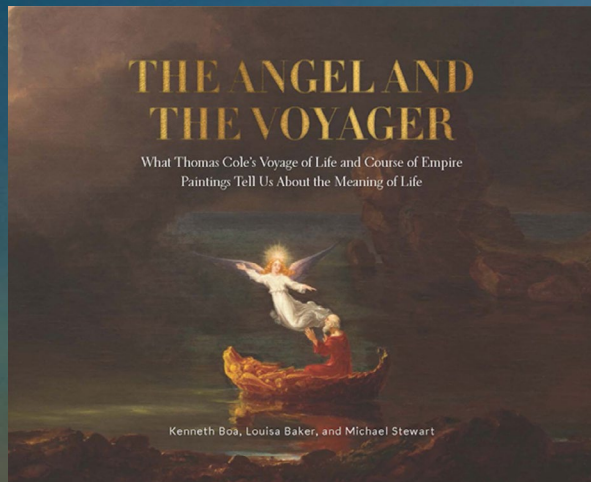


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GOD'S PROMISES

GOD'S MESSIAHS

Read Isaiah 44:28–45:7

People the world over are familiar with the word *messiah*, if only because it has been made famous as the title of the English oratorio by George Frideric Handel. Within Christendom, “Messiah” is the term applied specifically to Jesus Christ as the One who came to fulfill Old Testament messianic prophecies. God’s Messiah was to suffer for the sins of the world and inaugurate the coming age of peace, during which He would reign as God’s anointed ruler over all the earth.

Messiah is the English rendering of an Old Testament (Hebrew) word meaning “anointed one.” Clearly, Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies of God’s divine Messiah (“Anointed One”) foretold in Daniel 9:25–27. Jesus Christ was anointed as the divine King of kings, just as Saul and David were anointed as earthly kings of Israel (1 Sam. 15:17; 16:13). But if we dig down to an even deeper level, we will discover that there is more than one *anointed one* mentioned in the Old Testament. Knowing about at least one of these other individuals unlocks insights into how God manages world affairs, despite the presence of evil.

One of these other anointed ones was the Persian king Cyrus (Isa. 45:1). God called this pagan king by name (v. 3) and assigned him the mission of conquering the Babylonians, the people who had taken Israel into captivity. Although this king did not even know the God of Israel, he was anointed “for the sake of Jacob [God’s] servant” (v. 4). Why? To release the Israelites from captivity so

they could return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (Ezra 1:1–3). Those anointed of God always fulfill the purposes of God in history.

As you look around on the stage of world affairs, you may be looking at a ruler who has been similarly anointed by God. Like Cyrus, such a ruler may not at first, or ever, be cognizant of having been “anointed” by God. But such a ruler will help set the stage for the Messiah—Jesus Christ—who will return to rule in righteousness over all the earth. That is the confidence and comfort of every believer.

God’s Promise:

Even evil rulers serve
the ultimate goal of
righteousness on earth.

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JUNE 2025

REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers
to develop a clear mind and a warm heart

WORK AS A MODE OF WORSHIP

You have called me to participate in Your purposes through the work I have been given to do during my earthly sojourn. May I do my work with care and excellence in the desire to be pleasing to You. I realize that all things become spiritual when they are done in Your name. May I honor You in my choices and activities and view the works of my hands as a mode of worship. I want whatever I do in thought, word, and deed to be honoring to You and edifying to others. I ask for a clearer sense of purpose and calling and for the power to accomplish that for which You have placed me on this earth.

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Psalm 37: Laying Hold of God's Perspective

Is it chance
or dance moves
the world?

Is the world
blind and dumb
or bloom, festal?
A vain jest,
or holy feast?
—Eugene Warren,
Christographia XIV

Our perspective on life, whether temporal or eternal, will determine the set of rules by which we play, the standards and character we pursue, the source of our hope, and the difference between obedience and disobedience to God's precepts and principles.

In his essay "Meditation in a Toolshed," C. S. Lewis depicted the difference between looking at a beam of light and looking *along* the beam. As he entered a dark toolshed, he could see nothing but a sunbeam that

came from a crack at the top of the door. At first, he looked at the shaft of light with thousands of specks of dust floating in it, but then he did something most of us have done at one time or another. He moved until the beam fell on his eyes, and at that moment, the toolshed and the sunbeam vanished. Looking *along* the beam, he saw green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside, and beyond that, the sun itself. Perspective makes all the difference.

The Short View vs. the Long View

Psalm 37 is a wisdom psalm that instructs us on the importance of maintaining the right perspective during our relatively brief sojourn on this planet. It is a beautifully crafted acrostic poem that begins almost every other verse with each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Like the book of Proverbs, this

instructional poem contains wisdom sayings that encourage us to take the long view of life and see things from an eternal perspective.

The bulk of Psalm 37 contrasts the pursuits and destiny of the wicked and the righteous. It grants that, in the short run, those who refuse to acknowledge God may prosper, whereas those who seek God often suffer at the hands of evildoers. This poem illustrates the truth of Ecclesiastes 8:11: "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil." But this is only a temporary state of affairs, since the sentence *will* be executed, and God will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7–8). As Psalm 37 says:

I have seen a wicked,
violent man
Spreading himself like a
luxuriant tree in its native
soil.
Then he passed away, and
lo, he was no more;
I sought for him, but he
could not be found.
(vv. 35–36)

By contrast, the righteous will ultimately endure and inherit the land: "But those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land" (Ps. 37:9; see also vv.

3, 11, 22, 29, and 34 as well as Matt. 5:5).

The wise advice of this psalm is to adopt a long-run rather than a short-run perspective on life by embracing God's purposes and ordering all of our affairs (e.g., family, work, leisure, finances, ministry) in light of them. On the negative side, the proverbs in this wisdom poem exhort us not to fret and not to be envious, angry, or anxious when evildoers get the upper hand. On the positive side, the psalm tells us what we should do to sustain the proper attitudes and actions in life. Four of these positive commands (trust, delight, commit, and wait) involve our relationship with the Lord:

1. Trust in the Lord.

(Ps. 37:3, 5)

While the wicked trust in themselves, the righteous are called to put their confidence and hope in the character and promises of the Lord. If we are wise, we will cling to the goodness and sovereignty of the One who "causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

2. Delight Yourself in the Lord.

(Ps. 37:4)

Let the nearness of God be your good (Ps. 73:28) and cultivate intimacy with Him. This cannot

be done apart from the discipline of regular time with the Lord in the Word and in prayer. (And I have never heard anyone say they regret making this investment!) When we seek Him first, He gives us the desires of our heart because our desires become conformed to His.

3. Commit your way to the Lord.

(Ps. 37:5)

Unreservedly give all your plans, dreams, hopes, and desires to the Lord (see also Prov. 16:3). The only things that will really be yours are those you have freely given to God. In the long run, you will be unable to keep the things you held back from Christ (Luke 9:23–24).

4. Be still and wait for the Lord.

(Ps. 37:7, 9, 34)

God's timing is almost never our own, and because of this, we grow impatient, anxious, and frustrated with the adversities of life. But if we trust His character, we must also trust His timing. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6–7).

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