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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

US warns no one will be ‘fully pleased’ by Israeli-Palestinian peace plan

In joint statement, Trump's Mideast peace team says only path toward an agreement is for both sides to not get everything they want

By ERIC CORTELLESSA 15 August 2018 <https://www.timesofisrael.com>

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration said Wednesday that neither Israelis nor Palestinian would be “fully pleased” by its long-awaited Middle East peace plan, whose contents are one of the most guarded secrets in Washington.

Jason Greenblatt, US President Donald Trump’s special representative for international negotiations, tweeted a statement from multiple officials that said the only way to achieve a final-status accord was for both parties to accept painful compromises.

“No one will be fully pleased with our proposal, but that’s the way it must be if real peace is to be achieved,” the officials said. “Peace can only succeed if it is based on realities.”

Trump officials have said they are finishing the plan and working on rolling it out, but have not offered any timeline.

Even before the release of the plan, the Palestinian Authority, which is boycotting the administration, has rejected the attempt to jump-start talks.

On Wednesday night, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas assailed the Trump administration for its proposals to alleviate the Gaza Strip’s humanitarian crisis. In a speech in Ramallah, Abbas said of Trump’s team: “I swear to God, they are liars.”

He also accused them of seeking to promote Gaza aid and relief projects to serve their own interests — and not out of a genuine desire to improve the lives of Palestinians.

The Palestinian leader’s frustration with the White House dates back to last December, when Trump formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and set in motion plans to move the US embassy there from Tel Aviv. The new compound was eventually opened in May.

Since Trump’s announcement, PA officials have refused to meet with members of Trump’s cabinet, declaring them as having relinquished their capacity to act as an honest mediator in negotiations.

Nevertheless, the Trump team tasked with trying to solidify a peace deal has been pushing ahead with developing a plan for what Trump has called the “ultimate deal.”

US-Palestinian relations, though, have continually soured. In January, the White House announced it would withhold \$65 million in assistance to the UN relief agency for Palestinians, a punitive measure responding to Abbas’s unwillingness to work with the administration following the Jerusalem decision.

“We pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect,” Trump tweeted on January 3.

Two weeks ago, however, Washington released millions of dollars of frozen aid money to the Palestinian Authority. White House officials said those funds were allocated only for Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, and that all other aid was still under review.

Willow Creek Has A Lot More to Repent of Than Sexual Abuse Cover-Ups

August 11, 2018 by Lighthouse Trails Editors

An August 8, 2018 Christianity Today article titled Willow Creek Elders and Pastor Heather Larson Resign over Bill Hybels chronicles events that led to Willow Creek founder Bill Hybels’ resignation from the megachurch due to numerous women having come forth with accusations of years of sexual misconduct and abuse by Hybels. Because of the lackadaisical attitudes Willow Creek leadership has taken toward the victims of Hybels sexual abuse, the Christianity Today article states that the two current lead pastors have resigned followed by the entire board of Willow Creek stepping down.

The Christianity Today article leaves the impression that once Willow Creek gets rid of these leaders, elects a new board, and apologizes to the women, there will be a fresh “new start” for Willow Creek. However, there is more to this Willow Creek story than meets the eye, more to repent of than the cover up of sexual misconduct, and the Christianity Today article unknowingly alludes to it. The CT article states:

In the summer of 2008, Bill Hybels stood in front of thousands of pastors and other church leaders gathered at Willow Creek Community Church and admitted his megachurch had failed.

“We made a mistake,” he told the crowd gathered for the 2008 Global Leadership Summit (GLS). A detailed Willow study had found that the church had helped many people find new faith in Jesus, but had failed to teach them how to practice the spiritual disciplines needed to grow their faith.

Lighthouse Trails remembers when Bill Hybels came forth with this declaration. He had actually announced it earlier in 2007. At that time, headlines across Christian media blasted the news that Willow Creek had repented. Lighthouse Trails readers began contacting our editorial office asking if we heard the news that Willow Creek had repented. This led to our researchers digging a little deeper to get the full story on Willow Creek’s “repentance.” In November of 2007, we issued an article titled “No Repentance from Willow Creek – Only a Mystical Paradigm Shift.” Our article began:

Recently, headlines about Willow Creek filled the front pages of several online news outlets. The caption stated: “A Shocking Confession from Willow Creek Community Church.” Some wondered if Willow Creek’s pastor Bill Hybels was repenting from past errors in ministry techniques.¹ But a Lighthouse Trails commentary showed that this “shocking confession” was actually a re-enforcement of Willow Creek’s efforts to “transform this planet” through contemplative and emerging spiritualities.

