

An Open Letter to the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS)

by Tim Hegg • April 7, 2014

Only recently did I read the position paper authored by the IAMCS, dated 1/15/2014, and entitled: “One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement.” The majority of this 59 page position paper deals with denouncing the so-called “Two-House” teaching, the “Sacred Name” movement, British Israelitism, and other errant, unbiblical teachings which have found their way into the larger “Messianic movement.”

Toward the end of the document (beginning with p. 54), the authors turn their attention to what they label as “One Law’ Theology.” In this section, they note that First Fruits of Zion (FFOZ) did, at one time, espouse “One Law’ Theology” but that they came to believe such teaching to be in error and therefore changed their position. Subsequently they published an article entitled “One Law and the Messianic Gentile”¹ to explain their theological and ecclesial reasons for their theological shift.

Having outlined the change FFOZ made, and noting that as a result of this theological shift I was unable to continue writing for FFOZ and speaking at their conferences, the authors of the position paper turn their attention to me since I continue to teach that there is one Torah for both Jew and Gentile. I honestly would not be taking the time to respond if their purpose was simply to show a theological disagreement. Frankly, I welcome theological debate and dialog as I think that doing so often helps to clarify and sharpen our theological perspectives. However, in this position paper I am charged with teaching an errant gospel. This, I believe, goes to a much deeper level since the inspired words of the Apostle Paul consider those who teach an errant gospel to be accursed!

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Gal 1:8–9)

Here, quoted directly from the IAMCS document, are the charges leveled against me:

Tim Hegg’s teachings so strongly stressed the need for Gentiles to observe the Torah, that it often sounded as if Hegg actually equates Torah observance to the gospel itself. To give an example of Hegg’s teaching, Hegg argues based on a comparison of two scriptures, Mat. 5:20 and Mat. 28:19-20 that the purpose of the Great Commission was to bring Torah to the Gentiles.² The two scriptures Hegg refers to are as follows:

“For I say unto you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” Mat. 5:20.

And:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” Mat. 28:19-20.

Putting those two scriptures together, Hegg arrives at the following analysis:

“The phrase ‘teaching them to observe all that I commanded you’ makes it clear that Yeshua’s teaching in Matt. 5:17-20 was to form a core aspect of the curriculum the disciples were commissioned to teach the Gentiles.”

Thus, according to Hegg, the Great Commission is to bring the world into Torah observance. This is the major error of the “One Law” teachers. They preach a “gospel” of obedience to law, the very antithesis of

¹ *Messiah Journal* 101 (August, 2009), pp. 46–70.

² Quoted from: Tim Hegg, *An Assessment of Divine Invitation Teaching* (Aug. 2009), p.6, available at: [http:// www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/DivineInvitation_Response.pdf](http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/DivineInvitation_Response.pdf)

the true gospel.³

To be very honest, I was shocked that this accusation was made toward me, that I somehow have ever taught a “works salvation”! In fact, I have consistently taught, both in recorded lectures, teachings, as well as written materials, precisely the opposite, and I’ve done so consistently.

Moreover, I am bit nonplused to understand how anyone could read my comments about the Great Commission and conclude that I hold to a “gospel of obedience to the law.” It seems to me that those who have misinterpreted what I wrote did so because they equate initial evangelism (proclaiming the Gospel, that is, the “Good News” in Messiah Yeshua) with the process of making disciples. Granted, the two go together, for the gospel “is the power of God resulting in salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16) and discipleship is the process of leading and teaching the one who has come to faith in Yeshua both what it means to be a disciple of Yeshua and how to become like Him. Yeshua, in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20, instructs His Apostles and us not only to go to the nations with the Gospel but also to teach those who repent and believe in Him how to be His disciples—what it means to walk in His footsteps:

The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1John 2:4–6)

So I want to set the record straight: I fully affirm that God saves sinners, not by the works of the Torah nor by any goodness on their part (for in the flesh there is nothing that can attract God’s mercy or satisfy His holiness), but by His own, sovereign love granted to the elect before the world began (2Tim 1:9), and applied to them by the gracious work of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), so that they are granted righteousness and eternal life by faith alone, through God’s grace alone, on the basis of the work of Messiah alone, by means of the Gospel of which the Scriptures alone are the final and ultimate revelation and authority, and thus for the glory of God alone.

As proof that I have consistently taught this Gospel as revealed in the infallible, authoritative, and divinely inspired word of God, I have gathered the following quotes from some of my published works. These were collected in the space of an hour or two, and surely could be multiplied if desired. But my hope is that in seeing these few examples they will prove to you that the accusation leveled against me in the position paper of the IAMCS is blatantly false and an egregious misrepresentation of the facts.

Shalom in the matchless Name of our Messiah, Yeshua!



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³ n.a., “One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement,” A position paper of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS) Steering Committee, (1/15/2014), pp. 55-6.

