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# Messianic Perspectives<sup>®</sup>

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

## SEVEN THINGS GOD CANNOT DO

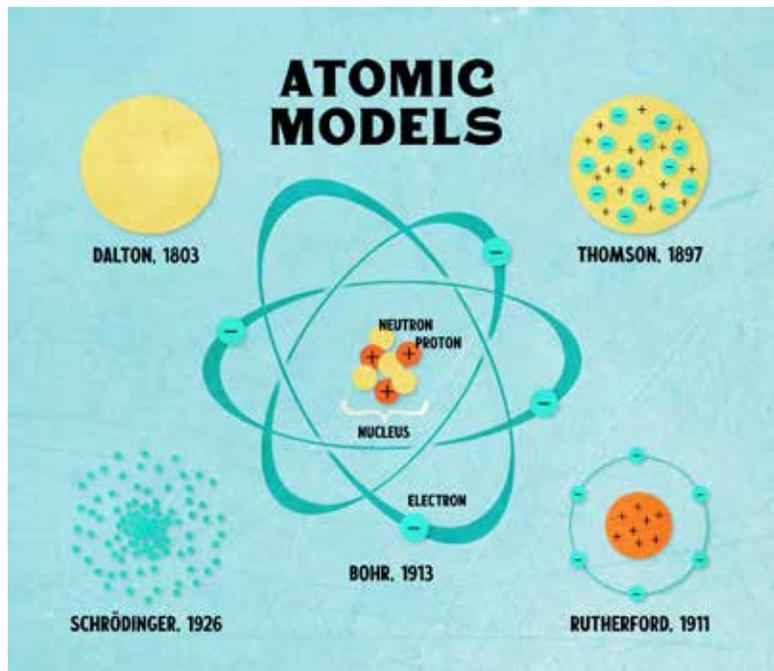
BY GARY HEDRICK



Would it surprise you to learn that there are some things that even God, the Supreme Being of the universe, cannot do?

Christians believe that God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent.<sup>1</sup> These three general attributes tell us a great deal about Who He is and what He can do. They also help us understand some things He *cannot* do.

*Omniscience*, for instance, means the Lord is all-knowing. Nothing falls outside the realm of His knowledge and awareness. He can name and label every proton, neutron, and electron in our material world. He also knows everything there is to know about the entities that inhabit the immaterial world.



*Omnipresence* means He is all-present. He has no spatial or temporal limitations. He is anywhere and everywhere He needs to be in order to help His people—whether it’s in the past, present, or future. Wherever we go on the timeline, we will find that He is already there.<sup>2</sup>

*Omnipotence* means He is all-powerful. No task overwhelms Him or taxes His resources. There is nothing He cannot do—with just a few notable exceptions, as we will see in this study. There are some things even God Almighty cannot do. But first, let’s look at some popular myths.

<sup>1</sup> God’s other attributes include His divine nature, truth, holiness (righteousness), faithfulness, love, grace, eternity, infinity, and numerous others. However, His essential characteristics are generally summarized in the three “omni-” attributes—omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

<sup>2</sup> One of the names of the future New Jerusalem will be *Yahweh Shammah*—literally, “the LORD is there” (Ezek. 48:35). It’s not unprecedented for great cities to have more than one name. Chicago, for example, is sometimes called “the Windy City.” Similarly, New York City is known as “the Big Apple.”

## The Proverbial “Too Heavy” Rock

Skeptics have had a heyday with this ages-old paradox: “Can God create a rock too heavy for Him to lift?” Their argument assumes that if there’s anything He cannot do, He’s not truly omnipotent. So again, can He create an object He can’t lift? If He *can*, then He’s not omnipotent because He isn’t able to lift the object He himself created. And if He *can’t*, then He’s not omnipotent because He lacks the ability to create such an object. In either case, God loses His omnipotence. *Checkmate*, the smug skeptic declares.

One simple, country preacher’s answer to this conundrum was that yes, God could create such an unliftable rock—and then, to demonstrate His omnipotence, He would proceed to lift it. The skeptic’s response to this, however, is that this answer incorporates a contradiction because as it turns out, the rock wasn’t unliftable after all.



Although that country preacher wasn’t too far off the mark, his homespun answer isn’t the only contradiction here. The problem is with the question itself. The skeptic is engaging in pretentious word games that are essentially meaningless. It’s like asking if God can draw a square circle, or could He compose a riveting conclusion for a never-ending story? Someone else might ask if He could violate the very laws of physics that He himself has ordained by placing two material objects in the same space at the same time. These are all smoke-and-mirrors questions that are cleverly contrived but ultimately meaningless.

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Such questions are meaningless because as unlikely as it may seem, the answer is invariably yes. God could do any or all these things, if He chose to. Due to our deficiencies as frail, finite creatures, we are eminently unqualified to judge what God can or cannot do. Take that question about Him drawing a square circle, for example. Our perceptual limitations leave us with a very narrow, two-dimensional concept of what we think circles and squares should look like—and why they are incompatible.

