

STATEMENTS ON MY FAITH AS A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST

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Modern technology has had amazing results in the area of communication. Yet, for all its convenience, it will always lack the personal touch of face to face presence with each other. It also falls short when it comes to description of my faith. Jesus and His Apostles preached and taught the Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom of God by oral means, by relationship in

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their homes and *ecclesiae* and not by writings. Sure, there were writings to various individuals and *ecclesiae* in that first century, but they were the result of the relationships and not the cause.

Because I do not intend to write a complete book on my faith, this document will no doubt also fall short, but I am sure it will bring any reader some important clarity on my faith.

CHILDHOOD FORMATION

Like so many of my generation, I grew up in one of South Africa's mainline Afrikaans churches – The Dutch Reformed Church. Looking back today, I know that, also like so many of my generation and even the generation of our fathers and mothers, we were often simply following the tradition of a religious culture. This does not mean that it was all bad, but that we gained perceptual and intellectual knowledge about God the Father, this great judge who we were taught was always watching us, His Son, Jesus Christ who died for our sins (whatever that meant), and the Holy Spirit (a name mentioned in passing without providing any understanding of the deep spiritual realities it carried).

It was only many years after my childhood (actually approaching my fiftieth birthday) that I really came to faith in the sense of understanding and knowing it. The question naturally follows: what is this faith in what or whom? I will try to explain without getting lost in too much description.

MY APPROACH TO OTHERS AND THEIR WORK

I have come to the realisation that I could listen to what others were saying, but the responsibility for what I believed was mine and mine alone. I could never transfer that responsibility to anyone else.

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him/her.**

What I could do, however, was to listen to others, carefully weigh what they were saying, testing it against the Scriptures and then decide for myself what I believed to be the truth.

I also try to separate the person from his or her teachings. I can therefore differ from another's views and still love and appreciate the person. Isolating oneself from the world in a convent or monastery type of institution was not God's will for us. So many times in the Scriptures we find His command: be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth!

FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

I believe in *elohei Avraham elohei Yitschak velohei Ya'acov* – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I believe He is the one true elohim (God) who also revealed himself to Mosheh (Moseh; Moses), and to the other prophets we read of in the Tanakh or Old Testament. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, of the universe.

I believe that the prophets foretold the coming of an Anointed One and the Messianic Age. The Hebrew Rabbi's always took this to be the "end of the age" or "end times". Referring to the Seventy Sevens prophecy in the Book of Dani'el (Daniel), the Rabbi's have forbidden the Hebrews to count or calculate the sevens, for then they would know that Yeshua MiNatzaret (Jesus of Nazareth) was that Messiah/Maschiach/Moschiach. (Pronunciation of Yeshua – accent on Yé, followed by schwa).

I believe that He is that completion of the Law and the Prophets, not the destruction thereof. I also believe that He gave His disciples a new law – that they should love each other as He loved them. This stands on a level far above loving one's neighbour as you love yourself. Torah (the law and teaching of God) was no longer written on stone tablets and papyri, but on the heart.

In the Messiah, His life, crucifixion, resurrection and eventually His *parousia* and judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 70 AD, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that one wonderful day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 the old Mosaic Covenant

was replaced by a New Covenant. It was not a renewed covenant as some would teach, but a New (better) Covenant (Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ibrim/Hebrews 8:1-7). The

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work Yeshua/Jesus has been given to do is far superior to that of the human high priests. He entered the holy of holies (Holiest Place) once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (for those who would believe in Him as the Son of God).

I believe that the Scriptures, or the Bible if you will, is a fulfilled (and not terminated) book. After all, Chapter 15 and verse 8 of the Apoakalypsis (Revelation) states that no one could enter into God's presence until all the plagues of the seven angels had been poured out. If the Apoakalypsis has not been fulfilled as I believe, then I still cannot enter into the presence of Elohim Yahweh. Then I would still need a Levitical high priest to come before God in my place.

The Apostles' generation was the Elect, for they were the vehicle for the establishment of a new and better Covenant, and we need to follow the principles of their doctrine. To do so we need to clean up the pollution of our understanding by the stubborn stains of Greek and Hebrew philosophy. Yet even today, the Scriptures are not being read, they are being interpreted instead. And the interpretation inevitably adds into the Scriptures what was never written or intended. It is no wonder then that there are more than 40 000 denominations in Christendom.

Differences are not limited to Orthodox, Reformed, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christendom, though. We find it in the writings of Judaism, for example – I only have to think of Rabbi's Shammai, Hillel and Akivah. And so, too, do we find it in the writings of those who identify themselves as 'Torah Observant Christians.'

I dearly appreciate the use of the Hebrew names of *HaShem* (The Name) and of His *Maschiach*. Having said that, however, I realise that there is a lot of confusion here too. In literature of Torah observant groups, sometimes called Sacred Name groups, there are so many variations, and all declared to be The Correct One. I have at least 26 variations of God's name and 14 of Messiah's name. Then I have statements from, for example, the Institute of Scripture Research's translation of the Bible, called The Scriptures, and which is used by Torah observant groups in South Africa, and also some abroad. This Institute has preferred to retain the Tetragrammaton for God because, like many others (including rabbinic circles), they declare that through non usage over so many centuries, no one really knows anymore what the proper pronunciation of HaShem (The Name) is.

