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Messianic Perspectives[®]

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

SEVEN HANUKKAH LESSONS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

by Dr. Gary Hedrick



Believe it or not, one of the earliest written accounts of the celebration of Hanukkah is found, not in traditional Jewish sources, but in the Messianic (Jewish-Christian) New Testament.

The Gospel of John records an occasion when Yeshua was in the Temple during the Feast of Dedication, also known as the Festival of Lights or Hanukkah:

Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then the [Judeans] surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the [Messiah], tell us plainly."

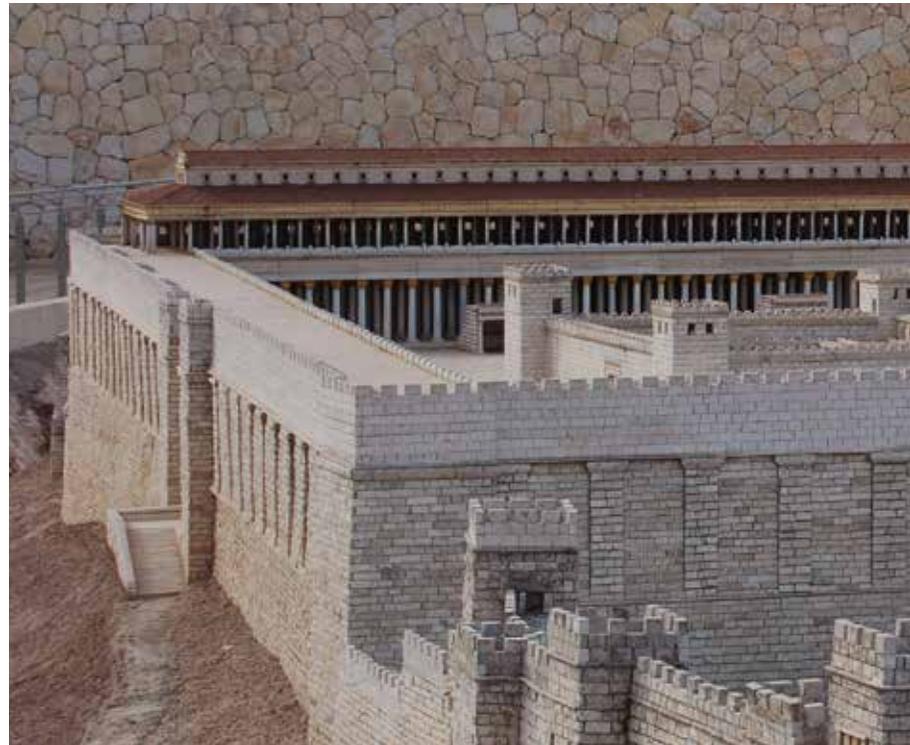
Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:22-30).

Historical Background

Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165 BC. The Temple had been defiled when Syrian forces invaded Judea about ten years earlier. They looted the city and the Temple. Antiochus, the Syrian leader, erected an altar to Zeus (also known by the Roman name Jupiter) in the Temple in 167 BC. He even sacrificed a swine on the altar—the ultimate affront to kosher Jewish sensibilities.

After a three-year struggle led by a brave band of Jewish freedom fighters known as the Maccabees, Jerusalem and the Temple were finally liberated from Syrian control. According to an ancient Jewish legend, the victorious Judas Maccabeus ordered that the Temple be cleansed immediately and Temple worship be restored. However, they could only find one sealed jar of oil—enough to keep the Temple lamps burning for a day. Miraculously, however, that single jar of oil kept the lamps lit for an entire week while they hurriedly pressed olives and prepared new oil.

No one knows for sure if the legend about the oil is true. Many Jewish authorities today say it's not. But we do know that the Maccabean revolt happened—and that was the real miracle anyway. It's what the Feast of Lights/Dedication is all about. It commemorates the victory of a relatively small group of Jewish freedom fighters over the vastly superior forces of an empire—and the preservation of Jewish culture even in the face of an onslaught of Hellenization in those days.¹ It's also a compelling reminder that the worship of the LORD God of Israel is at the very core of Jewish identity (Ex. 34:14).



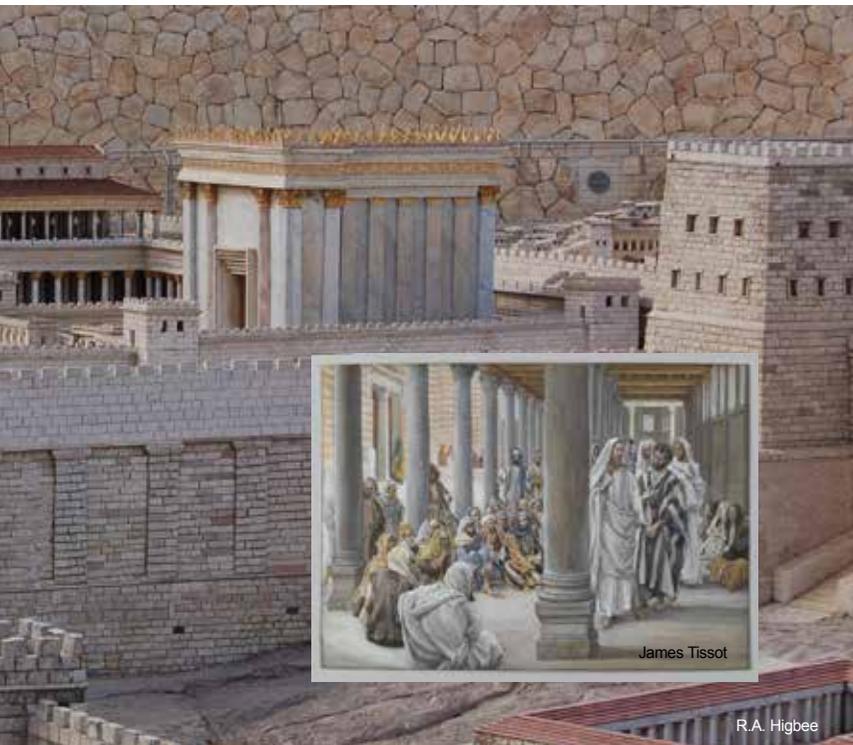
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When He finally arrived, however, the Messiah didn't want the news broadcast widely. On one occasion, for instance, He healed a man who had leprosy and told him to keep it quiet (Mark 1:43-45).⁴ Sometimes theologians call this the "Messianic secret."

