

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

John
5:39

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries



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April 2003

It All Began with Abraham — ISRAEL: The Super Sign of the End-Times, *part 2*

Part of the reason for the return of Israel's Messiah will be to enforce the everlasting decree of God's land grant to the Jewish people and to overthrow the nations of the world in league with the anti-Christ who will violently attempt to take the land away from them (Zech. 12-14; Ezekiel 47:13-48:35).

In fact, the boundaries God gave for the Promised Land stretch from the river of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) to the Euphrates River near the Syrian/Iraqi border (Gen. 15:18-21) — an area yet to be occupied by the Jewish nation that well includes the two presently disputed areas of Gaza and the West Bank (Judea and Samaria).

The covenant God made with Abraham not only would produce the Jewish people from his ("seed") posterity with a land to live in, but their presence in the world also would greatly benefit and bless Mankind. The Lord said: ***"And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"*** (Genesis 12:3). Indeed the Jews have brought the world immeasurable blessings. They wrote and preserved the Scriptures (the Bible), which is the number one best-seller in the world and were

the people through whom the Messiah came to redeem humanity from sin (Romans 3:2; 9:5). The Jews wrote the Bible and the Messiah Jesus is a Jew.

God subsequently reaffirmed this covenant with Abraham to his son, Isaac, and Isaac's



Todd Baker

son, Jacob (Genesis 25:5-6; 35:9-15). From these three patriarchs, God eternally promised the land of Israel to the Jewish people. From a divine and biblical perspective then, the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people. And so God chose this Land and the Chosen People to play a central role in His plan of redemption for the world and mankind that naturally involves the past, present, and the future.

The plan of redemption for Israel and the world focuses around two epochal events — the first and second comings of

the Messiah Jesus Christ. In both advents, Christ has and will personally come again directly to Israel. The covenant God made with Abraham plays a special significance and role in end-time Bible prophecy. The fact God guaranteed the people of Israel a national existence and homeland forever that brought the material and spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ to the Gentile nations basically defines and determines the primary focus of the whole eschatological program of God. The covenant of Abraham with the provisions of a land, nation, Messianic descendant, and blessing to the world is

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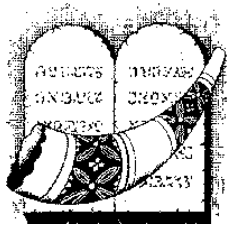


Israel as promised to Abraham and his descendents

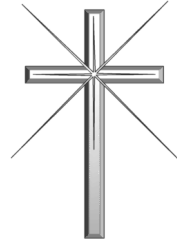
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ROMANS 7:



PRE-CHRISTIAN, POST-CHRISTIAN, OR BOTH? PART 4



The fifth and final interpretation of Romans 7:7-25 divides this chapter into two categories of time — past and present. Verses 7-13 describe the experience of the unregenerate as appropriately expressed in the past tense while verses 14-25 describe the present struggle of a saved Christian fighting against the sin nature that still dwells within him. The key to identifying 7:7-

*“Go away from me
Lord. I am a sinful
man” (Lk. 5:8).*

13 occurring in the pre-regenerate state is found in verse 5. In that verse, Paul locates the place and time as “when we were in the flesh”, which indicates the time before salvation. Thus 7:7-13 expressed in the past tense with special emphasis of verse 5 allows one to logically conclude 7:7-13 is the experience of one who is unregenerate. Romans 7:14-25 then goes on to describe the ongoing tension between the regenerated self and the remaining power and presence of sin still within human nature expressed in the present tense that the law continues to reveal and exacerbate in the life of a Christian. This seems the most probable interpretation since it best agrees with the past and present tense sequences of both sections. The majority of the early church Fathers took this same view.

One of the signs of spiritual regeneration in Christ is the constant

inward struggle and warfare that takes place within the believer’s mind, body, and spirit. The point of both sections is to drive home the truth that the Law of Moses could never save a person whether saved or unsaved. One objection to this interpretation is the strong language Paul uses in verses 14-25 tends to make the Christian life one of continual frustration and defeat. This objection is somewhat defused if we keep in the forefront of our minds that what Paul is addressing in 7:14-25 is the constant struggle and moral fight every born-again Christian faces when living for God from a regenerate nature while simultaneously combating against the sin nature, or natural inclination toward evil that will be eradicated in the future when the glorious eschaton comes.