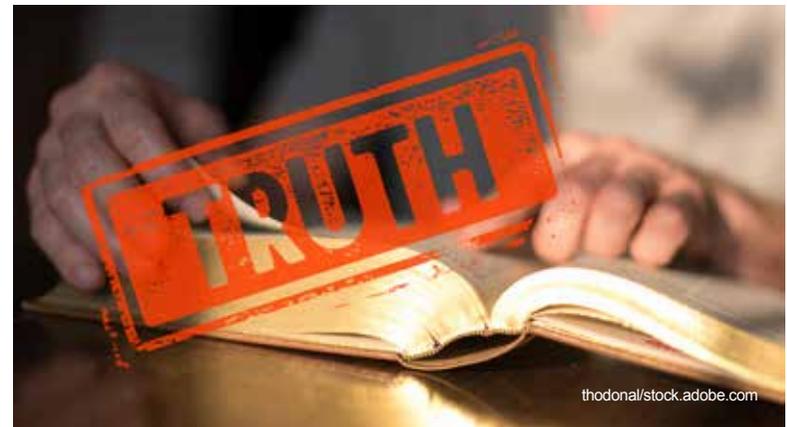
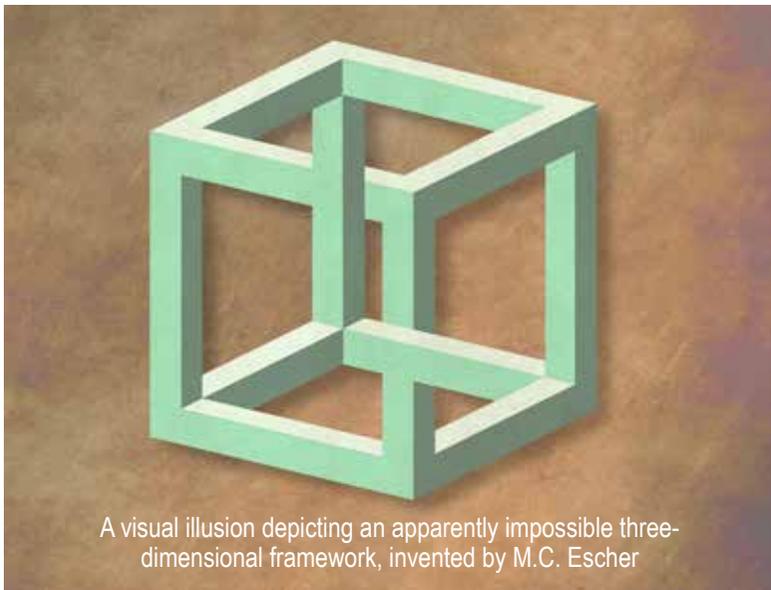
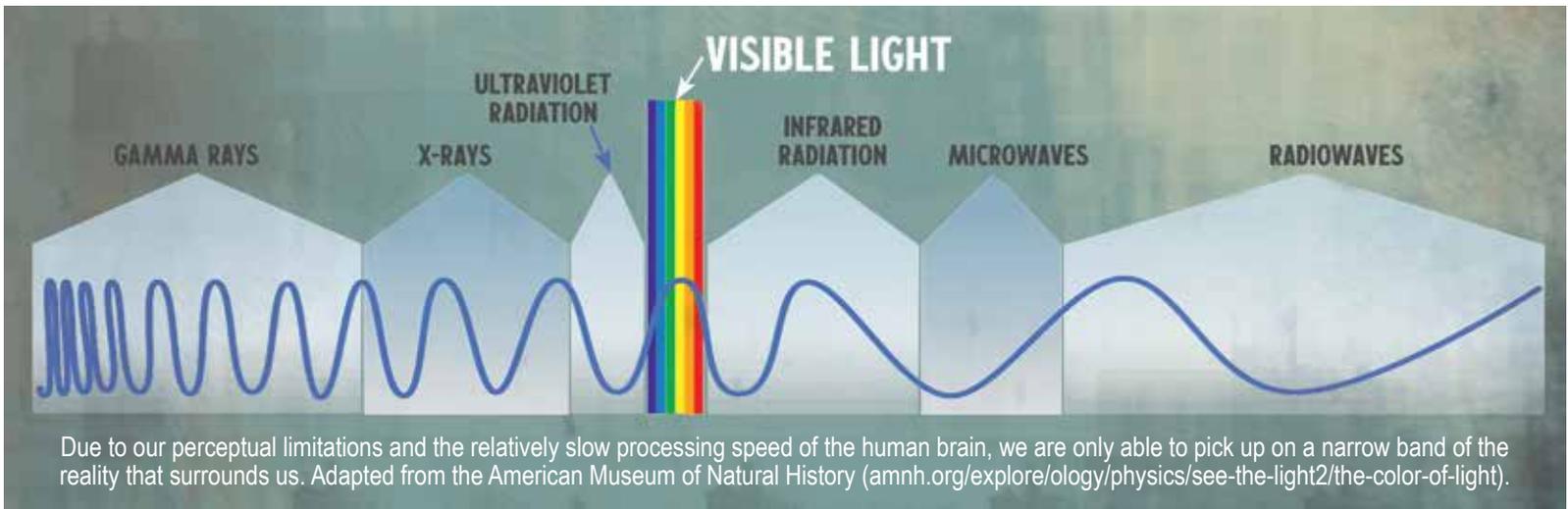
The Lord, on the other hand, has an infinite perspective. He has access to unlimited shapes, dimensions, geometrics, spectra, and patterns—in our universe and perhaps in others—that we can't even begin to fathom. The question, then, isn't whether God could draw a square circle, but rather, if He did, would finite beings like us recognize it?<sup>3</sup>

## What God Cannot Do

Aside from the legendary, “unliftable” rock, the Scriptures tell us that there are at least seven things God cannot do. They reveal fascinating insights about our amazing God and Who He is.

### 1. God cannot lie or contradict His Word.

The first thing the Lord cannot do is lie. He encourages this same attribute in His people. The ninth of His Ten Commandments is, “*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*” Yeshua amplified this in His Sermon on the Mount when He said, “*But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one*” (Matt. 5:37). The meaning is clear: Whenever we open our mouths, only the truth should come out.



God holds Himself to the same standard. He does what He says He will do. His word is good. “*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*” (Num. 23:19).

In His dealings with His people, God is always faithful and true. When He says something, we can believe it. Hear the Word of the Lord:

*In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began (Titus 1:2).*

*That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil (Heb. 6:18–19).*

<sup>3</sup> Modern science tells us that we humans are only able to process about 0.0035 percent of what is happening constantly all around us. (That number is three and one-half thousandths of one percent—a virtually infinitesimal slice of reality. Just use tweezers to remove one, single grain from a cup of sand—and that’s roughly the fraction we’re talking about.) Unbeknownst to most of us, we are immersed in a matrix consisting of the sub-microscopic world (atoms, molecules, and a lot of empty space), along with infrared, microwave, UHF, VHF, shortwave, medium wave, long wave, and (at the other end of the EM spectrum) ultraviolet, gamma, beta, and x-rays—none of which we can see with the naked eye. Yet all these phenomena are really there! Isn’t it presumptuous, then, for a finite human to challenge God’s ability to perform a task like drawing a square circle? Since our perceptive powers are so limited, we are left with the humbling truth that what we *don’t* know far outweighs what we *do* know! Little wonder that King David, in contrite humility, asked God, *What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?* (Psalm 8:4).