The reason He didn't want news of His Messianic credentials spread widely was that He knew the first-century Jewish leadership would misinterpret them. They were looking for a political messiah to lead them in throwing off the yolk of Roman rule. But He knew that He had come to die (Matt. 20:28). He knew that the Sanhedrin would see those two roles—that is, Ruler and Redeemer—as incompatible.⁵

If He allowed Himself to be coronated as Israel's King-Messiah, it would not only rile the Roman authorities, but it might also sidetrack His mission of redemption. The Jewish religious leaders weren't prepared to accept any version of the truth that involved a suffering and dying Messiah. Nonetheless, Yeshua knew He had to go to Jerusalem and die: "*Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51).

However, NT believers can handle the truth. In fact, our faith is based on the first-person testimony of individuals who saw and handled the truth—literally: "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life*" (1 John 1:1).

A Hanukkah Like No Other

John tells us that on this particular Hanukkah, the Lord was walking in Solomon's Porch (10:23). Israeli winters can get cold. Sometimes it even snows (especially in Jerusalem, which is in the mountains). Solomon's Porch (or portico) was a roofed area along the southern perimeter of the Temple Mount overlooking the Southern Stairs. It provided shelter during those cold winter months.

The Judeans, who were mostly critical of the Lord's ministry, surrounded Him and demanded that He come out and declare publicly that He was the promised Messiah (v. 24).² In Yeshua's response to them, He presents seven brief, yet power-packed teachings. The first one came in response to a rather disingenuous question asked by the Judean religious leaders.

1. Getting a Handle on the Truth

"Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, 'How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the [Messiah], tell us plainly'" (John 10:24).

Their question was direct and to-the-point: was He the Messiah? It's a simple question. But here, as on other similar occasions, the Lord avoids making a direct claim about being the Messiah. Why?

Jack Nicholson had a famous line in *A Few Good Men* (1992) where a military defense attorney is grilling him relentlessly on the witness stand. The attorney demands, "I want the truth!" Nicholson's character angrily blurts out, "You can't handle the truth!"

That was the case here. The Judean religious establishment couldn't handle the truth. The Jewish people had been waiting for generations for their promised Deliverer. The Torah contained promises that He would come someday to break the power of the curse (e.g., Gen. 3:14-19). He would be a Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:18) and the Prince of Peace (Heb., *Sar Shalom*; Isaiah 9:6). He was known as "the Desire of Women" because it was every Jewish girl's hope and prayer that she might give birth to the prophesied Anointed One.³



The Apostle John was saying, in essence, "Don't waste your breath trying to convince me that the Gospel story isn't true. I was there when it happened. I saw the Lord with my own eyes. I touched Him with my own hands. I know it's true just as much as I know the sun came up this morning."⁶

So here in John 10, on the occasion of Hanukkah, when the Judeans confronted the Lord in the Temple precincts and asked Him if He was the Messiah, He knew that their question had already been answered. The question of His messiahship had already been settled by His life and deeds (v. 25; cp. Matt. 11:2-6).⁷

The real problem was not that He hadn't answered the question. He had! The problem was that He didn't give the Sanhedrin the answer they wanted.

2. The Blindness of Unbelief

“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe’” (John 10:25).

Unbelief is one of the most underrated weapons in the Enemy’s arsenal. The reason it’s so dangerous is that it stems from the first sin—pride (Gen. 3:1-5; cp. Isa. 14:14). Unbelief is related to pride because it’s tantamount to reserving judgment for ourselves. We decide for ourselves what is right or wrong.

For instance, the Bible says God created the world; but some of us aren’t so sure the materialists aren’t onto something when they say everything sprang from a primordial explosion and natural, random processes kicked in at that time. Rather than simply taking God’s Word for it, we appoint ourselves judge and jury. We will weigh the evidence and decide whether or not the Bible is misleading us.

It’s a dangerous exercise that stems from human pride and arrogance. C.S. Lewis offered this observation about the sin of pride:

As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you. . . . The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether.⁸

One of the saddest phrases in the Bible is found at the end of Matthew 28:17, where we read about something that happened just before the Lord went back to Heaven. In English, it’s three simple words: “and some doubted.” That is, even after His followers had spent years listening to His words and witnessing His miracles, there were still some among them who had lingering doubts!⁹

It’s not hard to imagine what the doubters may have been thinking. “Maybe His miracles were the result of magic or sleight of hand. . . . If He’s really the Messiah, how come Roman legions are still grinding us under their boots? . . . The Pharisees may have been right when they said He was born out of wedlock. How can our royal Messiah, the rightful King of Israel, be the illegitimate son of a peasant girl?”

