Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"It's Not An 'Opiate'—The Hope Of Heaven"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Ps. 19; 49; *Ps. 8; 139; Heb. 11:6-16; 1 Cor. 15:16-22*

We spend so much of our lives trying to make things last. We build, provide for our families, and try to leave something behind. We watch the wealthy and powerful and imagine they have life figured out. But when someone dies, the question becomes unavoidable: And then what? What happens when the years we have worked so hard to fill are over? What can we actually take with us? Even a long life is short compared with eternity.

Karl Marx famously called religion "the opiate of the masses," as though heaven were a delusion people cling to in order to help them cope with life's difficulties. But our hope in God is not an escape from reality. It is grounded in the reality of the God who made us, who has revealed Himself, and who promises to redeem us. Psalms 19 and 49 call us to look honestly at the world around us, to consider what this life can and cannot give, and to put our confidence in the One who holds eternity in His hands.

1. CREATION DECLARES THE GLORY OF GOD—AND HIS WORD MAKES HIM KNOWN (PS. 19:2–15)

Look around you. The heavens, the expanse of the sky, the stars beyond counting—all of it is declaring the glory of God. *"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky shows His handiwork"* (Ps. 19:2). Day after day creation pours forth its testimony; night after night it reveals His greatness. Think of the dependability of the rising sun, the order woven into what He has made, the galaxies upon galaxies beyond what we can imagine. The more we discover, the more astonishing it is. We may feel small, but we are not cosmic accidents. We are the work of His hands, and creation is pointing beyond itself to its Creator.

Yet there is something important here: creation declares God's glory, but we do not always discern what it is saying. So, in His graciousness, ADONAI has also revealed Himself specifically through His Word. *"The Torah of ADONAI is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of ADONAI is trustworthy, making the simple wise"* (Ps. 19:8). His instruction gives light to our eyes; His judgments are more desirable than gold. Gold cannot show us who God is, cleanse our hidden faults, or keep us from the arrogant, willful sins that threaten to rule us. His Word exposes what we cannot see and leads us back to Him. No wonder David ends by asking that the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart would be acceptable before ADONAI, his Rock and Redeemer. That is where wisdom begins.

2. ALL THE WEALTH IN THE WORLD CANNOT REDEEM A SOUL (PS. 49:2–15)

Psalm 49 begins with a summons to everyone: the lowly and exalted, the rich and poor together. If you are living, you need to listen. The psalmist is about to address a difficult riddle: Why should we fear when those who trust in their wealth and boast in their riches seem to flourish? We can imagine that money and influence place powerful people above the rest of us. We admire them, hang on their words, and imagine their riches would make us secure. But the psalmist is asking us to look beyond appearances and see what is really real.

"No man can redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of a soul is costly" (Ps. 49:8–9). No matter how great their fortune, no human being can purchase everlasting life. The wise die, the foolish die, and both leave their wealth to someone else. They may name buildings and lands after themselves; their names may appear in history books or on monuments. But where are *they*? Their statues are not them, and their fortunes cannot follow them into the grave. Money and ingenuity cannot defeat death. We cannot redeem ourselves. This is meant to wake us up. Why put our confidence in something that cannot save us when it matters most?

3. GOD HIMSELF REDEEMS THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM (PS. 49:16–21)

Then, right in the middle of this sobering picture, Psalm 49 gives us an astonishing declaration: *"But God redeems my soul from the power of Sheol—for He receives me"* (Ps. 49:16). Notice the contrast. A man cannot ransom his brother. Wealth cannot buy a soul back from death. But God can redeem, and God will receive those who put their hope in Him. The word translated "receives" carries the idea of taking hold, grasping, carrying away. He cannot escape death by his own strength. He is saying that ADONAI will grasp him. His destiny is not finally determined by the grave, but by the God who holds him.

That changes how we view everything else. *"Do not be afraid when a man gets rich, when his house's splendor increases. For when he dies he takes nothing away"* (Ps. 49:17–18). We do not need to be consumed by envy, frightened by the power of the wicked, or impressed by every earthly achievement. Even grand earthly legacies fade. And those who walk with ADONAI, whose names may never appear in a history book, are not forgotten by Him. Faith means trusting that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Like Abraham, who lived as a stranger while waiting for the city whose architect and builder is God, we can live here faithfully without pretending this present world is our permanent home. Our confidence is not in what we can hold on to, but in the One who holds on to us.

CONCLUSION

The hope of heaven is not wishful thinking. Paul makes the stakes plain: if Messiah has not been raised, our faith is futile, and if we have hoped in Him for this life alone, we are to be pitied. *"But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"* (1 Cor. 15:20). This is why we have hope when people we love pass away. We grieve and feel their absence. But we do not have to grieve as those without

hope. We know that our lives are more than the seventy, eighty, or hundred years we may spend here. A million years from now, what will all the wealth, applause, or self-indulgence of this brief life amount to? But to be with ADONAI forever—to see Yeshua face to face—what could compare with that?

So the focus here is not simply to think more often about heaven. It is to examine our confidence today. Have we been running after the gold that cannot redeem us, or listening to the Word that restores our souls? Have we lived as though God does not see, or as those who know He is our Rock and Redeemer? Bring those hidden faults, those willful sins, the fears, the ambition, and the false securities into His presence. Ask Him to cleanse you and to turn your heart toward Yeshua, the risen Messiah. If you have never entrusted your life to Him, do not put it off; come to Him in repentance and faith. If you already know Him, surrender again the things that have captured your attention. Live for Him now, in the joy and contentment of His presence, because this hope does not merely carry us beyond our circumstances someday; it lifts our eyes above them today. It is not an opiate. It is a true and living hope. We will behold Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As you consider the heavens and the faithfulness of creation in Psalm 19, what do they reveal about ADONAI's greatness and care?
2. How does God's Word reveal what creation alone cannot, and where do you need His instruction to expose a hidden fault or restore your soul?
3. Why does Psalm 49 insist that rich and poor alike must listen? What does the inability of wealth to redeem a soul teach us about true security?
4. Whose success, influence, or possessions are you tempted to admire or envy today? How might an eternal perspective change the way you measure a successful life?
5. In a season of grief, uncertainty, or pressure, how does the promise that God will receive you—and Yeshua's resurrection—reshape your daily choices?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, our Rock and our Redeemer, the heavens declare Your glory, and Your Word reveals Your heart. Forgive us for placing our confidence in things that cannot last. Search the hidden places of our hearts; cleanse us from the sins we do not see and keep us from the sins we knowingly choose. Teach us to treasure Your Word more than gold and to trust Your promises more than our own strength. Thank You that what we cannot purchase or accomplish, You have made possible through Yeshua our Messiah. When we face grief, fear, or the apparent triumph of the wicked, remind us that You hold us in Your hands. Help us live faithfully today in the light of eternity, until the day we behold You face to face.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.