

Knowing and Understanding Yah

Happy Sabbath to all.

There was a particular verse last week that really caught my attention, and from your comments, which I appreciated, it seemed that you also responded very well to it, and so I would like to focus more on it in this study, which is called “Knowing and Understanding Yah.”

The verse, for your recollection, was this one, and I am including the verse before as well for the full thought: “Thus saith Yahweh, ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Yahweh which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth, for in these things I delight,’ saith Yahweh.” (Jer 9:23, 24)

Taken together, we see both an important warning and a powerful promise. The warning, of course, is that we must be humble before Yah. We must not think that the gifts we have been given, whether they are of the mind or the body, make us worthy of praise, for they are indeed “gifts.” And, if they are not used to the glory of the one who gave us these things, then they are worse than wasted.

The promise is that if we do humble ourselves before our Father, and consider ourselves to be His workmanship, and His merit within us (for every good thing in us comes from Him) then we will both understand and know Yahweh.

Now, what does this mean? As was pointed out last week, it means that we have the “mind of Christ,” who reveals the Father to the physical world. (1Cor 2:16, John 14:9) It means that our way of thinking becomes like His, and our reasoning becomes like unto that of our Creator and our Savior. When confronted with various situations, we respond according to the principles that correspond to Yahshua’s own character, and we thus reveal ourselves as children indeed of our Heavenly Father.

Now, what does this passage NOT mean? We are given a balancing concept in this passage, and others like it: “Seek ye Yahweh while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto Yah, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isa 55:6-11)

This passage tells us that Yah will always be “above” our understanding in a sense, and two things in particular are mentioned by the prophet.

The first is His mercy. Long beyond the point at which any human being could forgive another, Yah has forgiven us. Whereas we may say that someone is “hopeless,” or beyond redemption, Yah says, “Let the

wicked forsake his way,” and “let him return unto Yah.” As long as probation lingers, we must labor for the sinners. There may be miracles for us to behold from those whom we think are the furthest away from salvation, and inspiration tells us that our Father exercises “infinite pity” in the saving of the lost. Beyond all that we can understand, our Father is forgiving, and open to receive all who will come to Him.

The second thing the passage mentions as a difference between us and our Father is the surety of His word. We may err through lack of knowledge. Our Father is infinite in wisdom and knows all, therefore He cannot misspeak. What He says comes to pass, and therefore He declares, “[my word] shall not return unto me void.”

Now, the goal of our sanctification is to become like our Father in Heaven. We ought not to speak anything untrue, even by accident, and therefore the Apostle directs us, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.” (James 1:19)

Now, I am not here saying, “Be quiet.” No, in fact, we encourage questions and comments in our studies, by email, on our CSDA forum, and so on. We are improving at our communication, I believe, but there is always more to learn, and more to grow, with regard to this. But what we must ensure is that our communication is heavenly in quality. Let us consider our questions and comments through the lens of faith, and then let us share them for the purpose of edifying the Body. Let there be more of that, so that we will have an increase in both quality and quantity with regard to our speaking one to another. The more we do this, the more like our Father we indeed become, and the more valid the promise becomes of us, that we know and understand Yahweh.

Now, I noticed, when reading through the book from which I took the original quote for this study, that Jeremiah actually focuses a bit on both these ideas, knowledge and understanding. He speaks for Yah in another place, saying, “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer 3:15)

The teachers, which the New Testament tells us that Yah has placed in the Church “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, [and] for the edifying of the body of Christ,” (Eph 4:12) will feed the people of the covenant with both “knowledge” and “understanding” almost as if they were two separate (although obviously connected) things.

Ephesians, which I quoted here, is a very interesting book, and perhaps next week we will consider it as a unit of doctrine. Giselle and I were actually reading some passages from it together a couple of days ago, and we both had some interesting observations to share. We were talking about the difference between intelligence and wisdom, and while both are vital for living the life that Yah has provided for us, they are not quite the same thing.

We noted that there can be, and are, some very intelligent and knowledgeable people in the world. They know a lot of things, and they can think very well in terms of reasoning from cause to effect. However, these people can also be very wrong. Many of the world’s highly educated people are not Christians, and in fact may not believe in a Creator at all. They are very smart, but they are – at the same time – very wrong. Knowledge is a measure of how many things you have learned or discovered. Intelligence is how well you can put together what you have learned into conclusions. However, this by itself does not take into account the certainty that not everything we think we know is actually true.

We may be able to reason very well from cause to effect, but if we do not properly understand the cause, our understanding of the effect will always be wrong. In other words, if we begin to reason from an incorrect foundation, with incorrect assumptions, then intelligence actually becomes a curse.

How do I mean that? Because if we reason “properly” from a false beginning, the more accurate we are in our reasoning, the more certain we are to come to a false conclusion.

This is the reason why Yah tells us not to lean on our own understanding, or to trust in our own idea of “wisdom,” even after conversion. It is because not only are we limited in terms of what we know, but we dwell amongst deceivers, both physical and spiritual, who are actively attempting to steer us wrong.

We must have faith, so that we begin at the correct place in our reasoning. The Scriptures tell us this in no uncertain terms: “The fear of Yah is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.” (Pro 9:10) The fear, or the reverence, for our Father is what leads to discernment, to wisdom to use intelligence correctly. And it is not just any knowledge, but knowledge of “the holy,” of Yah’s character and His principles, that allows us to make righteous choices.

So then, what is wisdom? If we have a very smart, very knowledgeable person, but who is often deceived, or deeply deceived about something very important, we could not, for all his intelligence, say that he was “wise.” That is a very clear way of showing the distinction.

