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Messianic Perspectives®

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

SEVEN THINGS EVERY
CHRISTIAN SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT

*The Coming
Kingdom*

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

There's a lot of uncertainty about the future today. Our world is being ravaged by wars, disease, racial hate and conflict, political schisms and demagoguery, mounting economic uncertainty, and much, much more.

No wonder so many people are living in fear these days. They're wondering how much longer things can go on like this!

But, don't fret—there's good news! In the Bible, God assures us that a new and better world is coming. Planet Earth will someday be under new management. Many of us would say it's long overdue!

Here are some biblical facts about the future Kingdom that will comfort and encourage us in these troubled times.



King Cyrus the Great
Sydney Olympic Park monument

1. *The future worldwide Kingdom of God is a major theme of the ancient prophets.*

Hope is on the horizon! That's the core message of the Old Testament (OT) prophets. Isaiah, for example, had a lot to say about a coming new world order. He and other prophets envisioned it as something that will happen in real history (that is, not just allegory), in a future time of redemption and renewal on the earth.

Some people reject future prophecy as a fantasy. They reduce the OT predictions to Israel's *past* restoration after the ancient exile. The Persian King Cyrus allowed the Jewish people to return to Israel in 539 BC—so, they say, the prophecies about that ancient repatriation were fulfilled long ago.¹ To the skeptics, those passages didn't point to anything in the future. It all happened in the past. Israel today, they insist, is merely a burp of history. She has no place in prophecy.

The problem with this approach, however, is that even though there are indeed prophecies that were fulfilled either partially or completely in Israel's past, the fact remains that some ancient prophecies simply don't match the facts as we know them from established history.² They speak of a *permanent* restoration of Israel in her Land *after which she will never, ever be uprooted again* (e.g., Amos 9:15). These prophecies weren't fulfilled in 539 BC because Israel was uprooted again later. Therefore, the prophets are clearly pointing to something that will happen in the future—in *our* future. They describe a concerted, international effort to obliterate Israel at the end of this age; and that effort might succeed if not for the intervention of Israel's King-Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth. Following His victory in the final Battle of Armageddon, He will set up His global government in the New Jerusalem, capital of a renewed earth (Zech. 9:9-10).

Other skeptics take a different approach. They assert that the Kingdom prophecies were never meant to be taken literally. Instead, they say the prophecies are symbolic and should be applied (spiritually) to the Church. However, this pill is hard to swallow because the Lord himself took the Kingdom prophecies as (1) literal, (2) directed to earthly Israel, and (3) non-transferable.³ Yeshua taught His Jewish disciples to pray to the Lord like this: "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10). Anyone who tries to spiritualize this portion of the Disciples' Prayer ends up defending an absurdity. If the Kingdom is already here, and the mess we see around us now is God's will being done "on earth," like they say, then we are truly in an awful predicament! The Lord can only be talking about a *future* time when Heaven will come down, the curse will be reversed, and God's reign will extend from one end of the earth to the other (Dan. 2:44). That surely isn't the case now! The earthly Kingdom, then, is literal and it's yet future—awaiting the time when the Lord himself descends from Heaven in power and glory.

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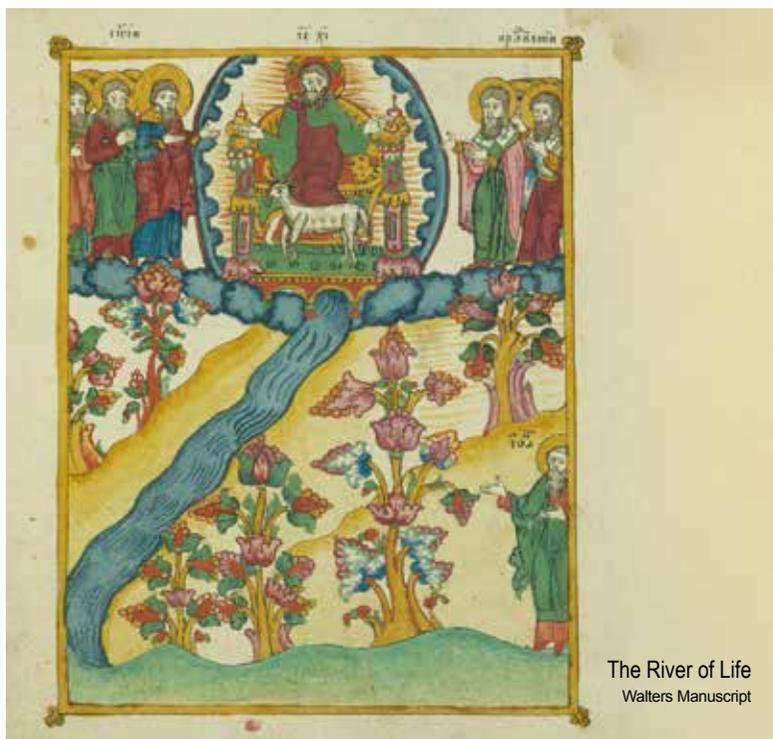
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A good way to remember what the term “kingdom” means is to think of it as a *king’s dominion*—“king-dom.”⁴ The Kingdom of God is when God will rule the world forever through His divine Regent, the Messiah:

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 (Isa. 9:6-7).



One of Messiah’s titles is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16). It’s a political term. In ancient times, earthly kings like Artaxerxes and Nebuchadnezzar also held this title because they had no earthly rivals and other kings paid tribute to them. So, thanks to these previous uses of the term “king of kings,” we know what it means—and it is well suited to Yeshua, Israel’s King-Messiah, who will someday rule the whole world.

Speaking of his Descendant who would be the Messiah, King Solomon said, *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him (Psalm 72:11).*⁵

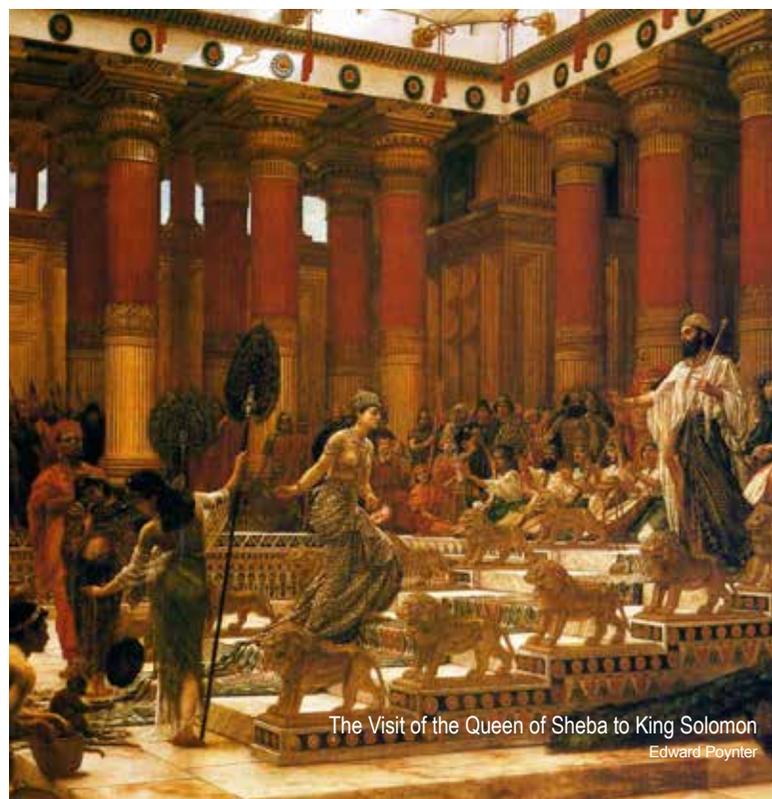
2. The ancient Kingdom of David and Solomon was a foreshadowing of the future Kingdom of God.

