



The 'Hebrew Roots' Movement

Part Four

By

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The number of false preachers and teachers in today's world is staggering. The same goes for the number of cults that present themselves as 'Christian.' I've been writing about them for more than 55 years, but can't keep up. It seems that new ones keeping 'popping up' every few years.

I amount of time I give the growing number of cults and false teachers depends in some measure to how dangerous they seem to be to the 'flock of God.' The fact that I've been writing about the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) for six years is testimony to how dangerous I believe this movement is to the people of God.

Parts 1 – 16 of this series make up what I call ‘Section One’ of the study. That’s where I quoted directly from HRM teachers about their beliefs and included a link to their websites for people who want to do more research. I also included critiques from Christians and Messianic Jews who are concerned about HRM. You can look back at Parts 1 – 16 or download them for free in three eBooks –

[The Hebrew Roots Movement, Part One](#)

[The Hebrew Roots Movement, Part Two](#)

[The Hebrew Roots Movement, Part Three](#)

Now that Section One is complete, I will begin Section Two with my own thoughts about the dangers of the Hebrew Roots Movement (aka Hebraic Roots).

A Dangerous Movement

I used to be part of a very dangerous movement years ago, so I'm sensitive to the term. I was an atheist who argued with Christians every day as a radio talk show host in a major American city. I now see atheism for what it is – dangerous. I also see the Hebrew Roots Movement as dangerous – though for different reasons.

Atheists don't pretend to be religious. They don't pretend to believe in God or represent Him. They don't pretend to teach the Bible. Atheists admit what they are and move on. They are a-theists. They don't believe in God. Most probably live their lives caring very little about what other people do or believe. However, some atheists are anti-Christian and fight God's people at every turn. I was one of those.

Since becoming a Christian in 1971 I've done my best to learn how to 'defend' (apologetics) Christianity. My primary models for faith defense are Jesus Christ and His apostles. I do my best to depend on the Holy Spirit to open my eyes, ears, mind, and heart to how God would want me to respond to **false preachers and teachers** and Christians listening to them. I've also addressed how to talk with Christians about non-heretical issues that have divided the Church through the centuries. I've written about that at length in previous series (especially one called 'Order in the Court of the King' available **in seven volumes**).

The Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) is similar to the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) Movement in several ways. Both are insidious in how they worm their way into Christian churches and begin the process of taking disciples away for themselves. That's reminiscent of true apostolic warnings –

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my

departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Acts 20:28-30

Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Galatians 2:3-5

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such

withdraw yourself ... Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 20-21

Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer ... But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:14-17, 23-26

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 3:1-7

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But

you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:2-5

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Titus 1:10-16

But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. Titus 3:9-11

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber ... For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world

through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Peter 2:1-3, 18-22

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us ... These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning

all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. 1 John 2:18-19, 26-27

That's just a small taste of how the Lord's apostles viewed false preachers and teachers – like HRM. I try not to go beyond their direction or attitude in the way I respond, but as you can read the apostles had no use for false teaching in the churches. They knew how destructive it was to Christian doctrine, practice, and unity. The Lord Jesus is the final judge on such matters and He will deal with that at the end of the age.

God's Word 'Rightly Divided'

The greatest investigative tool for a Christian is the Word of God – 'rightly divided.' The Apostle Paul wrote that to Timothy, but what does it mean?

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

It's important to remember how to study God's word 'properly.' We begin by observing the text in its context in its original language. After we have thoroughly observed the text, we ask questions that must be answered before making any interpretations and applications of the text.

The full context of 2 Timothy is that Paul wrote it shortly before he was killed by the Roman government. We often think of things in the Bible based on chapters and verses, but remember that chapters and verses were not added to the New Testament until about 15 centuries after it was written. Until the middle of the 16th century, people read the Gospels,

Acts, and the apostolic letters from beginning to end without any reference points other than their own memory about where a particular verse or section was located.

Paul began 2 Timothy with a greeting and reminder of Timothy's faith and heritage. Paul then told Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel, be loyal to his faith in Christ, and to stand strong in God's grace committing what Paul had taught him to faithful men who would teach the same things to other men. Paul told Timothy to endure hardship 'as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

The section where Paul references 'rightly dividing the word of truth' is sometimes referenced as 'Approved and Disapproved Workers' (NKJV). Here's the context –

Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more

ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' 2 Timothy 2:14-19

Paul was describing people like those in the Hebrew Roots Movement, but I'll get to that in a minute. First, let's see what it means to 'rightly divide the word of truth.'

There should be no question about the identify of the 'word of truth.' That's God's Word, which was the Hebrew Bible at the time Paul wrote his letters. Those letters were accepted by the very early Church as from the mouth of God (Paul was an apostolic prophet) and eventually were added to what we now know as the New Testament.

The Greek word ὀρθοτομέω (*orthotomeó*) is translated into English as 'rightly divided.' The ancient Greeks understood the word to mean 'cut straight.' The idea was to handle something 'correctly.' There is a right way and a wrong way to 'cut' things. I know that from teaching people how to 'cut' with swords and knives for martial arts practice for the last 60+ years. If you turn the blade the wrong way, even just a couple of degrees in the wrong way, the cut will not be 'straight.'

Paul was telling Timothy that he would have to 'cut straight, handle correctly, rightly divide' God's Word because of the ministry God had called him to do. Timothy was going to carry on the work that Paul had done for many years once Paul died. Fortunately, Timothy spent many of those years with Paul and knew how to 'rightly divide' God's Word.

HRM Errors

Now, to the many errors of the Hebrew Roots Movement. First, their teachers don't know how to 'cut straight' God's Word. They get both the Old and New Testament Scriptures wrong. Some in the HRM are off by a few degrees, while others are off by tens of degrees. However, it doesn't matter how far off you are. If you don't make the cut 'straight,' then you have made a 'crooked' cut. That's what Paul was referencing in the context of 2 Timothy 2:15.

1. The first thing Paul wanted Timothy to do was to 'Remind them of these things.' Look back at earlier verses to see what those 'things' were that they needed reminding.
2. The second thing Paul wanted Timothy to do was to 'charge' them 'before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.' That's exactly what HRM teachers do – they strive about 'words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.'

3. The third thing Paul wanted Timothy to do was ‘Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.’ HRM teachers should be ashamed of themselves for not handling God’s Word correctly.
4. The fourth thing Paul wanted Timothy to do was ‘shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness,’ which is exactly what HRM teachers do. They babble (κενοφωνία – empty talk, worthless talk, empty disputing), which causes an increase ‘to more ungodliness’ by themselves and the people they teach. Paul wrote that their ‘babbling’ would ‘spread like cancer.’ The Greek word translated ‘cancer’ is γάγγραινα, which means ‘a gangrene, an eating sore.’ That’s what’s happening in the minds and hearts of HRM teachers and followers.

The Hebrew Roots Movement is filled with errors. The errors are not the same for all the HRM groups because some of them don't agree with each other. Some of the errors are worse than others (like denying the Deity of Christ and 'works-based salvation,' but all of the groups I've researched fall into some area of heresy.

As we saw in the last part of our study, the apostles warn Christians to beware of these heretics and have nothing to do with them. The challenge is to discover them before they become 'embedded' in your local church. Many of them sneak into churches and other Christian groups 'secretly' to spread their heresies and steal away disciples for themselves. By the time they are discovered, it's too late. They've already 'poisoned' the church. They don't mind being asked to leave because they take their 'stolen disciples' with them. It is insidious and the apostles warned us it would happen.

