

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

John
5:39

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries



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Search the Scriptures

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Only One King

Read This One Slowly...

by Robert Cuccia
Guest Author

How can a man be saved? Upon hearing the Good News preached to him (or her), he is immediately brought to a realization that, in order to obey the Word of God, he must give up his own position as director of his life. There can be only one King. This is hard to accept for many people. Many see the need to be forgiven. They look inward and know the corruption there, accepting on principle the need and, with joy, the provision made for them. Still, either immediately or over time, the hard reality of the question of Lordship will present itself. Who is in control? Me or God? At this point, some turn away.



Robert Cuccia

If you are familiar with the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9, explained in Matt. 13:18-23), you know that the seed fell in different places:

- by the wayside,
- on stony ground,
- among thorns,
- on good ground.

For the purpose of this article, let us consider b) and c). In the case of the stony ground, the word of the kingdom is immediately received with 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" (Matt. 13:20-21).

Now, look at the thorny ground: (Matt 13:22) "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."

In both cases (b and c), the ground (person) at first accepts the seed. But then another decision is made..... that of Lordship. In the case of the stony ground, the man caves in to fear of what will happen

to him, ie. "tribulation and persecution." In the case of the thorny ground, the man chooses his greed, desires, passions, ie. "the cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches."

Now, let's look at the scripture between the telling of the parable and the explanation of it given by Jesus (Matt. 13:10-16). The disciples ask Jesus why He speaks to the multitudes in parables. Remember, this is a large and diverse crowd. Some have come out of curiosity or to "see the show." This is not a large multitude of believers, though I'm sure there were some among them. He is speaking "as it were" to the nation of Israel. This is made apparent in His startling answer to His disciples (vs. 11-13): "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they do not see, and hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand." And then Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 at one point saying "For the hearts of this people have grown dull."

Ok, here's my point: whether a person (or nation) hears the truth and rejects it immediately or through a series of choices over time (see explanation of b and c) that deny the Lordship of Christ... that person becomes stupid in the sense that their heart becomes dull. I refer you back to Matt. 13:11-15.

The only road back to the truth and God is humility, and that is hard to come by. It is the gift of God, and sometimes only attained through suffering. I'll let you extend the logic from here and draw your own analogies. Look for a "part 2" of this article in the future. †

PART 6: THE EVIDENTIAL PROBLEM OF EVIL



The main objection to the free will theodicy is offered by J.L. Mackie who basically contends that it is logically possible for God to have free moral human creatures that always do what is right. Since God is all-powerful and can do whatever is logically possible, it follows that He could have made a world without moral evil by simply bringing about the possible state of affairs wherein free moral creatures freely do what is only right.



Todd Baker

Mackie goes on to conclude from this hypothetical construct that the failure of God to bring about this much-desired state clearly evinces the logical inconsistency of God being both omnipotent and wholly good (J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, page 92).

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with the problem of gratuitous evil
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But Mackie's argument lies in the mistake of his claim that it is necessarily the case that God can bring about any logically possible states of affairs by reasonably demonstrating that there are logically possible states of affairs that God cannot bring about: such as the state of affairs where humans are free and always do what is right (Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds*, pages 168-173). Once God has created significantly free creatures, it is thus no longer true that God can create any logically possible states of affairs. For since we are significantly free it is partly up to us which state of affairs will be realized. Thus to be significantly free, humans must have the freedom to choose evil or good; and so God cannot guarantee that significantly free creatures will always do what is good without depriving them of their freedom.

It seems the best option when dealing with the problem of gratuitous evil and the existence of an all-powerful, wholly good God is to combine, critically modify, and connect the natural law, the soul-making, and the free will theodicies together to form a cumulative case to successfully answer the philosophical error that assumes that the fact of evidential evil negates the existence of a wholly good, omnipotent God. Evil exists, then, not because

God is not powerful enough to stamp it out, nor because God does not exist, but because in order for man to love and reach out to his Creator, he had to be made significantly free (the free will theodicy).