Paul described unbelievers as “*having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*” (Eph. 4:18). Unbelief inevitably leads to blindness. And when that happens, you can’t see the truth even if it’s staring you squarely in the face.

Just how devastating can unbelief be? In the days of the Exodus, it cost an entire generation of Israelites their lives. Hundreds of thousands, and possibly as many as several million, people died because of their unbelief. They decided to trust the 12 spies who said, “We are not able to go up against the people [of Canaan], for they are stronger than we” (Num. 13:31).

Rather than moving ahead and taking possession of what God had promised them, the Israelites turned away in fear at Kadesh Barnea (Deut. 9:23). That was their crossroads—and they made the wrong decision. Consequently, they wandered in a desolate, desert wilderness for 40 long years. The graves of that entire generation (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) were scattered all over the barren landscape during those four long decades. The writer of Hebrews concludes: “*So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief*” (3:19).

3. A Life Examined

“The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me” (John 10:25).

The religious leaders repeatedly tried to kill Yeshua because they considered His claims about being on a par with God himself to be blasphemous. So here they are feigning ignorance about His Messianic claims: “‘How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the [Messiah], tell us plainly’” (v. 24).



As we saw earlier, He had already told them plainly—but they weren’t paying attention. John recorded a series of teachings Yeshua had given a few months earlier in the Temple during Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) in which Yeshua had three specific interactions with the crowd regarding His being the Messiah:

- The religious leaders didn’t believe Yeshua was the Messiah, yet these same leaders conspicuously refused to confront Him publicly. Many of the common people, on the other hand, believed that He was indeed the Messiah. With the Pharisees clearly within earshot, they cried out, “When the [Messiah] comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?” (John 7:25-31).
- Yeshua made it clear that He had come from the Father and He would return to the Father (vv. 32-36).
- He stood up on the last day of Sukkot and said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” When the people heard Him, some of them said He was the Prophet (Deut. 18:15-18) and others said He was the Messiah (John 7:37-44).¹⁰

Were the chief priests and Pharisees fooling anyone with their pretense about being unfamiliar with Yeshua's Messianic claims? Surely not. They were playing a perilous, perverse, and poisonous game—and the Lord knew it. He had no intention of joining in their charade. He wasn't going to jump through hoops for the Sanhedrin to prove who He was.

Even if He had never said anything about being Messiah, they could have known who He was simply by observing His life. The miracles Yeshua did in His Father's name should have been all the proof they needed (John 10:25). Today's skeptics and other unbelievers would do well to think long and hard about the life and claims of this Rabbi who lived in Israel two millennia ago:

One Solitary Life

He was born in an obscure village, the Son of a peasant woman.

He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter's shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He became a wandering preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of those things one usually associates with greatness.

He had no credentials but Himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to His enemies and went through a mockery of a trial. He was executed by the state. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His clothing, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that One Solitary Life.¹¹

The calendar we use every day bears testimony to the significance of this first-century Galilean Rabbi. All of history is organized into two great divisions—before Him (BC) and after Him (AD, *Anno Domini*).

Professor Daniel B. Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary has observed, "One German scholar wrote a commentary on Luke called *Die Mitte der Zeit* ('the center of time'). That says it well: Jesus Christ is the fulcrum of all of life and all of history. All chronology is split by whether it is before Christ or after Christ."¹²

The next time you write a check or fill out a form, consider that when you inscribe the date, you're bearing witness to the fact that all of history revolves around Yeshua the Messiah!

4. Sheep Believe Their Shepherd

"*But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you*" (John 10:26).

What's interesting here is that unbelief is characterized as more an issue of what someone *is* rather than an issue of what he or she *thinks*. The Lord doesn't say, "The reason you don't believe is that you have processed the facts incorrectly." Or, "You don't believe because you need more information."

Unbelief is a function of the heart as much as it is a function of the mind. In a certain sense, it's existential.¹³ Its roots are essentially *spiritual* rather than *intellectual*. The mind usually follows the heart rather than vice versa. This means we should take care of our hearts first. When we do, our minds will follow. Yeshua confirmed this when He said that the difference between a "good man" and an "evil man" is what's in the heart (Matt. 12:35).

5. Sheep Listen to the One They Know

"*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*" (John 10:27).

Our younger daughter, Sarah, raises and breeds dogs (specifically, Great Danes). It's her hobby and she enjoys it very much. One day, two of her dogs got out of the yard and took off down the road. I was standing there and yelled for them to come back. They ignored me. I hollered and threatened, but it had no effect whatsoever. But when Sarah heard the commotion and called out to them, both dogs came running! She must have noticed a look of consternation on my face because she smiled and said, "Dad, a dog only has one master."



The same thing is true of sheep—and people, too! The Lord Jesus (*haAdon Yeshua*) said, "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt. 6:24).

He is our Good Shepherd. Earlier in this same chapter, He drew an instructive contrast between a "good shepherd" and a "hireling." He said a good shepherd cares about the sheep and is willing to give his life for them, when necessary (vv. 11-12).

