

Zahakiel: Almighty Father in Heaven, we give you thanks for the past week, with its trials and blessings, all of which serve to draw us closer to you in character. We thank you for the opportunities we have had to reveal your Spirit to the world, and we pray that the witness we have given will draw all unto you. We ask for your blessing during these Sabbath hours, that our minds and hearts should be in harmony with your will, and bless this study for the growth and strengthening of your People. We ask this in the name of your Son, Yahshua. Amen.

Barb: B: Amen, D: Amen, PC: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Elyna: Amen

Naraiel: Amen, Amen, Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Pete: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. A couple of weeks ago, I gave a study entitled "The Uselessness of Uncertainty." I pointed out that being uncertain, in spiritual things, is worse than being wrong in a very real sense. We may think of it as a parallel to being "hot or cold," that is, "right or wrong," rather than lukewarm. An individual that is uncertain is being lukewarm or non-committal in his opinions, and these are often the most difficult people to either work with or correct.

Fortunately, Yah has not left man alone with his diverse opinions. Yah has given His opinion through direct revelation and through prophets, as revealed in His Word. He has also, in this last generation, revealed His will through the collective wisdom of the Church.

In times past, a prophet would stand up and say, "This is the way things are." While there may still be rare occasions on which this is necessary, in the New Testament even the prophets are a part of, and subject to, the broader community of saints, rather than always in a clear leadership role. We read, for example, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." (1Cor 14:29) The prophets are still the seers, the ones who receive particular insight into the things of Yah; however, they no longer necessarily hold an "office" or authority over the congregations, for their words require interpretation, consideration, and the judgment of others.

For the honest seeker, he has received the promise of Yahshua that he will "find." Any who have accepted the Holy Spirit's invitation to come to know the Father and Son will surely do so, therefore even though caution and care are virtues, uncertainty not useful. There is, as in so many spiritual truths, a balanced place, and a ditch on both sides of the road. Tonight, we are learning to avoid the other ditch, and so this study is called "The Hardness of Certainty."

Caution, with the Spirit of Yahshua, can be a blessing. It keeps us safe, and from making costly mistakes. Without that Spirit, the carnal aspects of uncertainty are revealed: anxiety, cowardice, unreasonable fear.

Similarly confidence, with the Spirit of Yahshua, is a blessing. It gives us our testimony. It allows us to stand firm in the face of opposition, and to reach out to others in love. Without this Spirit, the carnal aspects are revealed, these being arrogance, pride, and hardness of heart toward those who disagree with one's position. I have had a number of experiences, as I am sure many of us have, with those who have become hard-hearted due to their overconfidence. They have received personal insights, or studied sacred texts, and have settled on an interpretation from which they cannot be moved. Now, on the surface, this sounds like a good thing; after all, isn't the "sealing" of Yah's people a certainty from which they cannot be moved? Well, there are some unique things about the seal of Yah.

First, it is due to an understanding of the objective truth, and not merely the consensus or opinions of men. Second, the seal of Yah, while it makes us firm as steel to principle, does not make us firm as steel to people. We become more considerate, more graceful with regard to others. We bless those who oppose us, we pray for those who speak about us and to us harshly. CSDAs have more cause to be certain than any other people on the earth, and yet...we are careful to learn of loving-kindness, and softness of heart, of courtesy to others and consideration of preferences. We have said that a Christian would rather die than hurt another person's feelings unnecessarily. What a difference this Seal of Yah is from the mindset of some whom we have encountered.

In the past, we have had camp meetings during which we have had visitors who have made themselves "experts" in the Spirit of Prophecy and (to a lesser extent, ironically) the Bible. At times, these have been among the most legalistic, rigid people we have encountered. There is nothing at all bad about a careful study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings; indeed, these things are necessary for sanctification, but then again, there was a reason why some of Yah's most powerful blessings were removed from the Church when it began to fall into apostasy and error.

We often point out that the Bible, the New Testament, speaks of the brethren keeping the New Moon. We do not find this to be true of any false Churches. The Bride knows the intimate things of the Father and Son, and when we try to explain the beauty of a day of examination, an ordinance of humility to others, they do not understand it. It is well that they do not, for if the New Moon activities were conducted by a group of people who were not covenanted together in love, that group would not last very long.

Similarly, the New Testament speaks of the "holy kiss." This is not some cultural thing that faded away...it is a "holy" kiss. It means something to Yahweh, and to His

people...therefore, if you want to know where Yah's people are, look for them among the commandment-keepers who honor the New Moon, and who greet one another with the holy kiss. None but the true, none but the blessed, can know these doctrines, even though they are written in the world's most popular book. This is not a coincidence.

