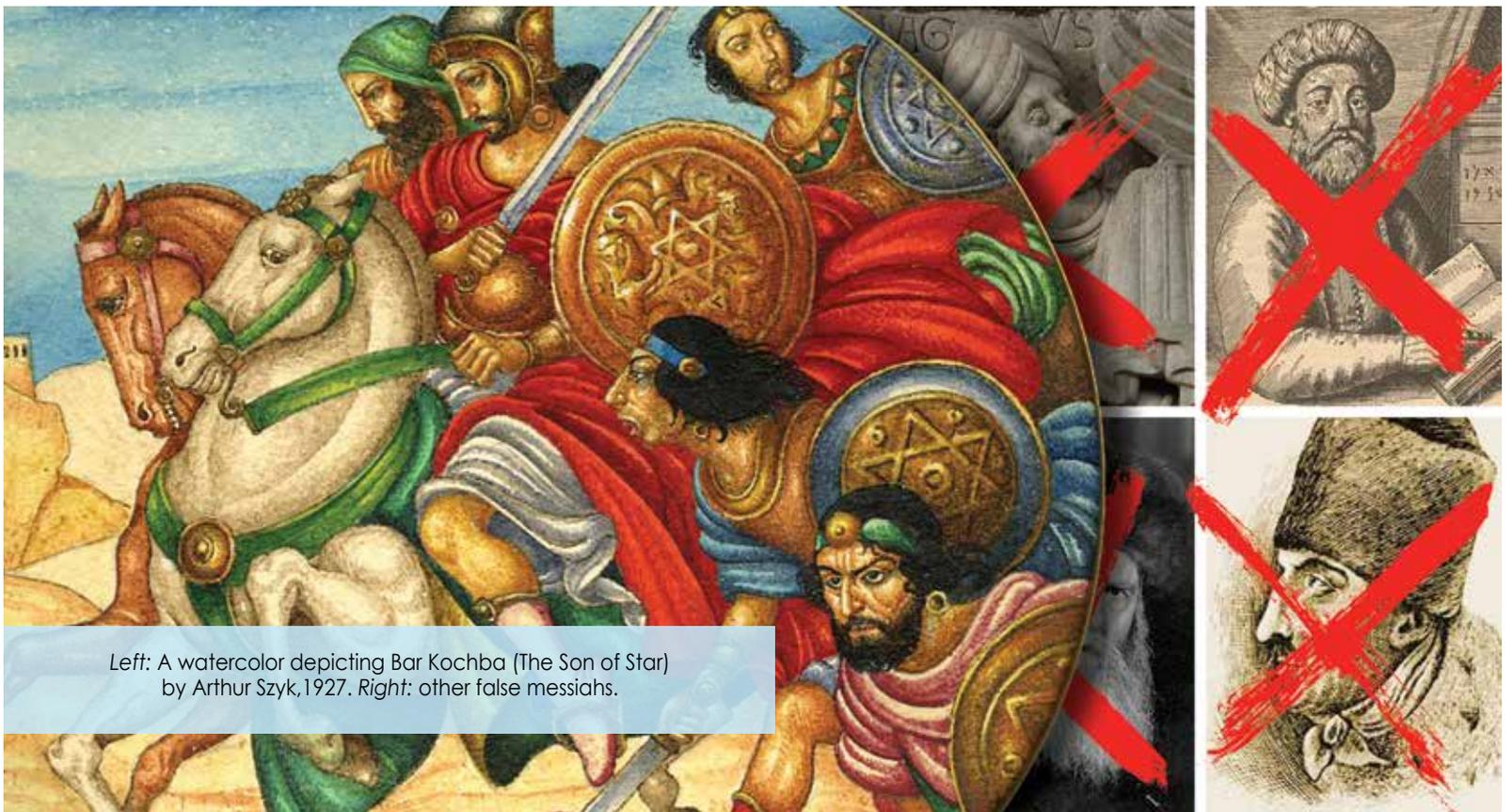
Perhaps the most famous of Israel's long line of false Messiahs was Simon Bar Kokhba (Aramaic for "Simon, Son of the Star"), who lived in the second century, just 62 years after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Simon stands head and shoulders above other Messianic claimants because he was endorsed by the head of the rabbinic magisterium of that era, Rabbi Akiva. Simon and his followers actually succeeded in defeating the Roman occupation force for a time—and he briefly (i.e., for a little over two years) ruled over an independent nation of Israel. They had a Sanhedrin (Jewish high court), made plans to rebuild the Temple, and even minted their own coins, some of which have been excavated in Jerusalem. But when the Romans retreated and then returned later with an overpowering force of some 120,000 soldiers, the Jewish resistance was quickly and unceremoniously crushed.⁶ Bar Kokhba and Rabbi Akiva were both killed.⁷

The Orthodox Union (the official voice of Jewish Orthodoxy in America) would add Yeshua of Nazareth to the list of false Messiahs.⁸ As we saw earlier, their reasoning is simple: Yeshua (Jesus) didn't establish the Messianic Kingdom of universal peace and righteousness when He came in the first century. Therefore, they conclude, He wasn't the Messiah. In their way of thinking, if He had been the Messiah, we would be living in the Messianic Age right now.