For the hireling, however, tending sheep is nothing more than a job. He's simply making a living—nothing more. If a hireling sees a wolf, or another dangerous predator, he'll run for his life and leave the sheep defenseless (v. 13).

When a sheep hears his shepherd's voice, he responds and obeys. When there's no response, we can only conclude that he didn't hear (or didn't care) what the shepherd said.

Notice also that Yeshua says, “I know them.” Many people these days claim to know the Lord—especially as long as they think they’re getting what they want out of the relationship (like health, wealth, prosperity, and blessings). But whatever happened to biblical discipleship? What about the old-fashioned idea of taking up one’s cross and following the Lord, even at great personal sacrifice (Matt. 16:24)?

Doug Samples was a dear friend and member of our board until his untimely death in 2005. He told me once that an acquaintance claimed to know Ronald Reagan personally. But in 1980, when Doug was invited to attend Reagan’s Inauguration in Washington, DC, as part of the Georgia delegation, he learned (under circumstances that were somewhat embarrassing) that the newly elected president had no idea who Doug’s friend was. Even though the man claimed to know Reagan, Reagan evidently did not know him.

The more significant question, then, may not be, “Do you know the Lord?” Maybe it’s, “Does the Lord know you?”

6. The Believer’s Two-Fold Security

“*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand*” (John 10:28-29).

The Lord says here that He “gives” us eternal life. That is, salvation is a gift rather than something we earn by our good works. This is the time of year when many people start thinking about giving gifts to their loved ones. How would you feel if someone presented you with a beautifully wrapped gift and then said, “That’ll be \$10, please”? What kind of gift would that be? If you pay for something, it’s not a gift! The Apostle Paul said, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in [Messiah Yeshua] our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23).

If we have received the gift of eternal life, the Lord said we will “never perish.” That means exactly what it says: *we will never perish*. We are secure in our relationship with the Lord. It’s not presumptuous for us to say that

any more than it’s presumptuous for one of my children to say he or she is my child. No matter what they do or how they conduct themselves, they will always be my children. It’s in their DNA!¹⁴

Our security as believers depends on two hands: the Father’s and the Son’s. First, the Son holds us safely in His own hand; and the Father also holds us firmly in His grasp. So, we are lovingly secured and protected by two sets of Almighty hands!

7. The Deity of the Messiah

“*I and My Father are one*” (John 10:30).

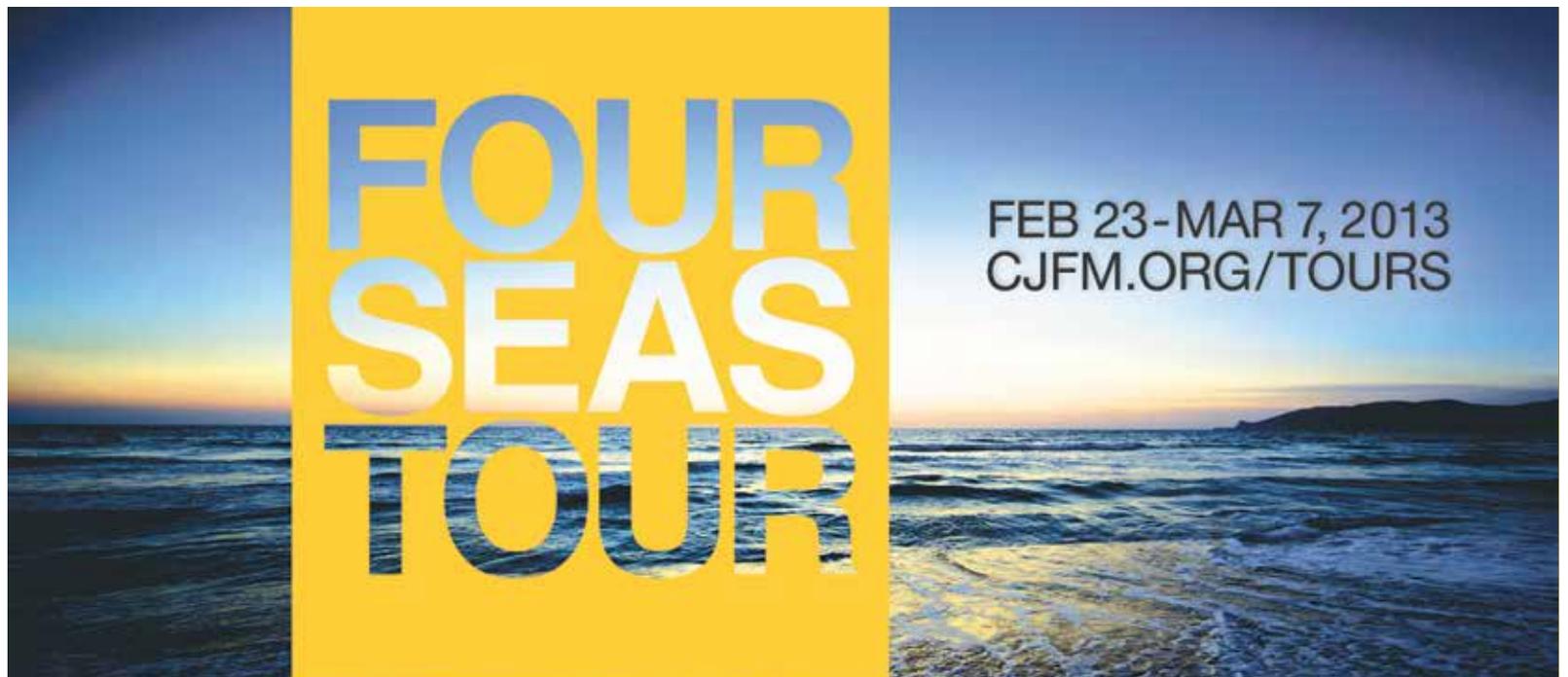
There was something ironic, and even tragic, about the religious leaders giving so much lip service to the Father while rejecting the One He sent: “Whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me” (Mark 9:37).

