Rhema vs. Logos

It happens every now and again. Well, it happened yesterday again!

Somewhere, sometime, someone came up with the idea that the Greek word ‘rhema’ has a totally different meaning to that of ‘logos.’ I do not know who started this mythological hoax, but once again the church fell for the hoax!

Yesterday, one of the pastor’s at church preached a sermon that included Mt 4:4, “But he answered, ‘It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."’” The Greek word for ‘word’ here is rhema. The claim is that rhema does not refer to the Bible like logos does, but to a fresh word from the mouth of God.

What follows is a little study on the uses of ‘rhema’ and ‘logos.’

It is a little long, but I hope it is worth the reading.

1. Introduction

In the Charismatic world we have been inundated with all kinds of teaching from all over the world. Some of it legitimate, and others not. In the last two decades or so the teaching has been spread that there is a major difference between RHEMA and LOGOS. Is there a difference? If so, what are the differences between these two words? If not, how do they relate to each other? It has been taught that rhema is the spoken Word from God to each individual or to a people today, whereas logos is God’s written Word as we have it in the Bible.

One thing that we must not be, is scared of what our studies of the Word of God will reveal. We should also never come to the Scriptures with preconceived ideas. We should also never merely accept what we are taught from the pulpit or in conferences by “reputable” teachers. We should be like the Bereans that kept on comparing what Paul preached with the Scriptures they had.

In the final analysis we are all responsible for our own faith and system of doctrine. If we are to mature as Christians, then we have to “be diligent to present [ourselves] approved unto God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” (NASB 2 Tim. 2:15). This study is not just a matter of semantics. Is it semantics that separate us from the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons? It is the true meaning behind common words that we use. There are many words that are shared between them, and us, yet they have vastly different meanings. So, it is important to know exactly what a word means as set forth in the Scriptures.

2. Meanings

- Rhema

First, let us look at some lexicons and a theological dictionary.

The following resources were used:

**Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance** from the Online Bible.

**Gerhard Kittel’s** Theological Dictionary of the New Testament abridged in one volume and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley.
This is what I gleaned from the above resources about **rhema**.

[what has been uttered by the living voice, sound from the voice with a definite meaning, words joined together to form a sentence; something expressly stated like an announcement or treaty, the Septuagint translates both *logos* and *rhema* from the Hebrew *dabar*, that which is uttered in speech or writing; speech, discourse, the subject matter of speech; a minimal unit of discourse, single word, focus on the content of the communication, differences between *logos* and *rhema* is a matter of style; thing, expression]

- **Logos**

This is what I gleaned from the above resources about **logos**.

[ a word, decree, the act of speaking, teaching, reason, account; first sense of collection, counting, conversation; expression of thought, statement; thoughts expressed in words, relates to speaking and thinking, a divine declaration recorded in the OT; systematic and formal treatment of a subject, the content of what is preached; matter]

3. **Translation**

- **Rhema**

**Spoken**

The following verses related to **rhema** all show its usage with the general meaning of "speaking".

Mt 4:4; Mt 12:36; Mt 18:16; Mt 26:75; Mt 27:14; Mr 9:32; Mr 14:72; Lu 1:38; Lu 1:65; Lu 2:17; Lu 2:19; Lu 2:29; Lu 2:50; Lu 2:51; Lu 3:2; Lu 5:5; Lu 7:1; Lu 9:45; Lu 18:34; Lu 20:26; Lu 22:61; Lu 24:8; Lu 24:11; Joh 3:34; Joh 5:47; Joh 6:63; Joh 6:68; Joh 8:20; Joh 8:47; Joh 10:21; Joh 12:47; Joh 12:48; Joh 14:10; Joh 15:7; Joh 17:8; Ac 2:14; Ac 5:20; Ac 6:11; Ac 6:13; Ac 10:22; Ac 10:37;

Ac 10:44 “While Peter was still saying these things (**rhema**) , the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word (**logos**) . Here the **logos** is equated with the **rhema** that Peter delivered unto them.

Ac 11:14; Ac 11:16; Ac 13:42; Ac 16:38; Ac 26:25; Ac 28:25;

Ro 10:17 "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the **word** of Christ." Should we believe that here the **rhema** refers to the spoken word? No, here it has nothing to do with the word being a spoken word or a written word. The word here is the gospel of Christ being preached.
Ro 10:18; 2Co 12:4; 2Co 13:1; Heb 1:3;

Heb 11:3 "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."

God spoke and all that exist came into existence. In 2Pe 3:5 it is the logos that was spoken and the heavens existed. Here it is clear that rhema and logos are meant to be synonyms.

Heb 12:19 "and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages (logos) be spoken to them." Here once again logos is equated with rhema.

1Pe 1:25 "but the word of the Lord remains forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” The rhema of the Lord here is the gospel that was preached.

2Pe 3:2 "that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.”