So, we have two classes of people who read deeply of the inspired writings. We have those with the Holy Spirit, and those without it. Those without it become hard, for they see rules, they see in the dos and don'ts the "way" to Heaven. Those with it become kind, gentle, even though they do not waver in their convictions. They see in the principles, in the character of Yahweh revealed the "Way" to Heaven. The words are the same, but the meaning is very different – one is a set of works, the other is the Person of the Son.

Adriel: Amen

Zahakiel: Just recently, I had a memorable experience in a Facebook group. Giselle had found a group composed of Adventists that are committed to the teachings of the Pioneers, specifically focusing on the first few decades of Adventism. She had some conversations with the people gathered there, and left some links. One day, a conference SDA came in and asked why they didn't believe in the Trinity. Now, these are a people who "major" in the anti-trinity doctrine. It is as the Gospel to them, far more than the born-again experience, although they would hardly admit this, so I had no real plans to say anything, even though Giselle told me about his question.

A couple days passed and, surprisingly, nobody replied to him, so Giselle asked me again if I would like to answer. I agreed to do so, and I joined the group. I gave what I felt was a good answer to the young man's question, speaking about the nature of the Godhead, and how it impacted the born again experience. He and I had several very pleasant exchanges back and forth about this, and he began to see where I was coming from, saying that my explanations made sense.

Now, while this was happening, other (unrelated) posts were being placed on the page from time to time, and they would get a brief flurry of "likes" from the regulars. The posts that were liked were invariably quotations from this or that pioneer, or Ellen White, with little or no commentary or substance beyond the quotation itself. This seemed to be the standard practice, and at one point Giselle posted a statement that she preferred to talk to people rather than just sharing quotes, because this was more natural. Meanwhile, our conversation, on a common question, and dealing with it directly from the Bible, was ignored. I didn't mind this, but I did note it, and realized that Giselle was on to something with this love of quote-posting...

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Now, while the exchange between the individual asking about the Trinity and myself was going on, a new person, apparently well known to the group, jumped in and gave a very by-the-book answer full of quotations and statements by the pioneers. There was no original thought in it, just "This is what was said," with some conspiracy theories mixed in for good measure. I'm all for relying on inspired writings and precedent, but for one thing, I had already answered the question to the satisfaction of the original questioner, for another I actually used the Bible and not what other people said ABOUT the Bible, and for a third, the quotations seemed like a very "stock" answer not designed to engage the individual at all, nor to win the heart.

I didn't really comment on the approach, as it was an open discussion; however, one of the things posted was some "research" item, reflecting the opinions of several scholars that the line in Matthew had been altered by the Catholic Church: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Mat 28:19)

My reply was that there wasn't any actual historical evidence that the verse was altered, and that whether or not that one verse was, it didn't affect the conclusions. As we have always noted, the "name" is singular, and it represents the cause, or the purpose, represented by the Godhead. The original poster seemed satisfied either way, but the individual who posted the reply...I don't recall his name... immediately began to attack me, and quite viciously. He said that I was speaking foolishness, that I was calling all the scholars idiots, and that I should basically shut up and leave the forum. Naturally, I was shocked at this reaction, but wanting to give him an opportunity to clarify his meaning, I asked if he really thought I should leave because we disagreed on this minor point...that I didn't say there was no evidence at all, it might even be true, but that the opinions of theologians are not fact, and in any case, we have the same conclusions about the Trinity. His next reply was a rant asking whose side I was on, since I was just spreading confusion. He could not accept the least bit of dissent from his opinions, even though they took us to the same overall findings without the need to suspect that the Scriptures as we have them are untrustworthy.

Well, seeing the kind of atmosphere that passed as normal, I prayed, and considered, and then I posted, saying (quite diplomatically) that I didn't feel like I fit with the group very well, and would leave. When I wrote this, the poster immediately accused me of "playing the victim" and threatening to leave in order to make him look bad...even though he was the one telling me to leave. I've rarely encountered such a demonized individual... Giselle can tell you, the level of verbal violence was bordering on cartoonish... and over such an utterly trivial matter, and on a forum where I would expect to find the "best" of SDAs. Since I already indicated that I was leaving, I didn't reply again, but I posted a private message to the SDA who originally asked the question, saying I hope I had helped, and I was sorry our conversation had been disrupted, but if he wanted to speak to me further, he could send me a message any time. With that, I unsubscribed from the group.

