

IT'S JUST SEMANTICS

You know, I really get a kick out some people. They will write the most asinine things on the internet and then when they are challenged by their incorrect use of words and such; they will counter with the phrase, “it’s just semantics,” which they use to blow you off. I seriously doubt that many of them have ever read the meaning of semantics let alone used it the correct way. Simply put, the meaning of the word “semantic,” is:

Semantics: noun plural but singular or plural in construction \ si-‘man-tiks\

: the study of the meanings of words and phrases in language

: the meanings of words and phrases in a particular context

The meaning that is used as the “blow off” comment usually applies to the second meaning of the word; meanings of words and phrases in a particular context. We have to wonder however, if their use of the word is proper or not proper and if it applies to the case at hand.

A few of us have studied scripture for several decades and we know that the Bible is the inspired Word of Yahweh; that it is a living Word and able to cut asunder, dividing the bone from the marrow, the soft tissue from the hard tissue and that it can be used for reproof and correction. Because of these things, you just can’t state something and then back up your words with, “it’s just semantics brother.” As we read in the definition of “semantics,” it is using words in proper context, not as some sort of word bingo that allows you to grab any word you want and place it into any context.

It is sad how Christians tend to mimic the world when it should really be the other way around. The world likes to pervert words and meanings. We have seen this in our current day like never before. Here are a few of those words:

awful: In the 1300s it originally meant “inspiring wonder” and was a short version of “full of awe”. But now the word has purely negative connotations.

Husband: The Old German words “hus” and “bunda” mean “house” and “owner”.

“Husband” originally had nothing to do with marital status at all, except that home ownership made husbands extremely desirable marriage partners in the 13th century.

The slang shortening it to “hubby” was first used in the 1680s.

Matrix: You may be thinking of Keanu Reeves in his 1999 hit sci-fi movie. But in reality “matrix” comes from the 14th century French word meaning “pregnant animal”.

The list goes on and on where these corruptions of the language are concerned; and just in our lifetime too:

Bad: used to mean bad but now it means something that is maliciously good.

Groovy: was an adjective that described something that had grooves; now it means something cool.

Cool: used to mean the opposite of warm; now it is something that means good and acceptable.

Queer: used to mean odd or strange; now it means homosexual. This one might not be so far off.

Gay: used to mean happy and carefree; now it means homosexual.

Christians are not immune from perverting words; albeit most of the perverting is done through ignorance and not blatant disregard for the Word of Yahweh. Let’s look at two words that seem to be abused these days:

Replenish: used to mean to fill with persons or animals; to supply fully; to fill with inspiration and power.

Quite a few theologians today use the new meaning of the word, which means to “fill again.” Many people who believe in an “old Earth” use this perversion to enforce their belief that either Yahweh used evolution to bring about our current creation; or, they say that there was a pre-Adamic creation that existed before Yahweh created the “present” heaven and earth. To use

the old and original meaning, one can only come to the conclusion that Yahweh was telling both Adam and Noah to “fill” the earth with people, not to refill the earth.

The word that is probably the most misused is the word **GRACE**. The Grace of Yahweh seems to be one of the most abused gifts that He has afforded to us. Before we can go into that, we have to see exactly what Grace is. Grace is found in both the Tanakh (Old Covenant) and the Brit Hadasha (New Covenant). The definitions of both are as follows:

Old Covenant – Hebrew: *chen* (khan) – favor, acceptance

And New Covenant – Greek: *charis* (kah – rees)

1. that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech
 - good will, loving-kindness, favour
1. of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues
 - what is due to grace
1. the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace
2. the token or proof of grace, benefit
 1. a gift of grace
 2. benefit, bounty
- thanks, (for benefits, services, favours), recompense, reward

The KJV translates Strongs G5485 in the following manner: grace (130x), favour (6x), thanks (4x), thank (4x), thank (with G2192) (3x), pleasure (2x), *misc* (7x).

Since most of the people who read this and may take offense at it will only have regard for the New Covenant, we shall only look at the Greek meaning. First, let’s look at a typical scripture that uses Grace, which so many people cite:

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Romans 6:14 KJV

The word for “grace” that is used in the scripture above is “*charis*,” and according to the word usage and Strongs Concordance, the meaning of “*charis*” in this particular scripture is: *that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech.*

So, Believers in Yeshua aren’t under the Law, which is quite clear, but they are not under “immunity” either. According to this scripture, Believers are under Yahweh’s joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness and his speech to us in Grace. In turn, the definition also suggests that believers should also have those attributes because we are not under the Law.

The problem today is that many people equate Grace with immunity. When people are immune from a law it means that a particular law does not apply to them. Theoretically, in our society, all people are subject to all laws and no one is immune. With the free fall into lawlessness we see people being granted immunity for this or that law and it bothers anyone who has agreed to obey all of the laws.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-20

Now, let’s look at two scenarios, one earthly and one earthly/heavenly:

In our first scenario, we have the laws of the land here in the United States. Let’s look at traffic laws, shall we. Those of us who drive know about stop signs. They are annoying little placards but they’re a necessity. They keep people from getting killed at busy intersections. In our scenario, let’s assume now that our dad the circuit judge for our district and we think that we have power and authority because we’re his kids. We figure that we’re immune because of our familial status. We’ve run the stop sign many times and we’ve never been pulled over by the police and cited for our violation. We assume that if we do get caught, our dad will intercede for us, so we just keep on breaking the Law. Even though our dad is in his high position, and he can pull our proverbial fat out of the fire, the Law still exists. We have grace through our dad because he loves us.