Around 1000 BC, the united Kingdom of Israel provided the world a fleeting glimpse of the future Kingdom of God. The ancient Kingdom wasn’t as grandiose and magnificent as the future Kingdom will be. It was on a smaller scale (i.e., not worldwide), and it wasn’t unending (the ancient Kingdom came crashing down shortly after King Solomon died). Neither did the Edenic curse begin to be reversed during David and Solomon’s reign (weeds no doubt grew in the King’s garden!). Nonetheless, the ancient Kingdom was based on the same covenant that will form the basis of the future Kingdom—that is, the covenant God made with David (2 Sam. 7:16). And, it was a literal kingdom, just like the future Kingdom will be!

King David had grown up as a common shepherd boy, the son of a farmer named Jesse. He got the attention of Israel’s royal court when he bravely confronted and vanquished the Philistine giant Goliath on the battlefield (1 Sam. 17:1-58). However, his military prowess wasn’t his main asset. His most important qualification for kingship was spiritual rather than political or physical: he was a man after God’s own heart (13:14).

John Sailhamer explains:

As a reward for David’s faithfulness to the Lord, God made a special covenant with the dynasty of David, in which he promised that a “descendant” of the house of David would establish an eternal kingdom in Jerusalem. That Davidic descendant would be a faithful king like David himself. Solomon apparently understood his own reign to be a fulfillment of God’s covenant promise. The biblical writers are clear, however, that neither Solomon nor any of the subsequent Davidic kings could be reckoned as the true fulfillment (1 Kings 11:9-13). Thus, the promise made to David went beyond any of the Davidic kings. It pointed to a future messianic king who would establish God’s kingdom in Jerusalem forever. That promise finds its fulfillment in the reign of Jesus, the Son of David.⁶



The united Kingdom of David and Solomon was resplendent and glorious, indeed. It was so widely renowned, in fact, that the Queen of Sheba crossed a continent to see if the things she had heard about King Solomon were true: *Then she said to the king: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However, I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard” (1 Kings 10:6-7).*

But, even the sprawling kingdom of David and his son Solomon was nothing in comparison to the future, glorious, magnificent, worldwide Kingdom of Yeshua the Messiah! That reign is yet future; it will be on this earth; and it will endure forever.

3. *The Kingdom will be Heaven on earth.*⁷

Though most Bible-believing Christians can tell someone how to get to Heaven (i.e., by trusting in Yeshua as Messiah and Savior), it seems odd that they know so little about Heaven itself. For instance, where is it? What's it like? What will we do there? Who's there now?

Like we've said before, there's a popular conception that Heaven is a nebulous place where we'll float around on clouds while we strum our harps. But, it's more than that—much more.

Heaven is wherever God is. If God is there, it's Heaven. However, the information provided in the Bible is even more specific. It explains that God dwells in a City—the New Jerusalem:

For [Abraham] waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

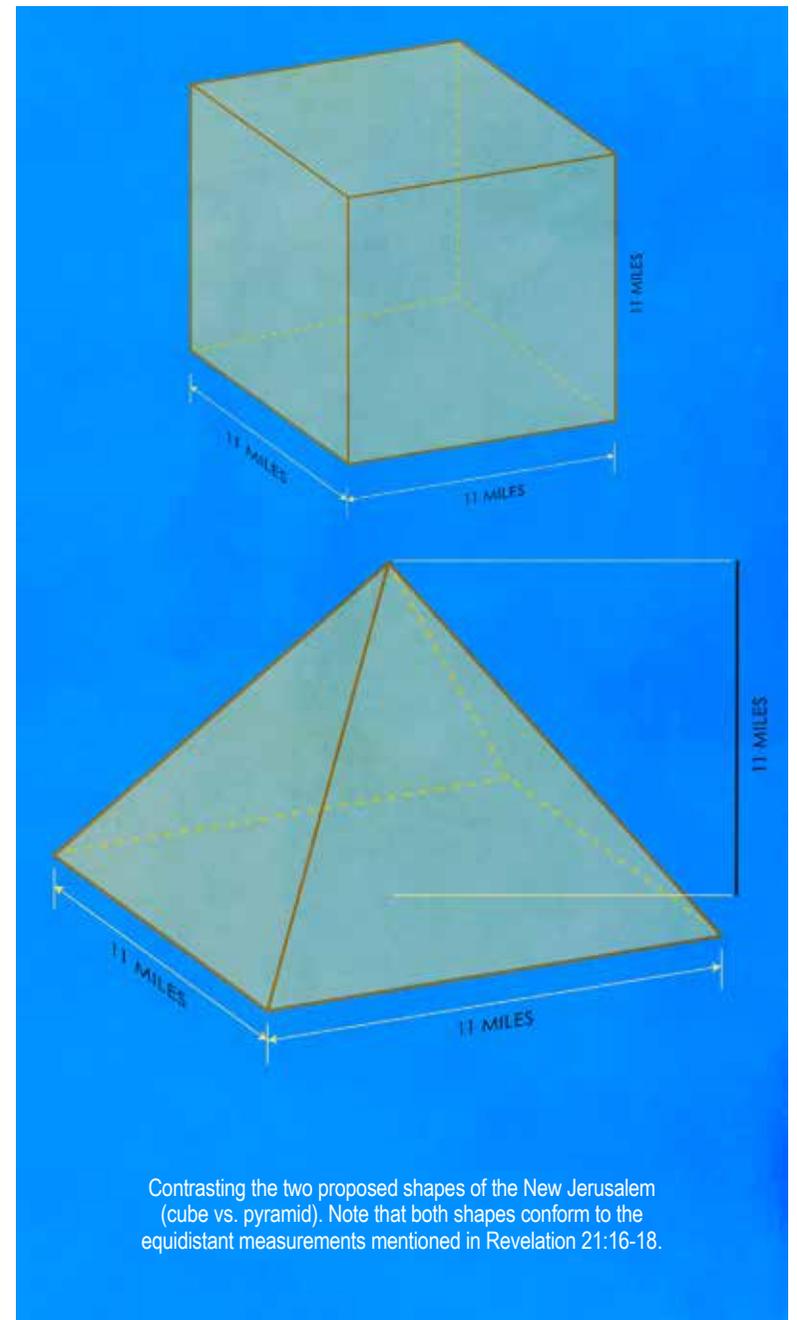
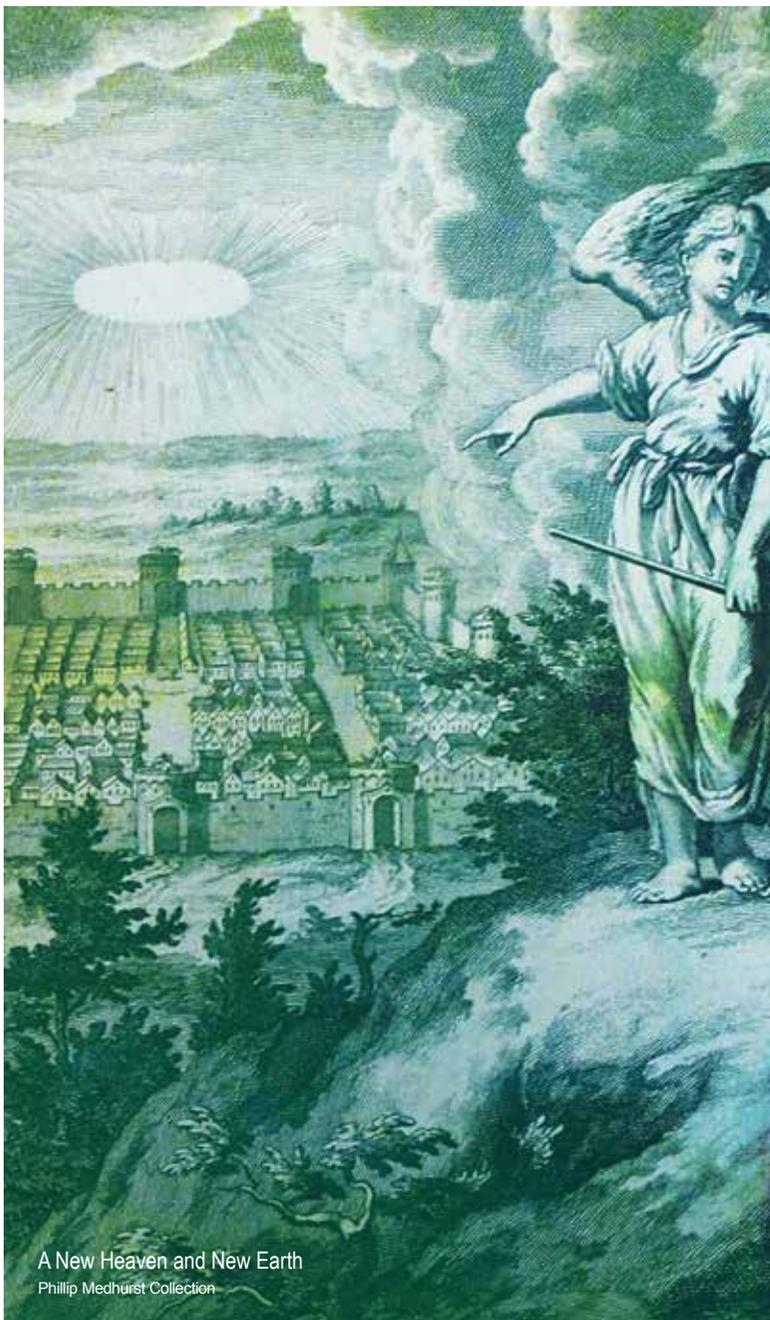
But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels (12:22).