Modern Day Judaizers

One of the best ways I can explain HRM is that they are modern day Judaizers. Remember those guys from the New Testament? The Apostle Paul especially had a tough time with them. That's because Jesus Christ chose Paul to take the Gospel of Grace to the Gentiles. Even the Twelve apostles didn't understand what God was doing with the Gentiles.

According to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit fell on the apostles and other disciples gathered together on the Day of Pentecost. They 'were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' Peter, filled with God's Spirit, preached a powerful sermon in the streets of Jerusalem and about three-thousand people believed his message about Jesus. All the new believers stayed close to the apostles and 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.' However, even being filled with the Holy Spirit, preaching powerful sermons, and standing up to the

Jewish leaders, Peter didn't know what Jesus had planned for the Gentiles.

Peter's experiences in Acts 10 with visions of 'unclean' foods and visiting an 'unclean' Gentile, even though Cornelius was a God-fearing Gentile, demonstrates that the apostles had no clue what Jesus had planned for His Gospel and His Church. They saw Gentiles from an entirely Jewish perspective. They thought Gentiles would have to become 'Jewish' in order to receive the blessings of Christ's Gospel. How wrong they were – and still are according to HRM teachers:

Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them! Acts 11:1-3

Imagine that! The Apostle Peter, the great preacher of Pentecost who stood up to the Sanhedrin, had to deal with the other apostles and brethren in Jerusalem who were ‘contending’ with him about what had happened at Cornelius’ house. It wasn’t until Peter told them the entire story about what the Holy Spirit had done that those who contended with him settle down a bit. I say a ‘bit’ because those who contended with Peter would later contend with Paul and Barnabas about Gentile believers needing to be circumcised and ‘torah observant.’ The Jewish believers learned a little from Peter’s experience with Cornelius, but they had much more to learn.

As you read from Acts chapter one to ten, nobody had a problem with the thousands of Jews coming to faith in Christ. That’s because it’s how they understood the Gospel message would happen. They thought it would all be ‘Jewish-based.’ They thought the ‘Jewish’ Gospel would eventually make its way across the world, then Jesus would return to establish His Kingdom in Israel. They had no idea that Jesus had a secret plan that He was going to reveal to someone named Saul of Tarsus, who was one of the Jewish congregation’s

fiercest opponents. While there were some problems between the Hebrew and Hellenist Jews (Acts 6), it was about the daily feeding of Jewish widows. It didn't address the issues that would arise later between the Apostle Paul and the 'Judaizers.'

The Key

The key to ‘rightly dividing’ the Word of Truth to understand how wrong HRM teachers is **Jesus Christ**. I’ve read every one of the HRM teachings that I can find and none of them understand what Jesus did when He called Saul of Tarsus to become the ‘Apostle to the Gentiles.’ They teach that Paul taught the same things the Twelve taught. How wrong can a group of people be who claim to ‘know’ God’s Word?

You can read Acts chapters 11 – 15 to get a good idea of what happened. The Jews didn’t trust Paul. They thought it was some kind of trick that Paul (Saul) was playing to get inside the believers’ congregations so he could find ways to destroy them. Jesus knew that was going to happen, so He recruited some trusted Jewish disciples to help Paul through the process. They included Ananias of Damascus, several unnamed disciples in Damascus, and Barnabas of Jerusalem.

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. Acts 9:26-30

Unfortunately, HRM is a growing problem in Christian churches. That's because HRM believers secretly infiltrate churches to take disciples for themselves. HRM websites and online videos are also playing an ominous role in promoting this false teaching. Once HRM believers they are discovered in a church, they often take their new followers with them to begin HRM study groups or 'congregations.'

Jesus and His apostles warned us that false prophets and teachers would increase in the 'last days' and that's what's happening with Hebrew Roots (also known as Hebraic Roots). These false teachers are busy deceiving people into believing their nonsense. That's why I started this series more than six years ago as a warning. Even if you have never heard anyone in your church talking about Hebrew Roots, I recommend you learn about it now. It is very divisive in Christian churches and even among families, so learn everything you can about it.

You can find information about other ‘false teachings’ at Faith and Self Defense’s ‘[Apologetics for False Preachers & Teachers](#).’ The problem of false preachers and teachers is getting worse every year. Please share these studies with your pastors, fellow Christians, and any other way God leads.

The Master Builder

One of the errors of the Hebrew Roots Movement is remembering who is building the Church. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, is the Builder. He is both the Builder and the Chief Cornerstone of the Church –

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

The stone which the builders rejected. Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. Psalm 118:22-23

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'? 'Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Matthew 21:42-43

... let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:10-12

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

The reason I point this out to you is so you'll understand the next part, which concerns a 'secret' (μυστήριον – *mustérion*) that Jesus Christ revealed in His own way in His own time.

The Call of Paul

We touched on this in the last part of our study, and I'd like to dive deeper because it is the 'key' to understanding how HRM teachers are wrong in what they teach. The plan of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is to move the Church 'forward.' The plan of the Hebrew Roots Movement is to move it 'backward.'

Paul, also known as Saul of Tarsus, was an intensely ambitious young Pharisee. He gave approval to the murder of Stephen, one of the leading men in the Jerusalem congregation –

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he

fell asleep. Now Saul was consenting to his death. Acts 7:57 – 8:1

That event, which was just a few years after Pentecost, kicked off a vicious campaign against the follower of Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus took the lead –

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Acts 8:1-3

Interestingly, this persecution scattered the believers who ‘went everywhere preaching the word.’ The persecution accomplished exactly what Jesus had intended. Remember what He told the apostles?

... you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Saul's persecution of the Messianic believers actually moved the preaching of the Gospel out of Jerusalem and into Judea, Samaria, and other parts of the world (e.g. Ethiopia). You can read more about that in Acts 8.

Saul was feared greatly by the followers of Christ. Saul had the blessing and authority of the high priest to go after these followers and was on his way to Damascus, Syria to arrest them and return them to Jerusalem for trial. Imagine Saul's surprise when 'a light shone around him from heaven' and he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' Saul cried out, 'Who are You, Lord?' The Lord responded, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.' Jesus told Saul to go into Damascus and wait for further instructions.

Saul was blinded by the light, so the men who were with him had to lead Saul into town. Saul was so affected by what happened that he did not eat for three days.

The next part of the Lord's secret plan was to reveal part of it to one His followers who lived in Damascus – a man named Ananias. Jesus appeared to Ananias in a vision and told him to go to Saul. Jesus said that Saul was also receiving a vision about Ananias visiting him and laying hands on him so he would receive his sight. Ananias was hesitant because he knew that Saul's purpose for coming to Damascus was to arrest followers of Christ. Jesus revealed some of His eternal plan to Ananias –

But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake. Acts 9:15-16

Notice that Jesus said Saul was a ‘chosen vessel of Mine.’ That’s key to the eternal plan. Jesus had openly chosen the Twelve and called them to follow Him and preach to the Jews following John the Baptist’s public announcement about Jesus. Now, Jesus revealed a ‘secret’ part of His eternal plan that would include enemy #1 taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Also, Saul would suffer greatly for Christ’s ‘name’s sake.’

Ananias visited Saul, laid hands on him, and Saul received his sight. Saul also ate some food, was strengthened, then spent ‘some days’ with the disciples at Damascus. Saul was not one to sit still about his calling or what he knew. He immediately preached in the synagogues that Jesus Christ ‘is the Son of God.’