The rhema of the prophets that the New Testament disciples knew in those days were written, yet they are referred to as that which was spoken by the prophets. In this case rhema can be seen as referring to that which is written. Although the prophets spoke those words, to the people that Peter wrote to, they were written. See also Jude 1:17.

Other than spoken

Lu 1:37 "For nothing (no word) will be impossible with God."

Lu 2:15; Ac 5:32;

Ro 10:8 "But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);" The word of faith being preached is the gospel. The gospel today is part of the written Scriptures. Should it not then be known as the logos? During the early years of preaching the gospel, it was not written down yet, but the gospel is just as well contained in the OT as it is in the NT. Anyway, the word of faith is preached here and not written.

Eph 5:26 "that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word," Here there is no reason to go either way as to what rhema is referring to. It could be pointing to the gospel that is cleansing us, or to the whole of the Bible that has a sanctifying effect on us.

Eph 6:17 "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” Is the sword of the Spirit that which is spoken or that which is written, or both? Something that I just thought of is this: Do the Scriptures refer to that which God has spoken or to that which is written when it uses the phrase word of God? I am almost sure that it uses the former meaning. Whether it uses the phrase rhema of God, or logos of God, it still points to that which is spoken.

Heb 6:5 ”and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,” In the context the Scriptures are speaking about salvation and related subjects, and I would venture to say that in this case “word of God” refers to the gospel as that which is good.

• Logos

For the sake of time and space we will not display all instances of logos or its derivatives which amount to about 320. Selected verses will be used here.
In the gospels logos is used as a spoken word in the greatest majority of cases. We can learn from this that logos is not to be interpreted as that which is written alone. It is to be suggested that the word used to refer to the written word of God is graphe. When a reference is made to logos as that which is written and especially when a quote is made from the Old Testament, it seems never to show the whole of the Old Testament as the logos, but rather a book or even just a verse. e.g. Lu 3:4 “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”, Joh 12:38 “so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’”, Joh 15:25 “But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’”

Spoken

Mt 5:37; Mt 7:24; Mt 7:28; Mt 8:8; Mt 8:16; Mt 10:14; Mt 12:32; Mt 12:36; Mt 13:19; Mt 15:12; Mt 15:23; Mt 21:24; Mt 22:15; Mt 24:35; Mt 26:44; Mr 5:36; Mr 8:38; Mr 10:24; Lu 1:20; Lu 4:22; Lu 4:36; Lu 5:15; Lu 6:47; Lu 9:28; Lu 10:39; Lu 23:9;

Joh 2:22 “When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture (graphe) and the word that Jesus had spoken.” Here John uses the word graphe to refer to the written Scriptures, and logos to refer to that which Jesus had spoken.

Joh 4:39; Joh 4:50;

Joh 14:23-24 ”Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.” John is not using logos here as that which is written, but rather as those words that Jesus spoke to the disciples.

Joh 17:6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.” Verse 14 will clear up what the logos here refers to. It refers to that which Jesus spoke to them.

Joh 17:14 “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

Joh 17:20;

Joh 18:9 “This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken:” Logos here refers to a portion of the Scriptures, and not all the Scriptures.

Joh 18:32; Ac 2:22; Ac 2:40;

Ac 4:4 “But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.” Logos here refers to the gospel as preached by the apostles, and not all the Scriptures.

Ac 5:5;
Ac 10:44 "While Peter was still saying these things (rhema), the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word." These words (rhema) of Peter were seen as a logos. Here we have a direct equation between these two words.

Ac 11:22; Ac 13:15; Ac 15:27; Ro 3:4;

Ro 9:6 "But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel," The word of God here most probably refers to the promises God made to Israel. In verse 9 the word is shown as the promise to Abraham.

Ro 9:9 "For this is what the promise said: 'About this time next year I will return and Sarah shall have a son.'"

Ro 13:9; Ro 14:12; 1Co 1:5; 1Co 1:18; 1Co 4:20;

1Co 12:8 "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit." One of the most conclusive evidences that rhema does not refer to the spoken word and logos to the written word is found here in this passage where logos is used to refer to the spoken word as found in the logos of wisdom, and the logos of knowledge. It has been said so many times by popular preachers that the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and prophecy are to be seen as the rhema of God to His people, yet here in this passage it is clear that they are the logos of God.

1Co 14:9;

1Co 14:19 "Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue." When speaking in a tongue it is not a rhema from God, but a logos from God.

1Co 15:2; 1Co 15:54; 2Co 1:18; 2Co 10:11; 2Co 11:6; Ga 5:14; Ga 6:6; Eph 4:29; Eph 5:6; Eph 6:19; Col 3:17; Col 4:6; 1Th 1:5; 1Th 4:18; 2Th 3:14; 1Ti 4:12; 1Ti 6:3; 2Ti 1:13; Tit 2:8;

Heb 2:2 "For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution," Here the logos is spoken by angels.