For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come (13:14).

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

The New Jerusalem is associated with the Bride of Messiah (“as a bride adorned for her husband”) because all the departed saints of the past 2,000 years (and most likely OT saints, too) will have already taken up residence there.⁸

The New Jerusalem will replace the old one. Topographical changes in the future Middle East (at the onset of the Kingdom) will form a greatly-expanded plateau that will serve as the site for this amazing City. Some people think the New Jerusalem will be shaped like a gigantic cube; however, it will probably be more like a mountain or a pyramid—with a broad base that gradually narrows upward to a point at its apex.⁹ This City on a renewed earth is where the saints will live and Messiah Yeshua will reign over the nations (i.e., mortal earth-dwellers who live outside the New Jerusalem) from His throne.¹⁰



Contrasting the two proposed shapes of the New Jerusalem (cube vs. pyramid). Note that both shapes conform to the equidistant measurements mentioned in Revelation 21:16-18.



4. *The Kingdom and the Millennium are distinct but related terms.*

Sometimes we say, “The Millennium is the thousand-year reign of Messiah Yeshua on the earth.” While that’s partially right, it’s not the whole story. You see, Messiah’s reign isn’t just for a thousand years—it’s forever. Yeshua’s Kingdom will never end.

The Millennium, then, will be the first thousand years of the Kingdom. The Kingdom continues indefinitely once the Millennium ends with the second Battle of Gog and Magog.

A. The Kingdom is God’s eternal reign. The Bible is clear about this. It has no end.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion endures throughout all generations (Psalm 145:13).

“The LORD shall reign forever and ever” (Ex. 15:18).

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom (Psalm 45:6).

You, O LORD, rule forever; Your throne from generation to generation (Lam. 5:19).

Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and languages

should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:14).

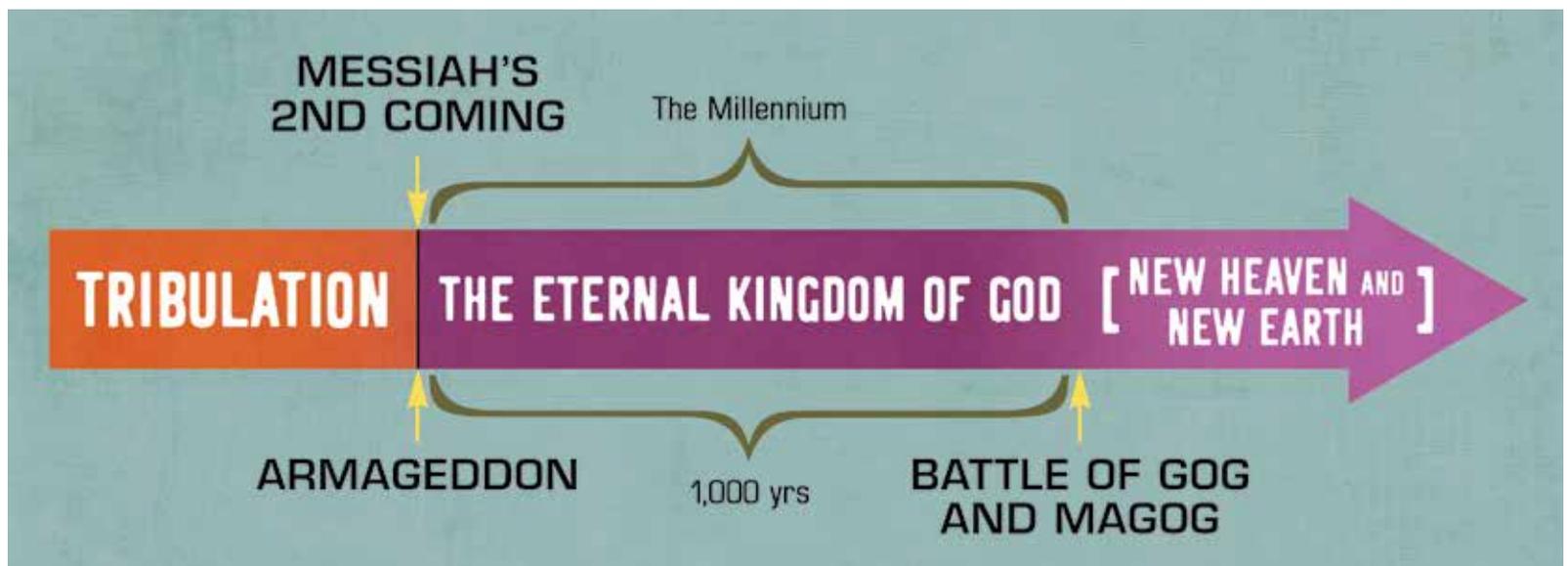
For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11).

