

One Way (Part 2)

Happy Sabbath to all.

Tonight we are concluding our study of the topic entitled “One Way.” This topic is designed to give the Brethren a way to approach what the world has made into one of the more controversial aspects of the Gospel; that is, the role of the Church.

Now, as Creation Seventh Day Adventists, we have taken what one might consider to be a firm stand on the subject of Church membership. There is too much that we find in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy writings for there to be any ambiguity in our minds with regard to the importance of unity, covenant, and formal agreement. We find that our Father has always operated in this way, and that He has always required His people to operate in this way. The detailed explanation of many items of social conduct, even of seemingly minor importance, in the Old Testament texts, and the diligent oversight of the Apostles in the New Testament writings, are powerful evidence of this position.

We find doctrine, prophecy, and principle, revealing that the Holy Spirit of our Father is a unifying, rather than dividing, Presence, and that the concept of multiple denominations, and lines of doctrinal division, were entirely alien to the writers of the inspired Books.

The topic for last week and tonight is called “One Way,” and intends to examine these ideas because, at the risk of sounding exclusionary, Yahshua the Messiah taught that there are not many ways. There aren’t many, valid paths to truth and salvation, but one Way, that perfect Way laid out by infinite wisdom, paid for with infinite sacrifice, and set before us with infinite love.

As such, there are four major issues we are looking at, four main ways in which the “one-ness” of the divine Way is made manifest. By way of summarizing the three from last week, we saw that:

a) There is “One Way” to Everlasting Life

We looked at verses last week showing that it is the Father who raised the Son back to life after His sacrifice, and it is in harmony with the Father’s will that the redeemed dead are given an everlasting inheritance. Reincarnation, the transformation into angels, or existence as spirit-only beings, these are pagan (or pagan-influenced) ideas that have seeped into Christian thinking over time, but the Bible tells us that the dead know nothing, (Ecc 9:5) the converted living are looking forward to a day of resurrection or translation, (John 5:29, 1Cor 15:52) and that the meek shall inherit this earth, not some transparent, ghostly kingdom. (Psa 37:11, Mat 5:5) The Bible also tells us that the “one way” to this life everlasting is through Yahweh the Almighty.

b) There is “One Way” to The Father

The one way to the Father is through the Son, (John 14:6) having been drawn by the Father. (John 6:44) Some, even some whole Churches, teach that the Father is the “Judge,” but that the Son is the compassionate One, pleading with the Father to calm Himself, so that He does not destroy humanity in our sins. This is a wicked and unfortunate deception that has formed the cornerstone of a great many false practices within Christianity. It is the Father Himself who first loved us, sending the Son to fulfill the Law and Righteousness, and sending His Spirit to live out the Commandments in our lives.

The Father draws all who are willing to the Son, who teaches us how to behold His face. There are many who believe, and teach, and write books about, the “many paths to God.” The God of the Bible, however, has taught us His own Way, and it is through His Dear Son.

c) There is “One Way” to Unity with The Son

Baptism is often understood to be the act of an individual. It is not. It is the act of a community. It is the event of welcoming a new birth into the Family of Yah, and if it means nothing more than one person giving His life to Christ, it need never have been a public occasion.

Those who are baptized do, as individuals, “put on Christ,” (Gal 3:27) but they are baptized not into the Head, but the Body of Christ; that is, His united people here on earth. Baptism is not a saving act any more than beginning to keep the Sabbath or refusing to eat unclean meats. These are “works,” and mean nothing if they are not paired with faith, and lived out in connection with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. And as we understand it, that “Spirit” is the life of Christ that abides in all who share in the New Covenant established between Yahweh and Israel after the spirit.

In short, it is not possible to have unity with Christ if one does not have unity with Christ’s Bride, the Church. The Scriptures tell us plainly, Christ is the Head of the Church, just as a man is a head of his wife, with whom he is “one flesh.” (Eph 5:23, Mark 10:8) This is plain doctrine, and cannot be refuted by the wisdom of man, which seeks to replace the righteous principle of “individuality” with the secular idea of “individualism,” the worship of the “self.” Naturally, Satan cannot openly introduce worship of the self into Christianity, so instead he has men worshipping the “self” through an idealized, personalized version of “Jesus” as we might imagine Him to be. The community of saints, the “cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1) that might endanger (and correct!) one’s false picture of Christ Yahshua is excluded, and men cannot thereby be sanctified by their own inventions. This is the reason why many modern “believers” have come to resist the idea of covenant membership... they have been deceived by this snare of Satan.

Yahweh gives us the Church as the greatest tool that can be imagined for sanctification, and we reject this gift at the peril of our everlasting inheritance. In order to understand this matter clearly, however, we must see Yahshua as He is, casting down any “imagination” that may stand in the path of that true vision. (2Cor 10:5)

This brings us to today, and we will look at the fourth application of the phrase “one way;” that is:

d) There is “One Way” to Find and Understand “The Church.”

Just as there is one way to the Father, and one way to unity with the Son, there is really only one way to be in unity with one another; that is, according to the formal, orderly pattern laid out by Heaven. Now, to modern ears within the religious world, this may sound elitist, divisive. One cannot claim to be THE uniquely valid Church without offending the rest of the world. This was Satan’s plan all along, to portray those who say, “No, this is what the Bible teaches, and all else is error,” as rigid traditionalists, who are intolerant and unwilling to adapt to the “new and better way.”