Man chose to rebel against the Creator and so through the misuse of free will brought evil and ruin upon himself. But through this pain and suffering that came, God in turn uses such to instill moral virtues like patience, kindness, compassion, and moral courage to those struggling and fighting against the harsh realities of pain and suffering (the soul-making theodicy). The culmination of this is seen in the cross; it is by the very act of the cross, man toward the Creator expressed the ultimate evil. But God turned the ultimate evil of the cross into the ultimate good in that evil and death will ultimately be defeated. Henri Blocher articulates this point well when he writes:

It is exactly this, the sin of sins, the murder of the Son, which accomplishes this work in a double manner. It provides the opportunity for love to be carried to its very peak, for there is no greater love than to give one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). And as this gift contains no element of a romantic suicide (like Tristan or Romeo), the death unjustly inflicted becomes the 'wages' earned by the sin of the world, borne by the Lamb of God. It constitutes the ransom paid to liberate sinners, for they are prisoners of the law of God, the One who is Son of God and Son of Man, the head of a new humanity taking upon himself the debt of His own people (Mt. 20:28; Gal. 3:13, 21; Col. 2:14, etc.) It is in this way that He triumphs over sin, guilt, and death.... We have no other position than at the foot of the cross. After we have been there we are given the answer of the wisdom of God, which incenses the advocates of optimistic theodicies or of tragic philosophies. God's answer is evil turned back upon itself, conquered by the ultimate degree of love in the fulfillment of justice. This answer consoles us and summons us. It allows us to wait for the coming crucified conqueror. He will wipe away the tears from every face, soon (Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross*, pages 132-133).

God does and will bring about good results from bad circumstances (see Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28). Evil and its attendant consequences exist as a necessary condition, if freedom of the person is to be realized. Within this

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Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



Part 7 - the Parable of the Mustard Seed
(Matthew 13:31-32)

The devil now chose to engage his warfare against the Church within its own borders instead of without. Consequently, this proved to be the devil's grand, masterpiece scheme—deceiving and damning multitudes of souls in the process. The person Satan chose to pioneer this diabolical religious fraud was a man by the name of Constantine.

In 312 A.D., when the Roman Emperor Diocletian died, two Roman generals vied for rulership over the Roman Empire. These two men were Constantine and Maxentius.

It was during a battle between these two men at the Milvian Bridge and their armies that a seducing spirit from Satan gave Constantine a vision in the heavens of the sign of the cross with the words: "In this sign conquer."



What did Constantine see... if anything?

Some historians believe Constantine imagined this or made the whole story up. Still, others assert the symbol he saw was an ankh.



The ankh is a cross having a loop for its upper vertical

arm. The ankh happens to be an occult symbol of reincarnation, and was used in the worship of Ra, the sun god of Egypt.

With the supernatural aid of Satan and his demonic forces, Constantine achieved military victory over Maxentius and became sole Emperor of the Roman Empire. He also declared his supposed conversion to Christianity. But it is a matter of historical fact that he continued to worship Sol, the official sun god of Rome, for years to come after allegedly becoming a Christian. As a man of political expediency, he publicly announced the Edit of Toleration in A.D. 313 that temporarily put an end to the brutal persecution of Christians, bringing a pseudo-peace that outwardly unified church and state in a single governing body.

Accomplishing this enabled the Emperor to brilliantly consolidate the secular part of the Empire with the religious part into a unified whole. The Empire was enlarged as a result of this unholy alliance. Constantine's religious directive was to fuse ancient Roman pagan worship with a diluted form of Christianity. He succeeded, and it eventually evolved into Roman Catholicism.

The Roman populace looked upon the Emperor Constantine as a great spiritual leader. He was acclaimed by them as their pope, the Pontifex Maximus of all Roman religion. He was particularly this to those who accepted his Romanized version of Christianity (see *The Story of Civilization* by Will Durant, Volume 3, pages 656-657).

Constantine convened the council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and presided

"Another parable He put forth to them saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in



his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."
(Matthew 13:31-32)

over it as the *Summum Pontifex*. He thus became the first one in the history of the Christian Church to be actually called this official title of the Pope, not Peter!

After Constantine's death, the barbarian invaders later ransacked Rome and the city was on the verge of total collapse under these unrelenting invasions. The Bishops of Rome secretly incited the rabble to rebel against the secular authority while they handsomely paid off the Roman generals to abdicate from their crumbling places of power and authority, and transfer the reins of imperial power over to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Roman Church.

The Papal Caesars, with new religious title and dress, gradually gained control of Rome and came to possess the vast amounts of riches the Roman Empire amassed for itself from the many nations it had conquered by the various Emperors of Rome in centuries gone by. Later on, the Popes forged and used a document entitled "The Donation of Constantine" to gain even more secular power. This edict declared

Continued on page 4

the Popes had apostolic and temporal rule over the entire world, supposedly granted by Constantine to Pope Sylvester I and his papal successors. It was further claimed in this document that Constantine also bequeathed the whole of his Empire to the Pope of Rome upon his death. The Vatican distributed copies of this to the monarchs of Europe. The Donation of Constantine fraudulently claimed that the Bishops of Rome, or more precisely the Popes, were the patrimonial successors of St. Peter and as such held "the keys" (authority) of life and death over all the living and the dead.

