

Zahakiel: Let's begin. Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We ask for Your Presence for this convocation, believing that a special Sabbath blessing is available to us. Thank You for hearing and answering our every prayer, in Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Barb: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Elyna: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Lucan: Amen

nattei: amen.

Ruthline: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's study is less of a separate study, and more of a follow-up, commentary, or extension of Bro. Luke's presentation last week. As Giselle and I were going over the study with her parents on the last Sabbath we were visiting them, I wrote down a few notes, and some things became immediately obvious to me, and I thought I would share them for your continued prayerful consideration of this topic. As Bro. Luke's study was called "The Number of A Man," this study, which follows his line of reasoning to its next logical conclusion, is called "The Number of A Beast."

I would like to begin by re-stating something I mentioned in my comments that night, and that is, his explanation of the 666 number makes sense to me. Like him, I am not prepared to say that this is the primary meaning we must draw from it in this generation, but the principle is sound. Essentially, the number "666" is a sign of rebellion, and not merely rebellion, but open, active hostility to the purposes of Yahweh. This does not mean that someone will stand up and say, "I am against God," but by their actions, they reveal the corruption in their hearts to the world, and they belie any claims of Christianity they may make verbally. One to whom this number may apply is involved in sin that is "finished," as James would term it, (James 1:15) or fully grown, fully developed.

One of the major "themes" that I drew from our last study together is that open rebellion is rarely the result of a moment's decision. Instead, it is the end-result of a series of gradual failures, resulting in grand apostasy. I was reminded of a quote I read many years ago in a book by Christian author C. S. Lewis. He wrote a lot on the subject of the principles of Christianity in the early 1900s and, while he was not always perfectly accurate, he could certainly produce a quotable phrase. The one that came to mind last week was the following:

"Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts." [The Screwtape Letters]

We find this is certainly true; Satan's most effective temptations are those with no sudden turns that may awaken a semi-sensitive conscience, and in fact we find a similar sentiment in Adventist works such as The Great Controversy. Here is one such place:

"Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like [the message of the Third Angel]. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven. As the people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? the ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet the awakened conscience." [The Great Controversy, pp. 606, 607] Let me know when you've read this.

Lucan: Finished

Pastor Chick: F

Adriel777: F

Naraiel: F

nattei: F

Barb: F

Elyna: F

daphna dee: F

Ruthline: F

Zahakiel: This is a most significant chapter and passage for Yahweh's little Flock, and one that we ought to read from time to time. An awakened conscience is one of the greatest gifts our Father has given to us. Even for the unconverted it can be a guide to moral behavior, if an unreliable one. But for the born-again Christian, the conscience is one of the key means through which Yah's Spirit speaks with us. The Enemy knows this, and he has made of his agents, the ministers of Babylon, trained charmers. They know how to most effectively say, "There is nothing to see here," when a weakness in doctrine or organizational policy is identified in one of Babylon's daughters.

With regard to the application of 666 as a sign of apostasy based on gradual descent from grace, Bro. Luke applied the idea primarily to individuals, using Solomon as the most representative example. Naturally, the principle applies equally well to organizations, and while the study last week did mention the Papacy and the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists, I would like to spend a little time indicating just how strong the parallels actually are.

Tonight I will focus on the G. C. as it is the more relevant organization affecting the Church of Christ today, despite the beliefs of those who are still expecting a National Sunday Law to come forth from papal authority. Before I speak of the parallels specifically, I do want to make a key distinction about some of the information from last week.

One of the things pointed out by Brother Luke is that Solomon had great wealth, and that, while the worldly mind would interpret this as Yah's favor, the truth is that the various descriptions of the king's majesty was actually an indication of his pride and vanity. The Scriptures do not openly rebuke Solomon, as they might in other cases... and there is a reason why they do not. As in many things, truth and error lie so close together that it truly requires the Spirit of Yah to tell the difference.

