

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries

John
5:39



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DEBTORS OF MESSIAH TO ISRAEL PART 4

"They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings."

Romans 15:27

While in Jerusalem, Paul and I visited our Jewish brother in the Messiah Aaron Levarko. He is a leader in one of the Messianic congregations of Jerusalem and works at Immanuel Christian bookshop. We spent about an hour visiting him. Aaron and the other Jewish believers at the bookshop once again supported our Gospel outreach by providing us with a nice supply of Hebrew New Testaments to give out to the Israelis.

The next day, Paul and I stepped out of the hotel to begin another day of bearing testimony about Yeshua the Messiah. We started a conversation with the security guard standing outside the hotel

entrance. The guard's name was Roey. The emphasis of our witness towards him was oriented around the problem of sin (in Hebrew this is called *yetzer hara*—the evil inclination) and how the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant was a type and shadow of the once for all perfect sacrifice of Yeshua the Messiah that cleanses us from sin (see Hebrews 9-10). We further explained to Roey that Passover and Yom Kippur were fulfilled and answered in the atoning death of Yeshua. Paul and I went on to say to Roey that the Tenach prepared the way for the Messiah of the B'rit Hadashah who lives in us and is reaching out to Roey through our personal testimonies and the written word of Scripture that we offered him. He was surprised and incredulous that we would offer him a free copy of the New Testament in Hebrew and joyfully accepted it when we said that his people first gave the word of God to us so long ago; now we have come to give it back to Israel in these last



Todd Baker

days right before the return of the Messiah. Roey told us that he would read the Hebrew New Testament commenting, as we left, "I've got nothing but time on my hands."

After that, I decided to take Paul to the Valley of Gehenna where the ancient Israelites burned refuse in large numbers during the Old and New Testament periods.

In the days of Jeremiah and the pre-exilic Prophets, this valley was also the area where the Israelites sacrificed their newborn children to the Canaanite god Molech (Jeremiah 7:31; 32:35). During the time of Jesus, the Valley of Gehenna was the garbage dump of first century Jerusalem where trash burned twenty-four hours a day. Jesus borrowed from this graphic imagery to illustrate the awful eternal reality of hell fire that will consume the rebellious unbeliever (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:45; Luke 12:5). Today, the Valley of Gehenna is a beautiful lush green public park where families play and have picnics.



Within the Valley of Gehenna today



Paul stands with Roey, the security guard

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My First Time to Israel



BY ERIC OLER
GUEST AUTHOR

Being in Israel for the first time was very enlightening to the cause I have been supporting both financially and with my time back home. Why you might ask? Unlike Todd and Paul whose sole purpose was to come to Israel to walk the streets and spread the Gospel with another missionary team (which is awesome by the way), it is so different from my usual daily routine which is perhaps not unlike yours. This occasion however presented itself very uniquely as my original purpose for coming to this side of the world was more work related, but suddenly an invitation presented itself for me to go a few days earlier and join the mission trip, and so I did.

For most of us in the US, we hear so much crud on the news about this part of the world that we easily have a distorted view. On the other hand, when you are here, you quickly learn that Israelites can be very friendly people with a special warmth about them. Case in point, my first day on the streets here was on April 3rd when we walked through the streets of Tel Aviv not far from the Mediterranean Sea. Before Todd, Paul and I went out for the day, we preceded our journey in prayer that God the Father would lead our footsteps to the very people who were hungry for His word and that He would set each of our footsteps ahead of us. Without avail, He did just that as it was a fruitful day of witnessing! We encountered many people and three of them I will never forget. Although I will describe these events as worthy, nothing can surpass watching the face of God's people beam with hope and joy about someone telling them that their Messiah has already come and is coming back again soon. Furthermore, we would explain that we are simply giving the Gospel or Word back to the people that it originated from.



Rug shop owner, Aron

It is fascinating for example to see a rug shop owner's (Aron) eyes open

on this subject. We went into the shop because I was curious about his rugs. While there, Todd and Paul began talking about Yeshua to him and offered him a complete Hebrew Bible which at first was refused, but later after our testimony was received. The Holy Spirit softened his heart and he received a New Testament (or B'rit Hadashah) along with a few tracts. I looked into his eyes then and could see that he was genuine in his love for God and that he appreciated the materials we gave him ("we" being all of the supporters of this ministry!). And from there we moved on.

