

A Simple Message

Happy Sabbath to all.

Tonight, I would like to share with you a short testimony, and an associated prayer request. I am calling this meeting “A Simple Message,” and for two reasons. First, I have so named it because this IS a simple message; and second, I have called it this because it is ABOUT a simple message.

Last week, on Sabbath, I was visited by two Jehovah’s Witnesses. Actually, it was during our long daylight meeting that they came by the gate and asked if I would be willing to listen to them sharing a message with me. I said that I would like that, but that I was busy at the moment, and asked if they would be willing to come by another time. They agreed to return on Sunday afternoon, and they did so last Sunday, at about 4pm.

When they arrived we sat outside under the shade of an overhanging section of the roof. There were three of us present: myself, a young woman, and an older gentleman that I soon discovered was her father.

We began with them offering me a pamphlet asking questions about religion, one of which was why bad things happened in the world, and whether or not God was responsible for them. We read several verses that spoke about Yah desiring good things for His people, and that He is not responsible for the misfortunes that befall human beings.

“So,” they asked me, “why is it that bad things happen? What do you think?”

I replied that I was a member of the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church (I had to spend a few minutes explaining that) and that I was also a Bible study teacher. I said that, in my studies, I taught that our Father is love, and kindness; nevertheless, He has given human beings true freedom, and therefore if we choose to abuse one another, He does not force us to stop. This is responsible for much that befalls us.

They said they agreed with that, and they were sharing the good news of the Kingdom, that God had reserved blessings for His faithful people. Now, the woman’s father was quiet for most of this initial exchange; however, at some point during the discussion about faith, he put in that it was important for God’s people to call Him by His name, which is, “Jehovah.”

I said that I agreed with what he said in principle, and that it was not a large issue with me, but that since there was no “J” in either Hebrew or Greek, the name “Jehovah” was actually a little bit inaccurate. He seemed a bit taken aback by this, and said that since we speak English, we should call Him by His name in English. Of course if we go by definitions, the name would be “I am,” not “Jehovah,” because that is a name, not just a word, and that it does not translate, as I pointed out. He stopped his pressing on that – for a short while.

Now, in the meantime, the young woman seemed to have been intrigued by the name of our Church, and also seemed to have had some experience with other SDAs, because the discussion turned to the Sabbath day. Of course, they were way off their “script” by this point; they gave some initial verses about the Law being passed away, all of which I was able to show Scriptures to counter, but every now and then,

the older man would seem to come up with a new argument for why “Jehovah” is the correct way to say God’s name.

Each time, I assured him that this was not a “test of fellowship” for me regarding faithfulness, but explained further why his reading of the name could not possibly be correct, and it got to the point where he was interrupting me fairly regularly while his daughter actually seemed interested in hearing about our beliefs.

We spoke, for example, about victory over sin. Their response to this was that while it is true that “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,” the Jehovah’s Witness position is that we are not yet born again until the resurrection! I have some verses to share with them about that the next time we speak, but that first time we did not have that much of a chance to talk about it, because the daughter did seem interested about the Sabbath.

Actually, she didn’t seem to be asking her questions in order to refute me. What she said was that she had spoken to a number of SDAs about the Sabbath, but none of them had ever explained it the way that I was.

Now, this is where the title of my testimony comes in, “A Simple Message.” Yes, I used Bible verses to explain why the Scriptures support the continued observance of the Sabbath in the New Covenant. Yes, I explained how the wording means that the “debt” is nailed to the Cross, and not the Law. Yes, I explained the difference between a Covenant (the one made with Moses passing away) and the Law, which is eternal. I said all the right things, doctrinally speaking, but this is not what really seemed to get to her, nor what I was primarily focused on.

When I spoke of the Sabbath, I spoke about what it meant to me. I spoke about the reminder of the creation, that our Father made the world in seven days and then rested in its beauty. I spoke about the invitation to mankind, that the Son said, “The Sabbath was made for man,” so that we may benefit from it. The father put in that Christ Himself “broke the Sabbath” by healing and eating grain from a field. I told him that he was accepting the accusation of the Pharisees and Scribes; that it was true that Christ had broken their law, their additional burdens placed upon God’s Law – but that the true Law, as it is written, and not interpreted by fallen man, is intended for our good.

