

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

John
5:39

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries



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Sharing "good tidings" to Zion ISAIAH 40:9-10

Part 5: One Greater than Moses

This is a continuation of Todd's recounting of his missionary trip to Israel in November 2003 with Robert Cuccia.

While in Jaffa, one witnessing encounter found us in a deep discussion with a customer representative at a music store. His name was Aryeh. Both he and his friend with him, Robert and I discovered, were moral relativists who did not believe there is such a thing as moral absolutes or that truth in general is a certain and fixed element of reality. Yet in their philosophical claim that there are no moral absolutes, they were paradoxically asserting what they claim was not true. For in saying there are no absolutes, one automatically claims an absolute by saying there are absolutely no absolutes.



Todd Baker

In spite of this, Aryeh and his friend failed to see the absurdity that their philosophical position was contradictory and self-defeating. Robert and I gave an extensive witness demonstrating the reliability and historical accuracy of the Bible by way of the foretold history of Israel from 3,500 years ago with Moses up to the present time. But alas, all of this for the present time seemed to fall on deaf ears. Both of them outright rejected our testimony. Aryeh vociferously exclaimed he did not believe in Yeshua. We countered his rank unbelief by saying God will answer that unbelief by showing Himself true and that Yeshua is the Messiah if Aryeh would ask the Lord to show Him with an honest and open heart. Otherwise, the very Word he rejects will judge him on the last day just as Yeshua says it will with all unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile (see John 12:47-48).

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The next day in Haifa, we took the subway into downtown Haifa. Once we got there, a middle-aged man called to us from his fruit juice shop. The man's name was Asher. He gave us freshly squeezed orange juice and was grateful to see Americans visiting Israel, which naturally prompted him to ask us why we came to Israel. Robert and I told him that we came there to let the Jewish people know the Messiah has already come. And the Messiah is soon to return as the prophetic sign of the restoration of Jews back to their ancient homeland would indicate as foretold in the Tenach.

Asher knew that by us saying the Messiah has already come, we were talking about Yeshua from Nazareth. Asher then named other persons in Jewish history who made the same claims about being the Messiah as Jesus did. "So," he asked, "how can one know who the Messiah really is?" "It is true," we replied, "that anyone can claim to be the Messiah. But only one person could truly be the Messiah by virtue of fulfilling certain and specific prophecies about the Messiah found in the Jewish Scriptures." Asher replied that Jewish people in general couldn't accept Jesus as Messiah. We said in return that this rejection was not based on a clear reading and understanding of Scripture, but upon the misleading traditions of the rabbis, cultural upbringing, and the sad fact that many so called "Christians" have persecuted and killed the Jewish people down through the centuries; all of which engendered and instilled an inherent rejection of Jesus being the Messiah. So this misguided belief is not really rooted and based in Scripture since the case for Jesus being the Messiah is directly found in the Jewish Bible. Asher went on to remark that as far as

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Robert speaking with Aryeh

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Falling short of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15): "Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

The Greek word for "fall" in Hebrews 12:15 is *huesteron*, which means "to come behind; to fail and fall short". To fail the grace of God is to lack and be destitute of it. As followers of Christ we are not to allow any bitterness, anger, resentment, or unforgiveness to fill our hearts lest God's gracious love is crowded out and not able to penetrate our inner man. The Word of God commands Christians to put away all bitterness, wrath, malice, and evil speaking (Ephesians 4:31). This must be done if we are to continue in the grace of God. If we refuse to forgive others as Christ has forgiven us, the heavenly Father will not forgive us our trespasses. Jesus laid down this simple condition in Matthew 6:14-15. **"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."**

Grace can also fail because of unbelief in the Gospel. The heart of unbelief has a spiritual disdain for the divine and exclusive claims of Jesus Christ. Since the Bible says only God's grace can truly save, the rejecter of it will die in the state of sin and experience the eternal separation of God in the lake of fire. People who laugh at Christ's saving death on the cross do so at their own eternal peril (Hebrews 10:29-31). Jesus warned the unbelieving Jews in John 8:24 and all those who disbelieve Him: **"If you believe not that I am He, you will die in your sins."** In the original Greek manuscripts there is no personal pronoun "he" in verse 24 of John chapter eight. So the original

Biblical Warnings Against the Misuse, Abuse, and Neglect of God's Grace.