The inner struggle between the “flesh” and God’s indwelling Spirit in a Christian believer causes us

*“The struggle
portrayed in Romans
7:14-25 is a normative
experience for those
growing in grace.”*

sometimes to fall in our action to do good. Galatians 5:17 is an indication of the reality of this tension. Having a constant and acute awareness of our own sinfulness in the light of

Search the Scriptures

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God’s holiness and grace is a sure sign spiritual regeneration has taken place. Indeed, all those who have walked closely with God, like the apostle Paul, realize more and more their own wretchedness. This is a pattern clearly seen throughout Scripture from some of the greatest persons of the faith found in the Bible. Abraham considered himself no better than “dust and ashes” when standing face to face with God (Gen 18:27). Job confessed after seeing God revealed from the whirlwind, “I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets, cried out to God, “Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips” (Is. 6:5). The greatest of all the prophets, John the Baptist, acknowledged his own innate sinfulness by humbly suggesting to Jesus that it was he, not Christ, who needed to be baptized (Matt. 3:15). When Peter saw the supernatural power of Christ, he exclaimed, “Go away from me Lord. I am a sinful man” (Lk. 5:8).

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Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age

Part 3 - the Parable of the Sower and the Seed

MATTHEW 13:5-6, 20-21

“Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth, and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.” (Matt. 13:5)

In verses 20 and 21, the Lord Jesus gives further explanation of the stony ground hearer: ***“But he who received the seed on a stony place, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with great joy. Yet he has no root in himself but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”***

Here we have the stony ground hearer, or shallow-hearted person, receive the seed of the Gospel which takes initial root in his life. But not long after, it withers away before it can produce spiritual life and maturity. The reason for this: the seed was planted in the shallowness of the soil. The stony heart hearer is indicative of the superficial recipient of the Gospel who, whereupon hearing the Good News of salvation, “immediately” embraces it with joy coupled with emotional enthusiasm.

The reason why the stony ground hearer quickly falls away from the faith is because he failed to seriously consider the tremendous cost he would ultimately have to pay for the Gospel's sake. Consequently, he soon becomes discouraged, having no enduring root of overcoming faith within him. When the heat of persecution and tribulation arise to test his soul, he falls away. Oh how this typifies so many professing Christians today who think they are genuine Christians. But when temptation, trial, and trouble strike, the stony ground hearer does not consider obeying the Word of God because he never really placed a strong and deep commitment to Christ in his life. The Apostle Paul offers

a good remedy for the stony ground hearer of the Gospel:

“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10-11).

Christ especially characterizes the stony ground hearer as having a lack of depth and abiding faith in the Word of God. The psychological mindset of the superficial hearer, like the stony ground hearer, is revealed in one who is not willing to stress enough importance of surrendering to the Gospel and what he must do to follow Christ. The stony heart person does not personally apply and practice the Word of God consistently. He hears the Word gladly but does not obey it. Subsequently, he is led astray. For without the proper wisdom of God's Word that results in doing it, one is open to great deceit. ***“But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).***



The sad result for this kind of hearer of the Gospel is eventual apostasy because the root of enduring faith that germinates from the Gospel deteriorates into barren unbelief. Endurance in time of struggle and difficulty is not present here. Perseverance or endurance is not a condition for salvation but a result of it. The stony ground hearer was never saved because he failed to endure to the end (Mark 13:13). Unless we have a correct biblical understanding of why temptations, trials, and persecutions occur, our hearts will begin to question trust in God, significantly hindering the ability God has given to us to strengthen our faith to draw more closely to Him. Failing to endure, the stony heart hearer of the Gospel loses sight of God's progressive purpose for allowing testing and trials in the Christian's life. He then becomes offended at them and blames God for life's many difficult experiences and forfeits the opportunity of following Him. Unlike the Lord Jesus, this hearer does not learn obedience by the things that he suffers (Hebrews 5:8).

