

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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by Byron Zahm,
guest author

It's been three months since the Fall Mission to Israel with my partner Robert. As you would expect, Israel after Arafat is still very much in the news. The temporary cessation of violence was interrupted just days ago by another homicide bombing at a beachfront disco in Tel Aviv. In fact, our accommodations were just a block away from the said target. I recall taking notice of the obvious signs of previous terrorism at the same nightclub.

I've often thought about the privilege of witnessing for Christ, particularly in the Holy Land and asked myself what significant and lasting impressions I gained from the experience. Time and again I recalled with surprise the openness the Israelis demonstrated in discussing spiritual matters.

We met all types of people. Some were well-educated and writing books. Some had even read the B'rit Hadashah. Others espoused belief in Kabala or Ba'hai. Of course, there were your secular humanists, agnostics and those whose syncretistic belief system lends themselves to the dictates of experience and self-government.

It can seem overwhelming, the "hodgepodge" of belief systems. One thing is for certain, however. They all stand separate and apart from the God of the Holy Scriptures. Yet, it is this very dynamic that gives us Christians a stage to display and declare our unique message of an eternal God who is living, active and transforming human lives every day.

This is the God, Robert and I proclaimed, that God Who from eternity past covenanted with Himself to possess a people called by His name. No people earned this distinction; rather it was bestowed upon the nation of Israel. In this very act, He continues to demonstrate His love for His chosen people. Today He is still calling them. His people are of the promise of Abraham, those who by faith trust Him even as Abraham did. By doing so, we inherit tender mercies from our Creator God. Thus a rebellious people are turned from going each his own way.

People everywhere long for significance. Each of us measures our lives by meaning and purpose. When our Creator draws us to Himself, we see ourselves clearly — perhaps for the first time. It is in declaring such wonderful love that we find our audience. The message of the Gospel is the God of all history speaking to each one, right where they live today. When we evidence Him in word and deed, it speaks of hope and promise satisfying the longing of every heart for today and the future.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." - 1 John 1:3

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**NOW THAT'S
A GOOD
QUESTION!!**



Todd Baker



Does the New Testament require Christians to abstain from certain foods as prescribed by the Law of Moses or the practice of fasting during Lent?



The dietary laws from the Law of Moses have been done away with in Christ. They were part and parcel of the Old Covenant. Thus Paul writes in Colossians 2:14-16 that Christians are not under these kind of dietary restrictions since they foreshadowed in one way or another the Person and work of the Messiah.

What we eat or do not eat under the New Covenant is not an issue nor does it produce a better standing with the



Lord since one is justified by faith in Jesus alone and not by the works of the Law such as following Kashrut (the food laws of the Old Testament) (Galatians 2:16;). Thus the whole practice of abstaining from meat on Friday by certain Christian sects has no basis in Scripture.

The Word of God declares, *"But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse"* (1 Corinthians 8:8). Impurity is not what you eat or don't eat, but is a matter of the moral state of the heart and mind, as Jesus clearly declared in Mark 7:14-23. The whole idea of imposing a dietary ritual for the New Testament believer, whether seasonal or year round, is not scriptural. Those laws have passed away and we are under the better and permanent promises of the New Covenant (see 2 Corinthians 3:7-18). *"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 14:17). †



Is there one way of salvation for the Jews and another way of salvation for the Gentiles? If so, can Jews be saved apart from faith in Jesus Christ assuming they have heard the Gospel?



We are all saved in the same way, whether Jew or Gentile; that is, by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Peter preached this crucial salvation truth without distinction to Jews and Gentiles (see Acts 4:12; 10:43). The only difference is that the Jewish people were prepared to receive the Messiah before He came as predicted through the Law and the prophets revealed through the Scriptures, whereas the Gentiles were ignorant of the revelation and covenants God gave to Israel.