All of this shows why it's so important that we learn to put the pieces of the puzzle together correctly. Yes, there are many possible ways to put a puzzle together—no one is denying that. But, there's only one *right* way.

Here are seven basic puzzle pieces that point us to the real Messiah. Let's see if we can put them together, shall we?



Left: A watercolor depicting Bar Kochba (The Son of Star) by Arthur Szyk, 1927. Right: other false messiahs.

PUZZLE PIECE #1: Messiah's origin and birthplace

Micah 5:2 (5:1 in the traditional Jewish Bible)—“*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth Are from of old, From everlasting.*”

Yeshua's origin and birthplace are specified in the New Covenant:

Matthew 2:1—*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. . . .*

John 1:1-3—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

John 8:58—*Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”⁹*



PUZZLE PIECE #2: Messiah's genealogy

Through Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-3—*Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

We saw earlier that Yeshua's royal genealogy is detailed in the New Covenant:

Matthew 1:1—*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ [Heb., Yeshua HaMashiach], the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.¹⁰*

Through David:

2 Samuel 7:12-13—*“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”*

Yeshua was a direct descendant of King David:

Luke 3:31-32—*[He was a descendant of] the son of Melea, the son of Menan, the son of Mattathah, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse. . . .*

PUZZLE PIECE #3: Messiah's self-authentication (with “signs”)

In medieval times, there were rabbis who taught that the Messiah would perform certain authenticating miracles when He arrived on the scene.¹¹ In his book *The Messiah Texts*, Professor Raphael Patai lists two ancient sources that deal with *Otot HaMashiach* (“Signs of the Messiah”)—one an anonymous, apocalyptic midrash from around the 12th-century AD and another by Sa'Adya Gaon from the 10th-century. Patai also has an appendix on Maimonides' detailed description (in the *Mishneh Torah*) of the coming Messianic Age (i.e., the “Redemption”), which includes specific indications of its advent. The *Babylonian Talmud (Bavli)* also elucidates at some length on the coming of the Messianic Age and accompanying signs (*Sanhedrin* 98a-99a).

But we can go further back than that! The Bible itself speaks about what the Messiah will do when He comes. It's not unreasonable, then, to assume that similar Messianic expectations existed by the Second Temple Period (specifically, in Yeshua's time). How else would Simeon and Anna have known to tarry in the Temple for Him (Luke 2:25-38)?

The Bible provides many clues about how the Jewish people were expecting the Messianic promises (beginning with Genesis 3:15) to be fulfilled. For instance, Eve herself may have thought her firstborn child, Cain, was going to be the promised Messiah. We can easily imagine the giddiness in her voice when she excitedly told Adam, her husband, that she had “acquired a man from the LORD” (4:1).

Cain, of course, later proved to be a disappointment. (He was banished for murdering his brother Abel.) Later, however, when Noah was born, his parents (Lamech and Betenos) evidently thought their son might be the Messiah. They named him Noah (“Rest” in Hebrew) and said, “This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed” (5:29). In other words, they believed Noah might be the One who would reverse the Adamic curse. But, of course, he wasn't.

Over time, the hoped-for Messiah came to be known as “the Desire of Women” because every Jewish maiden dreamed that maybe she would be the one to give birth to Him. Finally, in the fullness of time, Elizabeth said to her relative Miriam (Mary), “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! But why *is* this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:42b-43).

The Jewish people during the Second Temple Period (roughly the time of Yeshua and His disciples), then, had a reasonable expectation about the coming of the Messiah. They expected Him to do certain things when He arrived. Accordingly, some scholars see seven authenticating “signs” in the Gospel of John.¹²

1. Changing water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-11)¹³
2. Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-15)
4. Feeding the 5,000 and walking on water (John 6:5-24)
5. Healing the man blind from birth (John 9:1-7)
6. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)
7. Yeshua's own Crucifixion and Resurrection (John 19:16-19; 20:14-18, 26-29)

PUZZLE PIECE #4: Messiah would be virgin-born

The Messiah couldn't be a physical son (i.e., a genetic descendant) of Adam. Why not? Because He had to be the spotless (sinless) Lamb of God. But Adam and all his progeny were (and are) sinners:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12).