I'm leaving out some details, because I don't want to focus on the negativity I encountered any longer than is necessary to illustrate my point, but I was surprised when a couple hours later the original questioner did message me. He said, merely, "Wow." I asked, "What happened?" He said, "I wasn't expecting that... I thought you guys were on the same side." I said, "Oh, no... the God whom I worship would never permit me to treat anyone so poorly! "That person and I may have some doctrines in common, but we have very different religions." He said he understood, thanked me for taking the time to answer his questions, and left.

The conversation ended as it had begun, calmly and with (I believe) a new understanding on his part about the Godhead. Giselle had also left some links in the forum before she left the group that she says (amazingly) have not been removed, so he and others can find us if they want to speak further.

The experience was a difficult one for me, not because I was called foolish, or accused of being in a cult and working for the enemy. I expect that already; and in any case the defensiveness and overreaction was so over the top I really couldn't take it seriously anyway. But I know that the words of Ellen White, and other Pioneers, which I love, were intended to bring about the Spirit of Christ in believers. I know that the Bible is meant to refine the spirit and make us noble, gracious beings...and I know that in this generation it is not being used with the Spirit of Yah to form such creatures.

This is a great tragedy.

There is a hardness in certainty, a narrow-minded elitism that can develop if we do not understand that education must be about character. It always has been; but those who fail to see this will end up treating us worse than the world ever would. It is because of this that the members of our own spiritual "house" may become our most bitter enemies.

Memorizing the Scriptures, becoming familiar with many inspired quotations... I have always encouraged this in the Brethren, for they are necessary and useful to us. But let us not forget that this is, like so many other things, a "work," and does not truly educate us unless we are first committed to the character of Yahshua, and His ministry of bringing life to the lost and dying.

Without victory over sin and self, knowledge leads to corruption. This is why Yah has told us to seek first of all the Kingdom of Heaven, that which begins within the heart, and grows to cover the entire world.

So I would say, in conclusion, let us learn deeply of Yahshua. Let our every day be a "school day" for the life to come, and on this Sabbath,

Elyna: Amen

Zahakiel: let us rejoice and be grateful that we are among brethren who live according to the Spirit of Christ to manifest agape to the world.

Are there any comments or questions on the study tonight?

Adriel: C

Elyna: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Barb: D: C

Adriel: What came to mind as you mentioned such a "demonized individual" was "get thee behind me Satan" I wonder if he would have "heard" that? But you were not led to say that to him, so maybe he wouldn't have. End

Zahakiel: Well, Giselle stayed in the group a little longer to give them a testimony...but once they saw that we both had the same last name, well, you can imagine what occurred after that 😊

Adriel: 😞

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Guerline.

Elyna: While I do not let what others say to me or about me turn me back away, I too am familiar with that experience you have had. I face it from time to time when calling SDAs. I have had just last week a lady scolding me for letting the truth speak to her through Natashua, who handled all her questions quite well about the TM. However, when I ended up talking to her, she strongly rebuked me for letting my nine year old take part of these things. So surprised I told her simply that I was sorry that she sees that wrong, that I had to grant her her own opinion on that. I say this to say that I sympathize with you on what happened in that forum. Unfortunately we will see more and more of these kinds of things as time shortens, but these are signs to us that time is short, we must let these trials sanctify us wholly. End

Adriel: Amen

Zahakiel: Well, we must draw warmth from the coldness of others. By their characters, you will know them... so it is clear where the "sides" truly are. Go ahead, Daphna.

Barb: Daphna: It is far better to show our love to the world than to be concerned that the world loves us. When we are of Yahweh, the world seems to hate us more, but we don't

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need to worry about that. To understand them where they are coming from, to love them anyway, and pray for them, that they, too, may come to know Yahweh through us. <End>

Zahakiel: Very nice 😊

Adriel: Amen

Zahakiel: All right, if there are no others, I will ask Bro. Luke to close with a prayer.

Lucan: Dear Father in heaven. We thank you for the blessing of the Sabbath hours, set aside from creation for your people to come together and set aside common things to reflect on that which is holy. We ask that your Spirit continue to guide us in wisdom and power as we navigate the challenges of this world. We thank you that our navigation will be successful, as we allow you full control of the vessel. We ask that you dismiss us now into the remainder of the Sabbath hours with your blessing. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen.

Elyna: Amen

Barb: Amen PC: Amen D: Amen

Adriel: Amen

Naraiel: (Amen, Amen)

Pete: Amen