Why I’m Leaving the Messianic Movement

by C. M. Hegg

My friend Aaron just called “Messianic”, Messi-Antics. When I have said Messianic in the past, I mean someone that believes the Torah is God’s way of sanctifying His elect unto Himself, whether Jew or Gentile. But recently I have realized that the term Messianic is beginning to carry a lot more baggage. If this title is going to make people believe I have given up on some of the core beliefs that I rest my faith on, then I would just as soon give the title up. I can just as well call myself part of the “Torah movement”, or even call myself a “Christian” and then do a bit of explaining (which I always have to do anyway). So I am ready to leave the “Messianic Movement” behind, and identify myself as part of the “Torah Movement”.

During my teens and early twenties, I loved shock value. I would love to drop the verbal shock bomb in a conversation and then while the person was dazed and confused, I would bring them back to reality with a short explanation of what I was “actually” talking about, and how I wasn’t really a heretic (first paragraph as my example). I no longer like shock value, in fact I try to avoid it. I now see this form of conversation as immature, and turning good people off from me and any conversation we might have. Granted, there are still times when my immaturity shines through, and I drop hints of my former joy in shock bombs, but for the most part I try to keep the shock to a minimum. But this has not been the case for others. I have noticed recently that many within the Messianic faith, and even Christianity are selling themselves with a large amount of shock value. Perhaps the most surprising aspect to this is that people are buying it hook, line and sinker.

Within Christianity I have seen teachers and speakers grab their audience with provocative and shocking titles. Jarrid Wilson is a prominent Christian writer who is young and hip, is hooked the Christian youth by writing books such as “30 Words”, and his much anticipated “Jesus Swagger”. Wilson is a master of social media marketing, and has built a huge following through twitter and the provocative titles he uses to steer people to his blog. Tweets like “Why I’m getting divorced in 2014”, a title that even had me clicking on his link to see if this God fearer was leaving his wife, only to find out he was “divorcing” his iphone. In the end Wilson seems to have a genuine love for the Lord, and is reaching out to a younger generation, with a message that life is hard, life can suck, but with Christ by your side life can also be great.

Perhaps the bigger issues I have are from teachers within the Messianic movement. Some teachers have moved beyond the provocative title, into content that is meant to shock. This content has now lost its original intent, i.e., to be the content that originally shocks you, but then sets up the teacher to explain his wonderful point, and has changed to content that is not only shocking, but is downright wrong! Michael Rood has made an entire ministry off this kind of content. After his botched prophecy of the return of the Messiah on 9/11/99, Rood’s audience was not happy. He needed to grab new ears and keep them listening. Rood has set himself up well with a very slick social campaign, and a weekly T.V. show that looks really good. The problem is that you don’t have to watch his show for longer than one minute before you will find something that is theologically wrong. Perhaps even more egregious is Rood’s recent rejection of John 6:4. Rood has decided that this verse doesn’t fit his theological timeline of Yeshua, and so he has thrown it out.

Another example would be Monte Judah, a Messianic that couldn’t figure out how the book of Hebrews worked, so instead of realizing his own short comings, decided that the inspired word of God was wrong and decided the book of Hebrews should not be considered canon.
Both of these examples could be chalked up to bad scholarship, and downright ignorance, as opposed to leaders trying to shock folks. But with leaders like these, much of the Messianic movement has jumped onto the shock value band wagon (even if much more subtle), and are beginning to turn shock into bad theology. It seems like some Messianics are getting so used to people disagreeing and being surprised by their theological stance, that when they become more radical and let truth slip, they simply chalk other’s rejection up to the same old “christian blindness”.

The fact of the matter is that the Christian Church has gone through 2000 years of bloody fighting to bring us what we now have. Whether Messianics want to admit it or not, we owe a huge debt to Christianity for bringing our theology to where it is today. God has used figures and groups throughout history to preserve His truth that has allowed us to build upon what others have already wrestled with. Here’s a shock bomb for ya... God used the Catholic Church to bring us much of the theology we have today. That’s right folks, the evil institution that we so strongly fight against today was a tool used to shape our theology. Before the protestant reformation you didn’t have a second choice (unless you lived in a place where the Greek Orthodox ruled). You were part of the catholic faith, or you were in danger of losing your life. I fully affirm that there were true believers that did not agree with the Catholic Church, but still were a part of their local parish. We know this because almost all of the protestant reformers came out of the Catholic Church. It was folks within “The Church” that began to push against its theology. People like Luther, Tyndale, and even John Calvin were all members of a parish before they broke away and began the fight that eventually helped shape Europe and the U.S. as we know it today.

So why have I gone down this short historical rant, when I started by talking about shock value? What is happening in many Messianic circles is that people are coming out of the Christian church and coming into Messianic congregations. They are realizing the wonderful joy of living a life of Torah. And when this joy is found, they feel lied to and cheated by the Christian church. I understand this feeling, and have felt it myself. The problem is that while these feelings of betrayal are at their strongest, leaders come along and try to tear down other theologies that are clearly true. While it is good for people to question their theology, and to ask why they might believe something, it is detrimental to question something and then have someone who received his “degree” by sending a $50 check in, and learned a couple of Hebrew words on the internet, come along and try to “show you the light” by rejecting theology that he or she has absolutely no business teaching.