But this is not about us. This is about the unchanging and perfect nature of our Heavenly Father; and the Bible, of course, being an inspired Book, has not left us unprepared for such a reaction. We are told to seek the “old paths,” not the “new ways,” (Jer 6:16) because Yah’s original way, His One Way, was created in perfection, and has never had need of an update, improvement, or enhancement.

Man’s work must be constantly maintained, and upgraded, in order to remain relevant and useful. Let us not dare to apply the limitations of our own terrestrial weaknesses to the Almighty One of Israel.

What our Father said 4000 years ago is as true today as it was then, and although this sounds hopelessly naive to so-called “progressives,” the choice to love, and trust, our Father just exactly as a child would is just that: a choice, and not something we have decided upon in ignorance.

As we have discussed many times, Yah has called His people into a community of saints, a royal and united priesthood. We dare not apply any opinions and thoughts developed in a few recent decades of life (and in an evil, rebellious society) to this eternal truth.

Yah has a Church, and He has invited all who are seeking salvation to unite with it in aim, purpose, and efforts to save the lost and dying. As I mentioned last week, I am drawing for concepts on this pair of verses shared by Sis. Jody during the recent feast: “And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” (Jer 32:39, 40)

I believe I said this a few weeks ago, but whenever we see words like “because,” “for,” and “that,” we should be paying very close attention. Those words mean that we are about to learn something about divine principles. We are about to see a demonstration of cause and effect. Yah says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, *that* I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

I have been saying this consistently over the past few weeks of our studies, but this passage spells out the truth of things without any need for interpretation or calculation. The Holy Spirit is saying something to us, to those who study with us, and for those to whom we take the truth. Yahweh the Almighty makes a covenant with His people THAT (so that) He will not turn away from us, and will do us good. It is the covenant that we share with Yahweh that keeps Him close to us, that “seals” us in His will, that we may be His redeemed children, and that we may receive the blessings of our Good Father. It is not our intentions, our resolutions, or our claims. It is the covenant that accomplishes this.

It is the covenant that is the strength of the Gospel, the “thing” that the Son’s death purchases for us, and to which our acceptance of Him leads us. It is a concept that no evangelists save those sent by Yahshua have ever taught, and that may be found only in the Church and through its messengers. We are not, by this statement, beating our chests in pride and saying, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” (Luke 18:11) No, none of us are here because we “deserve” to be a member of Yahshua’s Body. We are here because we are overwhelmed by the blessings we have not, and could never have, earned, but that we know are open, free, for any who desire them. For love’s sake, for gratitude’s sake, how can we keep this to ourselves?

Yahshua says, “I am one with my people,” and this is how we escape the destiny earned for us by our first father Adam; but we do not experience this salvation alone. No... we are invited, and we accept, alone... but once we HAVE received Yahshua, now, look at this...

We have often said, “Yahshua gives us a Church.” This is true. It is Biblical, and it is wonderful. But we should consider the other viewpoint as well. “Yahshua gives us TO a Church.”

It is not a one-way relationship; “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” (Rom 12:5) “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1Pet 4:10)

Now, who am I, that I should be considered a “gift?” Who are you, that you should be a blessing to other people, and a minister unto the brethren?

Well, the passage from Jeremiah tells us that the foundation of our covenant is unity. There is One Way to all these things we have been examining, because there is only One Heart in the Redeemed that follow that Way. Yah sets one way before us, and (as Jeremiah's passage tells us) gives us one heart with a will to follow it... but if we have one heart, then where did it come from? Whose is it?

We read, "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." (Psa 37:30, 31) We read in other places that Yah writes the Law on our hearts, the Psalm tells us that it is the righteous who receive this writing, and we read in another place that we have the "mind" of Christ.

Remember, in the Bible, the "mind" and the "heart" are very similar, and in fact we must love Yah and our fellow man with "all" of both. (Mat 22:37)

If the Law is written on our heart, then that "one" heart that we have is the heart of Yahshua, who is not divided against Himself. Jeremiah has said that here is One Way before us, and that way is the path that this heart must follow, to unity, and to glory.

Again, the world and those who love the world will not appreciate this message. This is one of the many things that will be a justification to resist the Gospel, and the whole-life changes that its acceptance must inevitably cause. So how do we approach it? It must be gently, but firmly.

It must be revealed that it is Yahshua's will, and not the will of any human being, or group/church of human beings, that designed this idea. If a teaching about the importance of membership and covenant sounds restrictive, exclusivist, let it be understood that Yahshua – in love – does seek to "separate" us from the rest of the world, for He says:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." (Mat 7:13)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John 10:1)

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." (John 10:8)

That last verse, that ALL who ever came before Yahshua, were thieves and robbers... I would like to examine that verse in particular next week. But the understanding here should be clear. Be wary of false teachers, those who seek to draw disciples after themselves. Beware those who do not know the Covenant, that very society of the Gospel that keeps us united with Yahweh, and able to receive His manifold blessings.

There is One Lord, One Faith, One Spirit, One Baptism... and if that be so, then there must be but one Body of Christ. The human form is patterned after the image of Yah; so we know that there is one Head, and one Body. If you know that you have found it, rejoice forever more, and for loves' sake, bring those whom you find in the highways and the byways... because the Wedding Supper is soon to begin, and although there is only One table, it is very large, and able to hold all who are willing to enter into the peace, joy, and love of Yahweh our Father.

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