That's why the Prophet Isaiah had foreseen the Virgin Birth of Yeshua:

Isaiah 7:14—*"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."*

Some people object to the translation "the virgin" here because the Hebrew word (*haAlmah*; העלמה) can mean, simply, "the young maiden." However, in the ancient biblical culture (unlike today), it was *assumed* that an unmarried young woman was a virgin. Furthermore, if the young woman mentioned by Isaiah wasn't a virgin, how could the birth of her "Son" have served as a supernatural "sign"? Young women who are not virgins give birth to babies every day! Such an event wouldn't have signified anything out of the ordinary.



Technically, the Virgin Birth of the Messiah wasn't an example of the phenomenon of parthenogenesis. Parthenogenesis is something that occurs in nature and is defined as "reproduction without fertilization and [it] occurs when the female gamete develops into a new individual without being fertilized by a male gamete."¹⁴ In the case of Yeshua, however, fertilization of the gamete was provided by divine intervention:

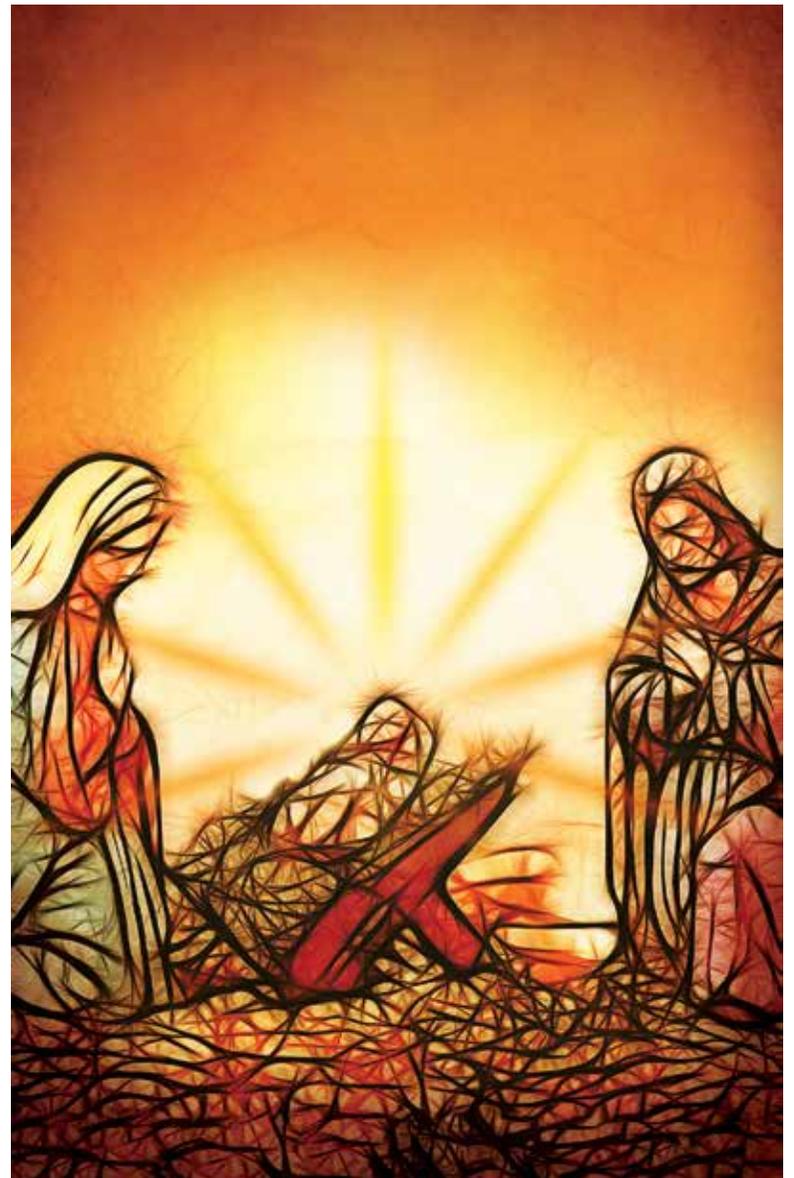
Matthew 1:18, 22-23—*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. . . . So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

As we said earlier, the Messiah couldn't be a sinner because, for sacrificial purposes, the "Lamb of God" had to be perfect and unblemished: *Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18-19).*

PUZZLE PIECE #5: Messiah would be God in human form

Isaiah prophesied that a "Son" would be born to assume rulership on the earth. The world government, eventually, would be His administration. But this would be no ordinary son. He would be known as "Mighty God" (Heb., *El Gibbor*) and "Everlasting Father" (*Avi Ad*), both divine titles. He would be God in the flesh.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (9:5-6 in the Jewish Bible)—*"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."*