The stumbling block for his failure to truly receive the Gospel seed in his heart lies in the fact that he takes offense that God does things His way that allows for struggle, pain, and hardship in the life of every follower of Christ — taking up the cross of Jesus. And herein is the offense of the cross: whoever follows Jesus must take up the cross of self-renunciation and prefer the will of Christ over self even to the point of losing your life for Him (Matthew 10:38-39). Those who refuse this become like the stony ground hearer — the Word of God has no lasting effect and they wither away and perish in apostasy. The stony ground hearer is here offended and turns away from truly receiving the Gospel in his heart.

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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.†

Encounters in Israel

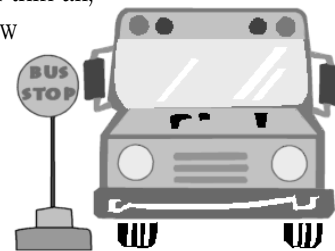
B'rit Hadashah (New Covenant) Ministries is a non-denominational evangelistic and teaching outreach devoted to proclaiming the Gospel to the Jewish people (Romans 1:16) with particular focus on Gospel outreaches to Israel. This being our vision, it is appropriate that we share with you glimpses into the work we are doing. These excerpts will be a continuing feature of this newsletter, keeping you in touch with our work in progress.

This excerpt was taken from an article written by Todd Baker which appeared originally in the December 2002 issue of the [Levitt Letter](#). Todd was joined by John Gonzales on this mission trip.

The Holy Spirit led us to a bus stop where we witnessed to an elderly Jewish lady who could not speak English well. A young Israeli teenager heard us, came over to listen, and ended up helping translate for us so that the lady could fully understand the Gospel message from the Brit Hadashah. This was simply amazing! Without hesitation this young man was willing to help us communicate the Gospel in Hebrew to a fellow countryman. We told them that if they would study the prophecies of the Messiah in the Tenach (our Old Testament) and see how Yeshua fulfilled them in the Brit Hadasha, they both would come to the obvious conclusion that He is truly the Messiah of Israel come to restore and redeem the Jewish people. Our translator seemed to be more open to the Gospel and so we offered him a copy of a New Testament in Hebrew.

When he took it, the elderly lady began raising her voice. I thought she was angered by our attempt to 'proselytize.' But the young man said that she simply wanted a copy of the New Testament for herself.

Unfortunately, I had only one copy because we had already given out the rest. I knew I had only one Hebrew New Testament left; I had checked my bag twice. I was sure of this. So, I expressed my apologies to the lady for not having a copy for her. As we turned to go, I checked my bag for the third and final time. To my shock and utter surprise, sitting right there on top of my tracts was one copy of the Hebrew New Testament, where surely there was none before! If God can easily multiply loaves and fishes out of thin air, why could He not produce a Hebrew New Testament for a sweet and sincere woman who wanted to know the truth? What joy and awe we had at this! I gave her the Scriptures and she thanked me. I have called this event "The Miracle of Replenishment." ✡



Prayer List

**for Baker/Cuccia Mission Trip to
Israel April 6 - 25, 2003**

- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).
- Pray that we have the Father's wisdom and guidance in everything we do (Psalm 32:8; 48:14; Colossians 4:5).
- Pray for witnessing opportunities (John 4:35; Luke 10:2; Acts 1:8).
- Pray that God will open the hearts of those who will hear (Psalm 110:3; Acts 16:14).
- Pray that God will give us the boldness to proclaim the Gospel to the Jew first and also the Gentile (Acts 4:31; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:19).

- Pray for spiritual unity and agreement among us (Psalm 133:1).
- Pray for our health, protection, safety, and God's protection from the hand of the enemy, both seen and unseen (Psalm 91; Matthew 6:13).
- Pray for spiritual fruit that will last (John 15:7-8; Galatians 5:22-23).