That earlier LT commentary stated:

It is no new thing that Willow Creek wishes to “transform the planet.” They are part of the emerging spirituality that includes Rick Warren and many other major Christian leaders who believe the church will usher in the kingdom of God on earth before Christ returns. This dominionist, kingdom-now theology is literally permeating the lecture halls of many Christian seminaries and churches, and mysticism is the propeller that keeps its momentum. If Willow Creek hopes to transform the planet, they won’t be able to get rid of the focus on the mystical (i.e., contemplative). Their new Fall 2007 Catalog gives a clear picture of where their heart lies, with resources offered by New Age proponent Rob Bell, contemplative author Keri Wyatt Kent, and the Ancient Future Conference with emerging leaders Scot McKnight and Alan Hirsch as well as resources by Ruth Haley Barton and John Ortberg. Time will tell what Willow Creek intends to do about strengthening its focus on “spiritual practices” and “transform[ing] the planet.”

Back then, Willow Creek had conducted a study to find out how they had failed as a ministry. The results of their study led Willow Creek to make a new more passionate commitment to taking their congregation into the emergent church via contemplative prayer practices (i.e., spiritual disciplines) as was clearly illustrated in the Fall 2007 issue of their magazine, where editors stated: “The landscape of our ministries is shifting. Brace yourself for the aftershocks.” The issue included the articles and teachings by numerous contemplative/emergent figures such as Richard Foster, Richard Rohr, Ruth Haley Barton, and John Ortberg (see more detail). There was no doubt about it after reading that issue of their magazine, Willow Creek’s repentance was basically saying, “We are changing the way we do things around here – we need to incorporate more of the contemplative, mystical element into our people’s lives.” And, yet, Christianity Today and other Christian media outlets made it look like a true biblical repentance was taking place at Willow Creek.

Since Willow Creek’s “repentance” in 2007, Lighthouse Trails has tracked much of what Willow Creek has been up to from Lynne Hybel’s anti-Israel efforts to the work by Hybel’s grown kids and kids-in-law to bring the contemplative prayer movement to full fruition at Willow Creek—and, of course, Bill Hybel’s own demise through his out-of-control sexual exploitations of women who worked for or with him.

To give an example of where Willow Creek is at today, we’d like to draw your attention to The Practice, a program started by Bill Hybel’s son-in-law, Aaron Niequist, in 2014 that takes place on Sunday nights at Willow Creek and specifically incorporates contemplative prayer practices. On The Practice website, it states:

The Practice is an experimental gathering where we immerse ourselves in God’s dream for humanity, practice the historic disciplines i.e., [contemplative meditation] that align us with His dream, and carry each other along the way.

While the headlines for a while will focus on the sexual-abuse accusations and the resignations and apologies that are following, there’s not much chance that you will see headlines discussing Willow Creek’s contemplative/emergent ways. Of course, you won’t. Virtually every major Christian media outlet (including Christianity Today) is either giving a pass to this mystical paradigm shift or is outright promoting it. If only the purpose-driven, Willow Creek, seeker-friendly, church-growth, dominionist “church of today” could see that it is on a mystical slippery slope to full apostasy, and while exposing sexual predators and helping victims is an important thing, the very nature of the “new spirituality” with a dependence on esoteric experiences instead of God’s Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, will not make people live more righteously and God pleasing but will, in fact, pull them deeper into darkness and sin because the source of those esoteric (contemplative) experiences are driven and led by the same source that deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and not by the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Thus, any “fruit” of such a “repentance” will be sour and harmful.

In spite of all that has been happening at Willow Creek, this year’s Global Leadership Summit still took place this week as is stated in a Religious News Service article. It was expected that over 400,000 around

the world would participate. Christians today seem to need to have their ears tickled and their spiritual bellies filled, and the show must go on.