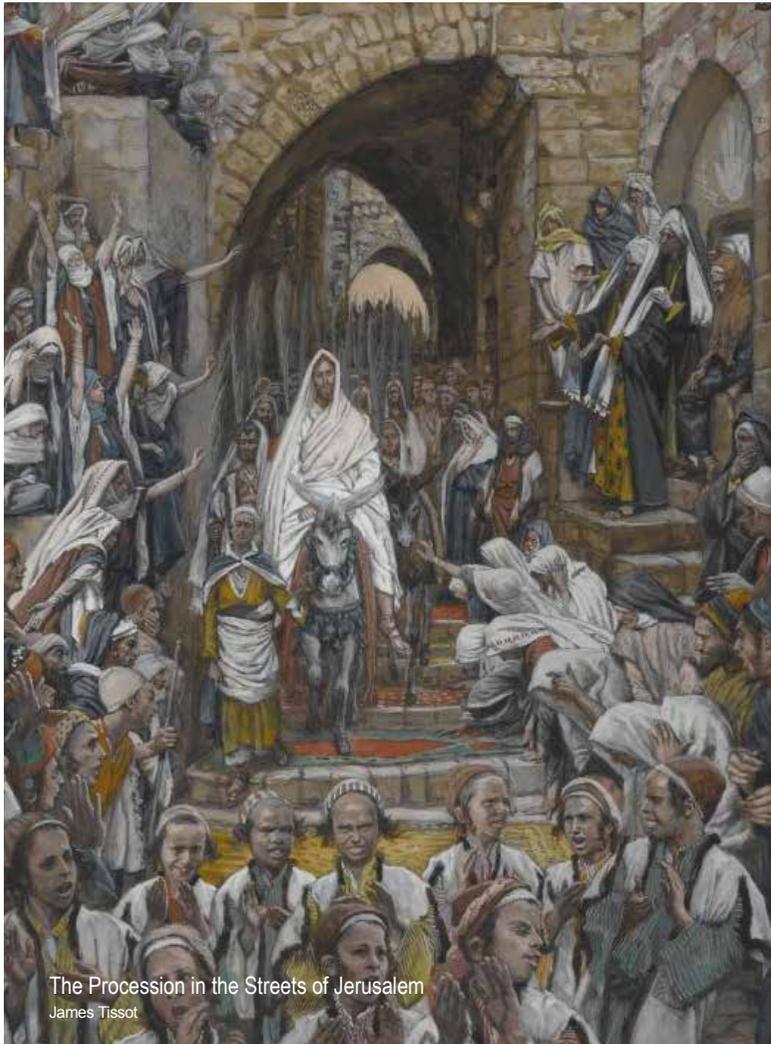
John explains how Yeshua fits this description:

John 1:1-3, 14—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

PUZZLE PIECE #6: Messiah's Humility

The Jewish people were expecting (and desperately wanting) a Messiah who would come as a mighty King and Deliverer. They were anxious for Him to throw off the yoke of Roman bondage. However, the prophets said He must come first as a humble Servant. For instance:

Zechariah 9:9—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”



The Procession in the Streets of Jerusalem
James Tissot

This is how Yeshua entered Jerusalem prior to His betrayal and Crucifixion—viz., on a donkey:

John 12:12-14—[A] great multitude . . . when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!” Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written.

Yeshua condescending and being born in Bethlehem as a human baby (so He could give himself over to die for us) was the ultimate act of humility:

Phil. 2:5-8—Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

PUZZLE PIECE #7: The Suffering Servant

Finally, before the Messiah comes as a reigning Warrior-King, the Bible says He would first come as the sacrificial Lamb of God:

Isaiah 53:4-6—Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

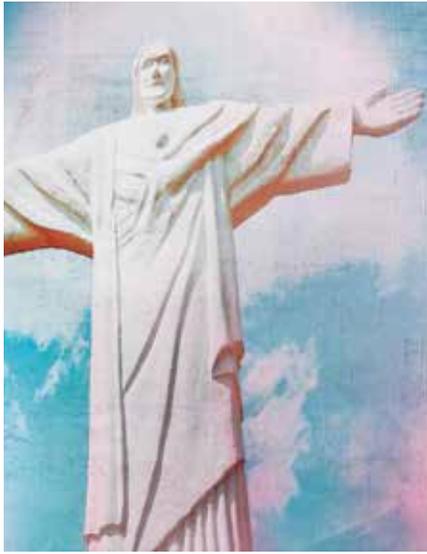
Believe it or not, few Jewish people have ever heard this crucial Servant Song in Isaiah (52:13—53:12) because it’s not included in the *Haftarah* (i.e., a selection from the Prophets that’s read after the cyclical Torah portion).¹⁵



The Sacrificial Lamb
Josefa de Óbidos

What were Yeshua’s credentials in this regard? Well, He was God’s Passover Lamb who was born so He could die and “take away” the sins of the world (John 1:29).¹⁶

Why did He have to be born as a Man before He could die? Very simply, the Incarnation was necessary because as the second “person” of the divine Godhead, Yeshua is eternal in His nature and therefore is not subject to death. In order to die, He had to first “empty” Himself (voluntarily and temporarily) of some of His divine prerogatives and assume the “form” of a human being (Phil. 2:5-11).