The Jews who heard him preach were amazed – ‘Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?’ But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.
Acts 9:21-22

The change in Saul’s purpose did not go over well with the Jews in Damascus. They plotted to kill Saul, but Saul learned about the plot and the disciples of Christ took him by night and ‘let him down through the wall in a large basket.’

Saul made his way back to Jerusalem where he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn’t believe that Saul had become a real disciple of Christ. That’s certainly understandable given the history of Saul and the disciples. That’s when Barnabas stepped into help. Remember Barnabas from Acts 4? He had the respect of the apostles and listened to what he had to say about Saul –

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. Acts 9:27-28

Saul spoke boldly in the name of Jesus and disputed against the 'Hellenists.' Those were Jews who had been born and grown up in Grecian parts of the world. They were often looked down upon by Jews born and raised in Judea. Saul of Tarsus was a Hellenist Jew, which probably added to the anger of the Hellenists that one of their own had turned on them. Saul may even have been part of their group that argued with Stephen, which eventually led to his death (Acts 6:9). The Hellenist Jews responded to Saul's preaching by trying to kill him. However, when the disciples found out about the murderous plot they took Saul to Caesarea and sent him home to Tarsus.

We don't hear anything about Saul for several years, but he was busy in his hometown and surrounding region of Cilicia. Saul had met Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, and his calling was to preach the name of Jesus everywhere he could.

If that's all there was to the story, Saul the Jew preached Christ the Messiah to Jews, then we're done here. However, remember what Jesus told Ananias? Saul was the Lord's 'chosen vessel' to bear the Name of Jesus Christ 'before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.'

Paul's Prep

The years that Paul (Saul) spent in Cilicia were a time of preparation for the 'secret mission' Jesus had planned for him. We learn a bit about that time and what Paul did in 2 Corinthians –

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4

Paul was writing about something that happened to him 14 years before writing 2 Corinthians. The reality of the event was such that he wasn't sure if God 'caught him up to the third heaven' physically or in a vision. Either way, Paul saw 'Paradise' and 'heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.' This was such an amazing event that God placed a 'thorn' in Paul's flesh that would keep him from becoming 'proud' of what he had experienced. The only reason he wrote about it in 2 Corinthians was because of the opposition he was receiving to his apostleship from false apostles in Corinth. Paul knew he needed to reveal this event to the Corinthians so they wouldn't fall for the lies the false apostles were telling about him. Paul was all about protecting the integrity of the Gospel that Jesus had given him to preach to the Gentiles.

The reason I mention this here is because of the timing. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians somewhere between 55-56 AD. He wrote about something that happened 'fourteen years ago.' That would mean Paul was caught up to Paradise and heard 'inexpressible words' about 41-42 AD. That would have been during the time he was back in Cilicia preaching the Gospel.

The reason this is so important to know is that Jesus revealed His 'secret plan' to Paul 'before' the Holy Spirit called Paul to teach in Antioch and go on his first missionary journey with Barnabas. Everything we are going to read about Paul's ministry next occurred 'after' his being 'caught up into the third heaven' – Paradise.

The Judaizers Appear

We learn in Acts 11 that after Stephen's murder and the persecution that followed, the disciples of Christ were scattered 'as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.' Interestingly, those who were scattered preached the Word of God 'to no one but the Jews only.' That should be no surprise given what we know now about the Lord's 'secret plan' concerning the call of Paul. The 'hand of the Lord' was with those who preached, 'and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.' That included Hellenist Jews, of course, since this preaching was outside of Israel.

Apparently, some Gentiles also heard the 'good news' of Jesus and believed. It wasn't long before that news got back to the 'ears of the church in Jerusalem.' It would have greatly concerned the Pharisees who had come to believe, along with 'a great many of the priests' who were 'obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7). The apostles may have also been concerned about the future of the ministry, though we're not told that in Acts 11. Many of the believers in Jerusalem believed that

Gentiles had to come to Jesus through Judaism (being circumcised and Torah observant), so they wanted to make sure that 'doctrine' was being followed in Antioch.

The reason I'm pointing this out now is because it's the beginning of the 'Judaizers' opposition to the ministry of the Apostle Paul. The Judaizers of Paul's day are similar to the teachers of the Hebrew Roots Movement today. More about that as our series continues, but keep your eyes on the reaction of the Pharisees to what Paul did and the steps they took to oppose him. That will be important to us as we watch Hebrew Roots teachers and determine how to respond to their false teaching now. The Pharisees were 'legalists,' and so are HRM teachers and followers. Obedience to the Mosaic Law is at the top of their list on things believers should do.

Barnabas was sent to Antioch to look into the news about Gentiles believing in Jesus. Barnabas was 'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.' He was 'glad' when he saw how the people in Antioch were receiving 'the grace of God.' Barnabas 'encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.'

We're not told why exactly, but Barnabas left Antioch and headed north for Tarsus 'to seek Saul' (Paul). Barnabas found Paul and brought him back to Antioch. They spent an entire year 'with the church and taught a great many people.' Interestingly, 'the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.'

As important as Antioch was to the Lord's plan, He had more in store for Paul. Jesus Christ, the Master Builder, the Cornerstone of the Church, was going to send Paul and Barnabas out into the world to 'plant' churches. As great as that was, the Judaizers were not far behind ready to destroy the very thing the Lord was building – so like what the Hebrew Roots Movement is doing today.

God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – designed a perfect plan for the world in eternity. That plan included the nation of Israel and the Church. Religious leaders opposed both plans then and still do now. However, God moves forward with His plan. Jesus told the Apostle Peter that He would build His Church – but Jesus didn't tell Peter about calling Saul of Tarsus to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. God working with Gentiles was a surprise to Peter and all the apostles and elders of the early Messianic congregations.

Jesus called Saul (Paul) in a way that was much different than His call of the other apostles. When Jesus sent out the Twelve apostles, He said – “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” However, Saul’s mission would be different – “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.’”

The Builder and Cornerstone of the Church, Jesus Christ, had a plan designed in eternity. However, like so many of God’s plans through history – people doubted Him. They lied about God’s plans, opposed Him at every turn, and rejected Him on many occasions. Would it be different with Christ’s plan for His Church? Let’s see what happened.

The Spirit's Call

The last we saw of Saul was in Antioch, Syria. Barnabas saw what God was doing there and traveled north to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul). Barnabas brought Paul back to Antioch where they spent a year teaching the mix of Jews and Gentiles. After that time, God revealed the next step in His plan to take the Gospel to the Gentile world –

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:1-3

The First Missionary Journey

It's important to note that the Holy Spirit told the leaders of the church in Antioch to 'separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Paul's leaving Antioch on what would be his 'first' missionary journey was not his choice – it was God's choice – even as it was God's choice to call Paul from persecuting Christ to preaching Christ.

Paul and Barnabas left Antioch and traveled to the Island of Cyprus, which was located in the Mediterranean Sea southwest of Antioch. They arrived in Salamis, a principal city on the east coast of Cyprus. Paul and Barnabas, along with Barnabas' cousin John Mark, 'preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.' They then traveled to the western part of the island to Paphos. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, requested an audience with Paul and Barnabas 'to hear the word of God.' However, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus (Elymas) 'withstood' Paul and Barnabas and tried to keep the proconsul away 'from the faith.' Paul, 'filled with the Holy Spirit,' opposed the sorcerer, called him 'full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil,

you enemy of all righteousness’ and said he was ‘perverting the straight ways of the Lord.’ Paul then said the sorcerer would become blind. ‘And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.’ The proconsul believed and was astonished ‘at the teaching of the Lord.’