At the same time, it's intriguing to note that God has, on rare occasions, employed the services of lying spirits to frustrate the schemes of the ungodly. This informs us that in His omniscience and wisdom, the Lord can cause even evil spirits to serve Him. There's an example of this strange phenomenon in 1 Kings 22, where the LORD has a consultation with His heavenly council, and is approached by an evil spirit:

*Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.*

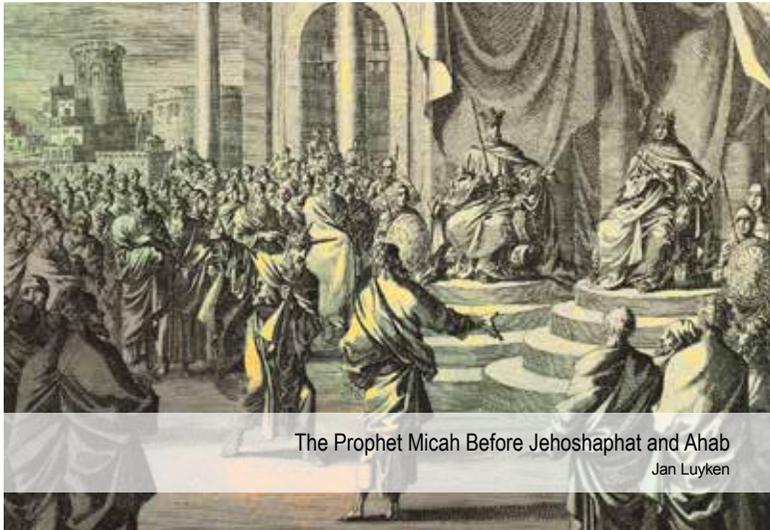
*"And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner.*

*"Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.'*

*"The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'*

*"Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you" (vv. 19–23).*

So yes, there have been times when God has used deception (indirectly) to achieve His own ends. The fact that He could recruit even a "lying spirit" to do His bidding is a demonstration of His sovereign control over even the powers of darkness. The demonic spirit could only do what the sovereign LORD authorized him to do.<sup>4</sup>



The Prophet Micah Before Jehoshaphat and Ahab  
Jan Luyken

God is always faithful and true to His word. The term "word of God" can be used in three different ways. First, it can refer to God's Son, the *incarnate* Word. Second, it can refer to the Bible, God's *written* Word. And thirdly, it can refer to the *proclaimed* word, the message the apostles preached about Yeshua and His Resurrection in the first century. We follow in their footsteps when we proclaim that same Good News today.<sup>5</sup> In all three of these instances, God's word is true. In his dealings with His people, God is always consistent, faithful, and true to His word.

<sup>4</sup> This episode resembles one we find in the Book of Job, where God allowed Satan (who had approached a meeting of the heavenly council, of which he himself may have been a former member) to test His servant Job but placed strict limits on what the devil could do to him (1:6–12).

<sup>5</sup> The cornerstone of the first-century, "Good News" message was the truth of Yeshua's Resurrection from the dead (Acts 3:15; 4:2, 10; 7:4; 10:41; 13:30, 34; 17:3, 31; 26:23). The Apostles' message was that He lives!

## 2. He cannot betray Heaven.

This is the second thing God cannot do: He cannot allow Heaven to become corrupted. He is protective of His dwelling place, the seat of His government, sometimes referred to as "the New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2). If Satan was ever able to take over even one square inch of Heaven, it would rupture the very fabric of the universe.



Saint Michael Expelling Lucifer and the Rebellious Angels  
Peter Paul Rubens

God's Creation is by its very nature binary. There's a divinely ordained duality that distinguishes between good and evil, light and dark, warp and woof, male and female, yin and yang. It's how the world works. One of the devil's strategies is to blur or even erase these distinctions: *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (Isa. 5:20). If he ever succeeded, it would turn the world upside-down and inside-out.

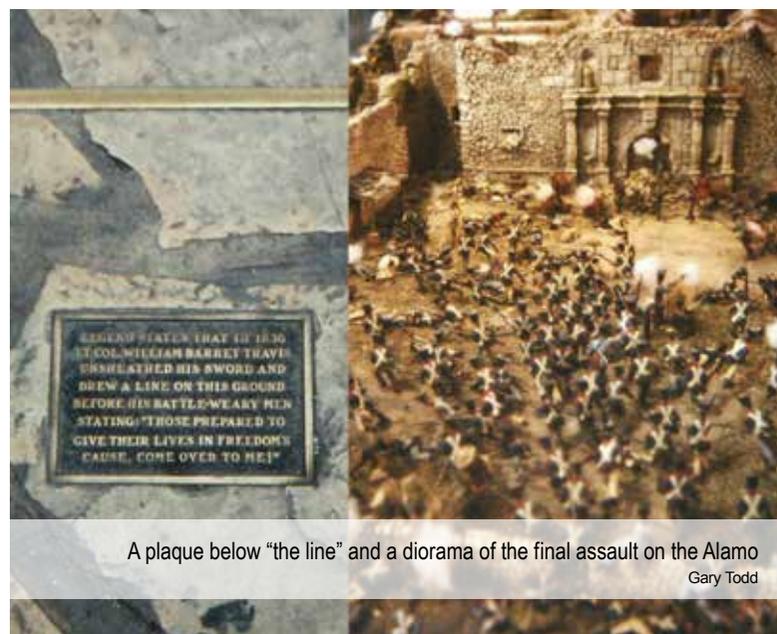
Ezekiel 28:14 tells us that God ordained a "guardian" (literally, one who "covers") over His dwelling place, "the holy mountain of God." If this is a veiled reference to Lucifer, or Satan, and his pre-Fall role as a guardian of Heaven—and we believe it is—then his divinely assigned responsibility was to guard God's throne from contamination by evil.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The primary referent in Ezekiel 28 is the earthly King of Tyre (vv. 11–12). However, a careful reader cannot help noticing that there are aspects of Ezekiel's description that wouldn't apply, even figuratively, to any earthly king. Verse 15, for instance, declares, *You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.* What human king has ever been "perfect" in all his ways? There is even a reference to this creature having been present in the primeval Garden of Eden (v. 13). Double innuendos like this (i.e., superimposing a reference to one thing over an extended passage about something else) are not unusual in Scripture. Matthew 1:23, for instance, understands the "son" born to a young maiden in Isaiah's time (Isa. 7:14) to be a foreshadowing of Yeshua, who was born of the Virgin Mary centuries later. Critics have said the Hebrew word *almah* doesn't necessarily have to be a virgin—and linguistically, they're right. However, thousands of young maidens give birth to male babies every day, all over the world. Such a birth would only be a "sign" (that is, something recognizably miraculous or anomalous) if the maiden were a virgin.