As the day progressed, I remembered a phone call I was supposed to make before leaving the states. Though it is a simple thing to dial out of the states to another country, I for the first time was in another country trying to dial back (which was 001 by the way). In my effort to get assistance, I walked up to an Israeli soldier who was shouldering his automatic weapon and waiting for his friend to pick him up. He suggested another prefix and so I tried it, all the while Paul and Todd started up a conversation with him. His name was "Itai" and



Itai listens to Paul and Todd sharing the Gospel

he was about 21 years old. Itai was an aspiring pianist whose life was recently spared. This was no accident as he was supposed to perform at a local venue called "Mike's Place." On the exact night he was to perform there, a terrorist sacrificed himself there and blew up the place. In effect, his life was spared, or rather protected, by God's love for him and

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Search the Scriptures

This publication is a monthly newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries. Special thanks go to several people who helped to make this newsletter possible:

Mark Levitt - Nancy Baker

Don and Elisa Retzlaff - Greg Hartwig

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Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



The Parable of Hidden Treasure Part 1 (Matthew 13:44)

At the outset of this parable, the writer shall take the liberty to consider several common interpretations imputed to this parable for the sole purpose of showing their total inadequacy in properly accessing the true meaning of it, which will be considered later. One popular interpretation claims that the treasure signifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and the field represents the Gospel. In what feasible way is the saved sinner advised to hide Christ, like a treasure, once he finds him? On the contrary, once Christ finds the saved sinner he is promptly commanded by Jesus to witness and publicly testify what the Lord has done for him. Jesus said, **"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel"** (Mark 16:15). Another popular interpretation teaches that the treasure is the Church, and the field is the world. This cannot be true, for Christ did not find the Church for the purpose of hiding it again. Refuting this, Jesus declared of His Church: **"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:14-16). The passage quoted above alone provides absolute proof invalidating the Church as something to be hid from the world. Obviously, then, the Church cannot be the hidden treasure. The final, and the most popular interpretation, believes the treasure is the Gospel and the field, where it was hid, are the Scriptures and the man who sought and found the treasure is the redeemed sinner. But the true interpretation of the field and

the man are found in the early part of Matthew thirteen itself!

In the first parable of Matthew thirteen Christ said the field is where the good seed was sown, and in the second parable following, He further informs the disciples that the field would be over sown with tares. In verse thirty-eight, Christ's interpretation of

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

- Matthew 13:44



the field is clearly the world of humanity, not the Scriptures. Since this is so, how then can the field mean anything else but this? As to the identity of the "man" who bought the treasure, it is incorrect to assume him as meaning anything else than what the first two parables of Matthew thirteen assert him to be. The "man" in verse twenty-four of Matthew thirteen is the one who sowed good seed in his field. Jesus relays to us the exact identity of the "man" in verse thirty-seven: **"He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man."** Since the man in

the second parable pictures the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, why are we to abruptly change His established and clear identity to mean something else in the fifth parable? Indeed, such erroneous interpretations of Scripture passages, previously examined, leads to a harmful disruption of the harmony and consistency of God-inspired Scripture that belittles it into an incoherent mass of nonsensical jargon. Therefore, it will serve us well to always allow Scripture to interpret Scripture so the most reasonable meaning is found without disturbing the established context under which God originally intended them to mean.

Christ spoke the parable of the hidden treasure right after He sent the multitude away and took His disciples into the house (Matthew 13:36). The fifth kingdom of heaven mystery parable is distinct from the last four, in that it is spoken only to the disciples away from the multitude. After hearing the four parables Jesus spoke before the public, the chosen twelve must have been greatly dismayed and sadly grieved at the dismal forecast that Christ foretold of the kingdom as it would grow and tragically develop in the world after His departure and prolonged absence from the earth. In the first parable, Jesus told His disciples that they would disperse the Gospel seed abroad, producing varied results. He instructed them that He would begin the initial work and they would continue the work after His ascension into heaven. He cautioned them that even though there was to be a universal sowing throughout the entire field, only a small portion of the seed would actually take root and bear fruit. In the second parable, Jesus informed them that Satan would

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On the southern side of the valley there is the famous hill in Jerusalem called Mount Zion. It is one the most frequently mentioned places in the Old Testament. David and the kings of Israel who came after him ruled



The Valley of Gehenna is now a beautiful family park.

over the nation of Israel from there. The tomb of David is also located there. Yeshua celebrated the Passover in the upper room on Mount Zion. Zion will be the future place where the King Messiah Jesus will reign over the world for one thousand years (Psalms 2; 102:13-22; 110:1-2).