Paul and Barnabas crossed the Mediterranean Sea and traveled northwest to the coastal city of Perga in Pamphylia. For some reason, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas traveled north and inland to Antioch in Pisidia where they visited the synagogue. Paul stood up and preached about Jesus the Messiah of Israel. You can read his sermon in Acts 13:16-41. Paul ended his message with these words –

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: ‘Behold, you despisers,

Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.’ Acts 13:38-41

That certainly wasn't a message the Jews there had ever heard before. They couldn't be justified by the 'law of Moses'! When the Jews left the synagogue, 'the Gentiles begged' Paul and Barnabas to preach again the next Sabbath day. Many of the 'Jews and devout proselytes' followed Paul and Barnabas who persuaded the people to 'continue in the grace of God.'

On the next Sabbath day 'almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.' However, when the Jews saw the multitudes 'they were filled with envy.' They contradicted, blasphemed, and opposed the things Paul had said. Notice these next words carefully in light of our current study especially –

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' Acts 13:46-47

That was bold on the part of Paul and Barnabas. It was necessary that God's Word be preached to the Jews first, but since they rejected it and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, Paul and Barnabas turned 'to the Gentiles.' Paul even presented it as a command from God to them – "I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth." As you can imagine, the Gentiles were glad when they heard Paul say that. They glorified the Word of God, 'And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.'

That did not set well with the Jews. They ‘stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.’ So typical of religious legalists and bigots. How did Paul and Barnabas respond? “But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Paul and Barnabas continued to travel through the region preaching the Gospel of Christ. They were opposed by the Jews in every city. It became so bad in one situation that Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed Paul and Barnabas and persuaded the crowds in one town to stone Paul. The people ‘dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead.’ However, when the disciples gathered around Paul, ‘he rose up and went into the city.’ Paul and Barnabas departed for Derbe the next day.

After preaching the Gospel in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch – “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’” Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church, prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord ‘in whom they believed.’ Paul and Barnabas passed through Pisidia, came to Pamphylia, preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia. They sailed back to Antioch in Syria and gathered the church together. Paul and Barnabas ‘reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.’

There’s another key for us to see. God ‘opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.’ The Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas were actually opposing God and His plan for His Church. Paul and Barnabas stayed at Antioch in Syria for ‘a long time with the disciples,’ but the Jews were not done opposing them yet.

The Opposition

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. Acts 15:1-2

These are the Judaizers I wrote about in the last part of our study. They are a lot like the leaders of the Hebrew Roots Movement. Judaizers want to turn Gentile believers Jewish by telling them that unless they are circumcised 'according to the custom of Moses,' they 'cannot be saved.' Being circumcised was not the only thing the Judaizers wanted the Gentiles to do – 'But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses' (Acts 15:5). The Judaizers (HRM) also wanted the Gentiles to be 'Torah observant.'

Was that okay with Paul and Barnabas? “Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them.” Short answer – no way! Paul had specific instructions he had received directly from Jesus Christ, so there was no way he was giving in to the Judaizers (HRM). The Greek words for dissension and dispute are στάσεως and ζητήσεως. They mean ‘standing against, commotion, strife, insurrection, debate, controversy.’ Paul was not going to put up with these Judaizers and made his opposition to their plan very clear. Why was Paul so upset? Because Jesus had called Paul specifically to do what He did and the Holy Spirit had sent him and Barnabas to get it done.

The Council

Paul and Barnabas headed for Jerusalem to meet with the Twelve and the elders of the congregation there. They passed through Phoenicia and Samaria describing ‘the conversion of the Gentiles.’ How did people respond to that news along the way? “and they caused great joy to all the brethren.” Paul and Barnabas were received by Jerusalem ‘church and the apostles and the elders.’ They ‘reported all things that God had done with them.’ Notice, Paul made it clear that what had happened during his missionary journey was God’s doing.

Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them ... Acts 6-7

The Greek word for ‘dispute’ is the same as earlier. It was a ‘fierce debate’ between the two sides. Finally, Peter stood up to speak to the group. He reminded them ‘that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.’ After Peter finished speaking, ‘Then all the multitude kept

silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.’ After Paul and Barnabas finished speaking, the Lord’s half-brother James, who was a senior leader in the Jerusalem congregation, spoke. You can read his words beginning in Acts 15:13. The end result was James writing a letter – ‘To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.’ Notice the recipients of the letter – not the ‘Jews’ in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, but the ‘Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.’ That’s vital to note.

HRM leaders and followers, listen up –

Greetings. Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment— it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of

mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. Acts 15:23-29

James, speaking for the Jerusalem congregation, sided with Paul and Barnabas. The Holy Spirit did not want the Gentiles who were coming to Christ to be circumcised and obedient to the Law of Moses (Torah observant). Take note if you are in or considering joining in with the Hebrew Roots Movement. The Holy Spirit says 'NO' to Christians being 'Torah observant.'

Paul revealed even more about what happened there in his letter to the Galatians. First, Paul said the whole thing started because of 'false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.'

Did you see that? Paul called them ‘false brethren secretly brought in.’ That’s the same thing we can say about people in Christian churches who are secretly following the Hebrew Roots Movement. They want to spy out the ‘liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.’ Once the HRM folks have wreaked havoc on a local church, they take their ‘stolen disciples’ and start a Hebrew Roots study or congregation.

Paul also wrote that ‘not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.’ That’s a demonstration of the effectiveness of what happened in Jerusalem. Titus, the Greek convert, was not ‘compelled’ to be circumcised.

Notice what Paul said happened next –

But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the

uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Galatians 2:6-10

Did you see that? When James, Peter, and John, ‘who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.’ That is so important!! The apostles and elders finally realized that God had given Paul a specific ministry to the Gentiles, even as God had given them a specific ministry to the Jews (circumcised). The ‘right hand of fellowship’ demonstrated both understanding and agreement.

The decision of James, and the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation, should have ended all opposition to Paul's ministry to Gentiles from the Judaizers – but it didn't. We pick up the details in two places in Scripture. First, Luke's version in Acts 15 –

So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Next, Paul's version in Galatians 2 –

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. 'But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build

again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

The Judaizers, just like the Hebrew Roots Movement, didn't give up their opposition to Paul's special ministry to the Gentiles. Can you imagine that after everything that happened at the Jerusalem Council that the Apostle Peter 'feared' the Jews who came 'from James' to Antioch in Syria? Peter was happy to eat with the Gentiles 'until' the Jews from Jerusalem showed up. Then, 'he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.' Barnabas, too? How could this be? What would Paul do? The Judaizers were at it again and this time, somehow, they turned up the

heat to the point that Peter feared them and even Barnabas ‘was carried away with their hypocrisy.’

Paul did exactly what he should have done – and might I add – what any Christian leader should do with anyone in their church who espouses the beliefs of the Hebrew Roots Movement. Paul ‘confronted’ them powerfully – and notice who he confronted – the Apostle Peter. Peter was the same person who stood up for Paul at the Jerusalem Council, so why didn’t Paul stand up for Peter and give him a little room to play the ‘hypocrite?’ The answer is quite simple. Paul was standing up ‘FOR’ Jesus Christ and His plan to build His Church.