B. The Millennium is the first thousand years of the Kingdom.

The Millennium will end with the final, great war between good and evil (i.e., the second Battle of Gog and Magog). A vast army will surround the New Jerusalem, but it will be quickly destroyed. At long last, all remaining vestiges of evil will be eradicated.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them (Rev. 20:7-9).

C. The Kingdom following the Millennium is sometimes called the Eternal State.



5. *The Kingdom of God has an arch-enemy—Lucifer, Son of the Morning.*

Imaginative tales about Star Wars, Star Trek, or astonishing events in the Marvel and DC universes can't hold a candle to the Bible. In its pages, we read an incredible, hair-raising story about an ancient war in Heaven that resulted in a princely and powerful angel, Lucifer (also known as the devil or Satan), being cast down to earth (Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:7-10). His sin was pride. He rebelled because he wanted to usurp God's position in Heaven (Isa. 14:12-15).

For now, Lucifer is the ruler of this fallen world. He relishes this role because he thinks it may help him prevent God's appointed King—Yeshua the Messiah—from coming to rule and reign over the earth. According to the Book of Revelation, a counterfeit trinity (i.e., the Serpent, the Beast, and the False Prophet) will attempt to establish a counterfeit kingdom to preempt God's Kingdom.

The essential ingredient in the devil's diabolical plan will be to destroy the People of Israel (*Am Yisra'el*) so God's promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob can never be fulfilled. However, we know that this will never happen.¹¹

Today, there are both "now" and "not yet" aspects of the Kingdom. There is a sense in which God rules today in the hearts of believers and we are citizens of a heavenly Kingdom. In fact, salvation history can be seen as a protracted war between two kingdoms—the Kingdom of light and

the kingdom of darkness.¹² Both kingdoms exist today and are in constant conflict with each other.

There are spiritual realities and laws of the Kingdom (many of them enumerated in the Sermon on the Mount) that are in effect today and that all of us need to understand. But, the *spiritual* realities of the Kingdom don't negate the prospect of a *future, earthly* Kingdom over which Messiah Yeshua will rule forever. The angel told the virgin Miriam (Mary) that her Son, Yeshua, would "be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). Habakkuk spoke of that future Kingdom when he said, *For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As waters cover the sea* (2:14).

It's obvious, then, that the Kingdom of God is not yet a literal reality on this earth. Righteousness doesn't cover the earth today like waters cover the sea (far from it!). Death, heartache, and suffering continue to afflict humanity. Here's how Yeshua explained it in John 18:36: "My kingdom [right now] is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to [the Judeans]; but now My kingdom is not from here." Notice that crucial word: "*now* My kingdom is not from here."¹³ Yeshua didn't come the first time (2,000 years ago) to rule and reign over this world from the Davidic throne. Instead, He came to die and thereby pay the price for the Redemption of the whole world. So, His kingdom on earth is not yet in place. But someday, it will be.



For now, as we have already seen, the ruler of this corrupt world system is the devil. The Bible refers to him as:

- Ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- Ruler of demons (Matt. 9:34)
- The god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4)
- Ruler of the kingdom of the air (Eph. 2:2)
- One of the rulers of the darkness of this age (6:12a)
- Head of a spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places (v. 12b)
- Deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9)
- One who comes down with great wrath when he realizes his time is running out (12:12)¹⁴

It's easy to see what a horrible ruler the devil has been. Just look around! As far as the eye can see, the landscape is littered with widespread poverty, disease, death, destruction, conflict, pain, and heartache. We're overrun by tragedies like human trafficking, refugees running for their lives, sexual perversion, social anarchy, and every other imaginable form of evil.



As things stand now, this world is the devil's domain. C.S. Lewis said we should see ourselves as guerilla fighters who've been dropped behind enemy lines to organize and carry out a resistance. He wrote, "Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage."¹⁵

So, for the time being, Lucifer is the god of this world. Someday, however, Yeshua will come and assume His place as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16). The evil one's dominion will finally be over. This old world will be under new management! In the meantime, while we await His arrival, He says we can joyfully anticipate the future, earthly Kingdom when His will shall "be done on earth as it is in Heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

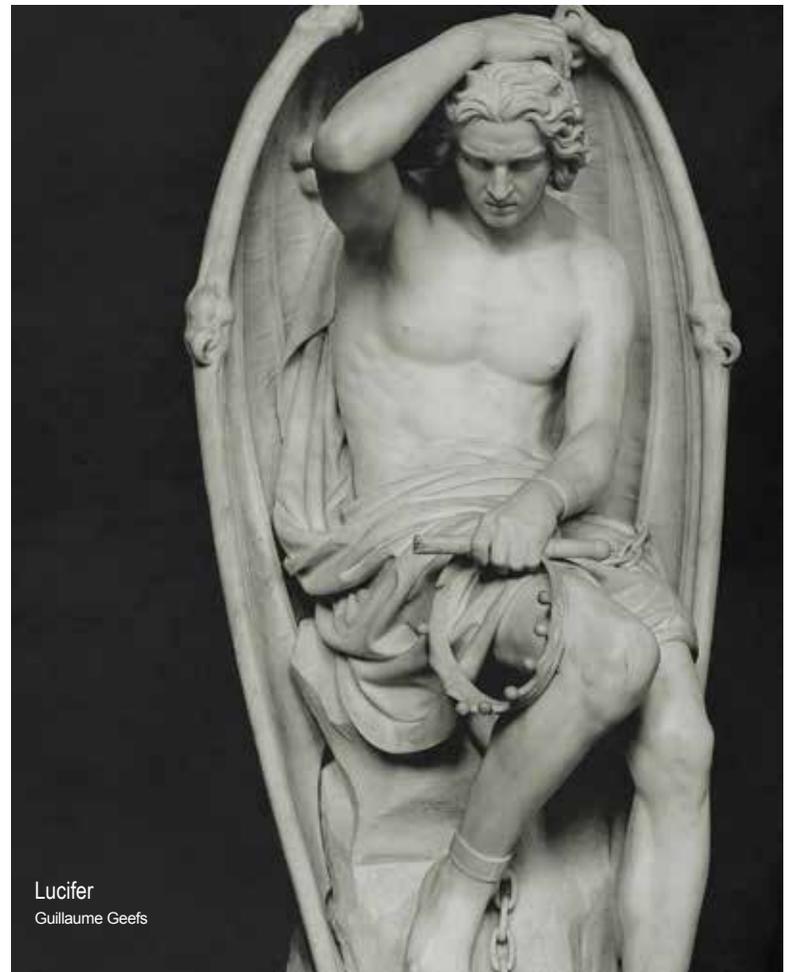
6. Yeshua and the Apostles believed in a future, literal, earthly Kingdom.