- Pray for favor among the Chosen People as we share the Gospel with them (Proverbs 12:2).
- Pray that the Chosen People will come to faith in Messiah (Christ) Jesus (Romans 10:1; Matthew 15-16; Mark 8:27-29, 14:61-62; Luke 9:18-20; John 4:25-26). ✡

Dear readers,

Please pray for our Gospel outreach team consisting of Robert Cuccia and myself as we go to Israel from April 6th to April 25th to conduct another witnessing campaign sharing the Gospel of Yeshua with His people. It is not too late to pledge your financial support to underwrite some of the cost for this outreach. May God bless you as you do so in blessing the Jewish people (Genesis 12:3). Here is a suggested prayer list to use when praying for us. We will give a full report of how things go over there in future newsletters.

Your servant in the Messiah,

Todd Baker

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ROMANS 7 - Continued from page 2

Paul makes a shocking confession in 1 Timothy 1:15 (which I myself well identify with) some 20 years after being in the Christian faith as he reflected on God's superabundant, undeserved grace toward him as "the chief of sinners." Note: he did not say, "I was," but "I am" the chief of sinners from the Greek present tense *eimi* ego. Are we to suppose that 1 Timothy 1:15 is any more harsh of a description than what we find in Romans 7? If some Bible students and commentators think it inconceivable that Paul would write the things he did in Romans 7:14-25 about his present Christian experience, then the verse in 1 Timothy 1:15 shows once again that Paul saw himself corrupt and sinful apart from God's saving grace.

The struggle portrayed in Romans 7:14-25 is a normative experience for those growing in grace. The more closely we draw to Christ, the more correspondingly clear the realization that we are indeed sinful and unholy in the presence of a holy God. Romans 7:14-25 is an extrapolation of this truth in the life of Paul. †

MATTHEW 13 - Continued from page 3

A true Christian is an overcomer and an overcomer is a Christian. Both are indispensable qualities of being a saved child of God as our Lord said in Revelation 21:7: **"He that overcomes shall inherit all things and I will be His God, and He shall be My son."**

Not overcoming the world-system brings moral defeat and spiritual destitution. The stony ground hearer is the defeated would-be shallow believer in Christ with no practical theological depth or biblical understanding of the Christian faith. He verbally professed Christ, but never personally possessed Him. He appears religious on the outside, but remains spiritually unregenerate on the inside (Matthew 23:25-28). Failing to endure temptation, he fails to trust God in the heat of spiritual battles. He is left cold and hardened against the truth of the Gospel after having been initially enlightened to its saving truth. He subsequently thereafter becomes a casualty of hell.

The spiritual character of the stony ground hearer is further described in Luke 9:62; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:29 and 2 Peter 2:22. †



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ABRAHAM... Continued from page 1

the building base and foundation upon which the plan of God is built and enlarged through the other covenants.

The creation of the Jewish people and the bestowal of a national homeland via the Abrahamic covenant were preparatory for the first coming of the Messiah. Gentiles who come to faith in Him are adopted into Abraham's family and receive the blessing promised through that covenant (Galatians 3:8; 14-29). And just as the establishment of the Jewish people as the nation of Israel was crucial to the first coming of Christ, so too Scripture indicates that the regathering of the Jews into their ancient homeland, after being scattered throughout the world for nearly 2,000 years, and the reestablishment of the nation of Israel are necessary for the second coming. In fact, it would serve as a super-sign that will set the stage for the prophesied series of events that will culminate in the return of Christ to Israel. Without the reconstitution of the nation of Israel in our generation, none of the events of End-time prophecy could occur or be possible.

Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy articulate and underscore this point well when they write:

"God's plan for history always moves forward in

relation to what He is doing with Israel. Thus, the fact that Israel has been and continues to be reconstituted as a nation is prophetically significant, so significant that it makes Israel God's super-sign of the end times. Were Israel not a nation again it would be impossible for events of the end times to occur since so many of them take place in that tiny country or in reference to it. But it has returned and so it is that all other aspects of Bible prophecy are also being prepared for the grand finale of history." (Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Prophecy Watch*, p. 61.) †

"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'" (Genesis 15:5)