This explains why God determined, even before Satan had fallen into sin, that a guardian of His throne was necessary. He foresaw that His introduction of free will into the universe (when He created the angels) would allow sin to rear its ugly head. Lucifer, the guardian of His throne, would rebel and many (possibly a third) of the angels would follow his rebellion.

In fact, the doctrine of divine omniscience explains the wide-ranging scope of God’s knowledge—natural knowledge, middle knowledge, and free knowledge. He knows everything, both actual and potential, as well as past, present, and future. He knows everything that *will* or *would* happen under any set of freedom-permitting circumstances. So, He knew very well how Lucifer and his followers would abuse their freedom. He knew that evil—and its ensuing, destructive consequences—would be introduced into the universe. We will have more to say about this when we come to our third point (below).

This brings us to the origin of Hell. This horrible place was created to be the final abode of the devil and his fallen angels: *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’”* (Matt. 25:41). They had a greater degree of accountability than mankind because of their prior privilege. They had been in Heaven and experienced first-hand the goodness of God—but rejected it. They dwelled in the very presence of God—but turned away. So, their destiny now is to be banished forever from the presence of God in a place described as a “Lake of Fire” (Rev. 19:20; 20:10). Humans who choose to join them will share the same fate.



A plaque below “the line” and a diorama of the final assault on the Alamo  
Gary Todd

In 1836, Colonel Travis famously drew a line in the sand at the Alamo. Defenders who chose to remain in the old Spanish mission and face certain death at the hands of overwhelming Mexican forces had to cross over that storied line. In a sense, God, too, has drawn a line in the sand for all of us. That line requires that we make a choice. Joshua, the successor of Moses, told the children of Israel, *“And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Josh. 24:15, emphasis added).

Lucifer and his fallen hordes made their choice in the primordial past. Michael, Gabriel, and the other righteous angels made a different choice. Now, it’s our turn. The “line in the sand” has been drawn for us on Planet Earth, and we, too, must choose whom we will serve.

God will defend Heaven at all costs, including even the death of His Son on Calvary—the ultimate Sacrifice. That’s why He wants to know where you and I stand. A choice is required because evil will not be allowed to take root in the New Jerusalem. John tells us, *Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood* (Rev. 22:14–15, ESV).<sup>7</sup>

### 3. He cannot allow evil to win.

As we saw earlier, Planet Earth is a battlefield. Satan has recruited and deployed His forces and they are preparing their final assault in this great, cosmic conflict. C.S. Lewis described the great face-off like this:

Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.<sup>8</sup>



Professor Lewis was writing this during the Second World War, when a resistance movement was active just across the English Channel, in Nazi-occupied France. Lewis saw a parallel between the French freedom fighters and our role in this world as believers. To him, the “rightful king” landed in disguise, so to speak, two thousand years ago. And now we have joined His resistance movement, serving behind enemy lines while the evil Prince of this world lays the groundwork to mount his final, desperate offensive. John foresaw a time like this when he wrote, *“For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time”* (Rev. 12:12b).

<sup>7</sup> Most textual differences between various Bible translations are inconsequential and have little, if any, effect on doctrine. Here, however, an over-zealous Byzantine scribe appears to have taken some license with the text and replaced “Blessed are those who wash their robes” with “Blessed are those who do His commandments,” thereby making law-keeping the requirement for gaining “the right to the Tree of Life” (22:14). Certainly, we should all keep God’s commands (12:17; 14:12; 1 John 2:3–4; 3:22, 24; 5:2–3); however, that’s not how we receive everlasting life. Good works are a result of our salvation, not its cause. We receive everlasting life, not by our good works, but by our faith in the saving power of the blood of the Lamb. John writes, *And I said to [the heavenly elder], “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Rev. 7:14).

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity—C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 46 (Kindle Edition).

Now we come to one of the great philosophical questions of the past two thousand years, which is this: If God is truly benevolent and all-powerful, why did He allow evil to enter our world in the first place, and why does He allow it to continue to exist and cause so much misery?

After all, if God is benevolent, He would surely want to do away with evil. And if He is all-powerful, He could do just that. Yet evil continues to exist, wreaking havoc in our world. The whole history of humanity is just one, long death-march to the grave. Therefore, the critics conclude that God either (1) is not benevolent and finds evil acceptable, or (2) He is not all-powerful—that is, even though He doesn't accept evil, He lacks the ability to eradicate it. Theologians refer to this conundrum as the issue of "theodicy."

Philosophers have wrestled with the question of theodicy for thousands of years. C.S. Lewis concluded that a possible solution to the problem of theodicy is found in the Lord's introduction of *free will* to His Creation. The Lord didn't want a mechanized world where His creatures dance on command like marionettes dangling at the end of a string. He wanted creatures who would love and obey Him because they choose to—not because they're forced to. And yes, the Lord knew ahead of time that the consequences would be catastrophic if His creatures abused their God-given freedom. Here's how Lewis explains it:

Of course, God knew what would happen if [His creatures] used their freedom the wrong way: Apparently He thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with Him. But there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes: You could not be right and He wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source. When you are arguing against Him you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all: It is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will—that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings—then we may take it [that] it is [a price] worth paying.<sup>9</sup>

However, believers can take solace in the Bible's assurances that this war between good and evil, and evil's relentless, destructive reign over humanity, will someday be brought to an ignominious end. Most of the Book of Revelation is about the ultimate victory of our glorious Messiah over the cosmic forces of evil:

*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*

*Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

*"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

*Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:1–5).*

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *Ibid.*, 48-49.