Backbone in the Church

We need to get some backbone in today's church leaders. Too many pastors and Bible 'teachers' have become 'spineless' and 'hypocritical' – just like Peter and Barnabas. Someone needs to stand up to them and remind them about WHO is building the Church – it's Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Just because you are the 'pastor' of the church, or an 'elder' or a 'board member' or a 'deacon' or any other position you think is important, that does not make the church 'your' church. The Church belongs to Jesus! This is no time to be afraid of opposition. You want to be a leader in your church? Then stand up for what's right. Stand up for God's Word. Don't cower to anyone – no matter who they are.

Paul stood up to the apostle who preached at Pentecost. Are you willing to stand up to someone like that? You'd better be if you want to be counted as a real 'leader' of a church. If someone in your church is talking about the Hebrew Roots Movement or any other corrupt cult, confront them biblically. Tell them exactly what Paul told Peter – “a man is not justified

by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” And – “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

One important reminder – there’s a difference between a heretical HRM teacher and someone who is listening for the first time. The Bible teaches us to deal with them differently. We confront a false teacher differently than a Christian who is hearing false teaching. The reason that Paul confronted Peter so strongly is that Peter was a fellow

They Won't Give Up

The opposition to Paul's ministry didn't stop there. His opponents, often the Judaizers, kept trying to destroy what Paul was doing across the Roman Empire. What they were really doing was trying to destroy what God was doing across the Roman Empire. The same is true today of people in the Hebrew Roots Movement. They will not give up because their hearts are evil and their minds are deceived.

Here are some examples of what Paul had to deal with during his journeys that followed the Jerusalem Council –

But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. Acts 17:5

But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. Acts 17:13

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. Acts 18:12-13

After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Acts 20:1-3

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance

toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:17-21

And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. Acts 23:12-13

Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. Acts 24:1

When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. Acts 25:7

Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. Acts 26:19-20

Letters of Opposition

Paul's many church and pastoral letters are helpful in our understanding about the opposition he faced during his God-given ministry. We learn much from them about how to address both heretical and non-heretical divisions within the church. You can read more about that in our GraceLife series, *Order in the Court of the King* (seven volume set of free eBooks – [Volume I to begin](#)).

The Hebrew Roots Movement includes many heresies that Paul addressed brilliantly in his many letters. Paul's first letter was probably to the Galatians, where he takes on the HRM of his day –

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let

him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:6-9

HRM 'perverts the gospel of Christ.' They preach a 'gospel' that is not the same Gospel Paul preached. As Paul wrote – let them 'be accursed.' Paul reminded the Christians in the churches in the region of Galatia that –

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12

Jesus Christ ‘revealed’ the Gospel of His Grace to Paul so that Paul could preach and teach it accurately in his ministry as ‘Apostle to the Gentiles’ (e.g. Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). All we have to do is turn to Acts 9 anytime we need a reminder about Christ’s purpose for Paul – “he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.”

Some Jewish legalists (similar to HRM) followed Paul around and visited many of the churches he planted. They usually waited until after Paul had left the area before approaching the churches. That’s because they are cowards at heart. They like doing things ‘secretly’ so they can do their dirty work before being found out.

Galatians is that kind of letter. Paul learned that some Jewish legalists had gone into the churches in Galatia and told the Gentile believers that they had to be circumcised and be ‘Torah observant.’ Someone told Paul and he wrote a letter that was shared among the churches –

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Galatians 3:1-4

I'll bet that got their attention! Paul, the man God used to plant the churches in Galatia, called the believers 'foolish' and 'bewitched.' Both words – ἀνόητοι and ἐβάσκανεν – have negative meanings. Paul was saying that the legalists who had taught them had 'cast an evil spell' on them. Yikes! No wonder Paul was upset. What the legalists had done was preach a message of spiritual 'bondage' to the Gentile Christians –

But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? Galatians 4:9

Paul called the Galatians to ‘free’ themselves from the lies of the Judaizers about being circumcised and being ‘Torah observant’ –

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. Galatians 5:1-6

The Galatians were being led in the wrong direction – backward. That’s the same thing HRM teachers do; they move backward. Paul had some strong words for the Jewish legalists –

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!
Galatians 5:7-12

As I've written before, I don't want to go any further in what I say about HRM or any other false teachers than what Jesus and His apostles said. There's no need to do that because Jesus and His apostles were VERY opposed to false prophets and teachers. Paul wrote that the people who 'troubled' the Galatians would 'bear' their own 'judgment.' Then, Paul wrote that he wished the legalists 'would even cut themselves off!!' Those are 'strong' words indeed.

Paul loved the Galatian Christians and despised what these legalists were doing to them. No wonder he wrote as harshly about them as he did.

The 'Secret'

God has many 'secrets' that He reveals in His timing. Everything that God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – decided in eternity was 'secret' until He created the heavens and the earth and began revealing His 'plan' to man.

As we saw in our last study, the Apostle Paul was one of God's 'secrets.' What Paul taught concerning the Gospel to the Gentiles was one of God's secrets. The other apostles believed the Gospel was for Jews and that Gentiles would have to become 'like' Jews (e.g. circumcision, observance of the Torah).

Jesus never told the Twelve Jewish apostles (e.g. Peter, John, Andrew) about His plan concerning the Gentiles. That's why Peter He never told them about His plan to recruit the man responsible for persecuting Him to become His apostle to the Gentiles. After Jesus called Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and Saul returned to Jerusalem, the Twelve Jewish apostles were afraid to see him because they didn't

believe he was really a disciple. God used Barnabas, who the Twelve trusted, to bring Saul (Paul) to them and explain how Jesus had called him 'on the road.'

God used Barnabas again years later to get Paul from Tarsus to help teach the mixed (Gentile and Jew) congregation in Antioch of Syria. After a year of teaching there, the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to begin a missionary journey that would take them to Cyprus and to the mainland region of Galatia north of the Mediterranean Sea. It was after that remarkable journey that Jews from Jerusalem came to Antioch and insisted that the Gentiles be circumcised and obedient to the Law of Moses (Torah observant). Paul and Barnabas disputed fiercely with them, which led to a 'council' meeting with all the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

The outcome of that council meeting was an agreement that God had called Paul to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (uncircumcision) and had called Peter and other members of the Twelve to preach to the Jews (circumcision). That was good news to the Gentile believers in Antioch, but even Peter and Barnabas backed down to the Judaizers who pressured

them with a visit to Antioch. Paul would have none of it and stood strong against Peter and all the Jews who were avoiding fellowship with the Gentile believers.

If that wasn't enough, the Judaizers (think HRM leaders) slipped in the back door in Galatia and told the Gentiles in the churches Paul had planted that they couldn't be saved unless they were circumcised and obedient to the Mosaic Law (think HRM). Paul was infuriated when he heard what the Judaizers had done and wrote a severe letter of warning to the churches in Galatia (Galatians). Paul made it abundantly clear that the Judaizers had 'betwicked' them, and that what they had told the Gentiles was a lie. The decision of the Jerusalem Council made it clear that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised or become Torah observant. The Judaizers were liars, frauds, and false teachers (think HRM).

How did Paul know things that the Twelve did not know? Simple. Jesus told him. Just like Jesus revealed certain parts of His plan to Peter and the other Jewish apostles, Jesus revealed more parts of His plan to Paul. We saw in 2 Corinthians 12 that God 'caught' Paul up to Paradise and gave him many revelation about His plan. That happened years before Paul started teaching at the church in Antioch of Syria and going on his first missionary journey with Barnabas.