Heb 4:2; Heb 7:28;

Heb 12:19 "and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words (rhema) made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them." Again, here the logos is equated with the rhema that was spoken.

Heb 13:22; Jas 3:2; 1Pe 3:15;

2Pe 3:5 "For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, . . . 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." When God spoke the heavens into existence, the Scriptures do not use the word rhema, but rather logos. What does this show us? When God speaks we cannot make a difference between rhema and logos.

1Jo 3:18; Re 12:11.

Other than spoken

The gospel

Lu 8:11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. (12) The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved." I would suggest that logos here refers to the gospel, because it is by
this logos that "they may [ ] believe and be saved."

Joh 5:38 "and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent." Jesus said this to the Pharisees because they did not accept the good news about Jesus, "for whom he sent, him ye believe not." The word here then refers to the good news about Jesus that they did not want to accept, and therefore did not abide in them. For, if it was, they would have believed in Jesus.

Joh 8:31 "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples," Jesus did not have any technical meaning for logos except to say that in order to be a disciple of His, one has to "continue in My word." (NASB Updated edition) This word then points to the gospel that Jesus brought to them. It is a word that Jesus spoke to them from the times of His own baptism.

Ac 6:2 "And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.'" The logos here again refers to the gospel, and not to all the Scriptures. When we keep on reading we can see what the twelve meant by the word of God in verse 4, "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The gospel is intended here.

Ac 6:4;

Ac 6:7 "And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." How does the word of God increase, unless it means that the gospel kept on spreading.

Ac 8:4 "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word." I would suggest that the word here again refers to the gospel.

Ac 8:14; Ac 8:25; Ac 10:36; Ac 11:1; Ac 12:24; Ac 13:5; Ac 15:7;Ac 15:35; Ac 16:6;

Ac 17:11 "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures (graphe) daily to see if these things were so." In this instance the logos is set in contrast to the written Scriptures.

Ac 19:20; 1Co 14:36; 2Co 2:17; 2Co 5:19; 2Co 6:7; Eph 1:13; Php 1:14; Php 2:16; Col 1:5; Col 1:25; Col 3:16; Col 4:3; 1Th 1:6; 1Th 1:8; 1Th 2:13; 2Th 3:1; Tit 1:3; Tit 1:9; Heb 5:13; Heb 6:1; Heb 13:7; Jas 1:18; 1Pe 1:23; 1Pe 2:8; 1Pe 1:23; 1Pe 2:8; Re 6:9.

Other

Mt 5:32;

Mt 15:6 "So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God."

In this case the logos of God may refer to the whole of the Bible, but I would suggest that in the context in this case logos refers to the commandments given by Moses to the Israelites. In verse 3 Jesus asks them "why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?", and then Jesus quotes one of the commandments.

Mt 18:23; Mr 1:45;

Lu 3:4 "As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet." Here the written part that logos refers to is that verse which Luke quotes here, and not the whole of the Bible as the "written word of God."

Joh 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Here logos undeniably refers to Jesus as in the following verse. Joh 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
Joh 12:38 “But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled.” Again, here word refers to a portion of the OT found in Isaiah.

Joh 15:25 “But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’” Logos here refers to a portion of the law, and not all the Scriptures.

Ac 1:1 “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.” Logos here refers to that which Luke wrote before, yet it only refers to the book of Luke and not the whole of the Bible.

Ac 15:15; Ac 19:40;

Ro 9:28 “for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.” Isaiah is here quoted saying that the Lord will execute His logos quickly. What was Isaiah referring to if indeed his own prophecies were part of written Scripture? Is it logical here to say that the logos refers to the written word? Logos most likely refers to a portion of Scripture, or even the spoken word of God.

2Co 4:2; Php 4:15; Php 4:17; Col 2:23;

1Th 4:15 “For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.” The word of the Lord here probably refers to that which the Lord revealed to Paul, and is not written somewhere else.

1Ti 4:5; 1Ti 5:17; 2Ti 2:9; 2Ti 2:15; 2Ti 4:2; Tit 2:5; Heb 4:12; Jas 1:21-23; 1Pe 3:1; 2Pe 1:19; 1Jo 1:10; 1Jo 2:5; 1Jo 2:14; Re 1:2; Re 3:8; Re 17:17; Re 19:9; Re 22:7.

4. The phrases "Word of God" and "Word of the Lord"

- RHEMA

**Word of God**

Lu 3:2 - God spoke to John the Baptist in the wilderness.

Eph 6:17 - The sword of the Spirit.

Heb 6:5 - Tasting the good word of God.

Heb 11:3 - The worlds were prepared by the word of God.

**Word of the Lord**

Lu 22:61 - Peter remembered the word of the Lord about the rooster.

