

## Presence

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

Our study for this meeting is given a simple title: Presence. The matter it covers is also very easy to understand with a little bit of thought, and it is, I am certain, “meat in due season” for the people of Yah at this time.

We are, both individually and as a group, in the process of sanctification. In order to perfect this process, and the character of Yahshua that is the goal, we need to have a firm “picture” of what we will look like in a spiritual sense. Now, I put picture in quotes, because I am not suggesting that we will have the clearest appearance of all our physical or spiritual characteristics at the time of Yahshua’s return. Paul said that he did not consider it fitting to judge himself relative to the end-goal of the sanctification process, (1Cor 4:3, 4) only with regard to what he knows of the truth now. (Phil 2) Similarly, John tells us that at the time of Yahshua’s return, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2) As we actually approach the end, however, that picture does come into sharper focus.

Notice the connection that John makes between “seeing” and “being.” He says that we will be like Him “for” (or “because”) we shall see Him as He is.

It is also written that “by beholding we become changed,” and therefore it is clear that we need to have some kind of picture of our end-goal in order to properly progress toward it, standing in the judgment (as Paul indicates) daily based on what we know of the present’s expectation of perfection.

So, what do the 144,000 look like?

That is the question we ought to be asking ourselves always. What does Christ look like (in character), and what do I look like as I reflect Him, becoming more and more “like Him?”

Of all the religions in the world that claim to be Christian, I can think of none but the Adventist faith – and in this generation the CSDA faith specifically – that can even allow us to do this. Because of who we are, and what we believe, we can have a uniquely insightful perspective of spiritual perfection, and it goes beyond the virtues that even the world considers “good,” like faithfulness, honesty, and mercy.

These things are good, certainly, and will be a natural part of any sanctified Christian’s life, but we will also do things that other religions will consider “strange,” because they do NOT have a proper perspective of who Christ and His Father are. Most do not understand our perspective on the name that Yah has given us. Few comprehend our situation before the courts of the world. Most will treat us very skeptically for simply claiming the promises of the Bible, such as victory over sin, and the continuing and living gift of prophecy in the Church. They know next to nothing of the Covenant into which Yah desires to bring His people through the work of Christ, and even our Biblical approach to praying for the sick has not always been well-received by the sympathy-driven rather than the genuinely agape-inspired.

Today, we are going to look at one particular characteristic of the 144,000 that is necessary for us to have if we are going to fulfill those things that the 144,000 are predicted to do: follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and other things that we know from the Spirit of prophecy that I will share with you shortly.

The truth of the Gospel – that it can only save those who accept Yahshua fully and completely – ought to be felt keenly by those of us with family, friends, and acquaintances who have shown some degree interest in spiritual things, and thus think that they are “okay with God,” but who possess no fear of the indifference they feel toward the actual Body of Yahshua. They should not feel fearful of Yahweh, and not of us, but the fact of the matter is that they should feel fearful of indifference. Indifference, and not open sin, will be responsible for the loss of many souls who are sincere, but incorrect, about the Gospel message.

As I have said, Creation Seventh-day Adventists have a unique perspective on the 144,000, and it is largely because of our understanding of victory over sin. The Scriptures tell us that they are perfect in their obedience to Christ, following Him wherever He goes in the spiritual journey to Heaven. They tell us, as drawn from other verses, that they speak often to one another (there is communication) and that there is no guile found in their mouths (they do not deceive or mislead others). Psalm 15 tells us that we who dwell with Yah will have these characteristics: uprightness, righteousness, honesty, openness, a love of goodness, a hatred of evil, faithfulness to commitments even when this places us at a disadvantage, integrity, and a strong sense of justice.

The Spirit of Prophecy writings add other things as well. Although I have generally avoided direct quotations from Ellen White’s writings in Sabbath studies, here is a powerful description of those we claim to be, and therefore those who we are. Each of us must be able to see ourselves in this passage:

“A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the Voice of God. Then the 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God.” [RH August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1849]

From Ellen White’s “first vision,” recorded in a number of places, we read, “When God spoke the time [of Yahshua’s return], He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses’ did when he came down from Mount Sinai.

“The 144,000 were all sealed, and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, ‘God, New Jerusalem,’ and a glorious star containing Jesus’ new name. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground.

“Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another’s feet, and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshiped at our feet.”

There is another passage from Mrs. White’s writings that I will share later on, but let us look at these two for now. Notice the common theme: their faces were “lighted up” with the glory of Yah. Since she specifically mentions Moses, let’s take a brief look at that passage:

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses [knew] not that the skin of his face shone while He talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him, and Moses talked with them.

“And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that Yahweh had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before Yah to speak with Him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, and Moses put the vail upon his face again until he went in to speak with Him.” (Exo 34:29-35)

Now let us look at the great Antitype of which Moses was a mere foreshadowing: “Yahshua therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto [those sent by the Pharisees and chief priests], ‘Whom seek ye?’

They answered Him, ‘Yahshua of Nazareth.’