Charles Spurgeon, London's Prince of Preachers (1834–1892), taught that at the climax of history, God will have a massive victory over the forces of evil. In the end, he said, there will be many more people in Heaven than there will be in Hell. Here is what Spurgeon said:

Think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace already. Think of the countless hosts in Heaven: If thou wert introduced there today, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now. They have come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South, and they are sitting down with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob in the Kingdom of God; and beside those in Heaven, think of the saved ones on earth.

Blessed be God, His elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Savior, and to rejoice in Him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company. "A great multitude, which no man could number," will be found in Heaven. A man can reckon up to very high figures; set to work your Newtons, your mightiest calculators, and they can count great numbers, but God and God alone can tell the multitude of His redeemed.

I believe there will be more in Heaven than in hell. If anyone asks me why I think so, I answer, because Christ, in everything, is to "have the pre-eminence," and I cannot conceive how He could have the pre-eminence if there are to be more in the dominions of Satan than in Paradise. Moreover, I have never read that there is to be in hell a great multitude, which no man could number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them . . . !

. . . Christ shall be Master everywhere, and His praise shall be sounded in every land. Christ shall have the pre-eminence at last; His train shall be far larger than that which shall attend the chariot of the grim monarch of hell.<sup>10</sup>

If the Bible makes one thing abundantly clear and certain, it's this: In the end, evil will not win.

<sup>10</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, Susannah Spurgeon, and Joseph Harrald, *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon: Volume 1, 1834–1854*, Chapter 16: "A Defense of Calvinism" (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898), 175.

#### 4. He cannot leave the story unfinished.

The Bible has been called “the greatest story ever told.” And it certainly is that! What are the elements of a good story? Here are some of them:

1. An introduction/premise
2. A plot/theme
3. Characters introduced
  - a. Main character/protagonist
  - b. Supplemental players
4. Conflict/climax
5. Conclusion/resolution

The Bible has all these elements, and more. God’s Book sets the stage of the human drama in the opening chapters of Genesis and follows the storyline through thousands of years all the way to its future conclusion in Revelation 20–22.

The unifying theme of this amazing story is Redemption. It’s like a scarlet thread that weaves its way from Genesis to Revelation. The term “scarlet thread” comes from the story of Rahab in the Old Testament. The Hebrew spies who came to check out Jericho gave her these instructions:

*“Unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home.*

*“So it shall be that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him” (Josh. 2:18–19).*



By following these instructions, Rahab and her family were spared from the fate that befell the other inhabitants of Jericho when the Israelites invaded Canaan. We believe the color scarlet (deep, dark red) wasn’t merely an arbitrary choice for the life-saving cord that would identify Rahab’s dwelling for the advancing Israelites. Red is the color of blood; so, the scarlet cord, from our perspective, represents sacrifice—a redemption by blood.<sup>11</sup>

The first implicit mention of God’s redemptive work is found in Genesis 3:15, where He told the Serpent (who represented Satan at the Fall): “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*”<sup>12</sup> Just a few verses later, God himself shed innocent blood to make coverings from animal skins for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21), pointing forward, once again, to Yeshua’s future sacrifice on Calvary.

At the Exodus, God required the shedding of a lamb’s blood for Israel’s deliverance from her centuries-long bondage in the land of Egypt. He told His people, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex. 12:13).



This same scarlet cord of Redemption finds its way through the pages of Scripture—all the way to the Book of Revelation, where we are told that when Yeshua the Messiah appears at the Second Coming, He will be “clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name [will be] called The Word of God” (Rev. 19:13).<sup>13</sup> At the close of the Book of Revelation, He is worshipped and acclaimed as the Lamb of God who purchased our Redemption by shedding His blood (22:1, 3).

The story of Redemption, then, began in the Garden of Eden and will conclude when the Lord returns. We look forward patiently but expectantly to the triumphant conclusion of this greatest of all stories!

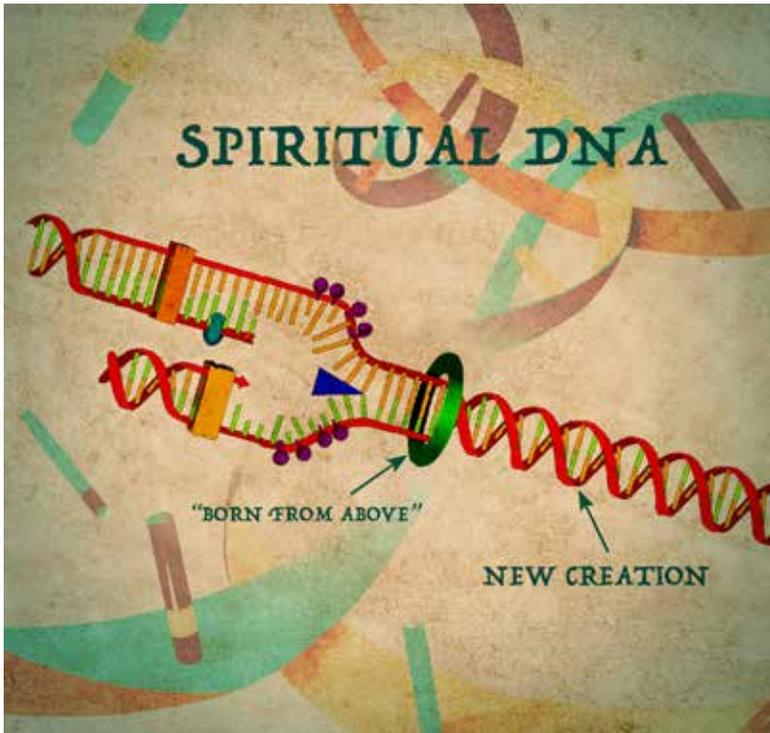
<sup>11</sup>In commerce, there’s a whole range of prices—from a few pennies all the way up to massive amounts of silver or gold—that can be charged for the purchase of various goods or services. However, the highest price of all is a life—represented by blood (Lev. 17:11, 14). Giving one’s life is the ultimate demonstration of love (John 15:13). It is the highest price that can be paid (1 Peter 1:18–19).