Clearly, King Solomon drew his riches from somewhere; in other words, Israel was, itself, quite wealthy under Solomon's reign. If the nation was unable to support its king's lavish tastes, then Biblical history would have recorded this monarch as a great oppressor, impoverishing his nation to benefit himself. Instead, we find that Solomon was considered to be wise and just by his citizens; therefore, we know that Israel had the funds to afford his excesses. What this means is that in a very real sense, the wealth that the Scriptures describe during King Solomon's reign was indeed a sign of Yah's favor; however, and this is important, it was not a sign of His favor on Solomon specifically. Yah blessed His people with great wealth and success, specifically so that the other nations would look upon them and marvel, and also to leave His people with no excuse to be jealous of the pagan countries that surrounded them. Solomon took it upon himself, as an individual, to increase his personal wealth and material status through Israel's prosperity, and this was his error, because he collected gold, silver, precious stones and so on... not to honor and glorify His Creator, but rather to fuel what he himself proclaimed to be his "vanities." What I would like to do is look at the cause of Solomon's vanity, and see how they may be applied to modern "beasts," modern corporations that operate with the hands of men, but according to the heart of the Dragon.

Last week, three points of transgression were revealed that led the way to Solomon's gradual apostasy. All taken from Deuteronomy 17:15-17:

- 1) A King of Israel is not to multiply to himself riches.
- 2) A King of Israel is not to multiply to himself wives.
- 3) A King of Israel is not to multiply to himself horses.

What are the principles underlying these three points?

For the first, with regard to riches, the reason should be fairly obvious. While wealth itself is neutral, the "love of money" is described by Paul as the "root of all evil." (1 Tim 6:10) A king may learn to trust in his wealth, and not in Yah's providence. Similarly, the multiplication of "horses" indicates the desire of the king to have a powerful military force. While, like wealth, military power may Biblically be used for good, we know that a king must be very careful how he deals with such matters.

King David, for example, was tempted by Satan to take an accounting of his army, "men that drew sword." This was presumably for some unsanctified wartime operation, and he was rebuked for this. (1Chron 21:1-30)

With regard to wives, it is certain that the covenant of Yah with mankind has included, in every generation, a family unit as one of its primary foundations. We see many examples in the Scriptures of the trouble that "many wives" can cause, from Abraham, to Jacob, to David and Solomon, so we need not spend much time explaining this particular point.

But how may these three points be applied to a Church?

Specifically, how may they be applied to the General Conference Corporation, supporting the understanding that they have become an "Image to the Beast," and therefore legitimate inheritors of the 666 designation?

Let us remember, understanding the modern-day application of this third angel's message is a key aspect of the Gospel for these last days.

With regard to riches, it is certainly true that the SDA Church is very wealthy when it comes to material currency... but that is not of the greatest significance. In a previous study, Bro. Luke made much of the concept of "merchandise." Applied spiritually, we understand that the "commerce" that mainly concerns Heaven and the Enemy is the merchandise of souls... human worship and loyalty.

The SDA Church has certainly become "rich" with the souls of men, for it boasts of many members, many "customers" to use their legal language. One may think that it should indeed be a point of pride for a Church to have many members... and if the members that they were gaining were Adventists indeed, taught according to the doctrine of the Pioneers, and being born again according to the teachings of inspiration, well, they would not have become a Beast in the first place. The problem is that, as one early Adventist writer noted, the SDA Church has become filled with individuals who do not know what conversion is.

I can testify to this personally, having been baptized into the Conference Church after attending a single day of a local "crusade," and knowing nothing of Adventism beyond what my friends (new Adventists themselves) had shared with me. I was a customer, a number to add to their worldwide tally, one more soul in the coffers. In this matter the SDA Church, while apparently doing something good by gaining "wealth," like Solomon, made un-rebuked errors, (for who can argue with the "success" of many baptisms?) and began to slide into apostasy.

What about many wives? Well, by its acceptance of Catholic and Pagan doctrines, the SDA Church has become one of many "false wives" of Christ. But does it, itself, have many wives? It does indeed. The General Conference is the "head" of a worldwide Church, a husband; yet, this worldwide Church is not one...it is not united in doctrine, spirit, or purpose. The Adventists of the world believe many different things, sometimes in direct contrast with the word of inspiration. We read of Inspiration's warning to Adventism:

"God is leading out a people, not a few separate individuals here and there, one believing this thing, another that. Angels of God are doing the work committed to their trust. The third angel is leading out and purifying a people, and they should move with him unitedly." [Testimonies for the Church Volume One, page 207]

And yet we see these different "movements." We may speak of the celebration movement, those in favor and against appointing female ministers, the various views on the nature of Christ, the Amazing Facts ministry, Kinship International (for a very significant divergence)... and these are just those groups that still identify themselves as belonging to the Conference to some degree. Beyond that we have the historic, the reform movements, and various others that identify themselves as being "established by SDA believers" at various points in time.