If you're standing, you might want to sit down for this one—because it's hard to figure. Here's the conundrum: even though the Bible clearly teaches the reality of a future, earthly reign of the Messiah—a view known as Premillennialism—many Christian denominations today reject this teaching. Instead, as we saw under Point 5 above, many of them say the Kingdom is spiritual and it's already here—a view known as Amillennialism. This is the prevailing view today. But it hasn't always been this way.

Several years ago, someone heard me on the radio and wrote to tell me he thought I was setting the Church back by two hundred years because of my old-fashioned and outdated ideas. I wrote back and told him I was disappointed to hear that because what I'm really trying to do is set the Church back by two *thousand* years!

You see, in the first and second centuries, the influential theologians—and the apostles themselves—were premillennial. The term "Premillennialism" refers, literally, to the Lord's return "before (the) thousand years" (i.e., premillennium). This thousand-year period begins after the Lord's return at the close of the Tribulation (Rev. 20:2-8).

Following the Tribulation, the Millennium will be ushered in. It starts a thousand-year countdown to the epic Battle of Gog and Magog II (v. 8)—quite literally, "the war to end all wars."¹⁶ It will mark the devil's ultimate defeat. Afterward, he and his followers will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire (v. 10). Conditions on earth will revert to the way they were before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. At long last, Paradise ("a new heaven and a new earth") will be restored (21:1).¹⁷



Philip Schaff, widely regarded as the preeminent church historian of the modern age, though not himself a premillennialist, nonetheless acknowledged that this was the position of the apostles and the early church:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment.¹⁸

Other, competing eschatological views (like postmillennialism and amillennialism) didn't arise until later. In fact, Augustine of Hippo, the venerable founder of amillennialism, started out as a historical premillennialist (i.e., a chiliast)—and changed positions later in his life.

Premillennialism, then, is the view of the end times that most closely aligns us with the position of the apostles and the early church. Even Schaff (below), an avowed amillennialist, confirms this to be true.

7. Someday, we will rule the world as co-regents with King Yeshua.

This is our destiny as Yeshua-followers. In His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said, *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth* (Matt. 5:5; cp. Psalm 37:11). That's not just a spiritual platitude; it's a prediction of a future reality. It points us to a time when *The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell in it forever* (Psalm 37:29).¹⁹ God's people are destined to rule the world!²⁰

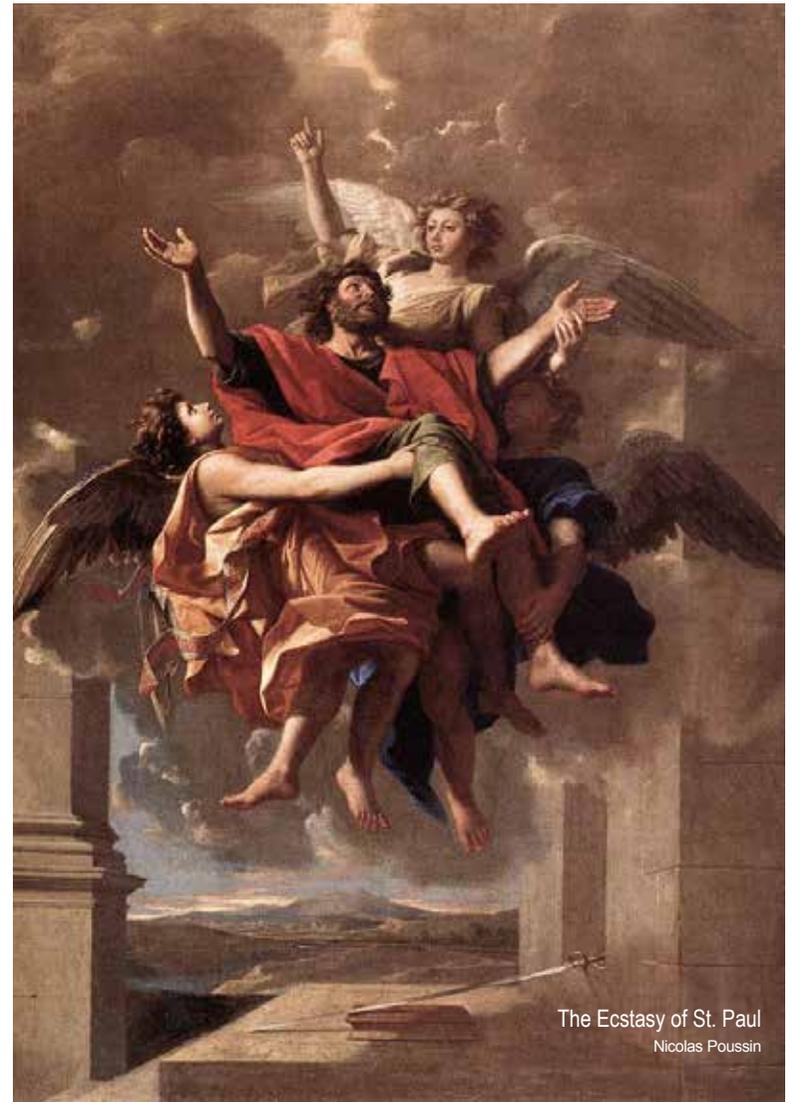
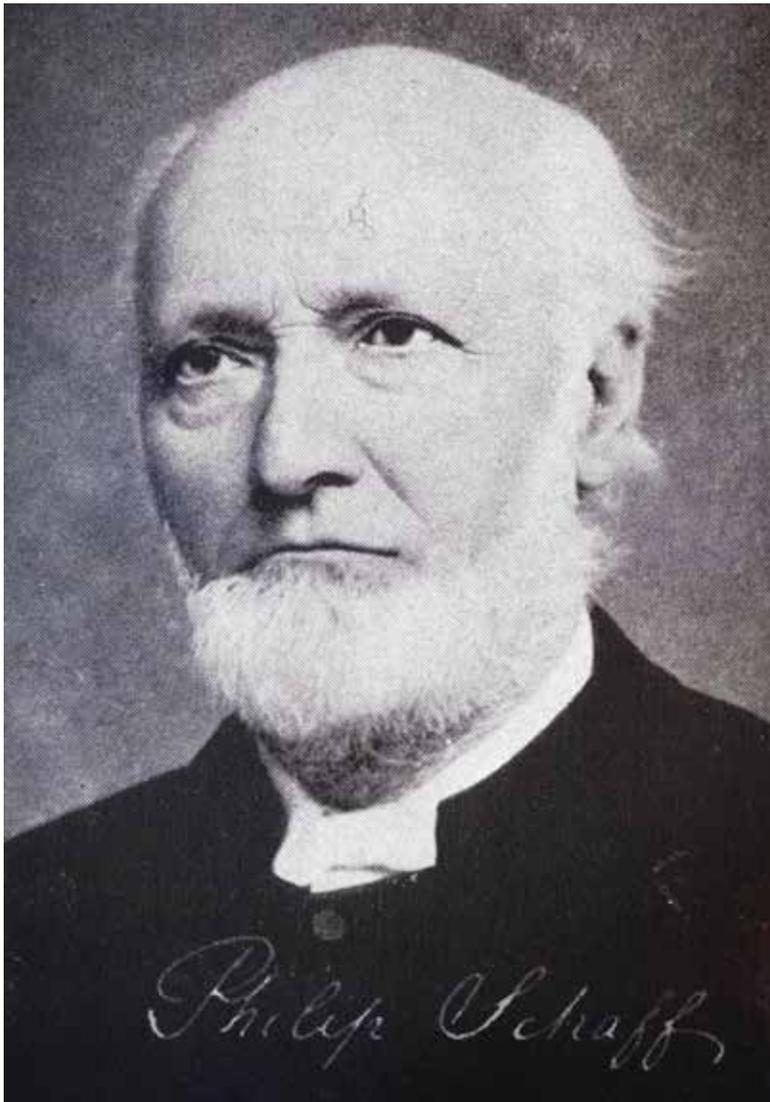
In the Book of Revelation, the saints sing “a new song” in which they proclaim, “*And you have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth*” (5:10). They are looking forward to reigning over the earth after the Tribulation!