<sup>12</sup>Theologians refer to Genesis 3:15 as the *protoevangelium*, or, literally, the “first gospel.”

<sup>13</sup>Yeshua is also called “the Word” (ὁ λόγος; *ho logos*) in John 1:1 (cf. 1 John 1:1–3). As the divine Logos (Aramaic, *Memra*), He is the Lord and Creator of all things (Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:1–2).

## 5. He cannot stop loving His people.

An earthly parent never stops loving his or her children. Even if our kids grow up to disrespect us, or to reject our values, or otherwise cause us heartache, we still love them. From the moment of conception, our offspring are connected to us both physically and spiritually—and that connection is unalterable. Even genetics tells us that they are, in a very real sense, part of us—and they always will be.



The same thing is true spiritually, in our relationship with the Lord. When we are “born from above” (John 3:3–7), our spiritual “DNA” is intermingled with His.<sup>14</sup> We are made “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). We become a child of God: *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (John 1:12–13).

The Bible says God’s love for His people never wavers and never ends (Ex. 15:13; Deut. 31:6; Psalm 48:9; Isa. 54:10; 63:7; Jer. 31:3; John 17:24–26; 1 John 4:10).

One of the keystones of the Reformed faith is that of eternal security.<sup>15</sup> That is, once someone has been truly born spiritually, he cannot be unborn. A Yeshua-believer can be chastised for sinful behavior (Heb. 12:3–11) and he may even be subject in rare instances to premature physical death for spiritual recalcitrance (1 John 5:16–17). However, a true believer never loses his sonship.<sup>16</sup> If a professing believer lapses into flagrant and unrepentant sin, with no evidence of divine chastening, it may indicate that he was never a true believer in the first place (1 John 2:19).

<sup>14</sup>The reference to spiritual “DNA,” of course, is meant figuratively. It’s based on the Bible’s statements to the effect that when we’re saved, we become “partakers in the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:3–4). In Greek, the term “born again” is literally “born from above” (John 3:3–7). It refers to our being spiritually born as a result of God’s work in us—a “rebirth,” of sorts. Our first birth is *physical* and situates us in our earthly family; the second birth is *spiritual* and places us in our heavenly family. Both relationships are irrevocable.

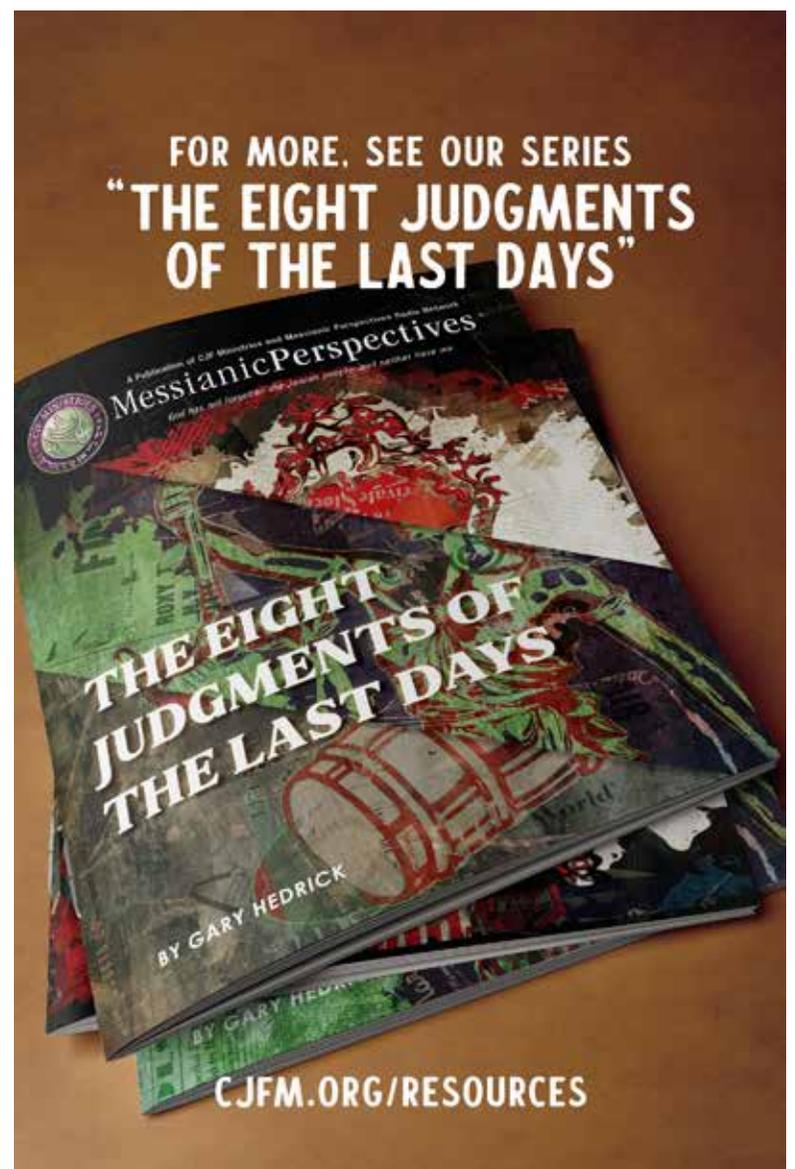
<sup>15</sup>Traditional Calvinists call this “perseverance (or preservation) of the saints,” the fifth of the famous TULIP points from the Synod of Dort.

<sup>16</sup>The Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches very clearly that true, familial relationship is never lost, no matter how far we stray, and the Father’s love for a wandering child never wavers (Luke 15:4, 11–24).

