

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

John
5:39

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries



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EZEKIEL 35 AND THE STATE OF PALESTINE

The Bush administration's call for a Palestinian state, first at the provisional level, plays right into the hands of Arab strategists who have long demanded such a scenario for the eventual destruction of the Jewish state. Instead of taking appropriate measures against Arafat and the terror groups he created and supports (Fatah, Tanzim, Islamic Jihad, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, etc.) by dismantling them and deporting Arafat and putting him on trial for crimes against the Jewish state, President Bush and Colin Powell are unwittingly rewarding such terrorists and acts of terror with a Palestinian State of their own. Such a disastrous policy would no doubt jeopardize America's sister democracy and important ally in that volatile region of the world. But more importantly, such a short-sighted Mid-East policy violates the Abrahamic Land Covenant God gave Israel for an "*everlasting possession*" as defined in the Word of God — God said this covenant is eternal (Genesis 17:7-8).

The proposed boundaries for a Palestinian State would include the Gaza strip, a large part of East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. The "West Bank," as it is erroneously referred to by much of the political world, the UN, and the media, is really the Biblical regions of Judea and Samaria and fall well within the eternal land grant God gave the Jewish people through

their ancestral father Abraham (see Genesis 15:18). Several times in Scripture the Lord calls this area "*the mountains of Israel*." In Ezekiel 35:12 and 36:1-2, this same area is referred to as the place Israel's enemies want to usurp for themselves — the very same area today the Arabs and Palestinians are demanding from Israel! This mountain range in Israel extends from Mt. Hermon in the far north to Elat in the far south of Israel. If one were to look at any map of Israel today (see map on p.4), he would see that the West Bank area that is normally shaded in is the very heartland of Israel and is part and parcel of the land God gave Israel for an "*everlasting possession*," Arab claims notwithstanding.



Todd Baker

The very scenario for the demand of a Palestinian State by Arafat, the Arab nations, and now sadly by the Bush Administration, today seems to be predicted and anticipated in the prophetic Word of God in Ezekiel 35! In this prophetic chapter of the Bible, there is a determined effort by the enemies of Israel to divide the land into two nations and countries for the purpose of making Israel geographically indefensible in the north so that the whole land can be conquered and taken at the expense of the destruction of the Jewish state and people (Ezek. 35:10). America's role does not directly

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It All Began with Abraham —

ISRAEL: The Super Sign of the End-times, *part 1*

Preachers and theologians are often fond of saying that History is "His story," meaning that God plans and determines the details and events that make up human history ruling over the process from beginning to end to fulfill His great purpose for Mankind. Nothing could be truer of Israel. The history of the Jewish people is "His story" played out within human history, which has been revealed, foretold, and written in the Bible. Israel's history is supernatural from beginning to end. It began with the Patriarch Abraham some 4,000 years ago when God called this nomadic wanderer from Ur of the Chaldeans (Modern day Iraq) to leave his homeland and go into the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham obeyed that call and became the father of the nation Israel and the Jewish people. Though Abraham and Sarah, his wife, were well beyond the age of having children (Genesis 18:11), God miraculously rejuvenated the ninety-year old body of Sarah to bear them a son, Isaac, through

whom God would raise up the people and nation through which the Messiah would come (Genesis 21:12). With the promised child came the Promised Land — the land that is called Israel where Abraham and his descendants would live. In Genesis 13:15 and 17:7-8, God promised to give the land to Abraham and his descendants (the Jews) for an "*everlasting possession*" under the unconditional terms of an "*everlasting covenant*."

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involve this of course, but is the furtive objective of the Arab nations around Israel today. However, the insistence for such a Palestinian State by the Bush administration is being used nonetheless by Arafat and the Arab world to further their disguised agenda cloaked behind false talks for peace. That agenda is nothing less than the extermination of Israel. Indeed, their humiliating defeats in the wars fought with Israel in 1948, 1967, and 1973 forced the Arab world to adopt a new strategy, one that involved a skillfully waged economic, diplomatic, and propaganda war against Israel while at the same time pursuing sham peace talks as a clever ruse. Prominent Arab strategist Al-Ayubi officially recommended this strategy as early as 1973; and judging from what has transpired the last 30 or so years, it seems to be working against Israel's favor. The so-called Peace talks from Oslo to the present hour chiefly centers on the creation of a Palestinian State in the middle of Israel mainly involving the regions of Samaria and Judea—the West Bank comprising a large part of

“the mountains of Israel.” This brings us now to the prophecy of Ezekiel 35 and the current situation for establishing a Palestinian State now unfolding in the Middle East.