Our faithfulness in this life determines how much responsibility we will have in the future, earthly Kingdom. In one of His stewardship parables, Yeshua said, “*His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord’*” (Matt. 25:23).

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that we will be judges (i.e., arbitrators and appliers of the Law) in the coming Kingdom: *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?* (1 Cor. 6:2-3).²¹

Our lives down here on this earth, for a brief 70, 80, or 90 years, constitute an internship, of sorts, that demonstrates how we're best suited to serve the Lord in His Kingdom.

As the future rulers/judges and administrators of this world, we should be advocates now for justice, righteousness, and responsible (and reasonable) stewardship of the earth and its resources. Someday, we will be in charge; so why not start being responsible servant-leaders now?²²



The Ecstasy of St. Paul
Nicolas Poussin

A kingdom requires a king. The Kingdom of God is coming—and so is our King! So, let's get ready!

Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle (Psalm 24:7-8). 



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¹ Israel was taken into Captivity by Babylon around 586 BC. She was released by the Persian King Cyrus in 538 BC to return to Israel and rebuild Jerusalem. Jeremiah's figure of 70 years for the Captivity (29:10) probably begins with 608 BC, when the first wave of captives (including Daniel) was carried off to Babylon. However, Judah wasn't fully conquered until 22 years later (586 BC), when Jerusalem and the Temple were finally destroyed. Cyrus released the Jewish people 48 years later to return to their ancestral homeland.

² Since the *past* prophecies were all fulfilled clearly and unmistakably, we may rest assured that the *future* prophecies (about Israel's restoration and Messiah's return) will likewise be fulfilled.

³ The non-transferable aspect of the Kingdom promises is seen in Romans 11:29, where Paul says, *For the gifts and the calling of God [to Israel] are irrevocable.*

⁴ This isn't the true etymology of the word "kingdom," by the way. It's merely a memory aid.

⁵ Psalm 72 was written by King Solomon and is clearly Messianic. It extols the all-encompassing nature of the Messiah's reign. The ancient Kingdom of David and Solomon never extended its dominion "from sea to sea . . . to the ends of the earth" (v. 8) so this is clearly a prophecy about a coming, literal, never-ending Kingdom of God.

⁶ John H. Sailhamer, *Old Testament History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 58.

⁷ See the related article "Seven Things Every Christian Should Know about Heaven" in the March-April 2019 issue of our bimonthly paper, *Messianic Perspectives* (available in the archives at cjm.org).

⁸ The spirits of the departed saints (i.e., those who have died) are now in the Lord's presence in the New Jerusalem (2 Cor. 5:6-8). Many of us believe that the spirits of OT saints like Moses, Elisha, and David were taken up to the New Jerusalem by Yeshua when He "led captivity captive" following His Resurrection (Eph. 4:8-10; 1 Peter 3:18-20). In any case, the New Jerusalem is associated primarily with the Messiah's Bride (Rev. 21:2), which is the NT believing community (or, the Church), although that doesn't necessarily exclude OT saints (who, strictly speaking, are not the Bride) from also residing there. So, by the time the heavenly City descends to the earth at the beginning of the Millennium, it will already have a teeming multitude of residents, including OT saints. However, the Bride (i.e., NT saints) will have previously departed the New Jerusalem to return to Earth with Yeshua and intervene at the Battle of Armageddon: *And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses* (Rev. 19:14). (John elsewhere identifies these people wearing fine, white linen as the saints [7:9]). Once the battle has concluded, and the opposing armies have been decimated, the City itself will descend, finally alighting at its destination in the Middle East.

⁹ Some people object to our suggestion that the New Jerusalem might be configured in the shape of a huge pyramid with height, length, and breadth measurements of 11 miles or more. Those objections notwithstanding, however, the numerous references to the heavenly City as a mountain-shaped structure (2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Chron. 11:5; 1 Kings 8:1; Heb. 12:22) seem to indicate a layout that is broad (and square) at its base and narrows as it progresses upward to its apex. The description in Revelation 21:16 could easily apply to either a cube or a four-sided pyramid-like shape. The Prophet Zechariah wrote, *"Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain'"* (8:3).

¹⁰ During the Millennium, there will be both immortals (i.e., those resurrected and translated believers who have their glorified bodies; 1 Thess. 4:14-17) and mortals (those Jews and Gentiles who came to faith in Yeshua, survived the Tribulation, and were granted entry into the Millennium; Matt. 25:31-46) on the earth. The immortals will dwell in the New Jerusalem (which descends from heaven at the beginning of the Millennium) while the mortals will inhabit the post-Tribulation earth.

¹¹ Matthew 23:37-39 says the trigger for the final phase of the Second Coming will be Israel's Messianic confession: *Baruch HaBa BaShem Adonai* ("Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord"). That's when Yeshua descends from the heavens and touches down on Planet Earth. So, if Israel was ever removed from the equation, all bets would be off. If no representatives of the Jewish nation were left to cry out to the Lord and His Messiah, God would appear to be vulnerable and Satan (in his twisted way of thinking) might be able to dethrone Him.

¹² This theme of two competing kingdoms figures prominently in the Dead Sea Scrolls. One document (*War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*) contains a prophecy of an end-time war between the forces of good and evil (scrolls 1QM and 4Q491-497).

¹³ The Greek particle *nun* ("now") is temporal, signifying present time. It's sometimes referred to as "an adverb of time." Yeshua says the Kingdom isn't here *now*, at least not in a literal sense; but someday, it will be. For the time being, the devil is the prince of this world. For reasons that aren't entirely clear, the word "now" is missing from John 18:36 in the NLT, CSB, NET Bible, and RSV. It's absent even from the supposedly "word-for-word, literal" NASB and ESV translations. On the other

hand, it is included (we believe correctly) in the KJV, NKJV, NIV, ASV, Young's Literal Translation, Darby's Translation, Webster's Bible, and the Hebrew Names Version. (Maybe someone should investigate whether amillennial translators are more likely to ignore the *nun* in John 18:36 than their premillennial counterparts are.) Without the *nun*, "But *now* My kingdom is not from here" (NKJV) becomes "But my kingdom is not from the world" (ESV).

¹⁴ This list of titles is not exhaustive. We're focusing here on the ones having to do with the devil's rulership and administration over the current, corrupt world system.

¹⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1980), 46.