## 6. He cannot remember our sins.

The “forgetfulness” of God is a blessing beyond words. It’s an expression of God’s mercy whereby He doesn’t hold our sins against us because His Son took upon Himself the penalty for those transgressions when He died on Calvary. The Bible says, “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (Heb. 8:12; cp. Jer. 31:31–34).

Does the notion of divine forgetfulness mean, literally, that God, try as He might, cannot remember the sinful things we have done? No, it doesn’t. After all, the Bible tells us that even believers, whose sins have been judicially forgiven (and “forgotten”) by God, will someday be judged (to determine rewards) at the Judgment Seat (or *Bema*) of the Messiah (2 Cor. 5:10). Since some believers will “suffer loss” of rewards at that judgment, we know that sins of commission and omission will be evaluated at that time (1 Cor. 3:11–15).<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup>The fact that God “forgets” our sins in one way (i.e., judicially), but remembers them in another way (i.e., at the Bema Judgment) might be seen by some people as a contradiction. However, there is something similar in modern jurisprudence, where a defendant can be found “not guilty” in a *criminal* case and still face charges for the same crime in a *civil* case. This happened to O.J. Simpson, who was acquitted of murder in a 1995 criminal action but was found guilty of the same two murders in a 1997 civil action brought by the Brown family. The sentence in a civil action is typically a monetary award from one party to the other—but no one goes to prison.

So, then, in what sense does God “forget” our sins? It’s not like when we humans forget someone’s name, or where we put our car keys, or the password to our phone or computer. These are human failings—and God has no such failings.

Rather, God’s memory of our sins is *selective*. That is, He decides when to recall those sins and when not to recall them. With respect to our *salvation*, those sins will never be recollected (Psalm 103:12; Rom. 8:1). With respect to *rewards*, however, they will be (1 Cor. 3:11–15).

Even humans can choose to exercise selective memory. Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, is a case in point. Early in her career, according to some reports, it came to Clara’s attention that a petty and jealous woman was spreading some hateful rumors about her. Clara ignored the reports and continued her important work. Years later, it came to pass that this same woman asked for Clara’s help with a project—and Clara helped her. A friend (who recalled the earlier offense) asked Clara why she helped that woman who had been so unkind to her years before. Clara looked her friend in the eye and said, “I distinctly remember forgetting about that.”<sup>18</sup>



Clara Barton, then, was following God’s example. That is, even though she was capable of recalling the unfortunate episode where she had been wronged in the past, she made a conscious choice to forget and leave it in the past. God does the same thing for believers with respect to their sins. When the devil drags sins out of our past and brings them before God, the Lord says, “I distinctly remember forgetting about that.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Luis Palau, *Experiencing God’s Forgiveness* (Multnomah, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985), 12.

<sup>19</sup>The devil sometimes uses this tactic in his role as “accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10). God’s non-response in these instances is not an example of neglect. He ignores the devil’s accusations because our sins were paid (atoned) for when Yeshua died and shed His blood on Calvary (Heb. 9:15). He has “forgotten” them.

## 7. He cannot fail.

The LORD cannot fail in His *pity*: Through *the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not* (Lam. 3:22).

He cannot fail in His *provision*: *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Phil. 4:19).

He cannot fail in His *promises*. When Joshua was about to die, he called the elders of Israel together and told them: “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one thing has failed** of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed” (Josh. 23:14, emphasis added).



And finally, He cannot fail in His *protection*. The LORD encouraged ancient Israel with these words: “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the LORD (Isa. 54:17).

We live in a day of widespread rebellion and apostasy. In our Western culture, we are witnessing a wholesale departure from the Judeo-Christian norms of God’s Word. Consequently, some observers might conclude that we have already lost the battle. But we haven’t. Far from it, in fact. The battle waxes and wanes as it moves toward history’s conclusion—but the victory is ultimately the Lord’s. That means time is on our side. All we need to do is be patient, be faithful, and wait on the One Who cannot fail!

*Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it* (Psalm 37:34).



Gary Hedrick  
is president of  
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# Bible Questions & Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

## Have a Bible question?

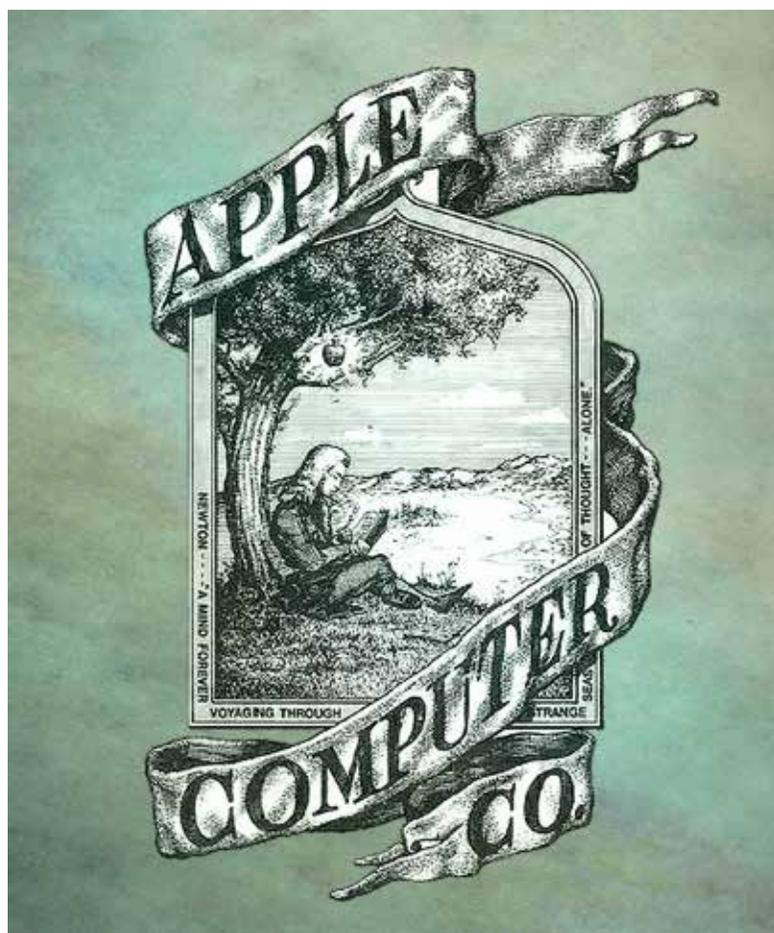
Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

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

**QUESTION:** *A member of our home study group insists that it's wrong for Christians to use Mac computers because the Apple logo is satanic. Since most of us are running Macs, it's become a sticking point in our little group. Can you help us settle this?*

**ANSWER:** Yes, this comes up from time to time—but it's not true. It's one of those “Christian” urban legends. The Apple logo has nothing to do with forbidden knowledge or Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The original Apple logo (1976) looked like the one shown below.

Look closely at the drawing and you'll see a fellow sitting under an apple tree. That's Isaac Newton, the famous scientist, and he's about to discover gravity when he's clobbered from above by a falling apple. In the early days of Apple Computer, someone thought this logo was appropriate because it symbolized the acquisition of knowledge through the scientific method (experimentation and deduction).



Later, some of Apple's higher-ups thought the Isaac Newton drawing was too “busy” (that is, too complicated), so they opted for a more minimalistic approach—very simply, a lone apple. The reason the apple was chosen was that it was Steve Jobs' favorite fruit. But someone suggested that the symbol as it was drawn might not be readily recognized as an apple. So, they hired Landor Associates (a brand consulting firm) in 1984, and their solution was to show the apple after a bite had been taken out of it. This, they thought, helped scale the drawing and made the object more easily recognized as an apple rather than something else—like a cherry, for instance. It's as simple as that. No satanism involved.



Of course, the person who's been making an issue of this in your Bible study group may not be so easily convinced. Purveyors of falsities are typically not fond of fact-checkers. Fortunately, however, there's no need to take my word for any of this. The information is readily available online at URLs like this one: [fineprintart.com/history-of-the-apple-logo](http://fineprintart.com/history-of-the-apple-logo). Also, Steve Wozniak, cofounder of Apple with Steve Jobs, discusses the logo in detail in his book *iWoz: Computer Geek to Cult Icon* (2006). If your critical friend remains unconvinced after this, it could indicate the presence of an underlying problem that's not related to the facts of the case. While it's good to be aware of the devil's strategies (Eph. 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8), it's possible to be preoccupied with evil to a point that's spiritually unhealthy. Our Jewish Founder, Charles Halff, warned us to steer clear of professing Christians who look for demons around every corner and under every rock.

We would all be wise to heed Paul's numerous admonitions in this regard. In Romans 16:19, for instance, the esteemed Apostle said, *For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil* (emphasis added). And in Philippians 4:8, Paul summarizes the priorities that should occupy our thinking: *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

# Fruit from the Harvest



by Violette Berger



## A Church Connection

**Rob Styler, CJFM Director of Missions (Phoenix, Arizona)**, was having a problem with his air conditioner recently and called for service. The next day they sent “Bill” to the house. Rob remembered Bill, who had been to the house several times and had asked questions about spiritual matters. Rob wasn’t sure what motivated their conversation that day—perhaps Rob’s library or a Bible on the table. However, this time Bill seemed to be somewhat stressed. Rob asked, and Bill told him that he was “struggling with a few issues and did not feel spiritually right.” He confessed that he had not been to church in a long time and needed to “get back to church.” He also told Rob that he doesn’t like going to church because he is not an outgoing person. They continued to talk, even though it was 101 degrees outside. Bill gave Rob his work phone number so that he could recommend a church in Bill’s area and text him. Rob said: “When Bill left, I checked out a few churches near his home and forwarded the information to him. I’m hoping he got himself to one of the churches I sent and that he might be able to make a connection.” We thank God for Rob’s “connection” with Bill! Please pray for a “church connection” for Bill.

## O Hear Ye! O Hear Ye!

**Eric Chabot, CJFM representative (Columbus, Ohio)**, and his team of volunteers were truly blessed with their summer outreach on the campuses of Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College. Though this is usually a much slower time of the year, they had the opportunity to speak with 160 people and praise God that 12 individuals made first-time commitments to the Lord. Please pray that they also have a fruitful fall semester. They are the only apologetics ministries located on these two campuses, which consist of a combination of nearly 100,000 students. To begin the fall semester, Eric and his campus ministry, *Ratio Christi Campus Apologetics Alliance*, hosted a theatrical event at Ohio State University called *C. S. Lewis, “The Reluctant Convert,”* performed by Max McLean. The production was recently made into a movie. Eric writes: “The impact of Lewis and his testimony—going from an atheist teaching at Oxford to a believer in Jesus—can’t be overestimated. This presentation was a huge task, taking more than three years to bring it to pass. We prayed for a large turnout and that many lives would be transformed—and that students would come and hear the truth of the biblical worldview. We thank God for His faithfulness! Over 1,500 people attended, and everyone seemed to be greatly impacted and blessed by the event.” See the pictures on the right.

## “Not by Chance”

**Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas, Nevada)**, took a vacation recently, with his wife, Oanh, to visit his mother who lives in New Jersey. On one of his flights, Rich sat next to a young Chinese doctor, “M.” They began talking, and the conversation soon turned to Jesus. M had many sincere questions, which resulted in a discussion that lasted the entire two-hour flight. What truly affected Rich was how their lives were so similar. M had started to attend a church because his girlfriend had asked him to go with her, but he was having an issue with salvation. However, he recognized that God was at work, and that this was not a “chance” meeting with Rich. As they parted, M said he needed to “do some thinking about the Gospel.” Please pray for M’s salvation and that he will get in touch with Rich when that happens.

Rich and Oanh praise the Lord that a young boy, whose mother is Jewish, attended their congregation with a believing friend and prayed to receive the Lord. Earlier, Oanh had an opportunity to dispel his objection, during Shabbat School class, that he thought he was not a sinner. Please pray for his sanctification. 



## IN THIS ISSUE

### Seven Things God Cannot Do

by Gary Hedrick  
Page 1

### Bible Questions & Answers

Is The Apple Logo Satanic?  
Page 10

### Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger  
Page 11

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