

Zahakiel: It looks like a few people might still be on their way... but we should begin. Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We come before Your Throne expecting a special blessing. We now thank You and praise You for answering our prayers. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Barb: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's study is called "The Impact of Revelation." With a title like that, one might assume that we are speaking about individual experiences, such as Isaiah's vision of Yah's Throne, or Paul's encounter with Yahshua in His glory on the road to Damascus. These are certainly central incidents to our understanding of the Christian faith, but tonight I want to speak of something even wider in terms of its impact on the Church and we, Its members.

When I speak of "Revelation," I am speaking specifically of The Book of Revelation, the visions shown to John on Patmos, and the record he made of what he saw. Specifically, the Book is "The Revelation of Yahshua the Messiah," because, for all of its dramatic imagery, with its warnings and omens, it is ultimately a record of how the Savior is revealed to the world in the last days, and how He ushers in His everlasting Kingdom.

My grandmother, who was a Roman Catholic, once told me that she never read the Book of Revelation, because she had been told that studying it would drive one crazy. Perhaps this colored my early impressions, because I never read it myself either, and when some friends of mine became Seventh-day Adventists (I have spoken about this a few times over the years) and shared with me what it said, I was both shocked and impressed.

There are certainly many views on Revelation among Christians. I understand that Martin Luther, one of the best-known figures of the Reformation, attempted to exclude several books from the New Testament Canon, including James, Hebrews, and Revelation. His reasoning was that these books contained teachings that were subtly contrary to his idea of salvation that comes only by grace, and only by faith. James in particular speaks well of "good works," explaining that by them faith is both revealed and "made perfect." (James 2:22)

If one has an incomplete understanding of faith, as Luther for all his wisdom and righteous zeal did, this is understandably troublesome. If, however, if we understand the word "faith" as the Israelites did, as a word that is not separate from actions or the impact of

belief in the "real world," this makes perfect sense. Adventists have come to understand the balanced roles of faith and works better than anyone else I'm aware of, reading both Romans and James with equal comfort.

When it comes to Revelation, however, even Adventists become uncomfortable. This is the reason, I submit, that even among Seventh-day Adventists there is great difficulty in understanding the modern applications of the Mark of The Beast and the Image of The Beast. Because they, personally, have difficulty with the book, they have come to rely, not on their own readings and the Spirit's voice to them directly, but the writings handed down to them through tradition. And let me be clear, I am not diminishing the value of pure tradition, of the works of Ellen White and other Adventist pioneers... I merely mean that reading their work can never take the place of studying the Scriptures for one's self, even the "difficult books," otherwise one will have no capacity to reason through the Scriptures when faced with new light, and therefore to identify truth.

If I were to read something in, for example, the Gospel of Matthew, and I found something in a Spirit of Prophecy work that seemed to contradict it, my first instinct would be to say, "The Bible is pretty clear on this, so what am I missing from the SOP?" This is the same thing I do with Revelation, which is why I have come to a few different conclusions than, for example, Uriah Smith, in his very good and useful commentary on Daniel and The Revelation. But this is not the way most Adventists deal with things, at least not with Revelation. They will say, "I don't understand it, I can't possibly understand it, so if Ellen White said that this is what it means, then anything else has got to be anti-Christian heresy."

I understand the temptation to do that, but like all forms of violence (and I consider a refusal to consider potential light from Heaven to be a form of rebellion and violence) it is based upon fear. Just as the Jehovah's Witnesses are forbidden from reading the religious material of any other denomination or religious organization, so Adventism has a number of "sacred constructs" that they protect through almost any means necessary. You dare not touch, you dare not draw into question the validity of these sacred constructs, or else you must either be ignorant at best, or a Freemason/Jesuit/Agent of Satan at worst.

The Feasts of Yahweh, mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, and central to our understanding of Revelation's symbols, are like this to some, and the doctrine of the National Sunday Law is like this to most Adventists we have encountered.

I first began to consider the impact that the Book of Revelation has had on the Christian Church last Sabbath/New Moon, while Giselle and I were watching a study online about the early part of the Book of Romans. The missionary journeys of Paul were being recounted by the presenter, and he was speaking about his time spent in Jerusalem during

the Council recorded in Acts 15. Giselle said she had a question about that Council. She referred to a passage that details the conclusion of James, whose reasoning was accepted by those assembled to discuss the matter of requirements being imposed upon the Gentile converts. The verses read, "Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God, but that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day." (Acts 15:19-21)

Obviously, abstaining from idols, fornication, and blood in meat are not the only things that Christians from among either the Jews or the Gentiles are required to do. There were specific matters being discussed in Jerusalem that day, and James makes it clear that this is not the production of a comprehensive set of guidelines for Christian behavior; after all, he concludes, Moses is taught every week on the Sabbath in the Jewish Synagogues. The implication here is clearly that those who wished to learn more about the Old Testament had an easy means of doing so, without relying on the Church to make a decision about every detail. What Yahweh had said before Christ's earthly ministry was still all true, and they therefore had no reason to meet and vote on everything that had already come from the Throne in ages past.

So Giselle's question was, "Why is it that CSDAs don't do the same thing?" Why is it that we, limited in size and resources though we are, don't suggest to our new contacts that they go to a Catholic Church, or even a Jewish Synagogue or Seventh-day Adventist service, to learn more about the truth?

The answer was immediately obvious to me, although I don't think I've ever heard anyone point it out before. And yes, some aspects of it should become apparent upon reflection, such as the fact that there are many "Gospels" in the world today, all but the true one corrupted to one degree or another, or that with the use of technology it is much easier for a few to teach many by means of websites, and so on... but there's something more fundamental at the heart of the answer as well. It has to do with the way that the Christian community saw the Jewish Church in those days, and this has an application for us even in this generation.