Yahshua saith unto them, ‘I am He.’ And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, ‘I am He,’ they went backward, and fell to the ground.” (John 18:4-6)

Now, what shall we say about these passages? There is much, and very much, that we can learn. Ellen White’s writings add the insight that those men fell to the ground because at times like these Yahshua’s “divinity flashed through humanity.” Those who beheld Him were given a brief, but overwhelming, glimpse at the Being that He truly was, and they were not able to stand in His presence.

Now, neither the Bible nor Ellen White tells us that there was anything physically different about Yahshua’s appearance during these moments. No mention is given of an actual light, such as that which attended Moses after his time upon Sinai. And I rather think that there was none in the New Testament event, for we consider that the Old Testament was a symbolic representation of what was fulfilled more perfectly in the New, and the physical “light” that came forth from the face of Moses was a representation that the Egypt-dimmed senses of the Israelites could more clearly understand of something much more profound.

Christ is infinitely above Moses in grace and power, and yet His display was more subtle to human senses – but not, it seems, to effect. Nobody fell down involuntarily before Moses; the people were afraid, and drew back, not wanting to approach. But those who beheld Yahshua’s less obvious, but more powerful, display actually did fall to the ground. Now, we know that the 144,000 will be more like Christ than like Moses, and that the divinity of Christ was un-reflected, un-borrowed, and closer to the majesty of the Father. I do not think, then, that when the last-day saints are described as having faces “lighted up” it is indicating a physically visible light... and this is often the way with spiritual things.

Yah does not care for overt displays of power. His presence is with a few, lowly people – in the desert, in out-of-the-way places – and not in grand cathedrals, or near men dressed in red and white silk. He cannot be found in the large and expensive churches that attract the attention of thousands. They may be brightly lit up, literally, but they do not have the true light of Yah’s presence.

The 144,000, like Yahshua, have a characteristic, which we may call “Presence.” It is a subtle thing. It is not an artificial way of getting attention, or of winning an argument, or getting one’s point across. It is not about display, or spectacle... but it is very apparent when it is there.

Presence is the ability to command respect without necessarily saying a word. It is the ability to – when we do speak – get other people to listen, and to believe what we say (even if they resist it and deny it thereafter). Presence is the ability to, as the Scriptures describe, hold out your hand and heal the sick, warm the hearts of the innocent, and to rebuke and dismay the wicked. Presence allows us to cast out demons, and to convert the souls of those who will listen to us, for the living God of Israel dwells within us. Yes, the 144,000 have honesty, integrity, and all the other characteristics listed in Psalm 15 and other places, but if we truly wish to be where Yahshua is, we must have Presence.

Now clearly, this is not something that can be “learned” through normal means. We may examine it, and we may study it, and we can learn what it is used for... but it cannot be obtained except that the Holy Spirit be poured out upon us. We can never be “deserving” vessels, brethren, in an absolute sense; but we can be “clean” vessels, suitable for the New Wine of the Gospel.

Now, when we ask Yah for Presence, as we all must in order to finish the work, what is it we are asking for? We must know, specifically, what to ask our Father to give us, just as we must pray for specific things, and confess, specifically, all those things that would keep us from obtaining it. One who has presence has the following characteristics. We must learn this “picture” of the 144,000 (as we began by discussing) that we hold before us as we are sanctified:

#### 1) Knowledge

Those with presence speak with authority that comes from knowing the matter of which they are speaking. An “expert” on a particular subject commands far more attention when speaking about it than one who is a novice. There is a confidence to his speech that is unforced, unstrained.

When it comes to spiritual things, the Apostles tell us plainly that we must know the truth in such a way that we can “give answer” to those who ask us the reason for the hope that is within us. We must be “experts” on our beliefs; it is not enough to trust those who have taught us the CSDA faith that “they must know what they are talking about.” It is one thing to respect religious authority, and it is another entirely to merely follow. The Seal of Yah cannot be taken in the right hand; it must be received in the forehead, with clear thoughts and intelligent understanding.

This is why we teach the importance of prayer and meditation – of speaking to Yah, and allowing Him to speak to us regarding what we must do and what we must say. Bible study also contributes to knowledge, for it is there that we learn principles and there we see clearly the face of our Father. Not everyone will be called to write a theological study, but everyone ought to be able to explain to honest seekers why we love our Father, and obey His commandments. If we cannot do this, we cannot have the presence that makes the faces of the 144,000 light up, and even those who are favorable to our message will not be convinced that they need to be as we are before the Father.

We must not fail to obtain divine knowledge, brethren, therefore let us pray for this to be given to us as a vital spiritual gift.

#### 2) Boldness

A number of our recent meetings have involved the spiritual healing of various individuals. Much of this healing has depended upon open and honest communication. We have been learning to speak to one another as the Family of Yah.

Yahshua went forth boldly, healing the sick, casting out demons, and speaking the truth heedless of consequences. We are to be the same, for how else can divinity ever flash through humanity to touch the hearts of others?

We must have boldness among ourselves and out in the world. We must speak without fear, perfectly balanced between having the same pure doctrine and judgment of the Body, while at the same time exercising the individual presence of will.