¹⁶ We refer to the post-millennial Battle of Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-9) as the "Battle of Gog and Magog II" to distinguish it from an earlier battle (during the Tribulation Period) with the same name (Ezek. 38-39). There have been numerous instances in history where two battles or wars shared the same name. In India, for example, Hindu and Muslim forces fought in the first Battle of Panipat in 1526. Then, they fought a second Battle of Panipat in 1556. More recently, there was a first World War (1914-18) and a second World War (1939-45). For more information about this chronology, see "Ezekiel" by Charles Dyer and Eva Rydelnik in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), comments on 38:7-9, 1260-61.

¹⁷ Historical Premillennialism (or Chiliasm, which we're talking about here) is not as nuanced and systematized as later, dispensational Premillennialism. Ancient writers had little concern about minutiae like the precise timing of the Rapture. Even today, the pre- vs. post-Tribulation Rapture debate is a significant issue only in the pampered, coddled, materialistic West. In other parts of the world where believers already are (or have been) subjected to torture, imprisonment, starvation, and even death at the hands of ruthless tyrants, they're not so easily shaken by the prospect of an end-time Tribulation.

¹⁸ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church (Volume 2): Second Period (AD 100-311)*, 614.

¹⁹ Some commentators restrict the meaning of the Hebrew *Eretz* (lit., "Land") in Psalm 37 to the Land of Israel. While it's true that *Eretz* often signifies the Land of Israel, that's not always the case. It can also mean the earth in general (e.g., Gen. 1:1, 28). It's clear that the prophets envisioned a time when Israel's King-Messiah would rule over the whole world because they said kings from all over the world would bring tribute to Jerusalem (e.g., Isa. 11:10-12; Psalm 2:10-12; 68:29; Rev. 21:24). The original promise to Abraham referred to his descendants initially possessing and ruling the Middle East (Gen. 15:18-21); however, passages like Psalm 72:8-10 ("He shall have dominion also from sea to sea") make it clear that Messiah's kingship will eventually extend over the entire planet.

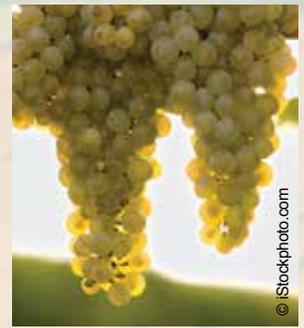
²⁰ The Lord also said, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first"* (Matt. 19:30).

²¹ Paul's statement that we will "judge angels" most likely refers to our participation in the judgment of the fallen angels (Rev. 19:19-20; 20:10) as part of our broader judicial and administrative role in the Kingdom (Matt. 19:28). The term "fallen angels" doesn't appear in the Bible; however, the statement about a "third of the stars of heaven" being thrown down to earth in Revelation 12:4 could refer to the expulsion of Lucifer's angelic followers from Heaven. Also, 2 Peter 2:4 says, "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell [*Tartarus*], putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment." We regard *Tartarus* as the area of *Hades* (i.e., the unseen realm) where certain fallen angels (perhaps those who assumed human form and interbred with mortal women in Genesis 6, producing giant offspring or *Nephilim*) are currently held in high-security confinement pending their final disposition. God evidently chose Noah to preserve humanity because he and his family still possessed uncorrupted genes. (There is no word in classical Hebrew for "genes," per se, but it's interesting that the Septuagint uses the Greek *genea* when it says that Noah was "perfect in his generations" [Gen. 6:9].) An extra-biblical tradition (based on ancient, uninspired [pseudepigraphal] writings like *The Septuagint of Job* and *The Sibylline Oracles*) says the archangel Uriel guards *Tartarus*, where 200 fallen angels ("Watchers") are imprisoned. However, there is no attestation in Scripture for this ancient legend, as intriguing as it might be.

²² We're not saying here that believers should take over the institutions of this world and bring about the Lord's Second Coming by transforming society and "Christianizing" it. The Bible teaches just the opposite: the devil is the current "prince" of this world (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4) and we are a counter-insurgency working behind enemy lines until the Lord returns to establish His Kingdom. Nonetheless, in some Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, teachings like the "Seven Mountain Mandate" (7-M) are gaining ground. The 7-M theology says we have a mandate to take control of seven spheres of influence before the Lord will return: religion, education, family, business, government, arts and entertainment, and media. It's a variation of classic postmillennialism (i.e., the view that the Lord returns *after* we have succeeded in setting up the Kingdom for Him). The 7-M theology overlaps with some of the "dominionist" teachings of the late Earl Paulk, a flamboyant and controversial Atlanta-area pastor and self-appointed "bishop" for many years. CJF Ministries rejects postmillennialism in all its various versions.

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



Two Awakenings

Michelle Beadle, CJFM representative (New Orleans), writes about her meeting with an Israeli woman who had recently moved to the New Orleans area. Her husband, who is a born-again Gentile Christian, had seen an announcement about Michelle's monthly women's meetings and encouraged her to contact Michelle. He had been praying for his wife's spiritual condition. She had met a Christian woman overseas who had shown her love and acceptance and was a living witness of the love of God through the shed blood of Jesus. But she had never met a Jewish believer in Messiah. Thus she was open to contacting Michelle, a disciple of Yeshua. After a few meetings and getting to know each other, she, her husband, and their daughter joined Michelle for their first Messianic Sephardic Seder for Rosh Hashana. But then disaster struck! This couple's daughter began experiencing some challenging physical issues; she had become increasingly lethargic and when brought to the hospital, was placed in the Pediatric ICU. Eventually, she lapsed into a coma.

Michelle, along with many of their friends, visited with the family in the hospital. A few months later, the mother told Michelle that while she was in the hospital watching over her daughter, she prayed to God for the very first time and begged Him to heal her child. She is from a secular Israeli family and had never given much thought to God. That night she confessed, for the first time, that she knew Yeshua was real and asked Him to come into her heart. She immediately felt a presence in the room with her, and then asked Yeshua to heal her daughter. The next day, her daughter awoke from the coma and has continued to make a steady recovery. Mom, like Michelle, is also now a disciple of Yeshua HaMaschiach, Jesus the Messiah.

Growing Thirst in the Land

Yossi Ovadia, CJFM representative and pastor of Kehilat Haderech Messianic Congregation (Israel), was blessed recently when representatives from two separate Army Prep Programs (with no connection to each other) contacted him with a special request: They asked if Pastor Yossi and a few members from his congregation would share the basic principles of their faith with them. One of the meetings was held in the center of Israel and the other in the congregation's new addition, called "The Well." Both groups, comprised of young men and women who are about to begin their mandatory Army service, showed keen interest in what was being shared with them. Pastor Yossi writes: "The meeting in 'The Well' lasted for four hours instead of one! The young people asked many questions and took lots of literature, and many of them even asked for New Testaments. We thank God for these wonderful opportunities to share the Gospel, long for many more such opportunities, and pray for an abundance of fruit."