Scripture is clear that individual Jews who fail to receive Jesus as the Messiah will die in a state of sin and be eternally



drawing by Linda Mason

separated from God just as Jesus warned in John 5:40; 8:24. Matthew 23 closes with Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on Israel that day because they did not accept Him as the Messiah! This is why Jewish evangelism is critically important. The Word of God says the Gospel must go to the Jew first (Romans 1:16). God's covenant with Abraham guarantees the Jews will always be a nation but the New Covenant is the only way that each one individually can be saved.

The remnant of Israel will be saved nationally when Jesus returns and they look upon Him whom they pierced and rejected (Zech 12:10). But in the present age, they must believe He is the Messiah to be saved. There is no other way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Jesus, not Christians, said in John 8:24, and other places in the Gospels, that if the Jewish people do not believe in Him, they will die in their sins. Jews, like Gentiles, must experience spiritual rebirth in Jesus the Messiah if they are to be saved (John 3:1-5). †

Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



Part 5 - the Parable of the Mustard Seed
(Matthew 13:31-32)



No longer did Christianity remain a tiny despised belief in the humble rejected Nazarene, small as the mustard seed and repellent to the unsaved world. Rather, it erroneously turned into a great imperialistic institution of the earth. The chasm between the saintly redeemed and the lost heathen disappeared. Both were unified together under the "Holy Roman Empire," or more appropriately, under the spreading expanse of the unholy Roman Empire.

The third symbol used in the parable of the mustard seed is the birds of the air that came to alight on the many branches of the enormous tree. The majority of Bible commentators would have us to believe these birds symbolize the benign professing multitude of Christians that find protective refuge under the immense shadow of the tree of Christianity with its sustaining branches reaching out to help them. These man-pleasing preachers of optimism who gladly settle for this mawkish interpretation do so at the negligent expense of contradicting Christ's definition of the fowl's identity clearly given in Matthew 13:19 and throughout other parts of Scripture. Examining these passages in the light of Matthew 13 will allow the diligent student of Scripture to ascertain the true identity of the "birds of the air" with respect to the parable of the mustard seed.



Genesis 15:11

"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)

In Genesis 15:11, we read that "birds of the air" swooped down to devour the atoning sacrifice Abraham offered up to God in honor and reverence. The Patriarch succeeded in driving away the fowls from consuming the sacrifice. ***"And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away."***

This episode in Abraham's life provides a spiritual allegory applicable for the Church today. Satan has placed men of religious learning and fame such as the liberal theologians and deluded disciples of Higher Criticism in the church to explain away the literal blood atoning death of Christ for the eternal salvation of sinners. These infidels are "birds of the air"



ingeniously placed as a Fifth Column cleverly encamped within the true body of believers to minimize and depreciate the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. But God, the Father, foresaw this, and like the determined Abraham of old has driven away and destroyed all the works of Satan and his demonic fowls of the air through the very cross of Jesus Christ. ***"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"*** (1 John 3:8).

It was through the power of the cross Jesus spoiled satanic principalities and powers, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:15). Satan and his ill-fated fowls of the air were reduced to flying in endless confusion upon the awful realization of their ultimate doom and defeat through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, ***"which God ordained before the world for our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"*** (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

In Deuteronomy 28:6, God warns Israel of the penalty and curse that would fall upon them for their disobedience. ***"And your carcasses shall be meat for all the fowls of the air."*** In Matthew 24:28, Christ predicted the fowls of the air would be feasting on dead carrion at the Battle of Armageddon yet to occur (Revelation 19:17-18). Fowls in the Bible are often involved in feasting on the dead bodies of God's enemies.

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Revelation 18:2 describes the counterfeit harlot church as the **"habitation of demons, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."**

In Matthew 13:4, the word "fowl" or "bird" is rendered the same as in verse 19. Both uses of the word are defined as coming from the wicked one (Matthew 13:19). Therefore, it is quite evident that the fowls in verse 32 of the same chapter are from Satan. The birds of the mustard tree are then obviously satanic in origin. They are not good, but evil.

Thus, the colossal and showy tree, wherein the birds of the air took residence, can in no way be the true church of Jesus Christ. The identity Christ ascribes to the fowls come from **"that wicked one"** who is none other than Satan, the Devil. The fiendish fowls are the warring agents of the devil himself. The fowls of the air steal the seed of God's word from the hearts of men and make ineffectual its "fruit unto perfection." These notorious birds are no doubt mortal enemies of the Sower Jesus Christ and all who choose to do His will.