Search the Scriptures

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The Doctrine of Divine Grace Part 7

***(Hebrews 12:15;
Galatians 2:21)***

Greek text should read: **"If you believe not that I AM, you shall die in your sins."** When the Lord Jesus used the I AM phrase here He is using the same divine name for God in Exodus 3:14 where the Lord told Moses His holy name is "I AM." Jesus also claimed the same divine name for Himself in John

8:24, 58. The equation is simple then; if you refuse to believe that Jesus Christ is Yahweh God in the flesh you cannot be saved and appropriate His grace. Woe to those then who deny that Jesus is God! In John 10:31-33 the Jews attempted to stone Jesus for claiming to be God because they knew exactly what He was claiming. Biblical examples of those who failed and fell short of the grace of God are Esau and Simon the sorcerer. Esau failed to take hold of God's gracious promise of the first-born and lightly esteemed it by giving such away to

his younger brother Jacob for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25:27-33). Simon the sorcerer failed to receive salvation by grace because his bitter heart sought to purchase the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit for selfish purposes (Acts 8:8-24).

*Frustrating the grace of God (Galatians 2:21):
"I do not frustrate the grace of God. For if righteousness came by the Law, then Christ died in vain."*

The Greek word for "frustrate" is *atheteo* and means "to disesteem and neutralize." Under the contextual setting of Galatians, frustrating the grace of God occurs when people set aside the free gift of salvation by grace and replace it with a merit system of works trying to earn God's favor. If divine grace is a matter of working for it, then it is no longer unmerited by nature and freely given to us by God. Both are mutually exclusive here.

The Apostle Paul points this very truth out in Romans 11:6: **"And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."** If we were saved by our own efforts, Christ's death on the cross would be vain and ineffective for salvation. People frustrate and nullify God's saving power demonstrated through the Gospel of grace every time they try to earn or work for His favor by observing and following a prescribed set of religious rules and rituals instead of putting their sole trust in the redemption Christ perfectly accomplished alone on Calvary nearly 2,000 years ago. ☩

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

A REVIEW - PART 2 OF 2

By Aaron Levitt

I recently saw Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ". The film affected me beyond any adequate description, and I plan to see it again soon. Despite the film's straightforward and openly-admitted purpose – to recreate the week of events leading to Christ's crucifixion – the film has received a large amount of unusual criticism from many directions. The "controversial" aspect of the film, some say, makes the violence it contains too intense for the silver screen. Another argument made is that this film is inherently anti-Semitic, since it reflects Jewish people demanding that Jesus be executed. Still others warn us that we must protect our kids from seeing the movie. All these objections come from people in the media business. But the third objection is I think the most surprising, coming from those who have long remained silent about other equally violent films over the years. This is Part 2 of my review of Mel Gibson's production.



Aaron Levitt

Though we all participated, through our sins, in Christ's death, it is nevertheless painful for Jews to know that members of their own people accused Jesus, and cried repeatedly for His execution. This is not only a sad thought for believing Jews like myself, but also for non-believing Jews, as is evidenced by those in that community who respond to the film in great offense. And, of course, certain Jews are not the only detractors of Gibson's film. Certainly, the media at large – including Hollywood, whose large filming companies refused to have anything to do with the movie's production – was unsparing in its criticisms. (They've toned it down a bit for now, as they notice how successful the film is becoming – exactly the opposite outcome from their dire and condescending predictions.) And, of course, there are the secular community and religious left. The past has long been a source of offense to these groups.

We need to understand that, for liberals, history changes with the times; what they want to have happened becomes historical fact. This provides quick, if temporary, emotional well-being. But what if everyone decided to forget about the Nazi Holocaust, because it simply caused us too much pain to remember it? Well, obviously, something just as horrible or worse would happen in the future. This principle is clearly understood by most people, and yet, to forget pain, rather than to remember and learn from it, is the creed of our society: non-offense outweighs, and therefore usurps, the truth.

I saw a *Dallas Morning News* headline which pointedly asked if we should let our kids see such a violent movie as "The Passion of the Christ". Where were these people, just formerly relentless free-speech activists and advocates, during the release of such movies as "Natural

Born Killers", "Friday the 13th", and the countless other movies we're so well-acquainted with that I don't need to name them, which are based on senseless and gratuitous violence, to say nothing of the equally numerous sex-selling movies? Both types of films are frequently aimed at younger audiences, and yet, suddenly – but only for "The Passion of the Christ" – our kids have been put in danger! Quick! Lock your doors, and keep your children home, lest they see Jesus! It's nice to see the media, of all people, showing concern for the moral character of today's youth.