The fact is, Christianity is not a bad word. Nor is Church, Jesus, Christ or any other term that you might have grown up using. Jesus Christ is the exact same person and savior as Yeshua HaMashiach. There is nothing wrong with using these kinds of terms, but the bigger issue is theology. If we do some study in the theology that modern protestant Christianity holds to today, we will realize that these beliefs did not just come into being by several guys chatting over a few drinks down at the local saloon. Much of what consists of the Christian faith today had blood shed, wars started, and many deaths before it became “common place” within our minds. So let me simply lay out some of these beliefs.

1. No matter what a leader might tell you, there is one way of salvation for Jew and for gentile. It is through the shed blood of Yeshua (or Jesus, whichever you like to use) that we are saved. There is no second way of atonement. There is not a different way for “intentional sins”, and those that reject Yeshua the Christ are not counted among His elect. Jews cannot reject Yeshua as a heretic and curse His name, and still be saved because they believe in “a Messiah”, and though they don’t realize it, they actually believe in Yeshua.

2. There is only one true authority within the life of a believer. The 66 books that make up our Bible are God breathed and cannot be tampered with or disregarded. Anyone who tells you that other texts hold as much or more authority than the Word of God, should
not be listened to. Yes the rabbis have some good things to say, but their words are not on par with the Holy Word of God. If your leader or a teacher says that a part of the Scriptures should be thrown out, huge red flags should go up. I understand that there were later additions to the canon we now have such as Mark 16:10ff as well as several others. Later additions should not be seen as original texts, and therefore should be questioned, but these are passages that bible scholars as a whole agree are questionable. When a teacher like Monte Judah says the book of Hebrews should be thrown out, or someone tells you that even one verse should be taken out (like Rood), put some boxing gloves on and get ready to fight.

3. I fully agree that the “trinity” is a Greek answer to a Greek question. It is also a way for us as humans to explain something that our minds can’t understand. However, the doctrine of the trinity is something that was not formulated easily. The fact of the matter is that within the Bible we see God manifesting Himself in different ways. We cannot explain this. John tells us that no one has seen God at any time. Yet we see YHVH show up and talk to Abraham in his tent. We also see Yeshua, God with us, die for the sins of His elect. If this doesn’t blow your mind, then you haven’t taken the time to truly delve into the issues surrounding such a theology. The fact of the matter is, no matter how much we dislike the word trinity, and this Christian theology was fought over, and discussed for centuries. Throw out the word, but the general principles behind such a theology are Biblically based.

4. If your congregation or leader is saying that Yeshua is the Messiah but is not divine, then the entire doctrine of justification through the blood of the Messiah has been missed. If Yeshua was not divine, His death could only pay for one of his own sins. The fact is that the only way a sacrifice could pay for all of the elect’s sins, is if that life was infinite. This is why when the temple was standing, we didn’t bring one sacrifice in our lifetime and call it good. A person brought sacrifices every year, and sometimes weekly. If Yeshua was not divine, then His death would not atone for our sins, and we would still need a divine Messiah.

5. I am shocked that things as basic as the virgin birth are coming under attack. Once again this shows a lack of understanding in basic theology. Adam’s sin is passed through the father (Rom. 5), therefore if Yeshua had a human father, He would have had Adam’s sin passed to Him, and He would not have been a perfect sacrifice without blemish, but would have had the blemish of sin that was passed through a father. If this were the case, Yeshua would not have been an acceptable sacrifice, and He would not have been able to die for His elect.

6. You want shock value? Tell people you’re a Messianic and also a five point Calvinist. You’re likely to be ran out of town, or at least the Messianic synagogue. If you don’t like the word Calvinist, I can use a different one. The Bible clearly teaches the sovereignty of God. This can be seen in the Torah, the Tanach, and the Apostolic Scriptures. It is a misnomer to think that just because you came into the Messianic faith, you have to hold to an Arminian view.

Listen people, these issues, and more, are basic Biblical theology. There is nothing wrong with challenging thought and theologies, but don’t simply reject something because a leader puts up an argument against these foundational doctrines. Many people today are gaining their theology from the internet, a thing my friend and teacher Rob Vanhoff likes to call “theological dumpster diving”. It has been proven that morons can make really slick websites with great marketing campaigns, and sell proverbial snake oil. The problem the Messianic movement is having right now is there is a push against good education, and genuine scholarship. Theologies such as the Aleph Tav bible, Hebrew word pictures, two house theology, sacred name theology and more, are products of a lack of scholarship and should not be listened to. But perhaps even more important are our core beliefs and values that have come under attack by some within the Messianic movement. If this is what the Messianic movement is going to represent, I want no part of it. I fully affirm that the Torah is God’s way of sanctifying
His elect, and that this sanctification is the same for Jew and Gentile. I have been calling this theology Messianic. But if the title “Messianic” is going to bring along with it a rejection of my basic theological beliefs, I will simply call myself part of the Torah movement, and leave the Messianic movement behind.