The prophecy of judgment opens with a prediction of destruction against those inhabitants living in and around Mount Seir (Ezek. 35:2-4). Mount Seir is presently located in Jordan and was the homeland of Esau, the father of the ancient Edomite people (Gen. 36:8). Mount Seir also served as the capital of the nation of Edom in Biblical times. Esau and the Edomites are one of the ancestors of the Arab people. “Mountain” in Scripture signifies power and strength. So the judgment is against those of that region who are strong in their hatred and opposition of Israel. Today people living in the area of Edom (now the country of Jordan, which is the Eastern neighbor of Israel) are made up of all Arabs known as either Jordanians or Palestinians. Often times in Scripture when God addresses a nation or group of people, He does so in the person, primogeniture, or federal head

Search the Scriptures

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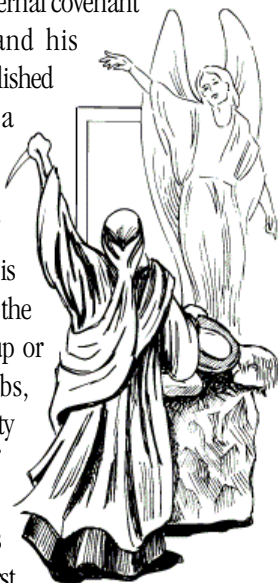
For more information about our ministry, or to be added to our subscription list, you may contact Todd Baker by mail:

B'rit Hadashah Ministries
P.O. Box 796127
Dallas, Texas 75379-6127
or by E-mail:
t.baker@earthlink.net
Visit our website at:
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Abraham ... Continued from page 1

“For all the land which you see I have given it to you and your descendants forever. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.”

Here we observe from Israel's inception that the history of the Jewish people and their divine destiny is inextricably bound up with the land God promised them. The covenant referred to in Genesis 17:7-8 is formally called the Abrahamic Covenant. It is an eternal covenant made between God and Abraham and his descendants forever. God essentially established through this Covenant with Abraham a people from him (the Jewish people), a place for them (the land of Israel), so that the purpose of blessing all the nations of the world could occur in perpetuity, that is forever. Thus God gave the land of Israel to the Jews forever and to no other ethnic group or nation, protestations from the Arabs, Palestinians, and international community notwithstanding. One of the basic laws of Bible interpretation is the law of first mention. The law of first mention states that when a thing is mentioned for the first



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time in the Bible it carries the same meaning all throughout the Scriptures. It establishes the Bible as consistent in its meaning from beginning to end as it applies to persons, places, events, and things.

In Genesis 13:15 we have the first mention in Scripture stating that God gave the land of Israel to Abraham and the Jewish people forever. This truth is reiterated throughout the rest of Scripture and establishes the rightful owners of the land to be the Jews granted by divine right. There is no deviation or alteration by God from this covenant. It stands for all time. The ongoing struggle for Israel's right to live in the Land of Promise has already been settled once and for all by the eternal counsel of God as codified and enacted in the Abrahamic Covenant. God has spoken and His Word on this matter is settled forever (Psalm 119:89). Thus all the political wrangling about who the land belongs to is quite simply moot and in the end irrelevant and inconsequential. The current Middle East crisis centers around who owns the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. But unbelief coming from the world disputes and dismisses the whole issue being settled by the inerrant Word of God. One cannot begin to understand the current Middle East crisis and how it relates to Israel's past, present and future without knowing and understanding the fundamental importance of this divine covenant. Author Richard Booker wisely wrote:

“Indeed the key to understanding today's headlines and tomorrow's news lies in the past within the sacred covenant God made with Abraham.” (Richard Booker, *Blow the Trumpet in Zion*, p.17).