Let those who have been timid now be bold, and let our prayers ascend that none should fall short of being able to speak their minds in the Spirit. I hasten to add that part, “in the Spirit,” because I have said, that there is a balance to be struck here. We are to speak openly and freely, but we are also responsible for “filtering” our thoughts and words through the Spirit of Yah, so that we do not speak hastily, foolishly, or in ignorance. If remnants of this tendency remain in any, it also must be overcome before we can reflect the presence of Yahshua as those who perfectly follow His path.

### 3) Grace in Speech

Speaking gracefully, with as much mercy and gentleness as possible, does not limit boldness. Sometimes great solemnity must attend our words, because this is what is required. The prophets who rebuked kings and the citizens of Israel often spoke a very direct testimony, but they did so with heavy hearts. Yahshua, we are told, rebuked with tears in His eyes, because He did not wish to wound the hearts of those who heard Him, yet He knew that if they were to have any hope of attaining life, they must honestly evaluate themselves from the perspective of Heavenly purity.

There is a quality of presence that allows even the most piercing testimony we give to be without undue hardness, something that can be perceived by genuinely innocent hearts. Those who are guilty may be offended, but those who are not will find no fault in our wording. They may be “amazed” by our authority, as many often were when Yahshua taught, but they will not be offended.

The children of Israel were not afraid of Yahshua, for example, even when He was driving the money-changers out of the Temple, but those who were not clear of sin could not remain in His presence. We must receive this kind of grace for our speech, that we may properly represent our Father in Heaven and, like Knowledge and Boldness that we have seen before, it will work within us to produce the kind of authority that will draw hearts to the Fountain of Life.

Finally...

### 4) Divinity

This one should make it very clear that we are not speaking about an ordinary skill to be learned or a talent to be trained. No human being has, of himself, any divinity. If anything about us is good, or righteous, or divine, it is because our Father has deliberately placed it there.

And yet, this is THE most important element of the 144,000s attribute of Presence. Moses, it is written, did not even know that his face was shining. He did not do anything to make it shine; it merely shone, because Moses had spent time in the presence of the Most High.

How is it with us? We cannot reflect the divine presence (for this “presence” is not from ourselves, but it is truly the “presence” of Christ in us, the hope of glory) if we do not enter THE Divine Presence. We cannot shine with Heaven’s light if we are a stranger to its courts. We have spoken about prayer and meditation in previous weeks, and I pray, fervently, that you have been taking it to heart, refining and changing habits as necessary.

We cannot “know” when our faces begin to shine, and when the moment comes that Yah gives us the power to stretch forth our hands to heal the righteous and cast the wicked away. But when the day comes that we will need to do this, those who have been with the Father and Son will do it. The Father and Son will do it through us, for it is their divinity, combined with our humanity, which brings forth the life of a saint.

In order to be the 144,000 of prophecy, we must reflect the very presence of the Father and Son. The characteristics that they had, whether overt or less obvious, must be our own through receiving their gifts.

Let us, therefore, pray for knowledge, and boldness, for grace of speech, and for that divine light that we can only understand by direct and personal experience.

Earlier, I mentioned another passage from Mrs. White that I would share with you today, and it is as follows:

“Many of the wicked were greatly enraged as they suffered the effects of the plagues. It was a scene of fearful agony. Parents were bitterly reproaching their children, and children their parents, brothers their sisters, and sisters their brothers. Loud, wailing cries were heard in every direction, ‘It was you who kept me from receiving the truth which would have saved me from this awful hour.’

“The people turned upon their ministers with bitter hate and reproached them, saying, “You have not warned us. You told us that all the world was to be converted, and cried, Peace, peace, to quiet every fear that was aroused. You have not told us of this hour; and those who warned us of it you declared to be fanatics and evil men, who would ruin us.” But I saw that the ministers did not escape the wrath of God. Their suffering was tenfold greater than that of their people.” [*The Story of Redemption*, p. 405]

It is fitting that we end this study on a rather solemn note, considering ourselves not to be arbitrarily immune from these things that are written about the worldly and the wicked. As many of you know, this past week I have been in an email conversation with an SDA pastor, who was once a member of the Lord our Righteousness movement that was influential in the formation of the CSDA Church. He has since returned to the General Conference organization, and he is far the worse for it. If things remain as they are, in the day that Ellen White’s words here are fulfilled he will be among those who will be reproached by his congregation, because he is not inclined to hear my words of warning and appeal.

We have escaped the fate of the false teachers, of the ungodly parents, of the uncaring relatives and friends, only because we respond to our Father’s love with obedience, and with humble hearts. This message ought to strike home especially to those who have children, parents, and friends not yet in the

faith. It ought to stir those of us who have friends yet under the influence of ministers who have kept them from the words of life. We must let them know that time is short.

We must pray that our hearts will be filled with divine fire, and our tongues with words of wisdom. We must even pray that our eyes will be filled with tears from necessary rebukes, as we prepare the way for the return of Yahshua, not only in the world, but in the hearts and minds of those who have heard what the Almighty has commissioned us to say with love, and with power.

We are to stand in the Presence of the Almighty, and thereby have others notice our presence. As it was written of the apostles, so it will – it must – be said of us, with regard to this divine gift, “They [who saw and heard them] marveled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Yahshua.” (Acts 4:13)

Are there any questions or comments on what we have studied today?