If you receive the Son, you’re also receiving the Father; if you reject the Son, you’re also rejecting the Father. Father and Son, then, are closely identified with each other. The religious leaders in Jerusalem claimed to be faithful to the Father while refusing to receive the Son.

Yeshua took His identification with the Father to another level when He declared, “I and My Father are one.” Some liberal commentators say that the Lord was merely saying here that He and the Father were one in purpose. That is, they are unified in some esoteric sense because they have common goals. These critics would vigorously deny that the stated “oneness” of Father and Son implies the Son was in any sense God.

The evidence, however, leads in a much different direction. In the Hebrew NT, for instance, the word for “one” in John 10:30 is *echad*. In biblical usage, it generally describes a complex unity (in contrast with a simple or singular unity). It’s the same word Moses used in Deuteronomy 6:4: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one* [Heb. *Echad*].”

This verse in Deuteronomy, known as the Shema, is considered the transcendent, defining declaration of Judaism. It’s part of the worship liturgy and observant Jewish men recite it at least twice every day.



HaAdon Yeshua HaMashiach (the Lord Jesus the Messiah), then, was making a connection here between Himself and the Shema. His Jewish listeners would likely have been reminded of this lofty declaration of Judaism when they heard Him say, “I and My Father are *echad*.”

But that’s not all. In John’s Messianic biography, the Lord identified himself numerous times as the great “I AM” of the OT (Ex. 3:14).¹⁵ In Greek, “I am” is *Ego eimi*. The Hebrew equivalent is *Ani hu*. Yeshua used this expression for Himself when He said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM (*Ego eimi*)” (John 8:58).¹⁶

When they heard this, His first-century Jewish listeners understood that He was claiming to be equal with God (cp. 5:18). Some of them were prepared to stone Him for blasphemy because of it (8:59)!

By referring to Himself as the I AM (*Ani hu*) of the OT, Yeshua was connecting the dots in passages like Isaiah 48:12: “*Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He [Heb., ani hu], I am the First, I am also the Last.*”¹⁷

The point is crystal clear: you cannot reject the Son without also rejecting the Father—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This was the case 2,000 years ago when Yeshua addressed the Judean religious leaders—and it’s still true today!

Let’s take these seven simple lessons to heart during this festive and meaningful time of the year. 

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ENDNOTES

¹Earlier, the Seleucid Empire had allowed the Jewish people to practice their own religion. However, when Antiochus IV ascended to the throne in 171 BC, he set out to impose Greek religion and culture everywhere in the empire—including Israel. “Hellenization,” then, refers to attempts to make the non-Greek world adopt Greek culture and beliefs. Over time, those efforts were largely successful.

²Some critics have charged that the Gospel of John is anti-Semitic because of its consistently negative portrayal of “the Jews.” However, when John uses the term “the Jews” (Gk, *hoi Ioudaioi*), it almost always designates the Judean (Jerusalem-based) leadership rather than Jewish people in general. In fact, the *Complete Jewish Bible* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998) translates *Ioudaioi* as “Judeans” rather than “Jews.” Judea (Jerusalem and its environs) is where most of the opposition to the Lord and His ministry was generated—and it’s where He was finally betrayed, tried, and executed. In contrast to this unrelenting hostility in the south, Yeshua was generally well received in the northern regions (Galilee). An interesting sidelight here is that some scholars believe the inhabitants of the ancient Qumran community (the folks who gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls) abandoned Jerusalem and resettled in the desert around the Dead Sea because of the corruption of the Judean leadership (Heerak Christian Kim, *The Jerusalem Tradition in the Late Second Temple Period* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007], 126). Yeshua, then, wasn’t alone in having His run-ins with the first-century Sanhedrin!

³Regarding “the desire of women” being an oblique reference to the Messiah, see James E. Smith, *Old Testament Survey Series: the Major Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1995) in his notes at Daniel 11:36-39. Also, see comments at Daniel 11:37 in *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio, 1998) and the corresponding note in the *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), on page 1456. Professor Gordon Wenham of Trinity College, Bristol, points out that “the desperate desire of women for children is often expressed in the OT” (*Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2, Genesis 16-50* [Dallas: Word Books, 1994], 244); therefore, if her son turned out to be the promised Messiah, it would most assuredly be a Jewish woman’s ultimate blessing. This is precisely why God’s promise to send a child into the world to redeem it (Gen. 3:15) is so crucial to our understanding of the importance of Gabriel’s statement to Mary in Luke 1:26-38 in which he said, “Blessed are you among women” (cp. Joel Green’s comments in the *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Luke* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997], 82-87).

⁴Other instances where Yeshua told people not to spread the news widely about His authenticating miracles are found in Matthew 8:4, 9:30, 12:16; Mark 5:43, 7:36; and Luke 8:56.