As Paul and I were heading toward Zion, a young Israeli man was walking toward us. I felt led to ask him about this historic site and used such an inquiry as a springboard for sharing the Gospel. The man's name was Gil. He briefly shared with us about the history of the Valley of Gehenna. Our discussion then shifted to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. Gil's assessment was in agreement with ours, namely, the pull out from Gaza, with forced evacuations of Jewish settlers living there, was simply wrong. The land of Israel needs to be united, not fragmented and given over to the terrorist

(not "militant" as the media wrongly calls them) regime of the Palestinians who will use such a vacated area to plan further Kassam rocket and terrorist attacks against the Jewish State, which they abundantly have as this goes to press. Paul and I assured Gil, as messengers of the Messiah's comfort to the chosen People, that the God of Israel has regathered the Jewish people back into the land given to them to prepare the people of Israel for the grand finale of history—the glorious return of Jesus the Messiah as Bible prophecy long ago foretold (see Psalm 102:13-16). When this occurs, the Messiah will restore Israel to Zion and reconcile them to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the head nation of the theocratic kingdom Messiah Jesus will establish from Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 3:14-18). We told Gil that we were sent from a Messianic congregation and ministry from the United States to convey our love and prayers for the Jewish people. We left Gil with a Gospel tract in Hebrew appropriately titled *Love the Jewish People*. †



Mount Zion

My First Time... Continued from page 2

instead allowed us to share with him the good news about His son Jesus, and with his friend as well after he arrived. It was another awesome encounter.



Anasa with Paul

Much of this special day Todd said was very productive but the best had yet to come. When we stopped to have lunch, we stopped at a sidewalk café where Paul was sitting at the end of the glass divider and happened to be next to a young lady named "Anasa." Anasa was actually not living in Israel but was instead visiting from Manhattan. It became quite apparent that Paul had been chosen by God to deliver a very special message to her as not only she was left alone by her cousin, but the Holy Spirit anointed Paul who selflessly left his hot lunch untouched for over thirty minutes while the

Spirit of God anointed him to touch this special person. However, I will let Paul and Todd go into detail about this and the other encounters in their letters. But quickly seeing joy come on the Israelites face when you talk to them about Jesus is wonderful. It does take a very trained missionary (and humble I might add), but for one of us who is typically back in the states living our ho-hum day-to-day lives wondering if supporting this ministry is worthwhile, then I think I just put my own doubts to rest. I can honestly say that I give more to this ministry each year than in my own retirement fund. Why? Because I plan to retire in His kingdom. Not to mention scripture says that God blesses those who bless His chosen people. ☆

B'rit Hadashah Ministries

Growth in any ministry is a very important thing to happen, says Dr. Todd Baker, founder of B'rit Hadashah Ministries. For the first two years, we have greatly been supported by fewer than anticipated supporters whose donations, combined, average less than \$1500 per month which is far short of the \$7000 monthly budget needed to go full time. However, we do see growth, which is very important. In this age of "the prosperity gospel," we dislike having to ask for financial support, but the reality is that it is a necessity.

Presently, B'rit Hadashah Ministries is comprised of all volunteer staff so the majority of funds received goes straight to ministry newsletters, mission trips, Tanachs and other materials needed for the mission field. Even Todd Baker himself does not receive compensation at this point, but instead chooses to continue to work as a chaplain at a local Dallas hospital.

One thing for sure though, God is working through this Ministry in Israel. One of the ministry's faithful supporters is none other than Zola Levitt as well as others who give their financial support, as well as time and talent like Eric Oler and Elisa Retzlaff. These two are indeed sowing good seeds in heaven.

Most importantly, says Todd, we are very thankful to all who can support the ministry and are encouraging members of the ministry to take the challenge and sign up for any automatic contribution they can afford. Even with as little as \$15 per month, contributions from many supporters can make the difference we need to make our budget goal and increase the mission trips to Israel. We are undertaking a great mission with a greater reward.

May God Bless each of you as you give and may it be on a consistent basis.

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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 Dr. Todd Baker come speak to your congregation about his work in Israel. Todd is available for speaking engagements, 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!

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imitate the Sower and plant his tares into the field among the wheat. The Lord forbade the disciples to uproot any of them. They were commanded to allow the tares to grow side by side until the harvest came. At the harvest, the tares would be summarily gathered in bundles and cast into the fire to be burned. In the third parable, Jesus forewarns the disciples that the outward form of professing Christendom would be like a tiny mustard seed, first developing into an herb, but then unnaturally growing into a huge tree with extensive outgrowing branches. This would later afford the devil and his demonic emissaries to take shelter and refuge in it. In the fourth parable, Christ announced that the meal, a symbol of His holy and pure teaching, would be secretly infected with a foreign element. The end of its corrupting process would leaven the whole meal. It is here, ending with the fourth parable, that the complete pessimistic forecast of the kingdom of heaven in the present age is concluded by Jesus Christ. No wonder this left the disciples sorely puzzled and downcast at such a



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glum prospect. For consolatory purposes, Jesus took His beloved disciples privately aside to reassure their hearts with the fifth parable of Matthew thirteen. †

About the Author

Dr. 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, a Master of Theology Degree from Dallas Theological Seminary, and he recently earned his Doctorate Degree from Trinity Seminary under the auspices of Liverpool University at Liverpool, England. †