

Lucan: It's time to begin. Bro. David, will you please offer an opening prayer?

Zahakiel: Blessed and holy Father in Heaven, we give you thanks for these sacred Sabbath hours, a gift unchanged from the foundation of the world. We give you thanks for the fellowship of the brethren, by which we are edified, and in whom we have joy. May we each receive the blessing you have prepared for us through the hand of your messenger, for our eternal benefit. We ask this in Yahshua's name. Amen.

Elyna: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Ruthline: Amen

Martha: Amen

Lucan: Tonight's study is called "Ye are all brethren," and is taken from the following passage:

"But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, [even] Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no [man] your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, [even] Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:8-12)

These verses speak to those who would seek to usurp authority over their brethren, and exalt themselves over others. This is a spirit that is wholly and frequently condemned in the Scriptures, and for good reason:

"But Jesus called them [unto him], and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

It is not the spirit of Yahweh, but the spirit of the world – the "gentiles" – that is the basis of the desire to exercise dominion and authority over others. We know which spirit this is:

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2)

Christ sacrifices Himself to lift others; Satan sacrifices others to lift himself. We may know the spirit by the fruit, and this dynamic is a simple way to test the fruit – is it self-sacrificing for others, or sacrificing others for self?

While the spirit of self-exaltation and religious oppression may rightly be called the "spirit of the Papacy," it has its source in the first great oppressor and accuser of the brethren. The Papacy, as it turns out, is neither the only nor the most recent example of such.

When CSDAs assert that the General Conference has formed an image to the Papacy, few realize just how thorough that parallel truly is, both spiritually and historically. This body has asserted itself as the governing head of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and the ultimate authority regarding its doctrines, membership, and even property.

Where the Scriptures say Christ is the head of the Church, the General Conference claims authority as the head of the church in both doctrine and in government. Where Christ says it is His place to exact vengeance and judge between wheat and tares, the General Conference sets itself as the arbiter and judge of who may and may not be a "Seventh-day Adventist," decided by creeds and enforced by Federal Marshals. Where the Testimonies say the name "Seventh-day Adventist" is the name the Lord has given His people, the General Conference claims the name "Seventh-day Adventist" is the mark they have given to their corporate membership and products.

This governing body, so far from serving, sets itself up in the temple of God, opposing and exalting itself above all that is called God. Rather than lifting up believers, they require the submission of believers; in order to be a "Seventh-day Adventist" by law, one must submit to the doctrines, authority, and dominion of the General Conference, even when those doctrines contradict Seventh-day Adventism. In order to be a "Seventh-day Adventist church" by law, one must surrender their land and building to the General Conference. They are then to submit to a General Conference-approved priest, paid to give a General Conference-approved message. Such messages are the "religious observances and missionary services" registered as a trademark and commercial product with the U.S. government; that is, the second beast of Revelation. It is the very definition of the "arbitrary authority of the church," and "making my Father's house an house of merchandise."

Those who dare dissent, pointing out that the Conference brand of Adventism is not Seventh-day Adventism in any form or fashion, are required to submit or face prison for "contempt of court." It is therefore the very definition of controlling the conscience via civil magistrate, and in turn, the antithesis of a Protestant organization – that is, it rejects the foundational definitions of Protestantism in practice. All of this from a body that, as the Papacy itself, is not elected by nor accountable to its membership.

Not only is it not a "Seventh-day Adventist" organization, it is not a "General Conference" in the sense originally used and intended. We see from Mrs. White's writings the following commentary on this subject:

"At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to

restrict God's work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God..." [9T 260-261]

Now, I will pause here a moment to note; this is precisely the matter as it stands. "A small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work" describes the modern General Conference corporation precisely. Continuing, we see this is not what was intended:

"But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority..." [9T 261]

Here we see the proper meaning of a "General Conference;" representatives that are both duly appointed and sent from all parts of the field. It is the field that appoints and sends them; it is not the General Conference that self-appoints and self-sends them.