In the series of articles to come, we will explore how this is true throughout the divine panoramic plan God has for Israel in the past, present, and future as revealed through Bible prophecy. ✠

Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age

Part 2 - the Parable of the Sower and the Seed

MATTHEW 13:3-9, 18-23

Jesus said the parable of the sower and the seed is extremely important to interpreting the other parables following it in Matthew 13. This parable functions as the illuminating key of understanding that unlocks the meaning and interpretation of the other parables our Lord spoke in Matthew 13. The Lord said of this parable in Mark 4:13, ***“And He said to them, do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”*** If then the student of Scripture is to make sense of the parables of Matthew 13, he must obviously grasp the meaning of the first one. If he does not, then he will not be able to unlock the meaning of the seven other parables in Matthew 13. The parable of the sower and the seed can also be found in Mark chapter 4 and Luke chapter 8.

“Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.” (Matt. 13: 3-4). In verses 18 and 19 we read of the Lord’s explanation of the seed sown by the wayside, ***“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.”***

The parable of the sower and the seed simply illustrates the preaching of the Gospel, the sowing of the seed by the sower Jesus Christ, and the final results and effects it produces upon four particular kinds of hearers in relationship to the state of their hearts as represented by four different types of soil. The scene of a farmer sowing seed in his field was a commonplace occurrence in an agrarian society like first century Israel. In his use of parables Jesus routinely takes the mundane and elevates it to teach an important heavenly truth about God and His kingdom. This parable is no different. The first of the four hearers we encounter in this parable is the wayside hearer. The wayside hearer’s chief characteristic is the constant forgetfulness of the Word because of his inability to understand it. Here we see the seed, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, does not have an opportunity to take root and be firmly established in the heart so the fruits of repentance and faith might yield salvation in Christ. The birds of the air, which are in reality the demonic forces under the control of Satan, use the weapons of unbelief, criticism, doubt, various prejudices, and worldly preoccupations to snatch up the Gospel seed before it can be firmly planted and rooted in the soil of the heart. No surprise here; for 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that this is the primary mission of the devil’s thieving ministry. Satan and his demonic imps devote much of their time to prevent the saving light of the



Gospel to penetrate the darkened hearts and minds of men, lest they should see with their eyes, understand in their conscience, and hear with their ears to acknowledge their true fallen condition as sinners and find spiritual regeneration in Jesus Christ.

This entails admitting the truth about needing salvation and accepting the Gospel of Jesus Christ to meet that vital need. The sinner must be willing to repent, turn away from sin and submit to God in order to inherit eternal life found only through Jesus Christ, the Savior of all men (Acts 4:12; Romans 3:23). Tragically the world is filled with wayside hearers who do not give serious pause for concern over the state and condition of their soul in spite of being presented the opportunity to receive the Gospel to the saving of their spiritual lives. Such things are too trivial, silly, and deemed far too below them for their undivided attention and wholehearted commitment. They delude themselves into thinking they are not that bad off as others and don’t need any saving. Unfortunately, the wayside hearer’s heart was rendered indifferent and insensitive to the Word of God because of the diversions of the evil one. To such as the distracted, negligent, and indifferent, the Word of God gives the prescriptive admonition to cure them of their spiritual deafness and blindness: ***“Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see”*** (Isaiah 42:18). How pitiful really the “natural man” is in his unsaved condition. Without the saving presence of Jesus Christ in his heart, he is a miserable idolatrous wretch—proud, unrepentant, and boasting in the flesh devoid of spiritual truth. Faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the most essential thing in saving an individual’s eternal soul. The wayside hearer is a careless person of dismissive unbelief to the very end. Because of this incorrigible state, this class of listeners are hopelessly lost ***“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).

The wayside hearer is one that really epitomizes the natural man gone reprobate. Wayside hearers of the Gospel are generally characterized by being non-responsive, indifferent, and unreceptive to the Gospel message. They make no place for Jesus Christ or His Word in their lives. The carnal man is the quintessence of the wayside hearer. He is the prototype of those deeply engrossed in the world-system at the dreadful expense of ignoring God. Thus he is worldly. The wayside hearer is accurately described in ***“the last days”*** in Romans 1:18-32; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14; and 2 Corinthians 4:4, 3:14.