As for the quality of the film, in my own opinion, I found it very well researched. The Romans really look and act like ancient people of Rome, and the Jews seem to be likewise astonishingly authentic. Gibson's directing style in this film was unexpected – it seemed to be a new, very personal one invented specifically for this movie. It was difficult to believe I had not been standing right beside Jesus the whole time!

As everyone has now heard countless times from our faithful media correspondents, the "Passion" is indeed a violent film. But it is so for the express purpose of showing what our Lord had to go through to save us. It was violent only because the history was equally, and even more, violent. Isaiah 52:14 says that "His visage [face] was marred more than any other man, and his form [body] more than the sons of men." Matt 26:67 says that people spat in his face, and smote him in the face.

Jesus was scourged by the Romans *before* his crucifixion had been decided (John 19:1), as an attempt by Pilate to persuade the people away from crucifixion. After the scourging, Pilate brought Jesus before the people (John 19:6). Then, the people cried, "Crucify Him!" Pilate then asked them to reconsider. Then, Pilate had a private talk with Jesus, obviously trying to avoid the crucifixion, and it is not until verse 16 that

Pilate agrees to the crucifixion. (It must be fully understood here that Pilate was indeed guilty in Jesus' death for finally agreeing to it.) Therefore, Jesus was scourged *and* crucified, something never done, as these were two separate and distinct punishments. I don't believe it is possible to overstate the sufferings of Christ, for after all, they needed to wash away every sin. If we consider His sufferings moderate, we miss the whole point, and the truth.

Children should not be prohibited from seeing the film, but parents should discuss the film with their children prior to viewing, and judge whether they are mature enough, and fully ready to see it. I think that this film is the most accurate re-creation of Christ's Passion Week experiences that we will ever see, and I, like many Christians, sincerely hope that Gibson will be led by the Lord to make a sequel about the Resurrection, and the concluding days of Jesus' earthly life. ✠✠

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sufferings moderate,
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Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age

Part 5 - the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares
(Matthew 13:24-30; 37-43)

In verses twenty-seven through thirty of Matthew 13, we have perhaps the greatest question of all time, a question whose universality goes unchallenged by any other mystery that perplexes the mind of man:

Why does a good and all-powerful God allow evil to exist?

I am sure all of us share the same bewilderment in replying as do the servants with the burning question as to why God, the owner of the field (world), the all-loving, all powerful benevolent Lord would allow wickedness and evil to remain in the world and the Church?

The answer to this cardinal question is not as difficult as some would make it appear. The answer is that God desires to be merciful above all else rather than to execute wrath on the wicked. For God knows that when the evil positively respond to His mercy with faith, they will be brought to repentance, and pass from death to life, and from judgment to pardon. God's eternal love is extended to a wicked world first before His all-consuming wrath is poured out. A perfect example of God's long-suffering love toward the ungodly can biblically be witnessed during the period before the great flood came upon the whole world. In antediluvian times, the whole of mankind immersed themselves in unspeakable wickedness and debauchery while the judgment of God loomed overhead as a great torrential flood of waters ready to sweep away all the ungodly and sinful from the face of the earth, save Noah and his family who were preserved in the great wooden ark (Genesis 6: 5-7).

Yet well before this, God promised His beloved saint Enoch that, after his son Methuselah would die, the flood of watery judgment would then come (Genesis 5:21-24). The name Methuselah literally means, "When this one dies, then it (the flood) shall come." In other words, when Enoch's son Methuselah dies, the Lord would then cease to be mercifully patient with a defiant, God-hating world. He was going to judge and purge it from the gross iniquities with an overwhelming deluge of water from above and beneath the earth (Genesis 7:11). Amazingly enough, Methuselah was the oldest human being ever to live on earth. He died at the astounding age of 969 years! Immediately after Methuselah's death in the 600th year of Noah's life,



the flood came upon the earth (Genesis 7:6). The miraculous longevity of Methuselah's life is a beautiful illustration of God's overextended long-suffering mercy toward sinful and wicked men. The Householder of the field is obviously God, who in His divine providence, desires to allow the tares of wickedness to presently remain active in the world so that the sinner at some point in his life will realize the true condition of his perilous state and seek God for the one and only redemptive solution found in Jesus Christ.