⁵Isaiah 53 presents the classic profile of the Messiah in His role as God’s “Suffering Servant.” The dual description of the Messiah in the Tanakh (as both a tragic figure who suffers and dies and also as a victorious, reigning King) prompted Rashi (in his commentary at Isaiah 11:13) to posit two Messiahs: *Mashiach ben Yosef* (“Messiah Son of Joseph,” the one who would die) and *Mashiach ben David* (“Messiah Son of David,” the kingly figure who would reign someday from the throne of David). The point of contention between traditionalists and Messianics, then, is the question of whether there are two Messiahs, each of whom comes once (a traditional view), or one Messiah who comes twice (the Messianic view).

⁶This is, of course, my own paraphrase of John’s statements in 1 John 1:1-3.

⁷We now know that there was a common Jewish expectation in ancient Judaism, especially in the Qumran community, that certain signs like healing the sick and raising the dead would accompany the coming of the Messiah. These events would show that

He was indeed the Messiah. In fact, one of the more recently released Dead Sea Scrolls (fragment 4Q521, dubbed “Messianic Apocalypse” by DSS scholars) has this line: “For [Messiah] will heal the wounded, resurrect the dead, and proclaim glad tidings to the poor” (see “The Signs of the Messiah” by James Tabor of the University of North Carolina on *The Jewish Roman World of Jesus* website at religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/4Q521.html).

⁸C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 124.

⁹It’s interesting that the Greek word for “doubt” (*distazo*) literally means, “to stand in two (ways)” (*Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*). The image is one of a traveler standing at a crossroads, trying to decide which way he should go. He is hesitating, and that’s essentially what doubt is—a hesitation to believe and obey God. As long as we linger at that crossroads, we are in unbelief.

¹⁰The last day of Sukkot was *Hoshana Rabbah* (the Great Hosanna). “According to rabbinic sources, it was customary at Sukkot to bring water in a golden pitcher from the pool of Siloam to the Temple to remind the people of the water from the rock in the desert (Num. 20:2-13) and as a symbol of hope for messianic deliverance (Isa. 12:3)” (*The Jewish Annotated New Testament* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 173).

¹¹This piece has been variously attributed to Helen Steiner Rice and others; however, there is a consensus that the real author is unknown.

¹²Daniel B. Wallace, “AD or CE?” (retrieved Nov. 6, 2012 at www.bible.org).

¹³Unbelief is existential in the sense that it’s grounded in the way we think about our own life experiences. For instance, sometimes people feel as if God abandoned them; for that reason, they assume that He must not exist. Charles Darwin had such an experience (and became an atheist) when his beloved Annie died in 1851. The online *Encarta Dictionary* clarifies that “philosophy in the context of existentialism” means being “involved in or vital to the shaping of a person’s self-chosen mode of existence and moral stance with respect to the rest of the world” (www.encyclopedia.com).

¹⁴Some people object to the phrase “once saved, always saved” because to them, it implies that a professing believer can live wickedly and still have assurance that he’s on his way to Heaven. However, this is not what the Bible teaches. God’s Word tells us that a faith that’s powerless to transform a sinful life is also powerless to save (Matt. 7:21-27; Rom. 2:13; James 1:21-27). There’s a very definite cause-and-effect relationship between salvation and good works—that is, salvation causes good works (but not vice versa).

¹⁵“And [Elohim] said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14). In the Hebrew, “I AM WHO I AM” is *EHEYE ASHER EHEYE* (lit., “I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE”). That is, as the Israelites embarked on their wilderness adventure, God would be for them whatever they needed Him to be. He would be their Redeemer, Purifier, Rescuer, Shepherd, Provider, or Healer; for instance, just to name a few of the possibilities.

¹⁶There are seven “I AM” sayings of Yeshua in John’s Gospel: 1. “I AM the Bread of Life” (6:35, 41, 48, 51), 2. “I AM the Light of the World” (8:12), 3. “I AM the Door of the Sheep” (10:7, 9), 4. “I AM the Good Shepherd” (10:11, 14), 5. “I AM the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25), 6. “I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (14:6), and 7. “I AM the True Vine” (15:1, 5).

¹⁷See Catrin H. Williams, “I Am He: The Interpretation of *Ani Hu* in Jewish and Early Christian Literature” (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) and Joseph M. Baumgarten, “A New Qumran Substitute for the Divine Name and Mishnah Sukkah” in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 83, no. 1 (1992): 1-5.



HANUKKAH BLESSINGS

Recite John 8:12

“I am the light of the world.
He who follows Me shall
not walk in darkness,
but have the light of life.”

אֲנִכִּי אֹרֶה עוֹלָם
הַהֹלֵךְ אַחֲרַי לֹא יֵלֵךְ
בְּחָשֶׁךְ כִּי-לוֹ אֹרֶה הַחַיִּים.

Ah-no-khee ohr ha-oh-lam,
Ha-hoh-lekh ah-khah-rye,
Loh ye-lekh ba-kho-shekh,
Kee-loh ohr ha-khai-yeem.

Recite Psalm 27:1

“The Lord is my light and my
salvation; Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?”

יְהוָה אֹרֵי ויִשְׁעֵי
מִמִּי אֵירָא
יְהוָה מְעוֹז־חַיִּי
מִמִּי אֶפְחַד.

Adonai ohr-ree ve-yeesh-ee,
Mee-mee ee-rah?
Daonai mah-ohz chai-yai,
Mee-mee ef-khad?