For a time the European kings trembled in their boots at such daring audacity. Nevertheless, they complied with the contents of the Donation of Constantine and were deceived into believing the Pope was the visible head of the church and the spiritual leader of God's kingdom on earth. This historical

reality came into fruition around the year 800 A.D. with the papal crowning of Charlemagne establishing "The Holy Roman Empire," which generally lasted for one thousand years. Today, we would popularly know it as the Vatican, or the Roman Catholic Church with its head ruler being the Pope.

It is here where the mustard tree of Christ underwent a gross mutation to become a hideously huge tree affording shelter and prosperous protection for the very religious autocrats of the evil one. Unsaved pagans came into the church with their passion for idolatrous worship and political power. Thus the statues of the Roman gods were changed to represent the Saints, Peter, and the Virgin Mary with her infant child Jesus. Worship done in spirit and truth was reduced to dead repetitive ritualism with empty pomp and pageantry. No longer did there exist a common body of believers equal

with each other under the divine Lordship of Christ having the same privileges and authority in Him.

There came forth instead an esoteric priesthood elevated over the universal body of believers. They were infamous for their insatiable lust for excessive wealth and worldly advancement. The upper echelon of the clergy lived in the lap of luxury dressed in fine exquisite clothing of scarlet and purple embroidered with gold and precious jewels of stones and pearls. They resided in costly cathedrals and palatial church buildings as the poor common folk wasted away in the homeless streets below. These gaudy and lavish expressions of religious externalism and material extravagance naturally attracted the sensual and selfish multitudes of the unregenerate into the branches of the tree of Christendom. †



B'rit Hadashah Ministries

TO THE JEW FIRST -- ROMANS 1:16

WEB SITE UPDATE

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Eric Oler, our main web site has a new and beautiful look. SearchTheScripturesOnline.org has copies of all of our newsletters from the beginning. So if you missed one along the way, all you have to do is go to the site, go to the Newsletter page, and click on the issue that you need.

The site also gives you the ability to change your postal or e-mail address for receiving the newsletter, as well as adding names and addresses for others who you want to receive the newsletter. You can even indicate which method you would prefer for receiving the newsletter.

The site is also a good place to send others for an introduction to B'rit Hadashah Ministries. And if you would like to make a donation, you can even do that on the site.

Thank you, Eric!!

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. †

B'rit Hadashah Ministries

needs your support

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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other ways you can help...

If you would like to help this ministry but can't afford a financial commitment, suggest to your church pastor that Todd Baker come speak to your congregation about his work in Israel. Todd is available for speaking engagements in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, and can be reached via e-mail (toddbus@yahoo.com) or phone (214-356-2583) for scheduling information.

If you have access to the internet and the world wide web, would you consider receiving our newsletter via your e-mail rather than through the postal system? The money you would be saving our ministry in printing and postage cost by doing this would be a big help to us. Thank you to those of you who have already made the switch!

You will be able to see the newsletter in its full color form! And you will of course be able to print the newsletter at any time if you so desire. You will also have access to past editions. All you need is Adobe Acrobat reader (which is free).

Just send an e-mail to Todd at toddbus@yahoo.com and tell him to remove your postal address (include it in your note) and add your e-mail address. Or go to our updated web site and make the change yourself! It's that simple!



thank you for your support

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The Problem of Evil... Continued from page 2

system there are ramifications for doing good or evil, which informs and instructs those in it; that such a state of affairs is ordered and governed by certain fixed laws (the natural law theodicy).

*For the believer is
committed by his faith
to trust in God—
especially in the face
of gratuitous evil.*

Such answers to the problem of evil do not preclude counter-evidence the atheist or unbeliever presents to count against belief in God. But as Christians we should not allow such prima facie evidence to count decisively against our belief in God. For the believer is committed by his faith to trust in God—especially in the face of gratuitous evil. His attitude is not that of the detached observer, but the believer who is faithful to the end, come what may (Job 13:15). †

Dear readers,

Our newest Gospel outreach to Israel is planned for **March 13-29** - that's **this month!** Our team, this time consisting of Paul Colley and myself, will conduct a witnessing campaign sharing the Gospel of Yeshua with His people. It is because of your prayers and God's will that each mission has been so amazingly successful.

Please **pray** for us, and **pledge what financial support you can afford** 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,

- ✧ 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). †