The Secret Plan

What was the 'secret' that Jesus revealed to Paul, to then reveal to the Twelve and then the world?

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh —who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who

were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:11-22

After centuries of hatred between Jew and Gentile, God brought some of each group together in a unique way through the death of Christ. Jesus 'abolished' the enmity between the two groups 'in his flesh.' What was that 'enmity?' The 'law of commandments contained in ordinances.' Did you get that, HRM? Jesus Christ, the Master Builder and Cornerstone of the Church, 'abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.'

God's 'secret' plan? 'One new man from the two, thus making peace.' Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God 'in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.' Jesus 'broke down the middle wall of separation,' but the Hebrew Roots Movement is trying to rebuild that wall. Shame on them for opposing God's plan for His Church.

The Mosaic Law had its place in the 1st century and still does. Paul wrote about it in his letter to the Galatian churches –

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Galatians 3:23-25

Paul wrote that the Mosaic Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, but after faith has come, 'we are no longer under a tutor.' What does that tell you?

- Tutor – Mosaic Law
- After Faith – Not under Mosaic Law

Pretty simple, really. Makes you wonder how HRM teachers missed it.

Think I'm taking this out of context? Okay, let's look at the context –

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the

law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Galatians 3:19-22

If you're an HRM teacher, you're probably screaming at your computer right now. I suggest you calm down and read Paul's letter to the Galatians slowly and carefully. Then, read Paul's letter to the Ephesians slowly and carefully – especially Chapter Three. That's where Paul wrote about the 'mystery' (μυστήριον – *mustérion*) God gave him to give to the Gentiles. Go ahead, I can wait. Read the entire third chapter of Ephesians. Even better, read Ephesians chapters 1 – 3 to get the full context. The same with Galatians. Read the entire letter to get the context.

Nothing I'm writing here is out of context because I 'rightly divided' (cut straight – handled correctly) the Word of God. The correct way to handle God's Word is to read and study text within context from the original language to the original audience.

Paul was ‘the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles.’ God gave ‘the dispensation of the grace of God’ for them. A ‘dispensation’ (οἰκονομία – *oikonomia*) is how someone manages the affairs of a household. In this case Paul was writing about how God was managing the affairs of His Grace. The fact that God gave that knowledge to Paul is how the apostle could write – ‘by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.’

And there you have it! God had not revealed His secret concerning how He was going to manage a household that no one knew about until He gave it to Paul to reveal. That’s why Jesus called Saul on the road to Damascus – ‘he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.’ That’s why he wrote this in 1

Corinthians 15 – ‘Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.’ Jesus chose Paul secretly – out of due time. Nobody knew it was coming, but it’s always been part of God eternal plan. Even when God was giving His Law to Moses, God knew that He was going to call Paul in the future to explain the purpose of the Law in a way that Moses would not have understood at the time.

The Secret's Purpose

Paul wrote that God gave him this ‘dispensation of grace’ – ‘that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.’

Did you see that? The ‘fellowship of the mystery’ had been ‘hidden in God’ from the ‘beginning of the ages.’ That’s how well God kept His secret about Paul, and the Gentiles and Jews becoming ‘one new man’ in Christ. It’s also important to remember that one of the primary reasons the Eternal Son of God came from Heaven to earth was to ‘destroy the works of

the devil' (1 John 3:8). That's why Paul included that the 'fellowship of the mystery' was to the intent 'that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

That harmonizes with what Paul wrote earlier in Ephesians – “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Members of the Body of Christ, Gentile and Jew, seated 'together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' will show for 'the ages to come' the exceeding riches of God's grace in His 'kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.' That's what Paul referenced again in Chapter Three of Ephesians – “to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made

known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*.”

This all goes to Christ’s purpose of ‘destroying the works of the devil!’ Yes, Jesus did it through His death on the cross. Yes, Jesus did it through His resurrection from the dead. Yes, Jesus did it through His ascension to the highest throne in Heaven with the Name that is above every name. Yes, Jesus is doing it by bringing together Gentile and Jew into a new relationship – a well-kept secret relationship – “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

We, Christians, Gentile and Jew, are that building! We are ‘fitted together.’ We ‘grow into a holy temple in the Lord.’ We are ‘being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’ That’s why Paul added these words in the context of the great ‘mystery’ that God had given him to preach and teach –

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:15-21

The Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) believes the Church that Jesus is building became corrupted after leaving its 'Hebrew' roots. Many in the movement blame the Apostle Paul or at least what they view as a misunderstanding of what Paul taught. I hope the last few parts of our study have shown how wrong they are about that. Paul (Saul of Tarsus) was part of God's eternal plan 'to create in Himself one new man' out of the Hebrew and Gentile – 'that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.' (Ephesians 2)

HRM is a relatively new movement that accuses the Church of being corrupted for one reason or another. However, HRM is not the first such movement. The first movement was the 'Satanic Movement' which began when Satan rebelled against God. The next movement was the 'Adamic Movement' which began when Adam and Eve rebelled against God. All of the movements that have come since that time have included combinations of doubting, disobeying, rejecting, and rebelling against God. If you don't believe me, take several months and read through the Bible. What will you find? Doubt – Disobedience – Rejection – Rebellion.

Sin

HRM thinks it understands the 'sin' problem and what to do about it. They believe that becoming 'Torah observant' is the answer to the sin problem. Not even close. Sin doesn't occur because of not 'observing' the Mosaic Law, even though that's what many HRM leaders teach. People can't stop sinning because they 'observe' the Law. In fact, it's impossible for a person to obey the Mosaic Law. Only Jesus obeyed the Torah perfectly.

So, what's the purpose of the Law? Paul wrote in Galatians 3 that the Law 'was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.' Did you see that? The Mosaic Law was 'added' because of sin (transgressions). Sin existed long before God gave His Law to Moses. The first time we see the word 'sin' in Scripture is Genesis 4 – "So the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.'" The

Hebrew word for 'sin' is *chatta'ah* (חַטָּאָה) and means "to miss, not hit the mark, make a false step, stumble and fall.'

This event, God talking to Cain, occurred thousands of years before God gave His Law to Moses. The Hebrew word is used almost 300 times in the OT, but we find it several times in Genesis before the Law was ever given. That doesn't mean disobedience to the Law was not sin, it just means that sin existed before the Law. Every human being has sinned since Adam and Eve. The Mosaic Law was added 'because of sin,' until Jesus Christ came to earth to fulfill the Law to take the next steps in His 'secret' plan to bring Gentile and Jew together into one Body.

How did He do that? He shed His blood on the cross to make "both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."

(Ephesians 2)

How do humans access ‘eternal life?’ By grace through faith, ‘and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.’ (Ephesians 2) The Law doesn’t bring ‘life.’ Jesus does. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As Paul wrote in Galatians 3 – “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

Somebody comes up with a ‘plan’ to ‘restore the Church’ because of ‘corruption’ on a regular basis. Look back through the history of the Church and you’ll find it. HRM did not discover something ‘new’ and ‘exciting.’ They just pulled out the old playbook of the ‘Judaizers’ who opposed God’s plan during Paul’s ministry and ran some of the same plays. If you read through Paul’s letter to the Galatians, you are reading that playbook. If you read what Paul told the Galatians about

the Judaizers, you know what God thinks of HRM and any other ‘movement’ bent on rebellion against His plan for the Church.