Ac 11:16 - Peter remembered the word of the Lord concerning the Holy Spirit.

1Pe 1:25 - The word of the Lord endures forever; the gospel is this word.

- LOGOS

**Word of God**

Mt 15:6 - The word of God being invalidated by the traditions of men.

Lu 8:11 - The seed that is sown is the word of God.
**Ac 6:2** - The apostles are not to serve tables with the effect of neglecting the word of God (the preaching of the gospel).

**Ac 6:7** - The word of God (the gospel) kept on spreading.

**Ac 8:14** - Samaria received the word of God (the gospel).

**Ac 11:1** - The Gentiles received the word of God (the gospel).

**Ac 12:24** - The word of God (the gospel) continued to grow.

**Ac 13:5** - They began to proclaim the word of God (the gospel).

**Ro 9:6** - The word of God concerning Israel did not fail.

**1Co 14:36** - How did they get to know about the word of God (the gospel).

**2Co 2:17** - Many peddle the word of God (the gospel).

**2Co 4:2** - Not adulterating the word of God (the gospel).

**Php 1:14** - Speaking the word of God (the gospel) without fear.

**Col 1:25** - Paul was called to carry out the word of God (the gospel).

**1Th 2:13** - The Thessalonians received the word of God (the gospel).

**1Ti 4:5** - Foods are sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

**2Ti 2:9** - The word of God (the gospel) is not imprisoned.

**Tit 2:5** - The word of God (the gospel) must not be dishonored.

**Heb 4:12** - The word of God is living and active.

**Heb 13:7** - Remember those who led you and spoke the word of God to you.

**1Pe 1:23** - We are born again through the living and enduring word of God (the gospel).

**2Pe 3:5** - It is by the word of God (God spoke) that the heavens existed long ago.

**1Jo 2:14** - The word of God abides in the young men.

**Re 1:2** - John testified to the word of God.

**Re 6:9** - Some were slain because of the word of God (the gospel).

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**Word of the Lord**

**Ac 8:25** - They testified and spoke the word of the Lord.

**Ac 15:35** - Paul and Barnabas taught and preached the word of the Lord.

**Ac 19:20** - The word of The Lord (the gospel) grew mightily.

**1Th 1:8** - The word of the Lord (the gospel) sounded forth from the Thessalonians.

**1Th 4:15** - Paul spoke to them by the word of the Lord.

**2Th 3:1** - Thessalonians were to pray for Paul that word of the Lord (the gospel) would spread rapidly.
5. Conclusion

After what we have learnt concerning the uses of rhema and logos, we have to conclude that there is no reason for us to speak of rhema as the spoken word of God, and of logos as the written word of God. Both have the potential to be used in either way. It has become one of the Charismatic ways to bring in all kinds of unverified teachings that no-one bothers to study. If it ever happens that someone differs on something they feel is essential to their Charismania, they will come with counter attacks such as "you are not in submission to your elders", "you are critical", and "do not resist God’s anointed", etc. Many Charismatic churches are still in the trap of believing that whatever the pastor says must be adhered to, because you need to remain under someone’s covering. This is what I would liken unto Charismatic witchcraft. Witchcraft is the art of manipulation, and boy, do these Charismatics manipulate! Do not get me wrong! I am a Charismatic (Reformed/Calvinistic) myself, but I am daring to stand up and be counted for correct doctrine. I want to handle the word of truth correctly. We cannot do this unless we study the Scriptures for ourselves. We are to be mature Christians, and not just be spoonfed from the pulpit. Ultimately we are each responsible for our own spiritual lives.

My purpose for writing this paper was not to trample on toes, or to deviate from that which is the truth. Rather, it is a calling back to that which is the truth. How many times have we not heard that someone said, "I received a rhema from God last night." It is accepted to such a large extent - not truthfully - that there exists a major difference between rhema and logos, that it almost seems impossible that people’s perception would be changed. Who wants to stand up and say "All of you are wrong, and I am right." The sheer opposition to that would already put most people off. Yet, when we know that there is wrong teaching in the church we need to stand up and speak the truth the best we know how.

After all this rambling, what is the connection between rhema and logos? One thing I have found is that rhema is never used to point to a quotation in the OT in the same way that logos is used. E.g. Joh. 12:38 “that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, …” Logos is used in this way several times where such a quotation from the OT is made, but never do we find any conclusive proof that logos is directly connected with the whole of the Bible. Rather logos is used as a part of a book or as a word. Looking at all the passages quoted above that relate to both rhema and logos we have to conclude that these 2 words are in reality synonyms for each other. As with all synonyms the “synonomic” (just coined) words do not always have exactly the same meanings or domains. There could be different shades or nuances, but synonyms, nevertheless.

I hope this study brought you, the reader, some enlightenment, and that I was able to bring the facts across clearly, and without ambiguity.

May God bless you as keep on searching for, and living out the truth.