In the next issue we will examine the second type of hearer in the parable of the sower and the seed, the stony ground hearer. ✠



of that group of people (see Romans 5 where Adam stands for the federal head and representative of all humanity). Edom is thus representative of those from among the Arab nations that oppose and seek Israel's destruction. God's destruction of them is the signal for His judgment on all the nations for their mistreatment of the Chosen People in the last days immediately before the return of Christ. The reason for their destruction is stated in verse 5. Edom and the Arab descendants from him have **"an ancient hatred"** for Israel. Hatred for the Jews by the Arabs is replete in Scripture (nations like Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Syria, etc) and legion throughout history.

The Arab nations in the Middle East start indoctrinating hatred for the Jew and Israel in their children as early as three years of age in school via the media, literature, and the Muslim religion. Their anti-Semitism runs strong and deep and shows no signs of abating. It has lasted for some 3,000 years—quite "ancient" indeed! Verse 5 gives a second reason for their judgment: they shed the blood of innocent Jews. The history of terrorism alone makes it abundantly clear that the Arab world represented by such loathsome persons as Hafez Assad, Yasir Arafat, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Saddam Hussein, and their countless terrorists groups have conspired together to copiously shed the blood of innocent Israelis. And the bloodletting insanely continues with the intifada.

This united conspiracy by the Arab descendants of Edom for the destruction of Israel is for the purpose of taking the land away from the Jews. Verse 10 exposes their evil intent and strategy and provides further reason for God's

judgment on them: **"Because you have said, 'these two nations and these countries shall be mine, and we will possess them.'"** The strategy of the Arabs is exactly this today. The goal is to create a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza thus bifurcating Israel to

render the northern border of Israel a mere eight mile strip and thus make it indefensible and vulnerable to Arab attack and invasion from the West Bank in the East and Syria in the North. It is the old military strategy of "Divide and Conquer." The desire of Israel's Arab enemies is that her land be divided into two nations for the purpose of taking

***"Hatred for the Jews
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all the land for themselves. Some Bible commentators who believe all of Ezekiel 35 was fulfilled in the sixth century B.C. interpret the two nations in Ezekiel 35:10 to mean the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. However the word "nations" and "countries" are used, not "kingdoms" and these two kingdoms were made up of one ethnic nation and people, the Jewish people, not two.

Furthermore the chronological context for the prophecy of Ezekiel 35 is given in verse 5 as **"the time of the punishment of the end"** (NASV) This feature would indicate that the divine judgment prophesied in Ezekiel 35 is ultimately eschatological and will be executed during the Great Tribulation period which will dramatically bring the present age to an end with the return of Christ to judge and punish the Gentile nations of the world for their rejection of Him and the mistreatment of His people—Israel.

At that time the Arab coalition against Israel prophesied here and in Psalm 83 will be utterly destroyed by the God of Israel (Ezekiel 35:5-15). They will suffer the same fate of complete annihilation all individuals (Hitler, Haman, Pharaoh) and nations (Egypt, Babylon, Rome, Nazi Germany) have when they sought the destruction of the Jews and Israel. Herein the negative promise in the Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled and confirmed again where God says: **"I will curse those who curse you"** (Genesis 12:3). Once again the current situation with Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state within the nation's God-given borders was predicted long ago in Scripture and shows that God does in fact know and has decreed the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10) and His plan for the Chosen People will prevail in the end no matter who or what should stand in the way at the present time or in the future. The Puritan proverb well applies here:

"What man proposes, God disposes." ✚

About the Author

Todd Baker is president of B'rit Hadashah Ministries — a Gospel outreach ministry to the Jewish people of Israel. He is also a full-time chaplain at Medical City Hospital. Since called to the ministry in 1984 his ministering experience includes Bible teaching, jail and prison chaplaincy, counseling, evangelism, and church ministry. Todd is also a theological consultant, writer, and tour leader in Israel for Zola Levitt Ministries. He has led several Gospel outreaches to the Jews of Israel commissioned and sent by Shalom, Shalom Messianic Congregation of Dallas, Texas. Todd holds a Bachelor of Science degree in biblical studies and a Master of Theology Degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. He is currently a Doctoral candidate at Trinity Seminary under the auspices of Liverpool University at Liverpool, England. ✚