Hamas: Western Wall belongs to Muslims

Hamas newspaper claims Western Wall is Islamic, claims 'war crimes' committed 'against' it.

Jpost.co.il

The Hamas terror organization has decried any religious or historical connection between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel.

Hamas' *Falestine* newspaper on Saturday will publish a special edition dealing with the Western Wall, which is called Kotel Al-Buraq in Arabic.

It will discuss the Wall's geography, which according to Falestine is "the first line of defense for Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Another section, the paper will discuss the laws and agreements which make the Wall Islamic, and claim that any harm to it is a war crime. The paper will also discuss "crimes" against the Western Wall and Israel's attempt to legitimize its rule over the site.

In 1967, Israel conquered Jerusalem's Old City, as well as Judea and Samaria, from Jordan.

he Western Wall is the last remnant of the retaining wall around the Temple Mount's base. It was built during the Second Temple Period (530 BCE-70 CE) by Herod the Great and is considered to be Judaism's holiest site.

Islam was founded in the seventh century CE. Al-Aqsa Mosque was built on the Temple Mount in 705 CE.

Hebrew Roots and the Leaven of Works Salvation Pt I

TA McMahon and G. Richard Fisher

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. 1 Cor. 5:7

The Apostle Paul warned about being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians:4:14) These days, the winds of false doctrine are blowing hard against the church.

Most people who believe in God have the notion that there are certain things we can do that will please Him, thus improving our position with the Almighty and gaining certain benefits for ourselves. There is some truth to this idea, but there are also serious problems that can result, such as a form of works salvation. We must remember that grace is God's kindness to the undeserving, and it cannot be worked for or earned in any way (Ephesians:2:8-10).

Of course, true salvation will always have works that accompany it (Titus:2:11-13; 3:8)

That truth is found in the Scriptures. For example, "Jesus answered and said unto him [one of the apostles], If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John:14:23)

Children are instructed to “obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians:3:20)

In Ephesians we are told that honoring one’s father and mother is the “first commandment with promise” (Ephesians:6:1-2)

First John states, “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John:3:22)

Obedience to the teachings of the Word of God indeed produces benefits and pleases the Lord (emphasis added to all above). Jesus accepts us as we are but does not leave us as we were. Genuine salvation produces sanctification and good works as we are motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Asking God for something involves more than just making a request. Yes, Jesus said, “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John:14:14)

Scripture, however, further tells us “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James:4:3)

God’s response to our requests is often dependent upon our motives, our walk with Him, the desires of our heart in conformity to His desire, His will, His grace, His mercy, and so forth. Such conditions challenge the false teachings of the Word/Faith, Prosperity, and Healing preachers, who try to bend certain verses of Scripture into a system of cause-and-effect laws, which thereby appear to turn God into a genie in a bottle who must respond to one’s demands. Supposedly, when a verse is “claimed,” God has no choice but to comply.

Not only is any attempt to interpret the Word of God in such a way that it becomes a system of spiritual laws (or methods or techniques) dead wrong, but it is little different from the beliefs and practices of magic, occultism, and witchcraft. At the very least, it generates legalism. For example, the response heard most often by those who have not been healed after following the teaching of the Word/Faith preachers (as well as the response of the preachers themselves) is that the healing could not take place because there was a lack of faith on the part of the sick individual. Legalism results in this system as individuals are coerced into adhering to the particulars of the false teaching (laws of their own making) in order to get the expected outcome. Furthermore, all of this is akin to “works salvation,” which will be considered later. Another aspect of legalism is creating unbiblical, man-made rules and practices not found in Scripture (Colossians:2:20-23).

Although the errors of the Word/Faith and Prosperity teachings should be obvious for diligent biblical Christians to discern, there is a growing movement that is related in many ways (although far more subtle and seductive) called the **Hebrew Roots Movement**.

The Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) is, in general, an attempt by its adherents to draw closer to God by gleaning things from Judaism that are perceived to be biblically significant and valuable. Though the movement includes Jews who have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah, for the most part, it comprises non-Jewish professing and true Christians (Gentiles). The HRM technically is not a movement as we would normally define one. There is no national organization or hierarchy of leadership among this group, yet there are leaders and writers from diverse ad hoc organizations, churches, and ministries who favor the trend. Within the subculture, churches may be called synagogues, pastors may be called rabbis, Jesus may be referred to as Yeshua, depending on the whim of the leader or leaders. That make-it-up-as-you-go-along concept was demonstrated when one “Christian Rabbi” wrapped a prosperity teacher in a Torah scroll, called the teacher King, seated him in a chair, and had ushers parade him around on their shoulders.

The attraction for many to the HRM is often motivated by a love for the nation of Israel and its culture and traditions. However, those feelings have taken multitudes beyond a biblically acceptable attitude toward things Jewish and into beliefs and practices that are contrary to the teachings of Scripture. For some, the HRM has led them into a gospel of works salvation, which the Apostle Paul warned against and condemned in his Epistle to the Galatians: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians:3:1-3).

So there appear to be three different layers within the HRM: (1) Those who see Jewish practices with the accoutrements as a means of salvation ; (2) Those who see some kind of a Jewish lifestyle as a means of sanctification and as a more godly spiritual life, and (3) Those who immerse themselves in Judaism as a way to understand the customs and manners of biblical times. Layers 1 and 2 create huge problems for their followers. They also create “levels” of Christians and a divisive elitism, while layer 3 could simply be called Hermeneutics 101. Layers 1 and 2 employ imitation, but the third layer includes those seeking better illumination and insight into the Word. Most exegetes fall into that third category.

Every sincere believer has been born again spiritually by faith in what Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross. Eternal salvation is the result. The Holy Spirit then takes up residence within that person and becomes his enabler for living a life that is fruitful and pleasing to the Lord. This is the only way for one to be saved from everlasting separation from God. Nevertheless, there is a certain kind of “salvation” (sometimes referred to as sanctification) that a believer is to work out by God’s grace (Phil. 2:12-13) But again, as Galatians makes very clear, the born-again Christian began in the Spirit, and his life in Christ can be carried out only by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. The flesh cannot please God (Rom.:8:8) and, furthermore, it profits nothing (John:6:63).

Many of those who are attracted to the Hebrew Roots Movement recognize that works play no part in the Gospel. Yet all who hold to the various HRM beliefs and practices have succumbed to a form of works salvation regarding their relationship with the Lord and their hope of drawing nearer to Him. For many, there is a false sense that “Jewishness is next to godliness.” Therefore, they see spiritual efficaciousness in Jewish rituals, dietary laws, paraphernalia, and the like. For a number of followers of the HRM, their affinity for such things may be unintentional when it comes to falling back under the Law to achieve righteousness. Nevertheless, it’s a leaven that rises and leads in that direction. No matter how insignificant that leaven may seem, it is at least a rejection of the grace of our Lord: “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come[s] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians:2:21).

The false teachings found within various groups of the Hebrew Roots Movement run the gamut—from a clear rejection of Christ’s full payment on the Cross for the sins of mankind as necessary and complete for salvation, to the arbitrary guesswork of what laws are to be obeyed, or to a dual-covenant salvation. Within that mix are numerous ideas that are declared to be based upon Scripture but have no biblical basis whatsoever. The HRM, with its Law/works emphasis and inclusion of extra-biblical content, is a major contributor to the last-days apostasy and therefore needs to be exposed and judged biblically. Not every enthusiast holds to all the particular teachings of the HRM, but if the doctrine or activity is unique to the particular HRM group, it is not scriptural.

The following information constitutes much of what is promoted within the HRM. The purpose for its inclusion in this article is to aid in discernment and to offer spiritual protection so that believers might follow the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians:5:21) This is accomplished by being a Berean, i.e., by searching the Scriptures to discern whether or not what’s being taught is consistent with the Word of God (Acts:17:11)