There is individuality in religion, brethren, but if it is not balanced by unity of Spirit, it is a very deep ditch. Beyond the gates of individuality lies the country of Babylon. The Conference is a Sister to Fallen Babylon, and also, perversely, the husband of many strange wives.

Finally, what of horses, the third point that leads to gradual apostasy? Of this we may say much. The armies, the weapons of carnal warfare that should never be wielded by the Bride of Christ, these have been employed by the once holy Woman. Here we see threats, intimidation, lawsuits, and so on. Here we see the forces of Egypt, and Caesar, being held in the hands of one who should be out harvesting the world in the name of the King of Righteousness. The work of the Church is to care for the souls of men, to reach out to the lost and dying with the Gospel, and to teach the world the Word and character of Yahweh. That is the extent of its Heaven-given authority. Anything it seeks to do beyond this indicates its apostasy, its rejection of its original purpose, and its adoption of a new belief, that it is responsible for a kingdom of this world. As Yahshua said, "My Kingdom is not of this world; if my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight..." (John 18:36)

Time would fail us to describe fully the ways in which this point of apostasy has been adopted by the Conference... and rather than belaboring the point, I think it sufficient to merely point out the parallels between Solomon the man, and this organization, this

corporation, once the wisest, the most blessed, the most responsible... and the one that has fallen the farthest of any by virtue of the fact that it is now only one of many, when it had formerly been the most exalted.

And so, we find that the principle of gradual apostasy, along the three lines outlined last week, in the multiplication of riches, wives, and horses, this may be applied with equal accuracy to a man and to an organization. Just as a "beast" may be either a king or a kingdom in prophecy, (Dan 7:17, 23) so the value 666 may be applied to either an individual or a corporation, a modern "kingdom."

When I first became a Creation Seventh Day Adventist, I found the victory message easy to understand. I accepted the truth of the Godhead without hesitation. I do have to say, though, that when I first heard of the apostasy of the General Conference, it was quite a shock. It is not that I did not believe it, for I had the Testimony of the Spirit that had said to me of the SDA movement, even before encountering the CSDA Church, "This is no longer my House." It's just that the idea was very new to me. I was given many documents to read, and it did become established very quickly in my mind that it was so. The specific thing that made it plain to me, though, was the "many horses from Egypt." Of course, I did not think of it in the terms then that I am using tonight, but the principle was clear, and I believe this is a powerful way to express and explain it to others when sharing with them the message of the Third Angel.

Yahweh is preparing a people who are separate from the ways and thinking of the world, who reject Church/State unions, who will not remain party to the persecution of commandment-keeping Christians, and who are seeking a better Country, one into which sin will never enter. With these things in mind, I speak tonight in favor of Evangelism.

Every week, we hear a study, some new insight or set of insights. And yet, if this light remains confined to those few of us who hear it week by week, it will fade out and die. The light you have been given, the various ways to explain the Three Angels' Message, these are for your benefit and understanding, of course... but also – and more importantly – for the blessing and benefit of those who have not yet come to understand the principles as we have.

Between last week and tonight, we have a way of explaining the "number of the beast" in clear, simple terms, with unfortunate Solomon as a prototype in humanity, and the General Conference as a modern manifestation of an "image"... a created being that was raised to great heights, but then slid into apostasy over the years along a "gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

Let us speak, then, without shame, of our understanding of the Three Angels' Message. Let us make the words of Yah clear and simple, but let us make them direct, that the hearts of our hearers will be struck, and their consciences awakened.

Are there any comments or questions about tonight's study?

Lucan: Q

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: Amen

Lucan: I have some thoughts, but, I would like to ask a question first...During the study last week, I recommended a particular chapter of Prophets and Kings be read in conjunction. Now, truthfully, the surrounding chapters were also relevant to me, but that one seemed the most so for the study...