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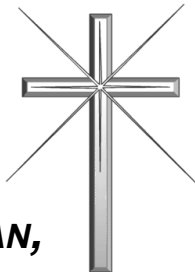
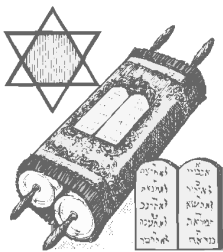
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ROMANS 7:

PRE-CHRISTIAN,

POST-CHRISTIAN,

OR BOTH? PART 2



In the last article, we established that there are five basic interpretations of Romans 7:7-25 that have historically been given. The first of the five says that Paul is speaking of the condition of a Jew like himself under the Law of Moses in a pre-converted state. Bible Commentator Douglas Moo favors this meaning and broadens it to encompass the nation of Israel and their moral failings under the Law. He believes that Paul uses "I" to describe himself and, by extension, other Jews in solidarity with his people." (Moo, 1:456). The repetitive use of "I" in Romans 7 then is not Israel alone but is Paul in solidarity with Israel under the old epoch of the Law. This meaning seems inferred and at best vaguely implicit in light of the clear repeated use of

"I". Paul does not need to deal with Israel's sin problem so subtly indirect when in other chapters of the same Roman Epistle he quite obviously gives the inspired account of their past and present problem (Rom. 2; 9-10) and their future salvation that will eventually come to them when they finally receive the returning Messiah (Rom. 11). Forty seven times the first person singular "I" occurs in Romans 7 and thus makes it all the more sure and certain that a person and not a nation is meant. Therefore the first meaning appears to be read into the context where there is no explicit identification of Israel with the "I" experience of Paul.

The second interpretation of Romans 7:7-25 basically says the passage is strictly autobiographical of Paul's pre-conversion state or perhaps is a description of his post-conversion struggles as a Christian. Advocates of this meaning (like Zahn, pp.134-144, Denney, pp. 20, 640) believe Paul to be recounting his own experiences while futilely trying to keep the Law of Moses and failing miserably in the process until his problem was resolved when he came to faith in Christ on the Damascus road. This view is somewhat problematic when we recall Paul's own estimate of himself while a Pharisee. He gave scrupulous attention to the Law (Acts 21:22; 25:8; Phil. 3:4-6) and was "blameless" with regard to its ritualistic observances. However, there is no contradiction in Romans 7 since it is describing his inward condition under the

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B'rit Hadashah Ministries

P.O. Box 796127

Dallas, Texas 75379-6127

e-mail: t.baker@earthlink.net

Romans 7... Continued from page 5

Law, instead of what appeared outwardly good in Acts and Philippians. It is from an enlightened and regenerated view in Romans 7 viewed through the perspective of Christ that Paul sees himself dead to the Law through Christ having once been sentenced to death by it. He makes plain in verses 1-6 what is generally true of those who were under the Law but who are freed from it through Christ. Paul then moves on to give a specific example of these things from his own life before and after Christ in verses 7-25. Thus what is true of him is universally true of fallen humanity and those redeemed by Christ.

The frequency of the past tense in 7:7-13 precludes us from lumping 7:7-25 together as an all past or all present experience. Paul's individual dilemma particularizes what is also generally true of us as well. Therefore, taking the lead from 7:1-6, it is not wrong to inductively conclude that while Romans 7 is autobiographical, it also describes both non-Christian and Christian alike in relation to the Law. Bible commentator Anders Nygren's observation is quite applicable here:

"It is not Paul's intention to present the following explanation as a subjective

confession, true only for him, without validity as to others in general. On the contrary, the singular form and the general compass are immediately included in each other. But we shall not be in error if we assume that the use of the personal form is due to the fact that Paul here comes to an issue, which in the most proper sense is the problem of his own life. It is the question of the Christian's relation to the law, the question as to the law in the context of the old and new aeons" (Nygren, pp. 278-79).

Our study in Romans 7 and its practical application for the Christian life will continue in the next issue. ✠