Both together, knowledge and understanding, allow discernment to work, and this is what eliminates errors in our thoughts. It begins with looking at our circumstances through lens of invincible faith... this is that “starting point” that leads to sanctified conclusions through reasoning. We have already had a couple of studies that discuss this particular aspect of what we are looking at. We have seen, in some New Moon transcripts, if I recall correctly, that knowing Yah’s character, knowing His true character as revealed in the unspoiled Adventist faith, makes it impossible to accept certain erroneous teachings in nominal Christianity.

The two most immediate examples that come to my mind, although these are just two of many, are the teachings about an everlasting, burning hell, and that of complete predestination.

For both of these, one in which Yah has specifically selected some humans to be saved and others to be lost, and one in which those who are ultimately lost are eternally tormented in fire and darkness, mainstream Christianity must come up with answers. They cannot claim to serve a loving God, and yet hold either (or both) of these ideas to be true without making an excuse somewhere in their reasoning. To merely accept both as being true damages one’s spiritual integrity, because nothing about these doctrines even vaguely correspond to a human being’s understanding of “love.”

Recognizing this, the excuse then must be, “God’s love is above our ability to understand. This is truly just and merciful, and we will understand it better once we are at His side.”

But is this true? Is Yah’s love “above our ability to understand?” Clearly not. As we have seen, Yah’s love and mercy is “above” ours, and “beyond” ours only in their extensiveness and size, not at all in their nature or quality. To say that even more simply, Yah has more love and mercy than we can understand, not “different” love and mercy than we can understand.

Yah's love is exactly like ours, the love of His children, in nature. The way that we love our fellow men is exactly the same kind of love that He has toward us, only with a depth that we approach as we progress in sanctification. For the born-again Christian, there is no mystery to how that love works, only that it works better, and more in line with our spirit's needs, than we would have anticipated.

But there is nothing at all that is "strange" about that love, or that even a child would be unable to understand. The wicked, of course, will flee from Yah's love, just as the money changers fled from Yahshua's cleansing of the temple in the Gospels. But the pure-hearted had nothing to fear, nor would they have a difficult time explaining that the Son's judgment of the wickedness in the temple was designed to restore the worship of Yah to that sacred place.

The idea of an everlasting hell, or that Yah has destined some for destruction without the freedom of choice He has given to all mankind... and again, these are just two examples of several... these cannot be properly reconciled with the human ideas of justice or mercy. They are not "above" them. They are not more loving, nor more merciful, than the best that humanity could devise. They are alien, impossible to understand without "excuses," and so we can only accept these doctrines if we place a difference between ourselves and Yah that He sent His own Son to suffer and die to remove. This is a terrible tragedy.

The Scriptures say that, although Yah's love and mercy are above our own, we who are His know Him and understand Him. The "holiest" of men who hold these terrible doctrines I have named to be true must admit that they do not know, nor do they understand, exactly why Yah behaves as they believe He does. The doctrines prevent them from knowing and understanding Him. The traditions they have accepted become a barrier between their understanding and His love.

Who is it that knows and understands Yah? It is they who become the most loving. In the Scriptures, we see David – a man after Yah's own heart – who mourned over his enemies, and forgave Saul as often as he was able. We see Jeremiah, who wept at the unbelief in Israel, for he knew that it would result in captivity to Babylon. We see Elijah, who took pity upon a widow and restored her son back to life. Those who know and understand Yah reflect the very best of human mercy and love, and go beyond (but never different from) the best that humanity can offer on its own.

This is what it means to know and understand Yah. It is not something that places us beyond humanity's ability to understand. Our concepts of love and mercy do not become foreign to our experience, for we were created in our Father's image. However tarnished that image has become over the millennia of sin, the core of that "coin," for the parable is as that of a coin that has been stamped with a face, has remained the same, and able to recognize divinely pure principles like integrity and charity.

Those who know and understand Yah exercise divine love, divine mercy. They have wisdom and discernment that comes forth from faith. And this is different from the mere intellect and knowledge of the world. And because of this their reasoning is applied correctly, starting from the point of invincible faith, it therefore keeps them from error and from faulty conclusions, particularly in regard to spiritual things... but pertaining also to the things of this life. Over such the enemy has no power.

And in closing, I have one more thing to add about the doctrine of absolute predestination. Consider two of those whom the Biblical record describes as having overcome death completely, being taken alive into paradise: Enoch and Elijah.

Why did these two men succeed in the faith of Yahshua to such a degree? It was not because Yah told them, “You are destined for salvation.” It was because they walked with Yah. It was because they chose to know Him, and to understand Him, through their words, and their actions. We could find many verses that tell us that Yah has chosen the saints for salvation. We could also find many verses that tell us we become a saint by choosing to surrender our lives to Yahshua. There is no conflict here, for both we and Yah are free to choose, and those whom He foreknows as making this choice, these are the ones who are destined for the inheritance of the saints.

We may take a closer look at that next week, but for now, the idea should be clear enough. Yah has hidden Himself from the eyes of the sinners, and the unrepentant. But to those who would see Him, He has revealed Himself. His Son reveals Him to the world, and through Yahshua we become like our Father, and more completely who we were intended to be.

It is the responsibility of Yah’s people, of those who know Him, to show Him to the world. And how do we do so in this generation? We do so by following the path laid out for us by Yahshua, the path that is illuminated by the three angels of Revelation 14. We speak of Yah’s love, and also His judgment. We declare the fall of Babylon, of confusion and deception. We resist, with utmost integrity, with our very lives if necessary, the Beast and His image – the working out of Satan’s principles through human agents.

In so doing, we become the Enochs and the Elijas of this last generation, revealing to others what we know and understand of our Father who has called us forth to life everlasting. And for whom, like them, the promise is that we shall not see death before this task is complete.

Are there any questions or comments as we close?