

A Settled Place

Sabbath greetings to everyone.

As you may have noticed from our last few studies, Yah has put it on my heart to deal, in several ways, with the concept of “fitting in.” We have looked at the concept of fairness and justice, which involves how Yah treats His people, and the people in the world. We examined, last week, the concept of the “state” of one’s peace. This week, our study is called “A Settled Place.” All of them deal with finding, and becoming comfortable with, one’s place in Yah’s creation and in the world to come... a sense of relationship and belonging.

There is actually a section of the book *The Two Temples* by this name, which deals with a similar subject in some detail. I do not really want to retread the material covered there, although I recommend that you read through it if you have not, or if you can’t remember it. Its main emphasis is about finding one’s talents and gifts, to best serve the ministry of Yahshua, and the Church as it performs the Gospel work.

This week, we are looking at a subject that will make that possible, and will deal with it more on an inward level.

We know that for every true thing our Father has said to us, Satan attempts to make this into a lie. He will either try to convince people of the opposite, or (more dangerously) he will try to convince people that what Yah has said is “mostly” true, but just different enough that their acceptance of this altered doctrine will not have the desired, sanctifying effect.

Living in this world, we cannot avoid hearing error. Even as we undertake the most sacred of all human activities – the work of evangelism – we encounter those who are enslaved by errors. As we speak to them about the truth, they will either share them with us, trying to help, or they will attack us with them in an attempt to defend their current position.

We may cite many examples of both of these kinds of deceptions that I have mentioned. The Scriptures tell us that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezek 18:4, 20) Satan says, “Ye shall not surely die,” (Gen 3:4) and that the soul of mankind is naturally immortal, residing for eternity in either Heaven or a Paganized version of “Hell.” The Scriptures tell us that “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” (1John 3:9) The Tempter tells us that “we all sin,” misquoting Paul’s statement that all HAVE committed sin, prior to this “born again” state, and attempting to cause general confusion and mistrust of those who bear the Faith of Yahshua. These are doctrines, widely accepted in much of Christianity, that are entirely the opposite of the Word’s teachings.

In regard to doctrines that are near-true, we would consider such concepts as the Trinity, the modern Christian “holidays,” and the idea that the first day of the week (as opposed to the last) has received Yah’s particular blessing to be counterfeits “close” to varying degrees.

There is another truth, a very important one, and Satan attempts to either destroy it entirely or modify it, in order to trouble those who would see life. The truth is this, a most precious promise from our Savior: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” (John 14:2-4)

Now this is often taken to be a promise of everlasting life in Heaven, and it certainly is this; however, an exchange afterwards sheds even further light on the statement that Yahshua made, and John saw fit to record it for our edification:

“Thomas saith unto Him, ‘Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?’

Yahshua saith unto him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.’

“Philip saith unto Him, ‘Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.’

“Yahshua saith unto him, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, “Shew us the Father?”’

Then He adds...

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.’

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” (John 14:5-13)

Yahshua’s reply here was very meaningful. Thomas and Phillip were thinking only of “mansions” in terms of a physical place to live. “How do we get there?” But Yahshua, in His reply, spoke about dwelling in the Father, and the Father dwelling in Him. Furthermore, even though none of the disciples knew the “way” to Heaven in terms of the route that Yahshua took during His bodily ascension, they all knew the “way” to the dwelling-place by virtue of knowing Him.

He then follows this by saying that because Yahshua goes to the Father to prepare a place for them, the disciples would do “greater things” than He has done while working here on earth. Clearly, then, the dwelling-place is to be understood more deeply than just a place where the glorified bodies of the saints will live in the resurrection. Entrance into the dwelling-place of the Father begins when we dwell within Christ, even as He dwells in the Father, that they, in turn, may abide in us.

No doubt, you have heard something like this before, as it is actually very clearly taught in the New Testament. You may recall this verse, from the very same chapter: “Yahshua answered and said unto him, ‘If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.’” (John 14:23)

That word “abode” is the same word translated as “mansions” in the earlier passage, and these are the only two places where this particular word is used in the Bible. I consider that to be very significant, for there are many words that could be used – and are used – for houses, and for mansions. But John, recording the Savior’s words, chooses to use this unique term for both these ideas.

Because of this, I consider the teaching that Yahshua has gone to prepare a place for us to be one of His most significant promises – to be claimed this very day – and not merely something to look forward to

“someday,” as many consider the blessings of being a follower of Christ. The promise is fulfilled this day, in any who come unto the Son for spiritual rest. We dwell with, and in, the Father and Son, and they dwell with, and in, us. The Sabbath is a day to celebrate this, as we do even now, but the reality is that this is an everlasting blessing, for there is no time that we are separated from the Almighty and our Savior. As it is written, and as we have made His testimony our own, “And He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please Him.” (John 8:29)

Brethren, understand, this teaching of the dwelling-place of Yah, this is also a teaching about the Victory over sin. We abide in Him, and He in us, and as a result of this, we “cannot sin,” because “His Seed remaineth in us.”

Now, in case you have not noticed, all of our verses thus far – with only the exception of that statement by Ezekiel and the brief reference to Genesis – have come from John’s writings. Most have come from His Gospel, and a couple of them have come from his first letter to the Churches. This is not a coincidence. John’s scriptures come after most of the other New Testaments’ books had been written and studied by the Churches of the early days of Christianity. This is one of the reasons why John’s contributions contain so much that is not found in any of the other books. It is not that there is a disharmony (as some Bible scholars teach). John, having seen the Church for the first few decades, and knowing that the believers were already familiar with the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul, wrote his Gospel, and his letters, to add an increased understanding that the Church would need to endure through the ages.