This was actually what we had begun to talk about initially, that God had intended good things for His people, and I shared with them my experience, that the Sabbath was a great joy, and not a binding regulation. When the woman’s father stated that Colossians tells us that the Sabbath is a “shadow of the past,” I showed him in the Bible that he was mistaken, that it was a “shadow of things to come,” and that Isaiah the prophet saw all the faithful people keeping the Sabbath even in the world to come.

I pointed out that even if they had spoken to Adventists before, they had become very much like those Pharisees and Scribes – adding rules, obeying out of obligation – and without a vital, joyful and living testimony such as I was sharing with them.

I could see genuine interest in the young woman’s eyes. I was keeping my message simple. Doctrine was present, because they had come to talk about the Bible; but it was being used in its correct way, not to prove who was right in an argument, but to remind us, as we spoke, about the things our Father has said

to reveal Himself to us. Now, while all this was going on, as I mentioned, her father continued to mention when he could about how important it was to use the name “Jehovah.”

I think that the daughter began to catch on, however, and she actually began to support what I was saying! She said that it is true, I had a point, and that it shouldn't be such an important aspect of this conversation. Of course, she could not fully admit that I was right, and so she said she would need to research what I was saying, and that when we spoke again we could follow up on what I was telling them.

What struck me, and this was a learning experience, was the way the two conversations were developing simultaneously, one with the father and one with the daughter. The father was stiff, resistant, unwilling to listen, and so our conversation was largely about verses, and doctrines, and teachings. At the same time, the daughter was open, and interested in what I was saying about the beauty and blessing of obedience. If it had just been the father there, he would have left. In fact, at one point he put his hat back on and made as if to leave, but the daughter just sat there, asking me more questions about my faith.

With her, because she was willing to hear me (even if not yet to believe) there was a lightness, a flow, to our conversation. She was not trying to “win,” and I wasn't trying to prove anything. I wasn't doing that with her father either, except that I was providing answers to his objections.

Finally, as it was growing late, she asked if she could return next week so we could continue to talk. I said that that would be fine, and that I enjoyed talking about the Bible with them. So, as of right now they are set to return next week Sunday. I have no doubt that they will have more verses to share about the Sabbath, and the victory (and probably the name Jehovah) but my focus will be on the simplicity of Biblical faith – that the things our Father has given to us, victory, and the Law, and all the other instructions, are given to us entirely for us to be blessed by them, and so that we might live.

Now, I have one more thing to share about that encounter.

After I went back into the house, my mother told me that she has been watching from time to time, and mentioned something about “the four of us.” I said, “There were only three of us out there, a woman, her father, and me.” She said, “But I saw a fourth person as well, a young man who was there with you.”

I again said that there were only three of us, but she seemed to become a little distressed, and insisted that she saw a young man with us as well. She said, “I think I need to go to the hospital,” so sure was she that she had seen this other person. Well, I immediately thought of the Book of Daniel, and I told her that what she was describing may not be “common,” but it isn't really anything “abnormal.” I said it was entirely possible that she saw an angel listening in... and she seemed to consider it a possibility. We haven't spoken about the incident since that time, but I thought it worthy of mention here.

So, we have some things to pray for, brethren. I ask that you pray for our next meeting on Sunday afternoon. I ask that you pray that the angels continue in attendance, that I may continue to give a testimony of victory and joy that will be received; that they remain willing to listen, because it is this – our living, simple testimony – that truly has the power to win hearts. Of course, the Scriptural teachings, the doctrines, and the light that our Father has revealed, these all have their place and their purpose. But the best thing we can do, when testifying, is merely telling our listeners who our Father is, and the wonderful things that He has done for us. It takes no great skill of speech or reasoning, just a willing

heart. This simple message, this beautiful message, is how the Gospel will take root in willing hearts, and bring forth fruit unto righteousness.

Are there any thoughts to add to this, then, as we close?