Adriel777: C

Lucan: I am wondering whether any did so? <End.>

Adriel777: A

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: I did-and a few more chapters as well. My comment has to do with the merchandise aspect. I was reading on the church site trying to find a study to share with Rodney who commented on the post last week. Sis Giselle and Bro Luke started a good dialogue study there. At any rate I came across the following quotes from EGW in the article entitled (by us) "Why the SDA GC Church was not Babylon in 1893". The original article was entitled "God's Rebuke to Laodicea."

"I understood that both these men were at the General Conference [held in Battle Creek, February 17 - March 6, 1893], that is, S[anton] and C[aldwell]. Could they not discern there the revealings of the Spirit of God? Could they not see that God was opening the windows of heaven and pouring out a blessing? Why was this? Testimonies had been given correcting and counseling the church and many had made a practical application of the message to the Laodicean Church, and were confessing their sins and repenting in contrition of soul. They were hearing the voice of Jesus, the heavenly Merchantman, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

These brethren who claimed to have this wonderful light had the very same work of repentance and confession to do, thus clearing the rubbish from the door of their own hearts, and opening the door of their hearts to welcome the heavenly guest. Had they placed themselves in the channel of light, they would have received the most precious blessings from heaven. They would have seen that the Lord was indeed gracious,

manifesting Himself to His people, and that the Sun of Righteousness had risen upon them. This was precious merchandizing actively carried on. The counsel of Christ to the Laodicean Church was being acted upon, and all who were feeling their poverty were buying gold (faith and love), white raiment (the righteousness of Christ), and eye salve (true spiritual discernment)." End

Zahakiel: Yes, thank you for sharing those quotes. Bro. Luke you indicated you had other comments?

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: Re: Jody...Wow, those are good. 😊 I'm surprised I hadn't noticed those before. That really "nails down" what merchant and merchandising is. And, I don't think I've heard Yahshua referred to as "the heavenly Merchantman" before...

Adriel777: C

Lucan: My question about the chapter from Mrs. White is related to one of the comments. I was a bit surprised to see Solomon named as not being a heavy taxpayer of Israel. I don't think it is a "major" point, but, I think it would warrant some further study. Mrs. White indicates in that chapter that he became very grievous in imposing taxes, and Israel's appeal to Rehoboam seems to concur. I am also a bit challenged by the idea of the General Conference as a "husband..." And, the various schisms within their church as "wives..." It seems like "gender bending" given my understanding of how churches are referred to in prophecy. I am wondering what your thoughts were on these? <End.>

Zahakiel: Let me answer these before Jody makes her comment, then... First, it is true that Solomon became a heavy taxpayer of Israel; my understanding is that this was later in his reign. During the earlier years, when the majority of his wealth was actually acquired, it seems from the various descriptions given in the relevant books that these were through trade, alliances, and so on...his various political marriages a testament to this. That he oppressed Israel later on makes it even more grievous, for he did not "need" the income at that point.

In regard to the Church as a husband, this idea is taken from the concept of "headship" as described by Paul. Christ is described as the "head" of every man, placing the men, who compose the Church, in the role of a wife. There is some "gender bending" of a sort, just as the Father is the "head" of Christ, placing Him in a subservient role. The Conference is indeed the "head" of the Church, and would therefore take on that role of guidance, leadership, and so on. If you have any further questions about these, I'd be happy to follow up. For now, go ahead, Jody.

Adriel777: Re: Yahshua being the "Heavenly merchantman..." I hadn't either and it fairly jumped out at me. Here is a link to that article for those interested.
http://www.faithofjesus.to/sda_1893.html End.

Lucan: Q

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: Following up on the second question... It would seem to me that the Papacy would therefore be a "husband," rather than the "mother of harlots..." My understanding of the symbols of prophecy here is that a church, as a woman, takes another husband in the appeal for outside authority, enforcement, and power. That can be a true husband - seeking Yahweh for these things - or a false one, seeking a government for them. But, I don't see a precedent for even a false Christ leading a church to be called its "husband," or various confused schisms as wives rather than constituting "Babylon..." Are you seeing something I am missing? <End.>

Zahakiel: Well, that may be the case. I'm not really seeing the difficulty you seem to be having... In the Bible, Churches, and organizations/nations in general, are usually represented as female, and this is because they are portrayed in relation to their kings, or leaders that are individuals. In Revelation, the Papacy is called the "mother of harlots" by virtue of the fact that she brings forth, like a mother, the daughter harlots. We do not have difficulty seeing God the Father as being the "head" of Christ... we are not confused by this, even though this is the same relationship a husband has with his wife. The genders as applied to organizations is dependent on the context, not a hard and fast rule. The use of Christ as both having a head (the Father) and being the Head of the Church is probably the clearest example that comes to mind...