"The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work..." [9T 261]

We have seen quite clearly what has resulted from this warning not being regarded, among many others. When an individual or small group of individuals is given the authority and influence due to the entire church in united agreement, it is not only error, it is blasphemy; it is setting one in the seat of Christ, to exercise the authority of Christ. It is the foundational premise of the Papacy; the idea without which it could not, and could never exist.

The quote concludes with an appeal that I would like for us to consider tonight:

"When this power, which God has placed in the church, is accredited wholly to one man, and he is invested with the authority to be judgment for other minds, then the true Bible order is changed. Satan's efforts upon such a man's mind would be most subtle and sometimes well-nigh overpowering; for the enemy would hope that through his mind he could affect many others. Let us give to the highest organized authority in the church that which we are prone to give to one man or to a small group of men." [9T 261]

We know well the dangers of usurpation of authority; what we find warned against here is something slightly different, however. Rather than speaking of men working with Satan to usurp and overthrow the work, she speaks of men being subtly worked upon and tempted by Satan. Her rebuke was not for the man in the high position, but those who placed him there, and were in danger of surrendering their mind and judgment to another.

Yahshua had a similar experience, in which some sought to place Him in a position of authority He was not appointed to hold:

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." (John 6:15)

Christ was unwilling to receive the earthly throne, even when the attempt was made to thrust it upon Him. Before one can usurp authority over a body, the body must be willing to allow such usurpation; before one can interject between the soul and Christ, the soul must allow for one to fulfill that role other than Christ.

A Church composed of living, individual, awake Christians will never allow any man or men to exercise arbitrary authority over their faith. They will certainly not do as those whom Yahshua departed from, and seek to make one an arbitrary authority by force. Yet as with most sins, this may be done by commission or omission.

The active sin is to forcibly seek to make one a king or ruler over us, and thus reject Yahweh's kingship over His people. The inactive sin is to refrain from discussion or individual judgment, leaving another to "lead the work" by default. This rejects Yahweh's kingship over us individually. It is a lazy Christian, a sleepy and indifferent disciple, that consents to let another decide on their behalf in spiritual matters.

There is a woe upon those who seek to draw men after themselves; there is a woe upon those that are not drawn away, but sleepily rely on their ministers to do the work and the thinking that is theirs alone to do. These sacrifice another's spiritual safety for their own comfort, rather than make a sacrifice of their own efforts to benefit others.

Do we not have the mind of Christ given to us freely? (1Cor. 2:16)

Every member of the Church of Yahshua has a voice and vote equivalent to a representative in General Conference. Where there is no danger of one attempting to control the Church, another danger often arises: the tendency to thrust one into control of the Church by individual members surrendering or neglecting their own God-given powers of judgment and reason.

As it is written, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1)

Some cults begin with a charismatic leader and a corrupt heart; other cults begin with a sincere leader and weak-minded followers seeking a "guru," or spiritual leader to make the hard decisions and intercessions for them.

Whether a man exalts himself, or is exalted by others, the end result is sin.

The one who exalts himself does so at cost to himself and those "below" him; he does not serve as a minister, but rules as a lord. The one who is exalted by others is a victim of those "below" him, for they sacrifice him to temptation and unreasonable expectations rather than taking the responsibility that is theirs as intelligent beings.

To have individuality in religion, one must have an individual religion. To have an individual religion is to have an individual relationship with Christ; to know His voice and perform His will for ourselves. This is the very essence of the new covenant; no one may enter into that covenant by means of any other head but Christ. Jeremiah tells us that the new covenant consists of the law written in our hearts, with Yahweh causing us to keep them; but this is not all. As it is written in the very next verse:

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:34)

We may read John's application of this promise to we who have received it:

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." (1 John 2:27)

It is Christ Himself that teaches us, both individually and as a people; it is Christ Himself that leads us, both individually and as a people. While we are to trust and love one another in Christ, we are not to trust any one individual's judgment or preferences to be infallible, for Yahweh has not promised this. Yahshua has instructed us to "submit yourselves one to another;" He has not instructed us to submit to one or two or three in particular. While Yahshua has placed gifts among His people – apostles, prophets, teachers, those with gifts of tongues – no one gift exalts any one above another. "Ye are all brethren." While the members of the Church are to submit one to another, in no case is the Church as a whole to submit to one, save for Christ.