Hark, the glad sound! the Savior comes!
The Savior promised long!
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song.

He comes the prisoners to release,
In Satan's bondage held;
The gates of brass before him burst,
The iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of His grace
To enrich the humble poor.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Your welcome shall proclaim;
And heaven's eternal arches ring
With Your beloved name.

—Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

Here's our challenge: lay aside the commentaries (whether Jewish or Christian) and just read what Isaiah 53 says. Don't let anyone else tell you what they think it means. Take this remarkable chapter at face value and decide for yourself Who Isaiah was talking about.

Conclusion

This, then, is how we put the Messianic puzzle together. The pieces fit together perfectly—and the resulting picture is indeed magnificent! Israel's mighty Deliverer and rightful King, the One before Whom even King David himself will one day bow, is none other than Yeshua of Nazareth.



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¹ One of the classic works in this field is *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* by the late Gershom Scholem (New York: Schocken Books, 1995). In this book, Scholem concentrates on Kabbalistic (mystical) aspects of Jewish Messianism.

² "The sons of light" vs. "the sons of darkness" was the motif of the famous "War Scroll" (actually several scrolls and fragments) found in Cave One at Qumran in the 1940s. Its alternate title is, "The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness." The scroll's composition has been dated by various experts at sometime between 200 and 4 BC. It prophesies an end-time battle that will pit the tribes of Judah (and the Levites, among others) against the arrayed forces of "Belial" (Israel's enemies).

³ Anti-missionary organizations like Jews for Judaism and Operation Judaism vehemently deny that genealogical records were destroyed in AD 70—or that written ancestral records were kept at all, for that matter. Instead, they say the Jewish people in ancient times relied on their tradition of "orality"—that is, the keeping of records through oral transmission passed down from generation to generation. (Never mind the extensive, *written* genealogical data in the Bible itself!) For a refutation of the "orality" argument, see "The Importance of Messianic Genealogy" by Wayne Jackson in *The Christian Courier* (accessed at christiancourier.com in January 2020). Israeli archaeologist and educator Mel Reisfield has told our tour groups in Jerusalem that he believes he knows where the ancient records were kept in the Second Temple precincts.

⁴ See "The Messiah Son of Joseph" by Israel Knohl in the September/October 2008 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR) at biblicalarchaeology.org. Knohl makes an interesting case—based in part on the first-century BC "Gabriel's Revelation" inscription—for the death and resurrection (after three days!) of a pre-Christian Messiah.

⁵ *A Treasury of Jewish Anecdotes* by Lawrence Jeffrey Epstein (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc.), 165.

⁶ "Six Failed Messiahs From Jewish History" by Ari Feldman (*Forward* magazine, August 5, 2016), downloaded in February 2020 at forward.com. Feldman explains that the Romans defeated the Jewish resistance at the Battle of Beitar. He comments, "The Talmud writes that the Romans killed so many Jews in the Battle of Beitar that the blood seeped into the nostrils of their horses and flowed forty miles to the sea"—noticeably similar to the imagery employed in Revelation 14:20: *And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.*

⁷ This is when Hadrian, the Roman Emperor, changed the name of the (now destroyed) Jewish homeland from Israel/Judea to "Syria Palestina"—literally, "Syria of the Philistines," an affront making use of the name of Israel's oldest and most dreaded enemy.

⁸ *The Real Messiah?* by Aryeh Kaplan (New York: Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1976), 5-11.

⁹ Adele Reinhartz comments, "I AM, an allusion to God's revelation to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14), also perhaps a claim to preexistence (1:3-5)" in *The Jewish*

Annotated New Testament, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, Eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 177.

¹⁰ When we draw Hebrew equivalents from the New Covenant (New Testament), we're using the text of the Hebrew *Book of the Covenants* (*Sepher HaBeritot*), translated from the Greek text and published alongside the English of *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982) by the Bible Society in Jerusalem, Israel.

¹¹ *The Messiah Texts: Jewish Legends of Three Thousand Years* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979) by Raphael Patai (Chapter 30, "Recapitulation").

¹² The Greek word *semeion* (σημεῖον) means "a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e., an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature" (Augustus Strong). This list of "signs" is loosely based on the work of John Marsh and Stephen Smalley in Marsh's *Saint John* (from *The Pelican New Testament Commentary* [New York: Penguin Books, 1968], 65) and Smalley's corresponding entry in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), 373. It differs slightly from the list proposed by Walvoord and Zuck in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 269). John Hutchinson and E.W. Bullinger also saw a series of authenticating signs in the Gospel of John.

¹³ John comments that the changing of water into wine was the "beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (2:11). The disciples, then, evidently recognized this initial miracle as a confirming, Messianic sign.

¹⁴ "Embryonic" by J. David Wininger, accessed in December 2019 at sciencedirect.com. Excerpted from "Parthenogenetic Stem Cells" in *Handbook of Stem Cells* (Academic Press, 2004), 635-637.

¹⁵ There's an interesting back-story here. The omission of Isaiah 53 originally occurred some 150 years before the time of Yeshua—and therefore wasn't intentionally anti-Christian or sinister in nature. What happened was that when the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BC) outlawed the reading of the Torah during the Greek occupation, the Sanhedrin substituted readings from the Prophets instead. Later, when the anti-Torah law was rescinded, they decided to keep the selected readings from the Prophets (which they recite, to this day, after the Torah portion). The *Haftarah*—due to the need for brevity—only uses 54 out of over 900 chapters in the *Nevi'im* ("Prophets"). Chapter 53, then, is only one of many passages in Isaiah that aren't included. Nonetheless, that's really not the point. The fact remains that many Jewish people are unfamiliar with Isaiah's Suffering Servant in Chapter 53, largely because it's not a *Haftarah* reading. By the way, the Talmud acknowledges the Messianic import of Isaiah 53 (see *Sanhedrin* 98b). Also, there's an interesting discussion thread at historical-jesus.info/32.html dealing with Jewish concepts of a suffering, dying Messiah vs. a ruling King-Messiah in the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* and *Sukkah*), Dead Sea scrolls, and Targum Jonathan.

¹⁶ See also: John 1:1; Matthew 8:16-17; 26:62-63; 27:12-14, 38, 57-60; Mark 15:27-28; Luke 23:33; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3.

Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

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

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

QUESTION: *I have heard that the Catholic Church has a secret vault in the basement of the Vatican where they keep, among other things, the plunder they took from the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, including the solid gold candelabrum and possibly the ancient Ark of the Covenant, as well. Can you shed any light on this?*

ANSWER: Yes, of course. First, let's understand that the Holy See (i.e., the Vatican) is pleased when people think they've enjoyed the kind of continuity that would allow them to be in possession of Temple artifacts from 2,000 years ago. But they know—and most of the rest of us know, as well—that it's a myth. The reality is that Rome has been sacked and overrun numerous times through the centuries. The oldest building in the Vatican today is St. Peter's Basilica, which was constructed in the 1500s. It was financed, in part, by the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were "certificates of remission" (that is, forgiveness of sins) that could be purchased in those days by donating to the fund for the rebuilding of the basilica in Rome. Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation when he wrote his 95 Theses against this sale of indulgences and nailed them to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517.

The church this new structure replaced in the 1500s (i.e., the old St. Peter's Basilica) was built in the 4th century (300s AD, roughly the time of Constantine)—which means it was built three centuries *after* the sacking and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. So again, there's no continuity that would allow for any Vatican "vaults" to contain ancient Temple treasures or artifacts. The Roman Catholic Church didn't even exist in AD 70. Peter wasn't a pope. For one thing, he was married. We know this because the Bible says he had a mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-17; see also 1 Cor. 9:5).

The myth of continuity, however, persists. It claims an unbroken link from the Apostle Peter through 2,000 years of church history, right up to the present pope. But it's all smoke and mirrors. Through the centuries, there have been popes and rival anti-popes, and numerous other historical disruptions. The myth itself may stem from the Holy See's claim that the high altar in St. Peter's Basilica (both the old and new one) is built over the site where Peter was buried. An underground mausoleum was discovered at that subterranean site in 1939, and later they supposedly recovered bones from a white marble box that were reportedly identified (by nearby graffiti) as the remains of the Apostle Peter. Subsequent DNA testing was inconclusive, although some reports said the bones were shown to be those of a man of small stature (5'7" tall) from the first-century Middle East, whose skeletal remains suggested that he had lived a life of hard labor. However, those reports are unconfirmed and may be more wishful thinking than anything else. In any case, this could be why some people think the Vatican has an underground secret vault in which they've hidden away the ancient Temple treasures. After all, if they have the bones of Peter, why not?

Adding to the difficulty of any supposed 2,000-year continuity is the so-called Catholic "Babylonian Captivity" in the 14th century—one of the "disruptions" I mentioned above. This was a (nearly) 70-year period when the pope, for political reasons, relocated to France (known as "the Avignon Papacy"), from 1309-1377. Marcia and I had an opportunity to visit the Avignon Vatican several years ago during an LCJE conference in the south of France. It's an impressive palace behind high walls, and worth visiting—but long since abandoned by the Catholic hierarchy, obviously. Here's the point: if there had been a secret vault that held the Catholic Church's treasures, Pope Clement V would have had to haul all that stuff with him to France in 1309! Then, seven popes later (in 1377), they would have had to schlep everything all the way back to Rome again—a trek of nearly 700 miles, all on horseback with carriages, on dirt pathways through much difficult terrain! Even if they were able to cover ten miles a day (which is doubtful), the trip to Rome would have required nearly two and a half months. Can you imagine?

So, there's no vault of treasures at the Vatican where historical relics like the Temple Menorah or the Ark of the Covenant are hidden away—and there never has been.¹

Yes, the Arch of Titus in Rome does, indeed, show the Roman soldiers carrying on their shoulders the booty from Jerusalem into Rome (including the seven-branched menorah) in a grand victory procession. However, that wasn't the original Temple Menorah, which appears to have had a different design at the base and was removed by the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes IV in 169 BC. The Maccabees built a new Menorah later, when they cleansed and restored the Temple, and it was large; but it probably wasn't solid gold. The Maccabean Menorah is the one that was in the Temple at the time of the Roman invasion in AD 70.²

Gershon Salomon famously wrote to Pope Francis in 2015, asking him "to return with no delay the Holy Temple menorah, vessels and treasures, that are presently located in the Vatican, to G-d's People Israel in Jerusalem."³ A few years before that, the Israeli minister of religious affairs had asked the Vatican to provide information about the whereabouts of the Temple treasures stolen by the Romans in AD 70. However, few people in Israel (or elsewhere) take publicity stunts like these seriously. The Vatican receives dozens of requests like this every year and they relish the attention. Why? Because (as we noted above) they claim apostolic succession—that is, they say there's an unbroken continuity of leadership from Peter to the current pope. So, when uninformed people think the Vatican has the Ark or the Menorah hidden away in their "secret, underground vaults," the Holy See has little interest in dispelling the myth because it feeds their false narrative. 

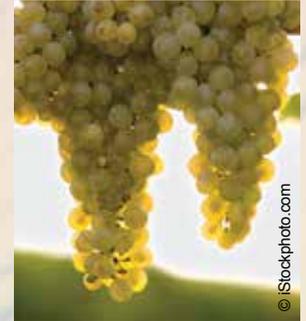
¹ The Ark of the Covenant wouldn't have been carried away by the Romans in AD 70 anyway, since it was missing from the time of Babylonian Captivity (586 BC) onward. Later, during the Second Temple Period, the blood of sacrifices was sprinkled on the "foundation" stone where the Mercy Seat of the Ark had formerly sat in the Holy of Holies. See Arthur Thomas Chapman, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Vol. 4 (Book of Leviticus)*, A.F. Kirkpatrick, Ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 91. See also Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Yoma* (5:2-4).

² Raphael Patai, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions* (London: Routledge Publishers, 2015), 358.

³ You can read the text of the letter to Pope Francis on the website of Rabbi Salomon's *Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement* at templemountfaithful.org.

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



Let's Take a Walk

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas), is experiencing, like most ministries, a shutdown of their congregation by their governor's orders. This also includes their evangelistic outreach via their campus ministry at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), mall ministry, and dance ministry in convalescent homes. Since the entire city has been shut down, he and his team were mulling over ideas of where they could go. The Lord put it on the heart of Rich's wife, Oanh, to go for a walk around the neighborhood. When they did, they realized that everyone else was out walking, too. During their walk, they noticed a woman sitting on a large boulder on the side of the road. Keeping their social distance, they engaged her in a conversation, which ultimately led to spiritual matters. They recognized that she was not a born-again believer and proceeded to share the Gospel message with her. At the conclusion of their conversation, Oanh asked her if she wanted to repent and trust Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She said, "Yes," and prayed for her salvation. Rich writes, "She was very excited about getting saved and we could see an instant change in her demeanor, like a great burden was lifted from her life. We exchanged phone numbers, and she asked about getting baptized! She also wants to attend our congregation. However, she knows that she'll have to wait for her baptism due to the coronavirus pandemic. Until the quarantine is over, we're only having closed Facebook services with essential workers." Rich encourages his supporters and fellow CJFM workers—all those who are able to venture safely out into the public for a walk—to see what the Lord might do through them. He and his team will, for sure, be taking more walks around the neighborhood.

Passover on Zoom

CJFM Representative Diann Parkas (New Jersey) had a Purim event in her home in early March, when our understanding of the severe Covid-19 threat was just beginning. Twenty-three people, including three unsaved Jewish women attended. Due to the recent restrictions, Diann invited those same individuals, and others, to join her for Passover—not in her home, but on Zoom. She will hold her home Passover Seders on the first and second nights of Passover. She writes: "Many Jewish people gather with extended family on those nights, but since these gatherings are not going to happen this year, many people seem particularly interested in attending a novel Zoom Seder, including those three Jewish women who came on Purim, and even those who don't live in my immediate area." We look forward to hearing from Diann on the results of her Zoom Passover Seders.