So we run the stop sign and it causes us to be injured in a car accident and two people in the other car were seriously hurt. We don't know why we're worried about this; after all, our dad is the circuit judge and he'll find us innocent; he's our dad, he won't fail us. What we didn't bank on is that our dad knows that he is bound by the law. Although he can show us grace, he'll have to allow us to go through the court process and if we're found guilty, he'll have to let us pay the price that we owe to society. The verdict comes in and the jury has found us guilty of reckless manslaughter. They have determined that we must serve a sentence of ten years in prison. We look to our father, and we ask him what happened. He explains to us that even though he's the magistrate, he cannot override the law. He will still love us and we will always be his children; and he has even expressed that he will receive us when we are let out of prison; but he will not alter the course that has happened.

For our second scenario let's throw a religious element into the mix. Joanne is a lovely woman of Yahweh. She grew up in a Christian family, accepted Yeshua as her Lord at an early age and has walked with her Lord throughout her life. She was a strong believer and knew right from wrong and she believed that the Bible is the Word of God. She has however gotten a warped sense of grace and she sees it as a way to fellowship with the world and still retain her status with Yahweh. Joanne has always known that tattoos aren't really what Yahweh would want her to do, but everyone else seems to be doing it so it must be okay. She wants to be like her friends, both worldly friends and Christian friends, all who are getting tattoos. A man of Yahweh approached Joanne in Church and showed her a scripture in Leviticus where Yahweh says that such things are not to be done; however, Joanne knows better and tells the man that she is under grace and that the Old Testament has been fulfilled in Yeshua.

Joanne has gone through a divorce and has children. Her life has changed during the months since the man approached her at church. She has dated from time to time, but it never seems to work out. The men she dates say that they are believers, but they always seem to prove otherwise. She has been interested in a guy at church, and has let him know that she's interested in him. He has explained to her that normally he would be interested in her, however, he does not find tattoos on a woman's body appealing and he sees them as an ungodly thing to do. Joanne becomes defensive and labels the man as judgmental. Joanne finds out some more bad news that week. For the past few months she's been run down and she's felt sick. She went to the doctor last week and the doctor performed some tests. The tests came back and revealed that Joanne has Hepatitis "C" and that her liver is damaged. She has learned that this disease has no cure and that it will ultimately kill her. Joanne, being a smart woman, does some research and finds out that

other people who got their tattoos from the tattoo artist that she used, have all come down with hepatitis C. The artist didn't clean his needles well enough and has infected several people.

Joanne begins to grow angry at everyone; everyone except herself. She blames the tattoo artist for the disease. She blames her friends who talked her into getting the tattoo. She even blames Yahweh for allowing this to happen to her. What Joanne didn't bank on is that fact that even though believers in Yeshua are saved from damnation, they are not necessarily saved from the results of actions that they take in this life. She mistook the meaning of grace as being immunity for her bad choices and didn't see that grace means that we are saved from hell and spiritual death, and that it made Yahweh happy to save us from those things. She begins to reflect on what the man in church told her, and even on what the Ruach Ha Kodesh told her all of these years; that your sins will find you out.

What about sin? Is getting a tattoo a sin? We have to turn to scripture to find out:

You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:28

Many people see the Tanakh as being antiquated; as null and void because of what Yeshua did on the cross. They cannot comprehend that Yahweh gave those Laws to Israel for a reason. Yahweh knew that tattooing is a pagan thing to do. Yahweh knew that people can get blood borne diseases from tattoos. Yahweh said not to make graven images and He knew that putting paganism on a believer's skin sets them apart for paganism and not for Him. Yahweh knew that tattoos displease him. Joanne knew that Yahweh stated "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. Joanne failed to realize that the same voice that spoke the Torah to Moshe was the same voice that uttered "it is finished," from the Cross. Joanne was told all of her life that her body was the Temple for the Holy Spirit, however she decided to put graffiti on Yahweh's temple:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

I am quite confident that the Apostle Paul was dealing with those who saw "grace" as a "get out of jail free" card. I know this because of the following scripture:

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:12-18

What Paul is saying at the beginning of that scripture can be summed up in modern English like this, "I'm under grace, so I can do anything I want; I'm under grace, but I will not allow myself to do anything that displeases Yahweh."

What many people fail to realize is that Yeshua fulfilled the Torah, He never said that he came to abolish it. Let me post that scripture again; hopefully from the lips of Yeshua to your ears and heart:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-20

Yes, Yeshua fulfilled the Torah in that we no longer have to sacrifice to make atonement to Yahweh. And it is true that the legal aspect of the Torah has been fulfilled; for instance, we no longer stone people for being false prophets (although maybe that one should still be around). However, the laws for healthy living, social living, the Sabbath and the Feasts are still alive and well and should be observed.

I have written this because Yahweh has put it on my heart. Our words are not to be semantics and our thoughts are not to be mixed with psychobabble. We're to speak the truth – all the time! We're supposed to love our brothers and sisters, even if that means giving them a harsh word. I am so tired of hearing, "you have to do it in love." I do believe that more people have been loved into hell whereas a stern rebuke would have saved their souls. I've seen more supposed "believers" in Yeshua run amok because good meaning people who would give them a word are suppressed by the notion that correcting a brother is wrong and that everyone is under grace. The great "grace debate" has been around from the start of the Church of Yeshua, and it will probably continue until the return of Yeshua. The thing that every believer in Yeshua has to determine is whether we're going to live under the dictates of those who abuse grace, or whether we're going to walk in the power of the Ruach Ha Kodesh and just speak what Yahweh wants us to speak, and act as Yahweh wants us to act. Political correctness is a tool from the very pits of hell and it has NO place in the Church of the Faithful in Yeshua.