Both Satan and the powers of darkness conjointly work together with malice and deceit in order that they might tear apart the noble assembly of born-again believers in Christ. These fetid fowls are actually the spiritual ambassadors of Satan who gain favorable access into the tree by the air just as Satan is the **"prince of the power of the air"** (Ephesians 2:2). We as Christians must effectively combat and fight these demonic powers of the air from a spiritual standpoint. The only way to successfully combat them is by putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18) and availing ourselves of the Word of God, and the blood of Christ through intercessory, warfare prayer. †

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. †



Join Todd Baker in an enriching evening of teaching the Bible and the Jewish roots of Christianity. The Shalom Shalom Congregation meets each Friday evening at 7:00 at Fellowship Bible Church located at Meadow Road and Central in Dallas, Texas. For more information, visit <http://www.levitt.com/congregation.html> or call (214) 356-2583.

Reaching Out to the Lost Sheep... Continued from page 1

As I've reviewed my journal of our Fall Mission, divine appointments where God has evidently orchestrated events are apparent. At other times, we simply testified of Jehovah and His eternal love. Whenever possible, we gave away the Tanach and B'rit Hadashah in their respective first language. In all except one or two cases, we found people were willing to hear our message. They invariably would invite us into a lengthy spiritual dialogue, often over tea. The Tanach often served as the common ground. Without moving speedily to the New Testament, we would speak of God "who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in the past unto the fathers and the prophets." As our conversations developed, we would find our conversation about God who "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Indeed, the Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ.

As you read this newsletter, very likely there is another team in Israel sowing the seed of God's Word. Another will come and water, but God, Whose Word does not return void, will give the increase. Pray for those seeds, pray that others will water. For if we do our parts, we have a most wonderful hope. Together, we will be seated with Him in heavenly places. At a banqueting table like you've never seen will be gathered a great cloud of witnesses — from every kindred and tongue and people and nation — singing to their Redeemer, our Pesach. †

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor and glory, and blessing... Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."
- Revelation 4:12,13

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.

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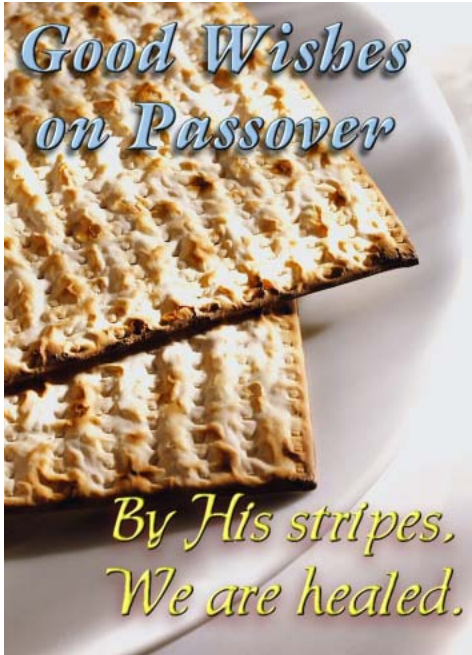
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Good Wishes on Passover



*By His stripes,
We are healed.*

**"Worthy is
the Lamb
that was
Slain..."**

- Rev. 4:12



B'rit Hadashah Ministries

TO THE JEW FIRST -- ROMANS 1:16

WEB SITE UPDATE

Have you visited our web site in the last couple of months? It has a great new look, thanks to Eric Oler, longtime friend of B'rit Hadashah Ministries. If you haven't seen it yet, just go to www.SearchTheScripturesOnline.org and take a look around. You'll find our Doctrinal Statement and copies of all of our newsletters. You can update your own address for receiving the newsletter, add other people to our mailing list, or make a donation right there at the site. You'll even find Todd's video interview with Zola Levitt, and more! So stop by the web site, and share the address with your friends.

Temple Pillar, Jerusalem