The HRM, however, thwarts that critical exhortation for discernment. Many followers of the movement are

taught that the synoptic Gospels were originally written in Hebrew in a version that was supposed to be superior to the Greek texts, containing Hebrew idioms that provided deeper insights. Since no one has ever produced copies of the original Hebrew language version, adherents are told that much of what has been “missing” can be gleaned from rabbinical sources, even the mystical, occult Kabbalah. The obvious fallacy in this is that it points a participant toward the extra-biblical material and speculations of men in order to supposedly explain the inspired Word of God. This greatly undermines dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit for a believer’s understanding of the Bible, and it does great harm to the belief in the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture. Furthermore, those who promote the idea of a necessary original Hebrew New Testament disparage the Greek text of Scripture that God chose in which to originally present the New Testament. Not only is that wrong, but it misses the obvious reasons for a Greek New Testament. Greek was the universal language of that day, understood by both Jews and Gentiles. Hebrew was the language specific to the Jews. The Gospel, however, was not for the Jews only, but God’s mandate to the disciples was that they were to preach it to the Gentiles as well (Matthew:28:18-20)

To further compound the error, HRM followers are exhorted to learn Hebrew in order to increase their spiritual understanding and become more like the Jewish Jesus.

The Apostles had a knowledge of Jesus from being with Him when He physically ministered here on earth. Yet Paul wrote, “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” (2 Corinthians:5:16 - NKJV). The implication is that a believer’s spiritual insight is far more necessary for understanding and growth in Christ than anything obtained through one’s flesh. In spite of that, the HRM majors in things of the flesh that are drawn from customs and traditions having no biblical support and are centuries removed from the time when Jesus walked the earth.

Going back to the Law has been a problem for Christianity down through its history. From Paul’s issues with Peter (Galatians:2:11-14) to the Judaizers of Galatians, to the obligatory dogmas of Roman Catholicism and the Russian and Eastern Orthodox Church, to the legalism of Seventh-day Adventism and other “Christian” cults of today—all teach abiding by the Law. Yet none teach that a person must observe the whole Law. All are very selective regarding which laws they choose to obey. The HRM also reworks Old Testament observances that only seem to reflect what God ordained. The Passover practiced today, for example, is not the same Passover observed during the Exodus and up until the first century. The contemporary Seder is based on an extra-biblical Jewish tradition that Christians attempt to recreate but that has no meaning for the non-Jew. Those of the HRM however, are not the only people who participate in the Seder. It is widespread among Evangelicals who are attracted to the present-day practice, thinking that it is consistent with Scripture. The biblical Passover celebrated Jewish liberation from Egypt, which does not apply to people who were not delivered from Egypt but from sin. Jesus gave to the Church the Lord’s Supper, not the Passover. Jesus’ death is the fulfillment of the Old Testament practice of Passover (1 Corinthians:5:7)

Honoring the Seder ceremony for the sake of witnessing to Jews may be well meaning on the part of Christians who participate but in fact promotes the invented content of the Talmud and sends the message that the Messiah has yet to come.

There is one incontrovertible fact that is ignored by nearly all in the HRM groups. That inescapable fact is that first-century Judaism is not the same Judaism that exists today. In fact, to be correct we would have to refer to Judaisms. There are a dozen or more subcultures and divisions within Judaism today. Orthodox, Conservative, Ashkenazic, and Sephardic Judaisms are only the tip of a very large iceberg. The huge question that the HRM has yet to answer is, Which Judaism? An arbitrary “take your pick” philosophy simply adds to the confusion and chaos.

The representation of the teachings of the HRM as leaven is fitting, as it has been slowly rising within the

churches of our day. But there are indications that the movement may increase like a flood. The names of some of those who promote certain of the teachings and practices of the HRM within Christendom have highly influential organizations or ministries. They include Joseph Farah of WorldNetDaily, Blood Moons author Mark Biltz, The Harbinger author Jonathan Cahn, pastor John Hagee, blogger and cultist Michael Rood, and pastor James Staley (now in prison for fraud).

There is much more that needs to be addressed regarding the Hebrew Roots Movement, which we plan to continue in Part II. It will include the belief in dual-covenant salvation] (one for Jews, based upon obedience to the Law, and one for Gentiles, who receive the gift of salvation based upon the finished work of Christ in payment for their sins); it will also focus on Jewish feast days, the Sabbath, denial of the Trinity, the Worldwide Church of God connection, the elitism that is generated by HRM participation, as well as providing further information.

TBC