For almost 2,000 years, God has indeed been patient and exceedingly long-suffering in grace toward an ungodly, Christ-rejecting world in all of its wretchedness and rebellion. The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance and be saved (2 Peter 3:9). God's love for the wicked tares sown within the Church and the world is seen in the delay of executing divine wrath on them right away. The reason being, wrath is to God the last of His perfect alternatives in dealing with sin. The first perfect alternative is of course His merciful love in delivering the wicked from punishment and eternal death. **"It is the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not"** (Lamentations 3:22). The forbearing compassion of God presently staves off divine judgment from being instantly poured out on a perverse and rebellious world inveterately opposed to the Lord and His Christ. But since God does not rejoice in the destruction of the sinner, He has made a sure way of escape in Jesus Christ. God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30) and turn from sin — submit their lives in obedience to Jesus Christ — so that they might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Then they may live and not die because of what Jesus accomplished on Calvary for them. The Lord Jesus Christ declares that He takes no delight in the death of the sinner in Ezekiel 33:11, **"Say to them: as I live says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but**

that the wicked turn from his way (repent from sinful living) and live. Turn you, turn you from your evil ways."

Another good reason why God has allowed the tares to continue growing in the world is because of man's free ability to choose for himself. Undoubtedly, the existence of evil is the result of the wrong choice made by man — the misuse and abuse of free will. The love of God is not forced upon any, but is offered voluntarily to those who choose to receive it, and lovingly serve the Creator, sowing that which is good abroad, and reaping love, peace and unity with undisturbed contentment in personally knowing the Lord — as it will be in Christ's millennial kingdom to come. Although being created a free moral agent by God, man has repeatedly failed in this much-needed endeavor. Man can also freely choose to hatefully rebel against his loving Creator, sowing that which is evil, abroad in the field of the world and reaping in return an abundance of hatred, selfishness, discord, and division with perpetual unhappiness that brings utter separation between man and God. This of course is the path fallen man stubbornly seeks to take starting with Adam in the Garden of Eden. Consequently, evil exists not because it is equal, superior, or stronger than the omnipotence of the Almighty, but because man chose to disobey God from the beginning and brought upon himself the punitive consequences of sin and death. The existence of evil and the presence of tares in the world are the direct result and cause of Satan's strategy to oppose God and man's sin and no more. The fault lies with both Lucifer's rebellion and mankind's disobedience to God. †

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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Asking for money is not what this ministry is about. B'rit Hadashah 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. We seek to explain the Jewish nature of the Christian faith to Gentile and Jewish believers and explore the integral relationship between Israel and the Church. But we need your help in continuing this mission.

Your financial donations go directly to help our outreach and operational costs only. That means they go either into the production of this newsletter, into the expenses of traveling to and around Israel speaking to those to whom God leads us, or into the tracts and Bibles which we distribute in Israel. Please help us in our mission as much as you feel led to contribute. And remember, donations are tax deductible as you give to this Non-profit ministry. God bless!

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Sharing Good Tidings...Continued from page 1

he could remember Isaiah was the first person in the Bible to mention the Messiah. Robert and I responded by telling him that it was Job and Moses who were actually the first ones to speak about the coming of Messiah. We then showed Asher in the Hebrew text the Messianic prophecy God gave Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. In this prophecy, Moses predicted to the nation of Israel that the Lord would raise up the preeminent Prophet who would be superior to all the prophets of Israel who came before Him.

This prophecy obviously points to the Messiah, and if one believes in Moses, then by logical deduction one will believe in the prophet Messiah who would be sent by God to Israel. We then showed Asher in Hebrew from the Gospel of John the passage where Jesus affirmed the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18 was specifically found and fulfilled in Him. Asher read what Yeshua said in John 5:45-47 that if a Jewish person claims to believe in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible that are the writings of Moses inspired by God), he or she will believe in Jesus the Messiah, the One Moses foretold would come in Deuteronomy 18:15. If then you reject Jesus' words, you automatically reject the writings of Moses.

After reading these verses from Scripture Asher's eyes widened with astonishment over the inescapable fact that

not to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah is the same thing as not believing Moses either, the very one who gave the legal code for Judaism. The Ruach Hakodesh (Hebrew for Holy Spirit) was convicting Asher. Robert and I offered him a list of many other prophecies made about the Messiah that were graciously given to us by Zola Levitt—a main sponsor of “To the Jew First” ministry that we conduct in Israel. Asher was visibly challenged and amazed at the words of Jesus and said he would look at the Messianic literature we gave him about Him whom Moses and the prophets had written. ✞



Todd greeting Asher in Haifa