The House of Mourning

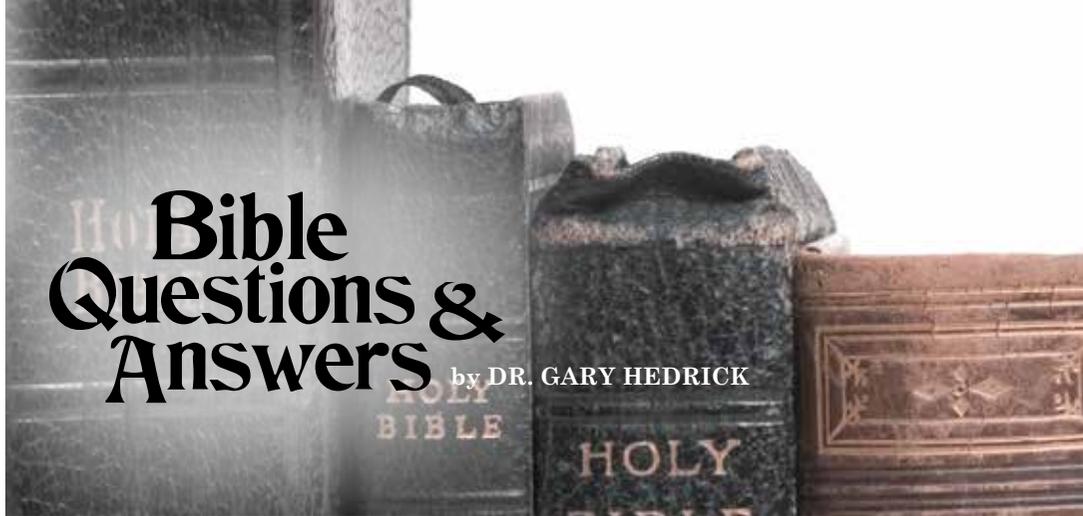
Michael Campo, CJFM midwest director (Chicago), recently had the difficult task of officiating at the funeral of two very dear friends. He shares his thoughts:

During my 36 years in ministry, God has used funerals to remind the living that 10 out of every 10 people die; then what? I was compelled in my spirit that the living take dying so seriously that they will be prepared for the inevitable. This was difficult because I was torn between my emotions for the two men I loved, and the need to love those who were in attendance. We learn from our Lord that the dead are concerned about family left behind. Abraham made it clear they had the Word of God (Luke 16:19-31). As I looked over the first row, I saw many tears—tears that remind us how sad the loss of life is. I also came to learn those tears were a response to the Gospel that promises the hope of resurrection for those who repent and believe the Gospel message. King Solomon reminds us just who funerals are for: *A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth; Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart* (Eccles. 7:1-2).

Salvation at "Shabbat School"

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas), is blessed by his wife's children's ministry. During every service, Oanh takes the children to a classroom, called "Shabbat School," to teach them the Bible. Sometimes the children bring their unsaved friends, which was the case with nine-year-old "Kelli." Although Kelli's liberal parents do not attend church, God had a different plan for her. When Oanh carefully explained the Gospel—what sin is, its consequences, why Jesus died for our sins, and the need to repent—Kelli joyfully prayed to receive Jesus. Please pray for Kelli's protection and spiritual growth.

Whenever Rich teaches at a certain church in Arizona, he visits his friend "Michael," a 92-year-old Holocaust survivor, who lives nearby. Michael's entire family died in the Holocaust; only he and his brother survived. It was the first time that Michael and Rich's wife, Oanh—a survivor of the war in Vietnam—would meet. Michael, a former businessman and world traveler, showed great interest in Oanh's Vietnamese background—her growing up in Vietnam and her family's escape from the War. There was a connection between them. Michael listened to their testimonies and Gospel message but did not comment on it nor make any mention of Jesus. Please join Rich and Oanh in praying for Michael—that God would open his ears and heart to receive his Promised Messiah, Yeshua.



Segues

CJFM Representative, Diann Parkas (New Jersey), has been exploring different ways to segue from a friendly hello to an opening for the Gospel. She discovered that holidays often offer easy opportunities in this regard. The day after Resurrection Sunday, Diann had a dentist appointment. A staff member at the office asked her about her Easter Sunday. Following a few exchanges on how they spent Easter, Diann asked him, “What about Easter? Do you believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead?” Diann says he wasn’t so sure about that. His idea of Easter was very secular. She further added, “The conversation ended up affording me an opportunity to sow a Gospel seed by pointing him to the spiritual significance of the holiday. Since I’ll be returning there, it gives me some time to think, pray, and ask God to guide me in planting the next seed. Please pray for this gentleman’s salvation.”



Diann’s professionally-filmed testimony has been completed and is available to view at IFoundShalom.com. Co-sponsored by Chosen People Ministries and One for Israel, it includes numerous video testimonies of Jewish believers in Jesus. A link to any of the testimonies can be shared on social media, making IFoundShalom.com an excellent resource for Jewish evangelism. Diann writes: “I posted my testimony on Facebook, and right away two of my unsaved Jewish cousins commented after viewing it. Please pray that God will use this vehicle to touch many hearts and to turn them to Him.”

QUESTION: *Some people say it’s wrong for Christians to be cremated because the process of burning the body destroys the tiny, microscopic “seed” from which we’re supposed to be resurrected someday (1 Cor. 15:38). Is it true that if I get cremated, God might not be able to resurrect me?*

ANSWER: No, it’s not true; in fact, any sentence that begins with “God might not be able to . . .” is starting out with a shaky premise from the get-go. On the other hand, however, I think we should go easy on old-timers like Clarence Larkin (early 1900s) who taught this theory.¹ They were struggling to come up with an explanation as to how God could resurrect a body that had been burned to dust, vaporized by a bomb, devoured by wild animals, or otherwise completely destroyed. Their explanation was that each person’s body has a tiny, indestructible, virtually invisible “seed” (or “germ”) that survives any tragedy and can be used to restore it later at the resurrection.

Although this view is based on a mistaken interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:38, it may not be all that far from the truth. Today we know about DNA, the submicroscopic strands of protein that provide the pattern for all living things, including humans. The genetic pattern of each individual is unique; no two of us are the same.² In theory, if the technology existed, it would be possible to clone (duplicate) a living human being from his or her DNA.³

This addresses mainly physical attributes; but we know from Scripture that human personality, identity, and even memories survive the grave, too. No less authority than Yeshua himself said that “many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11). We will meet the Patriarchs in Heaven! We will know who they are and what they accomplished during their storied lifetimes. There’s no reason to assume this won’t be true for all of us.

Since God is the one who “made” and “fashioned” us in the womb (Psalm 119:73), He was the original author of our unique, individual genetic code or genome. Our Maker has that code filed away somewhere in the recesses of His infinite mind and is fully capable of bringing us back into existence when our resurrection takes place.

Regarding cremation, I have said that if I die before the Lord returns, I would prefer a traditional burial. Some families choose cremation for economic reasons (it’s less expensive) and I won’t fault them for that—especially if it’s all they can afford. God can resurrect us in either case. Check the March/April 2009 issue of *Messianic Perspectives* for a more thorough treatment of the issue of cremation in a previous “Bible Questions & Answers” column. You’ll find it in our archives at cjfm.org.

¹ For more details about the antiquated “germ theory,” see Clarence Larkin’s *The Spirit World* (Philadelphia, PA: Clarence Larkin Publishers, 1921), 135. Larkin’s works are generally very well done and breathtakingly illustrated, and we recommend them; however, he did have some idiosyncratic ideas about the Great Pyramid of Giza and a few other topics.

² The term “identical twins” is a little misleading because even in this case, the DNA, though similar, is not really identical.

³ Lower animals have been cloned with some success; but human cloning is beyond our current capabilities and raises numerous moral and ethical questions. It’s something best left to God alone.

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