Excerpts from Published Works [see bibliographic data following the excerpts]

Romans Commentary vol. 1

Salvation (σώζω, σωτηρία, *sōzō, sōtēria*), while having a general meaning in the everyday Greek of Paul's world, is used by him only in the sphere of relationship between God and man. For Paul, to "be saved" is to be rescued from the deserved punishment for sin, i.e., death, and to be given eternal life. The message of Paul in the gospel is that this salvation cannot be merited or purchased, but is the free gift of God to all who through faith receive it. Thus, the gospel is the power of salvation to all who believe. But this belief (πίστις, *pistis, πιστεύω, pisteuō*) or faith has one and only one object—the person of Yeshua. Thus, the gospel has always been centered in Yeshua, the Messiah, and always will be. It is therefore impossible to receive and enjoy the gospel apart from receiving and enjoying Yeshua—the gospel and Yeshua are inseparable. (p. 19)

This faith, as the saving response to the gospel, is not something which man possesses as an attribute of his humanness, nor is it the meritorious work of a few who attain to higher standards than the rest. For Paul, faith is no work of the individual (Rom 4:5) for salvation is altogether—not almost altogether—God's work. (p. 19)

That is to say, the Gospel rightly understood and rightly taught gives the divine method of salvation, which is the imputation of righteousness by God's divine act. On the basis of the sacrifice of Yeshua, God is both just and the justifier, and therefore able to fully declare the sinner "not guilty" because the penalty for his sin has been paid by Messiah. The Gospel therefore discredits any notion of being able to attain righteousness through one's own status, or through his own efforts. This is clearly how the phrase "righteousness of God" is used in 10:3, for "righteousness of God" is contrasted with "attempting to establish their own righteousness." This must mean that man's attempt to justify himself stands at contrast to "God's righteousness," i.e., the method God has ordained to make sinners righteous in His sight. (pp. 22-23)

From Paul's perspective, saving faith begins, not by mustering one's strength to accomplish a good work, but by undergoing a death to one's self and being made alive in Messiah. Saving faith is therefore characterized by one's own confession of utter helplessness in the face of utter guilt and condemnation. To think that one can earn salvation by mustering faithfulness in life and deed is to put the cart before the horse, the fruit before the root. (p. 26)

Romans Commentary, vol. 2

Paul uses the verb "called" (καλέω) almost exclusively of the effectual "call" of God to the elect. When God "calls," it is the means of turning the elect to Him and bringing them into the covenant family of salvation via faith. (p. 34, on 9:24)

Instead of seeking righteousness through faith in the atoning work of Messiah through His offering Himself as a sin offering, orthodox Judaism teaches a righteousness based upon the merits of the fathers, the merits of personal repentance (*teshuvah*) and of keeping the mitzvot. In other words, the heart of the gospel, that the suffering of the Messiah as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners is the only way to obtain right standing before God, is not found in modern orthodox views of the Messiah. Therefore, even though an observant orthodox Jewish person may confess a genuine belief in the coming Messiah, such a belief does not necessarily include a confession of one's own unworthiness and the need of a Savior, something essential for saving faith. (p. 146)

The Letter Writer

The Hebrew of Habakkuk 2:4 should be understood to mean "It is on the basis of faith that the righteous one lives."²⁰⁷ When Paul combines Habakkuk 2:4 with his phrase "the righteousness of God" he is making the clear

statement that the righteous status of a covenant member is obtained through faith. In other words, the “righteousness of God” is a short-hand way of saying “the righteousness which comes from God,” or “the method God has ordained to grant a sinner the status of righteous.” This method is centered upon the exercise of faith, as Habakkuk said. (pp. 99–100)

In short, the gospel message reveals God’s ordained plan for making sinners righteous. This plan rests fully upon the work Yeshua accomplished in His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, and the application of this work to the souls of the elect by the Holy Spirit.

Whether Jew or Greek, the only “status” that brings one into a righteous standing before God is the status of “in Messiah.” Any one who is “in Messiah” stands uncondemned before the Almighty. (p. 101)

Paul needed to teach the Gentiles that the first step in their conversion was one of genuine faith in Messiah. Only after they understood that their righteousness was reckoned to them and not earned were they in a position to appreciate both the value and necessity of Torah-obedience. (p. 106)

This Gospel was not exclusively for Israel, but envisioned the whole world, and offered a way to attain membership in the covenant for both Jew and Gentile. This “way” was the simple yet profound exercise of faith in God’s Messiah—His method of giving a sinner a righteous status. It was through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the Messiah, foreshadowed by every sacrifice in the Tabernacle and Temple. And anyone could put his hands upon the head of this infinite Sacrifice, identifying it as his own vicarious substitute, by the simple exercise of faith. (p. 172)

Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians - Commentary

Thus, the message of the influencers, which they offered as “good news,” was actually a message of death and anathema. Those who would follow it would one day stand before the Judge and be condemned. It was not a message of good; it was something entirely different. It was a distortion of the “gospel of Messiah,” a “changing” it into something opposite. The true gospel rests entirely upon the Messiah Yeshua and His work of salvation, accomplished at great price. All other claims to righteousness will end in condemnation. (p. 35)

The message of the influencers which centered on the need for ethnic status is thus set against Paul’s gospel that finds covenant membership in no other place than “in Messiah.” To be “in Messiah” is the true identity for those who have placed their faith in Him. (p. 54)

For Paul, the message of the gospel, both to the Gentiles (uncircumcised) as well as to the Jews (circumcised) was essentially the same: salvation (the blessing of the “world-to-come,” including the guarantee of such by the indwelling Spirit) was available only to those who believed in Yeshua (trusted His work on their behalf as the means of God’s forgiveness and their right standing before Him). (p. 72)

Here Paul comes back to his primary theme: the gospel he was preaching was no different than the gospel Peter had proclaimed. But in both cases, it was a gospel that had as its core element faith in Yeshua, not the fulfillment of ritual. And it was a gospel that knew no ethnic boundaries, for it was not ethnically nor culturally based, but it was the good news “to all who believed, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). (p. 73)

How was it that the approach of the circumcision party was not a straight path to the gospel? The answer is clear: covenant participation is not based upon ethnicity, whether natural or received, but upon the elective love of God demonstrated in those who have exercised personal faith in the Messiah, and have thus drawn near to God. This was Paul’s gospel and the events of God’s salvation: election, which leads to faith in God, which secures covenant status guaranteed by the presence of the Spirit, which in turn produces a life of holiness. And all of this

was secured through the infinite sacrifice of Yeshua, sealed by His resurrection, foreshadowed in His ascension, and guaranteed by His intercession (Rom 8:34). This was Paul's "straight line," and to introduce a man-made ritual which promised a new heredity as the means of covenant membership was, in light of this soteriology, most egregious. (p. 85)

Paul concludes the verse with a clear and emphatic statement: "for by the works of the Torah no flesh will be justified."... Here is the core of the Gospel—the genuine "good news," for what man could not do himself, God has accomplished through His Messiah, Yeshua. And here is the linkage between Peter's actions (even if they were somewhat naive in the sense of having been governed by galvanized traditions) and the denial of the Gospel. For any teaching that would require something more than faith in Yeshua for obtaining full and eternal covenant membership with God, was diminishing the unique and central place of Messiah in the Gospel itself. (p. 91, commenting on Gal 2:15–16)

Thus Paul's position is clearly seen: the fulfillment of the covenant blessings promised to Abraham, and particularly the promise for blessing upon the nations, is not to be gained through obedience to Torah (something that comes as the fruit of faith) but through faith in the crucified and risen Messiah. Here is the kernel of Paul's gospel and it is all the more understandable, therefore, why the Influencers' message was so egregious to Paul. (p. 137)

The method of the Influencers, then, was not one of acceptance on the basis of the Gospel (i.e., faith in Yeshua), but on the basis of conformity to the accepted *halalchah*. (p. 194)

He is rather making such an impassioned statement in regard to the Influencers (and any who stood with them), that their perspective of covenant status, based as it was upon the "flesh" (ethnic status), could not stand together with the truth of the Gospel, which proclaimed sonship in the family of God through faith alone. (p. 205)

In contrast to the message of the Influencers, Paul's gospel proclaimed a righteousness by faith, itself the inner work of the Spirit. (p. 221)

Obviously, the truth that is particularly in Paul's mind is the truth of the Gospel which he had delivered to them, namely, that being "in Messiah" was the goal, and that one came into this covenant relationship in the Messiah through faith. (p. 225)

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew

[commenting on Matthew 16:28] Likewise, Yeshua Himself emphasized that God's grace is freely bestowed and not earned, for He tells the disciples as they are sent to the lost sheep of Israel: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give" (Matt 10:8). Indeed, in this very pericope Yeshua has instructed the disciples that saving one's soul is only possible if one is willing to lose his soul for the sake of Yeshua. To lose one's soul for Yeshua's sake means to cast all of one's hopes upon Him and in so doing, to treat Him as the Lord of one's life. Thus, there is no contradiction between the free gift of God's grace and the righteous life that such a gift brings about through the transformation of the heart. (Vol. 2, p. 698)

FellowHeirs

For Paul, the fact that God had received them [Gentiles] apart from circumcision (evidenced by their reception of the Holy Spirit and their consistent life of faith) meant that the community should receive them in like manner. Circumcision of the flesh could come later, when they were firmly established in the truth that they were "in Messiah" by faith, not by the works of the Torah. (p. 83)

Thus, Paul's prohibitions against circumcision are strong statements supporting justification by faith and denying justification "by the works of the Torah" (covenant entrance through becoming a proselyte). (p. 88)

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