Before the Book of Revelation, as hard as it may be for us to consider, there was no teaching about the Mark of The Beast. No aspect of the Hebrew religion had ever been called "the Synagogue of Satan" for rejecting the Messiah and opposing the Gospel. There were some indications that a global judgment was coming, but never had it been so clearly set forth in terms of Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues. While Yahshua spoke of Sheep and Goats, in John's final book we read of the Seal of Yahweh in the forehead, imprinted there by a designated angel. So yes, Yahshua spoke of judgment, of the Wheat and Tares at the

harvest, of the Sheep and Goats at judgment, but never as clearly as He revealed these things to John.

In the Gospels, Tares and Goats depicted are as not doing something they are supposed to be doing, but in these early teachings, there was less to indicate the concept of a conflict, or a "war" as revealed in Revelation. The members of your own house may be "against" you according to Christ's parable, but here we see words never used before to describe the split between the two.

Because of this, of course, some go too far in the direction of factions and separation, and there is hostility, or isolation, that is not good for the growth of The Kingdom. Seeing other Churches, or the unChurches as the "enemy" may serve to make us wary of snares, but we must not forget that all of us were born into sin, and thought as the world did, before being born again and set aright.

The world is hateful toward the truth, and Heaven's light, because it is lost, desperate for stability, and therefore lashes out on carnal instinct against anything that may seem to threaten what understanding of the universe and its rules they think they already grasp. To speak of "judgment" to such a one is going to naturally illicit a response.

This is the way that we, as Heaven's reformers, are seen by many Adventists, and because of insecurity... because Books like Revelation frighten them, and they therefore hide in the familiar, in the trustworthy. We see this in forum posts all the time, when we attempt to educate Conference Adventist believers about the "time and place" that must be considered when trying to understand the Beast and its Image. There is immediate hostility, and then the members who have rejected the Word quickly begin to comfort one another with verses and passages that support their centuries-old, but decades-out-of-date interpretation. And I do not say these things to be unkind, but these are the things that we face as evangelists, and Yahweh has said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hos 4:6)

Only Christ is the Rock of the Christian, and while He inspired the works of Adventist Pioneers, He also inspired them to explain that there was more light to come, that the promises of Yahweh are conditional on the obedience of His people, that (as I mentioned above) time and place must be considered...especially when reading the interpretation of a prophecy.

We cannot do as the early Church has done with regard to our contacts, for it is the wrong time and place for that. We cannot entrust the education of any that are preparing for Heaven to the world, or even others who call themselves believers, because now, after Revelation, the true significance of the earlier writings are to be understood. At the times of prior ignorance, "Elohim winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30)

Now is the time to understand what it means that "He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints." (Eph. 4:11, 12)

Since the Book of Revelation, we have a clearer understanding of Judgment, of the plagues, of the importance of the Sabbath, the Feasts of Yahweh, and many other things necessary to prepare us for the return of Christ. And yes, that insight, that inspiration, was given to us, to the New Testament Church, and not to the older oracles. It is uniquely Christian, and now, with all the light since that time, the truth about the days to come is uniquely taught by Creation Seventh Day Adventists.

In this last generation, CSDAs have been given specific revelations, not of entirely new light, but like Revelation itself, a clearer understanding of the things that the Father and Son have been saying all along, that Whosoever is Born of God does not commit sin, that there is a blessing in those things (days, practices, etc.) that Yahweh has said, "These are blessed."

There is a necessary blessing in understanding spiritual gifts in their right context, and the way that our view of the Godhead influences not only our spiritual experience, but also our characters. These are things that we have all known from the early days of Christianity, just as the elements of John's vision were drawn from all different parts of the Bible. Today, we see with clarity what these things mean, and how they apply to us.

Now we see a separation forming. Some are still saying, "There is nothing wrong with my Church; God has said the Wheat and Tares grow together until the Harvest," but the Angels are speaking with the voices of men and women, saying, "The harvest is come. Be ready, for the angels are gathering out of His Kingdom all those things that offend, and separating unto Christ those who are following the Lamb withersoever He goeth."

These are great and terrible times, Brethren, and only a great and awe-full faith will withstand Satan's last attempts to destroy what our Father has made. See the lines of distinction clearly, but love even those on the "other side" of the line. So were we once, and they are just as in need of Yah's love as once we were, and as ultimately we still are. Let this mind be in you as was in Christ, who He gave of Himself to serve others.

Adriel777: Amen

That He took upon Himself the loss, the humility, to be both an example and a sacrifice for others. We may not sacrifice ourselves in quite the same way He did; at least, those in this generation will not generally be called to martyrdom, but there are other sacrifices we are called to make, and we do this gladly, for we see clearly what becomes of those who do

not hear the voice of Yah calling them home to safety, joy and life. But as we see, we become that voice for them, the righteousness of Yah on earth, and this is the work, the life, to which we are called.

The Book of Revelation reveals Christ to the world, yes, but by the Spirit it also reveals who we are to ourselves. We may read it here:

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him that heareth say, 'Come.' And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17)

Freely, we have received the water of life. Freely, then, let us take the time, and expend the utmost effort, to share it with others, knowing the separation between light and darkness, for we know of the Three Angels and their Message, and we know of the Image, and we know of the Mark... and we know of the Seal of Yahweh, because Yahshua has given a Revelation of these things to we who are His faithful people.

Are there any questions or comments on tonight's study? If there are not, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for having given to us an experimental faith and the spirit of a sound mind. We know that it is not within our power to convince or convert, but only to offer the words of your Spirit. As we hold forth the bread and water of life that we have been given freely, may we be lead to those who will take, eat, and drink. In the name of Yahshua we pray, amen.

Barb: Amen

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

gadriel: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