John focuses a lot on this idea of the “indwelling” of Christ in us, and we in Him, because this is what believers need to stand against Satan’s most powerful attacks upon our faith. And so, of course, Satan would have us disbelieve this word, this promise, before he can really do anything else.

And how does Satan attempt to undo the blessings of understanding and believing this promise? Well, clearly, by attempting to have us believe that we do not have a place among the saints.

This is difficult to do openly, because the saints are *actively* seeking fellowship with others. We evangelize, we have open Bible studies, we are each prepared and ever preparing to answer questions about our faith to the blessing of others... how can Satan convince people that they are not welcome?

Well, here he relies upon his subtlety, and cunning. Here he works with hidden thoughts, and the secret chambers of the heart. Here he seeks to have those who are moving onward unto perfection feel rejected, cast down, and without value at every possible opportunity.

This, he freely applies to those both within and still not yet within the covenant. The Church has a mission toward its members and the world, to prepare souls for the purity of Heavenly society. Toward this end, a part of that work is to guide those who associated with It away from that which is worldly and common, and toward that which is holy and sanctifying.

At times, this requires the kind of discipline the Scriptures describe in careful detail. We have methods of resolving potential conflicts. We have Gospel Order for dealing with things that cause offense. We have an application of the principle of “two witnesses” to give the Spirit great freedom to move in our decision-making meetings.

And of course, at times Yahshua must, through these actions, “rebuke and chasten” those whom He loves. (Rev 3:19 – also recorded by John)

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb 12:11) So says the Word, and each of us here knows it to be true.

But how we, individually, deal with the “grievous” nature of the rebuke at its present moment, how we deal with the temptation to feel rejected and less valued... it is this that tells us how truly we really accept Christ’s words that He has a place for us indeed. How peacefully we accept the workings of providence, under our Father’s guiding hand, this tells us how truly we abide in the Father, and He in us.

Now, there is a difference, of course, between being at rest, and being entirely passive. We are Protestants, and thus we are very vocal in our stand for religious freedom, and for liberty of conscience. If we feel we have been wronged by either the abuse or neglect of others, we may say, as Yahshua said, “Why smitest thou me?” (John 18:23) The very name of our faith is a testimony against falsehood and error, and we cannot be moved to surrender this, or any other aspect of our faithfulness to our Savior’s instructions.

And yet, as we grow, we have to deal with being corrected, and the feelings that come with that, which Satan will do his utmost to exploit. Though it is natural to desire to feel valued, how we deal with those times when we do not feel valued is an important aspect of our faith. Of course, beyond the rebukes of righteousness, we also have the rebukes of injustice. The world will not value us for some of the most important aspects of our persons - in fact, they will not value us for THE central theme of our lives once we become born again.

Christ said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:18, 19) How do we deal with that? We must, or we will not be able to effectively evangelize. We must, or we cannot grow – we cannot seek our identities out in the world. We cannot find ourselves there, but only in Christ. This is when we truly come to our settled place.

We must be in a settled place in our relationship with Yah and the brethren. Last week, I spoke of the state of our peace, and the idea here is very similar. We cannot allow outside influences to tell us who we are in Yahshua. We cannot allow the corrections that Yah allows us to undergo to give the Enemy an opportunity to cause us to doubt Christ’s most precious promise: that we belong.

And here also there must be a balance. We must be sure of who we are, and we must also be able to accept legitimate rebuke and correction with Yahshua’s own grace.

We understand that correction given in the Spirit of Yah is not an indication that one is less valued; it is an expression of a desire to draw nearer. It is an indication that we are loved, for our Father trusts us to deal with the grief of it, and to stand fast until the blessing arrives.

So then, brethren, none of these things, whether we are corrected, or are correcting ourselves, or are dealing with the injustice in the world, remove us from our settled place in Christ. Satan can try to USE

these circumstances to trick us into separating ourselves from Christ. The “sorrow of the world” that Paul talks about is deadly here. The thoughts may come, “I am wrong again,” or even worse, “I can’t seem to do anything right.” These thoughts are of the world, from the enemy, and they cannot be accepted for a moment. They must immediately be rejected as hateful – for the simple fact that they ARE not true.

Yahshua has gone to prepare a place for us, and therefore a place we have indeed. It begins here, and now, and therefore we do always those things that please our Father, and greater works still than those we have read in the Gospels. We merely need to exercise caution in this regard, and we will see the fulfillment of this great and invincible faith.

It is the man of flesh who tends to focus on the negative atmospheres, until they dominate his entire thoughts. The man of the Spirit will focus on the truth as it is in Yahshua, and if the world, or the tempters, should throw mud on us, we notice it only as it slides off, leaving us in stainless white robes.

Now, if we are constantly having mud thrown at us, it may mean that we are standing in a muddy place... we move if we are able. This is learning, this is growth, and the true intent of rebuke and reproof. But this does not change the “clothing” that we are wearing, or the acceptance we have from the Father and Son. If we choose to remain in the mud, that is one thing... our Father will not be able to bless presumption (which is what this would be). But if we see that we are in a muddy place, and we move, we are merely growing in the faith, as we are privileged to do through this walk of Sanctification.

Let us believe this belief, then, that we have a dwelling-place with the Father and the Son. Let us not focus on the temptations, or the grief, when sorrowful events occur. We are not to ignore them; they were allowed for a reason. But let us focus on the increasing light, and the increasing “lightness” of our souls, as we release the baggage that ties us to the world, as we remove claim after claim that the world may place upon us. As we do this we will see, even with these eyes, the place that our Father has prepared for us in eternity.

Are there any questions as we close?