Blessing God for This Time

“Blessed are You, Lord our
God, Master of the Universe,
who has kept us alive and
sustained us and Has brought
us to this special time.”

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיּוֹנוֹ וְקִיּוּמֵנוּ
וְהַגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵן הַזֶּה.

Ba-rookh a-tah Adonai
e-loh-hey-noo me-lekh
ha-o-lam, she-he-khe-ya-noo
ve-kee-ye-ma-noo, ve-hee-
gee-a-nu, lahz-man ha-zeh.

While Lighting the Candles

“Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, Who sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of Hanukkah.”

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק
נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

Ba-rookh atah Adonai
e-loh-hey-noo me-lekh
ha-o-lam, ah-sheer keed-sha-
noo be-meetz-voh-tav,
ve-tzee-va-noo le-hahd-leek
near shel Hanukkah.

After Lighting the Candles

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, Master of the universe, Who performed miracles for our fathers in those days at this time.”

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים
לְעַבְדֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בְּזִמְנָן הַזֶּה.

Ba-rookh atah Adonai
e-loh-hey-noo me-lekh
ha-o-lam, she-ah-sah
nee-seem la-ah-voh-tey-
noo ba-yah-meem- ha-hem,
bahz-mahn ha-zeh.

The Closing Paragraphs

“We kindle these lights (to commemorate) the miracles and wonders and the saving acts that You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, by Your holy priests.”

הַנְּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ אֲנַחְנוּ מִדְּלִיקָן
עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת,
וְעַל הַחֲשׂוֹעוֹת וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת,
שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנָן הַזֶּה,
עַל יְדֵי כַהֲנֵיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים.

Ha-nay-roht ha-lah-loo
a-nach-noo mahd-lee-keen
ahl ha-nee-seem ve-ahl
ha-neef-lah-oht, ve-ahl
hat-te-shoo-oht, ve-ahl
ha-meel-chah-moht, she-
ah-see-ta la-ah-voh-tey-
noo, ba-yah-meem ha-hem,
bahz-man ha-zeh,
ahl ye-day ko-ha-ne-kha
ha-ke-doh-sheem.

“And all throughout the eight days of Hanukkah, these lights are holy, and we are not permitted to make use of them, but only to behold them, in order to offer thanks and praise to Your great Name for Your miracles, for Your wonders and for Your salvation.”

וְכָל שְׁמוֹנַת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה,
הַנְּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ קֹדֶשׁ הֵם.
וְאִים לָנוּ רְשׁוּת לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ
בָּהֶם, אֲלֵא לְרֵאוֹתָן בְּלִבָּד,
כְּדֵי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ
הַגָּדוֹל עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל
נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתְךָ.

Ve-khol shmoh-naht ye-may
Hanukkah, ha-nay-roht
ha-lah-loo koh-desh hem,
ve-ayn lah-noo re-shoot
le-heesh-tah-meish ba-hem
el-la leer-oh-than beel-vahd,
ke-day le-hoh-doht ool-ha-lel
le-sheem-kha ha-gah-dohl
ahl nee-sey-kha, ve-ahl
neef-le-oh-tey-kha ve-ahl
ye-shoo-ah-tey-kha.

Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

Have a Bible question?

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

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

QUESTION: Does the “star” in Revelation 9:1 refer to Satan? If so, why would God give him the key to the bottomless pit? Later, in Revelation 20, we’re told that an angel has this key. Which is it?

ANSWER: “Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit” (Rev. 9:1).

Yes, this “star” in 9:1 could be Satan (cp. 12:4-10). He is, after all, a fallen angel and angels are sometimes described in the Bible as “stars” (Job 38:7). Jesus said He saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18); and here in Revelation 9:1, John says he saw a star that had fallen from Heaven to earth. However, many commentators say this “star” is merely a fallen angel—not necessarily the devil himself.

Assuming that it’s Satan, the giving of this key to him signifies that even the devil is subject to God’s authority. That is, he can’t do anything without God’s permission, or “key.” Yes, God gives him the key to the bottomless pit, but what does Satan do with that key?

Ironically, he unwittingly unlocks his own demise. He opens the shaft of the bottomless pit and releases a smoke so thick that it blots out the sun. Out of the smoke comes scorpion-like “locusts” that spread out over the earth to sting and “torment” anyone who hasn’t been sealed by God (v. 3-4).

One commentary states:

This star, probably representing Satan cast out of heaven at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 12:9), was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss (“bottomless pit,” KJV). The “Abyss” (*abyssos*) is the home of demons (cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3; in Rom. 10:7 it is translated “deep”). Satan will be confined for a thousand years in the Abyss during the reign of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:1-3).¹

Now, this same key does reappear in Revelation 20:1. In Revelation 9:1, we see the key is given to the devil, which he uses to unlock the abyss; when we come to 20:1-3, the key has been given to one of God’s mighty angels who then uses it to lock up the devil in the abyss. The Bible is full of ironies like the one we see here—namely, that Satan ends up being condemned and confined by the same key he had intended to use against God’s creation.

These events all point to God’s supremacy and sovereignty. He gives permission, or “keys,” to whomever He wills (yes, even the devil), so that they might play a part in carrying out His good and sovereign purposes on the earth. ✠

¹ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Rev. 9:1-6.

But What Can I Do? 2012 Year-End Ideas

Never underestimate the importance of your role in ministry. Your faithful prayers and generous support make this work possible. We thank you, and appreciate each and every gift you send us throughout the year. Some may also be considering a special year-end gift, especially in lieu of potential tax benefits. Tax laws affecting charitable giving often change, so we strongly recommend that you speak with your tax consultant or financial planner before making any decisions. You can also call us at 800-926-5397. We’d be happy to point you in the right direction.

A YEAR-END GIFT OF CASH—Writing a check is the most common way people give. Mail these gifts to us at PO Box 345, San Antonio, TX 78292. Remember, however, that envelopes must be postmarked no later than December 31 to be counted as a charitable gift for 2012. You can give online at cjfm.org/give, or call (800) 926-5397, to make a credit-card donation.

Here are other giving options that may also provide you with tax benefits:

STOCKS AND BONDS—Gifts of stock may possibly save you in capital gains costs, and allow you to write off the full value of your stock gift. Each situation is unique, so please consult your accountant or tax advisor.

LIFE INSURANCE—You may currently have a policy purchased for reasons that are no longer needed, or you may receive dividends on certain policies for which you no longer need the income. Your insurance agent or financial planner can help you direct these assets to CJFM.

BEQUESTS—The easiest and most inexpensive way to make a deferred gift to CJFM is to include us in your will or revocable trust. A bequest is easy to arrange; it is not payable until death and therefore does not affect your assets or cash flow now. It can also be changed at any time prior to your death. If properly written, a will can also reduce the taxes paid by your survivors—which will result in a larger amount of your estate or property being left for your loved ones or charitable organizations.

May God enable you to be a wise steward of all that He has entrusted to you.

Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



On Campus

One of the ways **Eric Chabot, CJFM missionary (Columbus, Ohio)**, looks for opportunities to share the Gospel message is by distributing tracts on the Ohio State University campus. On one such occasion, a young man walked by, accepted a tract, and stopped to talk with Eric. He told him that he had just begun attending a local church. As Eric proceeded to discuss different aspects of the Gospel message with him, the young man admitted that he had never really trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins. When Eric finished sharing God's plan of redemption, the young man expressed a desire to pray and receive the Messiah into his life. Eric writes, "So, the good news is that he was already attending a church, but now he has become part of the *real* 'Church.' I praise God for this divine appointment!"

On the Street

CJFM missionary Michelle Beadle (New Orleans) likes to hit the streets during special events around town, passing out tracts and sharing the Good News. When Michelle and her volunteers attended the annual French Quarter Tomato Festival, their first encounter was with a woman riding by on her bicycle. She was curious as to the type of literature being handed out.

Once the Gospel was explained to her, she prayed to receive Jesus as her Savior with one of the volunteers. She was then given a copy of the Book of John to take home and read. Later, another woman initiated a conversation, and also prayed the sinner's prayer with one of the volunteers. She commented, "You've made my day, that was just what I needed!"

God's Prescriptions

Barry Berger, CJFM director of missions emeritus (Phoenix), recently underwent surgery at Mayo Hospital. As is the protocol, a pre-surgical consultation and tests were necessary. During the consultation with Dr. S, director of the pre-surgical department, she had to ask Barry his religion in order to complete the proper documents. Barry responded that he didn't have a "religion," he instead had an "intimate relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Dr. S seemed baffled and asked him what he meant. Barry had the privilege of sharing his testimony and the Gospel message. Dr. S said that she had never heard such an explanation of

the Bible and wondered why because she has been attending church for many years. Barry quoted John 1:12, "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*"

Barry asked Dr. S if she would like to pray with him to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She eagerly responded, "Yes, very much!" Afterward, they made plans to stay in touch. Please pray that Dr. S would continue to take her spiritual medicine.

New Believers, Baptisms, and Soldiers

Yossi, CJFM worker and pastor of Kehilat Haderech (The Way Congregation) in Israel, was recently blessed to baptize a father with his daughter, along with youth who are second-generation believers in their families. Pastor Yossi also writes that websites run by believers have generated interest in the Good News, and many visiting the sites have gotten in touch with him and prayed to receive Yeshua. Such was the case of a husband who initially wasn't interested in his wife's newfound faith. Once he heard the truth, however, he also accepted the Lord and both were eager to be baptized together. Pastor Yossi also thanks the Lord for the congregation's young soldiers who shared their faith and testimonies individually with their fellow soldiers. They were even asked to explain Messianic Judaism to their whole battalions in a lecture-type setting!

A Jewish Wedding Feast

CJFM missionary Peter Parkas (New Jersey) and his wife, Diann, are now the proud parents of a married daughter. It was a double blessing when the late Jhan Moskowitz (North American director of Jews for Jesus) presided over the ceremony; he had also presided over the wedding of Peter and Diann. Arielle Parkas married David, who works with Jews for Jesus, and together they will serve the Lord in Jewish ministry. The ceremony was attended by 80 people in the backyard of the Parkas home; at least 25 of the attendees were unsaved, and 10 of them were Jewish. Following the Messianic Jewish ceremony, Peter had an opportunity to expand Jhan's message as he addressed Arielle and David with the things they wanted Peter to let their guests know—the condition of sin, and how the Messiah's atoning sacrifice is available to everyone through God's plan of redemption. Peter concluded by reading 1 Corinthians 13. Please pray for the seeds that were planted by Peter and Jhan.

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