As Paul wrote in Galatians 2 – “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Read that again – “for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.” Remember that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Plus, Jesus personally taught Paul and the Holy Spirit ‘caught him up’ into Paradise before sending the apostle on his missionary journeys (2 Corinthians 12). In other words, you can trust Paul more than you can trust any HRM teacher.

Keep in mind that God knows us. Even after destroying most of the human race from the face of the earth and starting over again with one man and his family (Noah), God said this about the future of the ‘family of man’ – “the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). God said that centuries before He called a pagan named Abram to follow Him. Sin didn’t begin with the Torah. The Torah was added to the sin that already existed in the evil heart of humanity. The Torah was a ‘tutor, a teacher,’ to bring us to Christ. Once we have faith in Jesus, we no longer need the Law –

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Rightly Divided

Whether it's the Hebrew Roots Movement or any other false teaching, we should always go to God's word 'rightly divided.' That means 'cutting it straight, handling it correctly.' It means studying the 'text within the context in the original language to the original readers.' HRM, and other false religions, don't do that. They 'mishandle' God's Word. They make 'crooked cuts' as they 'mangle' the perfect and beautiful Word of God.

When I started this series of studies in May of 2021, I shared some of the beliefs of the Hebrew Roots Movement. There are literally too many errors in the movement to address every one, so I selected the ones that seemed most egregious. Here's a short list that I shared [in the first segment](#) –

- Restoring Christianity to its Hebrew (Jewish) roots
- Requiring the use of the name *Yaweh* rather than God or Lord and *Yeshua* rather than Jesus
- Belief that Jesus (*Yeshua*) is God (*Yaweh*) (there seems to be some disagreement by different HRM groups about

whether Jesus is God in the Flesh or if God elevated the human 'man' Jesus to a position of deity .. we'll look into that as our investigation continues)

- Helping believers express their faith in Yeshua as Messiah by returning to and keeping the Torah of Yeshua
- People are not saved by works, but the precepts of the Torah are eternally binding
- Viewing the Torah as the primary document for living the life God intends for followers of Jesus (Yeshua)
- Every believer should walk a Torah-observant life
- Believers must 'endure to the end' in their observance of the Torah
- The original Hebrew versions of Gospel writings are superior to Greek texts, which many in the HRM believe were corrupted. (Hebrew Roots has its own Bibles – *Qodesh Cepher, Sacred Name New Testament, Sacred Name Bible, Holy Name Bible*)
- The Epistles of the Apostle Paul are often ignored and sometimes rejected

- Pagan traditions adopted by Christians are not to be followed
- Hebrew terminology is used in meetings along with Jewish symbols and 'Messianic' music and dancing (known as Davidic Dancing)
- Believers should keep the seventh-day Sabbath and annual Passover
- Believers should keep the annual Feast Days (e.g. Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles)
- Removed from Protestant Christianity because of core belief differences
- Removed from Messianic Judaism because of core belief differences
- Removed from Rabbinic Judaism because of core belief differences
- Gentiles keep the Law through the One Law theory and Two House theology

Playing ‘Jew’

Most members of HRM are Gentiles. Messianic Jews are not fans of HRM, as I shared in previous parts of our study. I’ve met many Messianic Jews through the years and learned what they believe by talking with them, not just reading about them. They see themselves as ‘completed Jews’ (a term several shared with me). They believe that accepting Jesus as Messiah completes their Judaism. Messianic Jews usually retain their Jewish lifestyle and blend Judaism with Christianity as laid out in the writings of the apostles. Some prefer the writings of Peter, James, Jude, and John since those were addressed primarily to Jews. However, some Messianic Jews also read and follow portions of Paul’s writings.

While it may sound that Messianic Judaism (MJ) and the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) are almost the same, they are not. MJ is made up primarily of Jews who believe Jesus is the Messiah. HRM is made up primarily of Gentiles who are 'playing' at being Jewish. That's one of the reasons Messianic Jews don't appreciate the Hebrew Roots Movement. Both groups are fairly recent. The early history of MJ goes back to the 19th century. Some of the older HRM groups began in the 20th century.

I also personally know some Jews who became Christians. They also told me they believed that faith in Christ 'completed' them. Having been raised as Jews they have a deeper understanding of how the Jewish traditions point to Jesus Christ. Jesus did the same thing with His disciples after His resurrection – 'And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.' (Luke 24)

However, these Jewish Christians told me they no longer practiced aspects of their 'Judaism' (like being Torah Observant) because they had read Paul's letters and believed what He wrote. They understood that the blood of Jesus had 'broken down the middle wall of separation' between Jew and Gentile. They believed that Christ's death on the cross – 'abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace.' They believed that the Lord's death and resurrection reconciled Jew and Gentile 'to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.' These Christians, who were Jewish by birth and earlier practice, understood that 'playing Jew' was not what God wanted them to do. They were part of something 'new' that Jesus Christ did and they rejoiced in it.

That's what I meant when I wrote in a previous article that HRM goes 'backward' instead of 'forward.' Instead of embracing the 'new thing' that Christ did on the Cross, they want to embrace the 'old things' that can't bring life. Why would anyone want to do that? Embrace death over life? Makes no sense.

Making Sense of Scripture

- Restoring Christianity to its Hebrew (Jewish) roots

There's no reason to 'restore' Christianity to its 'Hebrew roots.' The Old Testament leads us to the New Testament. The Old Testament tells us what life was like before 'Hebrew' and it was Gentile. That was unsuccessful. The Old Testament tells us what life was like after 'Hebrew' and it was also unsuccessful. Look at the history of Judaism through the centuries. It was a mess! The New Testament tells us what life was like when the Messiah came to Israel. The Jews had Him crucified! Is that the 'roots' HRM wants to play?

It is important for Christians to understand and appreciate the Hebrew history that led to faith in Jesus Christ. God promised a 'Seed of the woman' in Genesis 3:15 would destroy the works of the devil. Everything in the Old Testament points to the Seed – Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David. God's eternal plan is not that we all become 'Hebrews.'

It's that we become 'free' in Christ. That includes freedom from everything that would hold us back from fully experiencing the promises concerning the Seed.

My goal as a Christian is not to be a Gentile or a Hebrew. My goal is to be what God has already made me through the sacrificial death of His Son – a child of God with eternal access by one Spirit to the Father –

And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:17-18

Our future is to 'reign' with Christ throughout eternity – not as Jews or Gentiles- but as 'kings and priests' to God. (Revelation 1)

- Requiring the use of the name *Yaweh* rather than God or Lord and *Yeshua* rather than Jesus

I'm happy to use the names for God that are found in the Bible. That includes Hebrew names and Greek names. However, since the Bible has been translated into thousands of languages, people across the world can know about God in their native tongue. To 'require' that every Christian in every nation speak Hebrew seems counter-productive to me. Do HRM leaders teach all of their lessons in Hebrew? No. I've watched their videos and read their websites and articles. They speak whatever language is native to them. They throw in some Hebrew words to make themselves appear more knowledgeable than other Christians, but that seems nothing more than just a 'show.'

Why don't they speak the other languages that Jesus spoke – Aramaic, Greek etc? Yes, Jesus spoke Hebrew in the synagogue. He probably spoke Greek and other languages of the day as was necessary for commerce. The apostles also spoke Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. Why do the HRM leaders 'require' using Hebrew only when speaking the Name of God? Sounds like a control feature to me. That's what cults do. They find ways to 'control' their members. I think it would be smarter for them to allow the Holy Spirit to 'control' His people.