Soup

Larry and Debby Dubin, CJFM representatives (Florida), came up with a novel, creative way to reach the lost and show kindness to their neighbors. Larry made a pot of chicken and matzah ball soup, just like his grandmother used to make. He and Debby will jar and distribute it to their Jewish neighbors and also to those in their synagogue discussion group. They also posted signs in the elevators of their condo building asking people who have any needs to contact them. We pray that God would abundantly bless them and the recipients of their selfless acts of kindness.

"KAVOD-19"

Jenya Drazman, CJFM representative (Canada), joined a local response team called KAVOD-19 (a play on words) in her local Jewish community and has offered to run errands, etc., for seniors. "Kavod" is a Hebrew word which means honor and respect. In the Older Covenant, it means "glory to God" or "praise be to the Lord." It is a way of witnessing His beauty and radiance. May God use Jenya to give Him honor and glory through her acts of kindness and grant her opportunities to reveal the Jewish Messiah to the lost.

"To the Jew First"

Violette Berger, CJFM representative and staff writer (Scottsdale, AZ), writes:

A widowed Gentile friend of mine, whose late husband was a pastor, moved into an independent senior living community, and the Lord recently opened the door for her to meet and befriend four Jewish women and a Jewish man while walking on the grounds. She has had an opportunity to witness one on one with each of them (while keeping their social distance) and to listen to their life stories. She calls me before and afterward for prayer and guidance in responding to their questions. She saw one of the women sitting on the patio, and their conversation once again turned to spiritual matters.

"Hannah" is a Holocaust survivor and shared the miraculous way God spared her when she was a child. I had suggested asking Hannah her views about Jesus and a Jewish Messiah and introducing her to Daniel 9:26 about when the Messiah would be put to death. I was blessed when my friend called me back to tell me that Hannah prayed with her to receive Jesus, her Jewish Messiah. Hallelujah! I am sending my friend some materials so that she can disciple this new Jewish believer. Thus far, and in view of the coronavirus threat, particularly among the elderly, the others remain open and curious. Hence, our phone collaboration continues. I praise God for her burden to reach "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" with the Gospel message. It has been a privilege to partner with her. Please join us in praying for their salvation.



Dr. Michael Licona

Zoom Campus Meetings

CJFM Representative Eric Chabot (Columbus, OH) has been holding weekly Zoom meetings with students from his campus ministries at Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College. Recently, for the students at Ohio State University, Eric held a Zoom interview/teaching with Dr. Michael Licona (see photo), a New Testament scholar and “Resurrection apologist.” Eric praises God that despite the lockdown of the colleges, “we don’t stop equipping students!”

Pandemics

Michael Campo, CJFM representative (Arlington Heights, IL), recently delivered a Sunday morning sermon at a local church through a Zoom call. (see photo) He focused on how God, throughout biblical history, sent plagues and pestilence. However, Michael pointed out “not all spreading pandemics are the result of a proactive God. It is quite possible that it is a reminder that we live in a fallen world.” He asked the question, “How should a man respond to a spreading pandemic?” Michael cited Isaiah 26:9-10 from the New American Standard: “For when the earth experiences Your judgments The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Though the wicked is shown favor, he does not learn righteousness.” He adds, “Judgment should cause man to learn righteousness. God showed favor to the unrighteous and yet they refused to repent and worship their Creator.” He encouraged the congregants to look for opportunities to witness: “Often, when people are fearful for their lives, they are more willing to have conversations about eternity, about life after death. We have the only answer for a spreading pandemic, Jesus Christ!” To listen to Michael’s sermon, please go to the following link: anchor.fm/living-word-bc



Michael Campo

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

Finally, I would like to end this column with the words from **Rob Styler, CJFM director of missions**, addressed to all CJFM representatives:

“Some are planting seeds, some watering, and some harvesting (see 1 Cor. 3:5-9). The work of God goes on regardless of the circumstances. Looking at the world, we see everyone’s plans are on hold or canceled. But looking toward God, we see His plans continuing to unfold. He alone is sure of the future, and as His followers, we can be certain of the future as well. Not that we have personal knowledge of His exact plan, but we are confident His plan and purposes will be accomplished no matter how long we may have to shelter in place. Let’s continue to encourage one another and pray for one another.”



IN THIS ISSUE

WHO IS HE?
**Putting the Messianic
Puzzle Together**
by Dr. Gary Hedrick
Page 1

Bible Questions & Answers
Treasures in Vatican basement?
Page 9

Fruit from the Harvest
by Violette Berger
Page 10

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