I am convinced, after reading much in this regard, that the English name "Jesus" has absolutely no pagan connection as some say and is simply a derivation of "Yesous," the Greek transliteration (and not translation) of "Yeshua." In his discussion of the matter, Dr.

Michael Brown, of Hebrew descent and who holds a Ph.D in Semitic Languages points out that *lēsous* was the natural Greek rendering of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* two centuries before his birth. Brown also points out that the original Hebrew-Aramaic name of Jesus is *Yeshu'a*, which is a short variation of *Yehōshu'a* (Joshua). The name *Yeshu'a* occurs 27 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, primarily referring to the high priest after the Babylonian exile, called both *Yehōshu'a* (see, e.g., Zechariah 3:3) and, more frequently, *Yeshu'a* (see, e.g., Ezra 3:2). So, Yeshua's name was not unusual; in fact, as many as five different men had that name in the Old Testament record. And this is how that name came to be "Jesus" in English: Simply stated, this is the etymological history of the name Jesus: Hebrew/Aramaic *Yeshu'a* became Greek *lēsous*, then Latin *Iesus*, passing into German and then, ultimately, into English, as Jesus. The name *Yahushua* which seems so popular in some circles as the correct name of the Messiah, does not exist in Hebrew culture or understanding of God, according to Brown.

With this in mind, I can only marvel at God's grace, for we all fall short. He reprimanded Israel through the prophet Yesha'yahu (Isaiah), that they honoured Him with their words, but that their hearts were far from Him. Yeshua (Jesus) repeated these words when he too addressed the religious leaders of the time (Mattiyahu/Matthew 15:7). The mirror image (directly opposite) of this would then be that the words from people's mouths were often inaccurate, but their hearts were with God – and this He graciously understood. After all, He was the one who told Sh'mu'el (Samuel) that He did not look upon man as man did, but He looked upon the heart. Is it not amazing that an adulterer and murderer, David, was called a man after God's own heart?

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Without this grace and reconciliation that came in Maschiach – and I do not see it as a free pass to do what we like – would there be any humans alive today? And if so, would any of them be blessed? I base this statement on Torah itself, for example D'varim (Deuteronomy) 28:15-19 which states that if they did not carefully follow **All His commands**, they would be cursed in the city and in the country, their descendants and firstborn of their herds would be cursed, and they would be cursed coming in and going out. The commands/ commandments include many things we would not be allowed to do today – such as stoning a rebellious son, for example.

The nation of Israel was set apart that the whole world of their time (and consequently beyond) would know God through them. They were given the land Canaan – physically the political, economic and cultural crossroads of that era. The nation controlling that small piece of land, could influence the whole known world. But Israel was a stiff-necked people and the nation was torn apart into two kingdoms. The Northern kingdom, known as Israel were idolators and eventually dispersed and lost in terms of the tribal identity. Hebrew Rabbis acknowledge that they are lost in that sense even to this day.

Judah and Benjamin were preserved as the Southern kingdom, or Kingdom of Judah, thus preserving the Messianic bloodline coming down from Noah's son Shem (also identified in

the Scriptures as Melchizedek). The modern nation of Israel is not a prophetic restoration of the Nation of Israel as the popular end-times industry prophets would have it. It is simply a manmade phenomenon. God's name was on the ancient city of Jerusalem, for that was where His Temple, the centre of His presence among men, was. **Jerusalem of today is no longer the holy city and by the very words of Yeshua to the Samaritan woman at the well (Yochanan/John 4:21-24), there is no need or place for a rebuilt temple.**

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God is Good News. In Yeshua HaMaschiach Adonay, we have been reconciled with Elohim Yahweh – and I use this name knowing that He hears my heart, not the correctness or not of my spelling or pronunciation. **That kingdom is not a physical area, but I understand it to be the power of God working through His people. It is, or should be, a visible kingdom, not by rituals but by the visible power of God in the lives of those who say they believe that Yeshua MiNatzaret (Jesus of Nazareth) was and is indeed the Messiah foretold by the prophets.** Sadly we are all a stiff-necked people so many times, just as the people of old Israel. We need only look at the world around us to see that like Israel of old, there is a lack, if not absence, of strong Godly leadership, leaders whose lives are a daily sermon of hope and Godly love to their own people and the nations abroad. We need only consider Ya'acov (James) 3:13-18 and measure contemporary political, judicial and church leadership against this Kingdom standard to know why the world is in a mess.

For me, the constitution of this kingdom is found in Mattityahu (Matthew) 5 – “Blessed is (...)”. I should never need to have to tell people what my faith is. They should know it from knowing me and seeing it in my life.

May you be blessed in the city
And blessed in the country.
May you be blessed in your work
And in all you do.
May your basket and kneading bowl be blessed;
And may you be blessed when you come in
And when you go out.

Sjalom.

Gerrie Malan