- Belief that Jesus (*Yeshua*) is God (*Yaweh*) (there seems to be some disagreement by different HRM groups about whether Jesus is God in the Flesh or if God elevated the human 'man' Jesus to a position of deity)

That's an easy one. Any person or group that teaches that Jesus Christ is not the Eternal Son of God is heretical. Warn them once, maybe twice. After that, remove them and avoid them.

- Helping believers express their faith in Yeshua as Messiah by returning to and keeping the Torah of Yeshua

We're already seen what Paul wrote in Galatians and Ephesians. Read Romans, Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, letters to Timothy and Titus. Returning to and 'keeping the Torah' is returning to something that God points us to put behind us.

There is much we can learn from the Torah, but it is not for us to observe. Do we get insights to how God thinks? Yes. Do we learn things that can improve our health? Yes. But that doesn't mean we are to be 'Torah observant.'

- People are not saved by works, but the precepts of the Torah are eternally binding

Nope. The ‘precepts of the Torah’ are not eternally binding. Read Paul’s letter again, please. Requiring someone to ‘keep the Law’ is a ‘work.’ We are saved by ‘faith,’ not by works. I could quote a lot of Scripture about this, but I’ll share one from Paul’s letter to the Romans –

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame. Romans 9:30-33

- Viewing the Torah as the primary document for living the life God intends for followers of Jesus (Yeshua)

Same thing again. The Torah is NOT the primary document for living the life God intends for followers of Jesus. The entire Word of God is the primary document for Christians, and as we saw in past parts of our study Paul's letters reveal the 'mystery' (secret) that God kept until He was ready everyone to know about it.

... having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace. Ephesians 2:15

- Every believer should walk a Torah-observant life

Again, no. Same reasons as listed above and in previous studies. Torah observance is not required, not recommended. Read Galatians, Ephesians, Romans, etc.

- Believers must ‘endure to the end’ in their observance of the Torah

No, again, no. Same reasons as listed above and in previous studies. Paul wrote about ‘enduring persecution, enduring anything that would hinder the Gospel of Christ, enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,’ but nothing about enduring to the end in observance of the Torah. HRM misses that one by a long shot.

- The original Hebrew versions of Gospel writings are superior to Greek texts, which many in the HRM believe were corrupted. (Hebrew Roots has its own Bibles – *Qodesh Ceper, Sacred Name New Testament, Sacred Name Bible, Holy Name Bible*)

Evidence, please. Making up your own Bible is what cults do.

- The Epistles of the Apostle Paul are often ignored and sometimes rejected

I understand why. The Apostle Paul blows HRM and other Judaizing cults out of the water. No wonder HRM would ignore, reject, or mishandle Paul's writings. They have to in order to fake some kind of validity. Doesn't work. Validity denied. Jesus called and trained Paul. The Holy Spirit sent Paul out to do His work and inspired him in writing Scripture. If a group has a problem with that, they have a problem with God.

- Pagan traditions adopted by Christians are not to be followed

Easter is not a 'pagan' tradition. The early Church celebrated Easter and even debated about which date to use for the celebration. I'm not a fan of how the 'world' has turned Easter into a celebration of bunnies and eggs, so on that we can agree. As for Christmas, it's celebrated at the wrong time of year for one thing. For another, it focuses on the wrong things – Santa and presents. Wrong. It's about the Son of God coming to earth in miraculous fashion to gain a human body to live a sinless life, minister to the needs of people in 'person,' and to be able to 'die' for the sins of many. As for HRM folks, many of them celebrate Hanukkah in place of Christmas. Again, wrong time of year. No connection to the coming of Christ. The main thing is to preach the Gospel of Christ every day of the year. We should celebrate Christ's coming from Heaven to earth every day. If the world chooses a particular day to 'play Christmas,' Christians can do what they can to remind sinners that Christ came to die for their sins.

- Hebrew terminology is used in meetings along with Jewish symbols and 'Messianic' music and dancing (known as Davidic Dancing)

No reason to do that, but many Christian churches look more like rock concerts than places of worship today. HRM are 'playing' at being Jewish. Christians are 'playing' at being more like the world than like Christ. Both are bad ideas.

- Believers should keep the seventh-day Sabbath and annual Passover

The early Christians met on the first day of the week for worship, preaching, study, prayer, offerings, etc. They also got together on other days of the week.

On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 1 Corinthians 16:2

But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Galatians 4:9-11

Paul wrote in Romans 14 – “Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things.” The church in Rome was made up with Jews and Gentiles. Paul spent a lot of time with each group trying to help them understand how they were wrong in their thinking about God and themselves. However, when it came to ‘doubtful things,’ like certain foods, special days, etc., Paul recommended they not ‘judge’ each other. Why? “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.”

Paul wanted to help the Romans understand that the ‘kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.’ Don’t let ‘doubtful things’ get in the way of following Christ.

- Believers should keep the annual Feast Days (e.g. Feast of Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles)

Same response as above. No need to do it in order to 'keep' your salvation. Christians should learn about the feasts because they point to Christ and help us understand events in the Gospel accounts, but not with the idea that they have to do that be saved. Wrong again.

- Removed from Protestant Christianity because of core belief differences
- Removed from Messianic Judaism because of core belief differences
- Removed from Rabbinic Judaism because of core belief differences

I doubt that Christianity, Messianic Judaism, or Rabbinic Judaism are shedding any tears over HRM removing themselves from fellowship. We want them to be saved and give up this false teaching, but no fellowship until that happens.

- Gentiles keep the Law through the One Law theory and Two House theology

The Apostle Paul blows up this ‘false’ theology in Romans 10 and 11. The Jews blew it by rejecting Jesus when He came to them proclaiming ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ They paid for it as a nation 40 years later when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

However, as Paul wrote – ‘I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!’ God is going to restore Israel just as the prophets said. When will that happen?

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save

some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ... For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins. Romans 11:11-15, 25-27

Again, another 'mystery' (μυστήριον) from Paul .. another one of God's secrets. The 'blindness' that has happened to Israel concerning Christ will continue 'until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.' The word 'fullness' in the Greek is πλήρωμα (*pléróma*) and means 'completion, full complement, fulfillment.' The day is coming when the final Gentile will be saved. When that happens, God will do something astounding in Israel – 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion.' Who is the Deliverer? Jesus Christ! He will 'turn away ungodliness from

Jacob; For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’

Every day that goes by gets us one day closer to that very special day when the ‘mystery’ is complete and God returns to fulfill His plan for the land of Israel and the world – as prophesied in the Old Testament.

In Summary

Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile is not important. The blood of Jesus covers your sin and joins you together in the Body of Christ. Now is the time to follow the Word of God, understand the 'mystery' God revealed to Paul, and enjoy being a child of God. There is no need to go 'backward' and depend on Judaism for your salvation. Christ and Christ alone is your salvation. It is 'by grace through faith' that we are saved, not through 'Torah observance.' That didn't work in the 1st century and it won't work in the 21st century.

I hope the details in this series about the 'Hebrew Roots Movement' has been helpful to you. HRM is not the only group that is trying to deceive Christians into thinking the 'finished' work of Christ on the cross was not enough. There is always some group that wants to bring Christians back under the Law. Don't let them deceive you is my prayer.

Free eBooks

The 'Hebrew Roots Movement' – Part 1

The 'Hebrew Roots Movement' – Part 2

The 'Hebrew Roots Movement' – Part 3

The 'Hebrew Roots Movement' - Part 4

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