Adriel777: C

Zahakiel: and we know that the Conference is referred to as the earthly 'head' of the Church, indicating that it takes on this male role when looked at in terms of its relationship to its members, ministries and so on. Go ahead, Jody.

Adriel777: Perhaps the "type" doesn't fit perfectly, but in principle Solomon had many illicit relationships with worldly women, as the SDA GC Church has made an illicit relationship with the 2nd Beast of Rev 13 and has become drunken on the wine of Babylon? End

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: I would be comfortable with the application of the General Conference taking many husbands, in fornication with the kings of the earth... Perhaps the difference is that I am looking at prophetic language, and you are speaking of practical language? ...

Zahakiel: No, it is that you are looking at the Conference in its relationship to the world...that is the many kings...rather than its relationship to its internal components, its ministries and members. I did a study some years ago...

Lucan: Well, I wasn't quite finished, but that does seem to be the same thing from where I am looking...Revelation doesn't deal with the internal components, but the relation to the world. My concern here is primarily that our language is clear in the applications of prophecy we make. I recall, for example, a time when some would say that the SDA Church is the image of the beast. But, that is not quite right... The distinction is fine between "The SDA Church" and "The union of the General Conference and the U.S. government"... And, perhaps in no small part because of the way in which the church and the Conference relate to one another, along what you are suggesting. But, the distinctions are important to keep clear nonetheless. Terms like "wives" and "husbands" have very definite meanings in the context of prophecy, and in particular, the image and mark of the beast... That is my contention with this point. <End.>

Zahakiel: I do not think there is a lack of clarity in the illustration I have made here. Let me try this.... I did not refer to Revelation in any specific place, rather than to draw the number 666. Inasmuch as the Church is connected to the "woman" in Revelation, you're correct, that it is used as a female there... however, whenever an entity or individual is referred to as the "head" of something else, this invariably places it in a male role. I know of no exception to this.

Lucan: Q

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: So, to clarify, are you saying that this is not a prophetic illustration, but one merely to illustrate a principle? <End.>

Zahakiel: That is correct. I am not referring to a prophetic use of the Church. I am talking about its relationship to its internal members and ministries, and making the same mistakes (as an organization) that Solomon did as an individual.

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: Okay, thank you. That resolves my concern. 😊 <end.>

Zahakiel: Ok 😊

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: Going back a little bit to the taxation / oppression later in Solomon's reign... There may be some parallels here as well for consideration. For example, it is not by "need" that they oppress their brethren. That has been shown time and again; no harm, real or financial, is being done to them by those they impose burdens on... Well, that is as far as I have at the moment. 😊 <end.>

Adriel777: 😊

Zahakiel: Thinking... Yes, I think there is something more to that parallel as well... it would be interesting to know more of Solomon's mindset in those later years... if he had an experience like King Saul's, troubled by demons, he would also be motivated to some degree by paranoia, seeing enemies even among those trying to help him. His tendency to surround himself with wealth, entertainment, and so on as Saul did, would help him to feel more secure. There is more in there to consider, certainly.

Are there any others with comments or questions tonight?

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: Mrs. White does give further insight on that as well... Interestingly, a part of his degeneration into taxation was from hiring unsanctified, albeit highly skilled, outsiders to perform work for Yahweh. Men whose motives were for money rather than for sanctification. Much akin to seeking worldly lawyers in those respects. <End.>

Zahakiel: I do remember reading that, yes.

Adriel777: (yes)

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

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for continuing to lead your people along the narrow path. Amid the sacrifices and challenges we are called to cheerfully bear, we are often blessed with clearer insights into your Word, and the times in which we live. We are thankful for these times of refreshing and encouragement, as we follow the example of the One who came before us in our daily lives. May your Sabbath blessing be upon us as we follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, standing now in the judgment of the living. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

08-11-2017 The Number of A Beast

Zahakiel: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Barb: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Ruthline: Amen.

nattei: amen.