Now, if the whole Church is in agreement with the message of Christ through one member, that is well and good. That is "agreement," in which all parties come to understand and agree on the matter intelligently, in the Spirit of Yahweh. Agreement in this manner, however, is not submission. Submission is the decision to abide by a judgment one is not fully convinced of. Submission of preferences by individuals can be a righteous thing when done in love; submission of convictions, or of God-given responsibility, is a very wicked thing, and equivalent to the worship of a false god.

It is written of an angel, "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See [thou do it] not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10)

Even the angels would not receive worship; yet let us recall that the essence of worship is not bent knees, but a bent mind and spirit. It is obedience to the image of the beast, not literal kneeling, that constitutes its worship and the receiving of its mark.

Similarly, if we cause ourselves to "submit" that which Yahweh has given us - whether it be a name He has ordained, or a responsibility He has assigned - we make an idol of the thing we submit to in place of Yahweh. A wife may submit to her husband in matters pertaining to the administration of the home, but not her personal relationship with and accountability to Yahweh. An individual member may submit to the judgment of the Church as a whole; a younger member may submit to the judgment of an elder. These are all Biblical concepts of "submission." As Bro. David pointed out in a recent study, however, submission / obedience is a lower quality of service than agreement.

As a body, we may agree with one member, but we may never submit to one member – that is, to go along with something merely because one member advocates it, without having been sufficiently persuaded.

As it is written, "...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Romans 14:5)

Individual judgment may be submitted in certain cases, but in no case whatsoever is individual judgment to be surrendered. Submission is to retain one's judgment, but to decide to act according to another's judgment for various reasons. To surrender one's judgment is to not come to a decision, but rely on another's judgment to decide for us from the outset. To surrender one's judgment is to regard an individual, or small group of individuals, as holding the same authority with which the whole Church in unison is to be regarded. To surrender one's judgment is to automatically submit one's judgment, not for principle, but for respect of the one being submitted to. It is therefore "respect of persons," which convinces us through the law as transgressors.

Essentially, to surrender one's judgment is to come to the conclusion that another's judgment is sufficient to dictate for us, when Yahweh has called us to speak, think, act, decide, etc. for ourselves as a pillar and stone in the temple of Yahweh.

"And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, [and] that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29)

We now live in a time when that Spirit has been poured out freely to all who will receive it; when all of Yahweh's people may, with the very mind of Christ that is given to us, "...be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height:" (Eph. 3:18)

Yahweh's people have no need to surrender their judgment to another or fear for wrong choices, "for God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Yahweh calls upon His people to stand and be counted in the large as well as the small matters; He has given each of us a voice, and an accountability to use it. As we adjourn into the blessing of the Sabbath, and prepare for the coming New Moon, may we answer this call diligently and learn from both the errors and victories of those who have come before us. May CSDAs ever have no king but Yahshua, no headquarters but Heaven, and no creed but the Scripture. It is by so doing that we avoid not only the error of submitting to those who would oppress us, but the error of forcibly exalting those who would serve us.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Galatians 5:1)

Are there any comments on the study tonight?

Adriel777: Amen

Martha: Amen

Ruthline: Amen

Lucan: If there are none, I'll ask Pastor to offer the closing prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Heavenly Father. We thank You for teaching us by Your Spirit which is given freely to all who believe. We are blessed to be sons and daughters of the Most High God, and given the Royal Robes of Righteousness. We rest in Your continued love and care as we observe the (Sabbath) Day which represents Your promise of freedom from the bondage of sin. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Kim: Amen

Martha: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Ruthline: Amen

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen