

Public Displays of Affection

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

Even though the Feast of Unleavened Bread does not officially begin until tomorrow evening, we have always joined them to Sabbaths that have fallen immediately before and after, so... Welcome to the Feast of Unleavened Bread for 2014.

There has been a temptation to think that, because we are far apart, and because it took a while to initiate some participation among those who would lead our meetings, that this would not be as great a blessing as previous Feast days. However, I am confident that this will indeed be, as we have said of every previous gathering, the most blessed of our holy times. Yah has given His people great advantages, and promises of His loving protection. He has committed to sanctifying all of His children, and so we rest (and the Sabbath is a fitting sign of that rest) in the promise that He will have something to teach each of us in the coming days that will be vital for our growth, and for our preparations to meet Him in peace, and serve Him in eternity.

I volunteered to lead this first meeting, even before knowing what the subject and themes of the feast would be. That is because, no matter what our specific theme is, the subject is always Yahshua. I am always eager to speak about Yahshua, and I pray that this example has and will serve as an encouragement to everyone going forward, whether we are asked to speak before the Church, or before the world. Those who are filled with the Spirit are filled indeed, to overflowing, and they do not hesitate – more, they seek out opportunities – to testify of what the Savior means to them.

This feast, and the conversations we have had leading up to it, has caused me to do some thinking about our regular weekly meetings. I do not want it to be the case that we fall into the habit of being passive listeners. I do not want it to be the case that there is one voice, that there is one person “giving the studies,” and the others simply listen and say, “Amen.”

Our topic tonight is what Yahshua means to me, and I have called it “Public Displays of Affection,” because this is exactly what I am talking about here. I have always been happy to write our Friday night studies, because I love my Savior. I enjoy talking about Him, telling others about Him, and sharing new insights into His character, His doctrine, when I find them. And it has always been the case, even if we are going over “old material,” that I find new light in them, that I look forward to sharing with the brethren, hoping that they will similarly be delighted... not in the studies themselves, but in what they are able to “see” because of them.

As much as I enjoy that process, however, I do not want to prevent the development of potential creativity, the potential gifts of leadership, in my brothers and sisters. A part of love for Yahshua is allowing others to express their love for Him openly as well, and so what I would like to do,

going forward, is this: I will continue to prepare studies weekly, as I have been doing... however, I will issue an open invitation that, should anyone feel led to lead our discussions on Friday nights, let me know and I will step aside for that week.

I want ALL of us to show our love for Yahshua by bringing their joy, their excitement, their insights, to share with the others, and then we will become more “used” to testifying both within the Family, and outside it. I pray that everyone will take advantage of this opportunity, and I encourage you (every member) to do so regularly, so that they will indeed be more occasions of sharing, occasions of open discussion, rather than merely having studies and sermons every week. These have their place, I am not by any means downplaying the blessings that have been ours from what we have done up until this point; nevertheless, I am confident that we will benefit in new ways as a people from having a variety of voices, because the wisdom of Yahshua is not to be manifested in any one person, but in the collective voice of the Bride as a whole. It is written, not “The Spirit and a representative of the Bride say, ‘Come.’” No, it is rather, “The Spirit and the [entire] Bride say, ‘Come.’”

There is no “male and female” in Christ. There are not “weak and strong” members in Christ, for all are weak so that He may be strong. Therefore, do not let any temptation, or any imagined barrier, prevent you from sharing yourself with the Family in this way. We must learn to develop our gift of communication, and apply it to the saving of souls.

If we are going to give the love of Yahshua to the world, we must be able to do so unitedly, and that means each of us shall speak, each of us shall testify, and the world will thus see us as One.

Now, I have called tonight, “Public Displays of Affection.” Whereas we would hesitate to publicly glorify any human-to-human relationship in such a way, it is a far different matter when speaking of our relationship with the Father and Son.

I will say, to begin, that I was not always a friend of Yahshua. I was not raised to love Him. I was not raised to worship Him. My family had, and continues to have, a distant, but formal, relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, and this was my only early experience with religion – ritual, dead forms, rote activities. Now, it is certainly the case that there are dedicated and sincere Catholics – I have met a number of them, who have just as much love for the Scriptures and what they know of God, than any Protestant, and more than many Adventists.

The problem with this religion, as with all religions but the true one, is that learning its teachings, and studying its principles, and acting out its beliefs, does not kill sin in the heart.

The religions of the world tell its people about Yahshua, studying Him as they might any other historical figure, but they do not teach love for Him, or the intimacy that comes from truly being born again.

When some of my friends became Seventh-day Adventists, I avoided them. I thought that they were taking religion “too far,” and were becoming fanatical. These are the typical reactions that the world will produce out of fear of change, and ignorance, but as they were my friends, I engaged them in discussions when they wanted, and so, over the months, I began to learn about Adventism.

While the Roman Catholic Church did not really teach me anything significant about being a Christian, I do recall that I had been taught to believe the Bible. I said, “What is in there, I will believe.” When my friends were able to show me passages talking about the Sabbath, and the clean vs. unclean meats, and details about the interpretation of prophecy, I was troubled. Why had I never been shown these things before? Why were we, who claimed to be followers of Christ, doing (in some cases) the exact opposite of what His Word was instructing us to do?

So, having learned that Protestantism, and Adventism in particular, more perfectly understood and followed the Bible’s teachings than my current religion, I attended an evangelical crusade, and I was baptized, for the first time according to the Biblical teaching, as a Seventh-day Adventist.

Now, I was confident, I was doing the right thing. Now, I was certain, I was living out the true faith. I had many good feelings about my religion – in fact, I described it to my friends as feeling “clean.” And for the first time I really did feel that way – and nothing I have learned since then has caused me to doubt those emotions as genuine.

However, if someone had asked me at that time, “So, what does Jesus mean to you?” I am not sure if I could have given a meaningful answer.

Let me explain: I did feel good because I believed I was obeying the Bible in becoming a Sabbath-keeper, and putting away things that I now understood God did not want His people to do. I felt that I was learning more about the truth, and I did not hesitate to put it into practice. I felt that my sins were forgiven, because I was now being a “proper Christian,” and could defend my beliefs from the Bible, something I could never do before.

And yet, now as I look back at those days with more mature eyes, I see that the feelings I had, and the emotions I were experiencing... these were more a result of believing I now had good “works.” That wasn’t the only reason... I do not want to make it seem that I am being overly critical of what was certainly a foundational experience with me. I also now had friends who loved to talk about the Bible. I was a part of a community of faith, something very different from my one-hour-a-week Church experience from before. One of my fondest memories of those times, actually, was spending a Sabbath afternoon after the Church service at a member’s house with my other Adventist friends, sharing a meal, talking about our faith, and singing with the others as one played the piano.

But if someone had asked me that afternoon, “What does Jesus mean to you,” I suppose I would have said something about Him being responsible for this wonderful experience I was having... but beyond that, I am not sure if I could have given a meaningful answer.

I am spending time talking about these incidents, which were quite pleasant, but which do not address the question of what Yahshua actually DOES mean to me, because I want my brethren to have a complete understanding. The world, and the nominal Churches, teaches us that these things are what Christ is supposed to mean to us. He causes us to do good works, they teach. He gives us good feelings, they say. He provides us with a Church, and with experiences, that cause our lives to be blessed.

But consider this parable: A young man, having lost his parents, is taken to live in the home of a wealthy uncle. Every day, the uncle or one of his servants leaves a meal for the young man. The young man is very grateful for the nice home, and for the meal, and he always says, “Thank you,” to the uncle or the house servants. However, he does not actually spend time in conversation with them beyond expressing thanks or occasionally making some request.

One day, the young man goes into town, and he meets an old friend, who asks him how he had been doing since the loss of his parents. The young man says that he is doing well. He describes his wonderful home, the delicious meals that he eats, the good clothing that he is given, and the generosity of his uncle who has made this all possible. But then the friend asks, “And what is your uncle like? I know he is a kind man, but what do you really know about him?” The young man is shocked to realize that he really doesn’t know who his uncle is at all.

There are many who, when Yahshua returns, will look upon Him with affection, being grateful for all the things they believe He has done for them. However, how many of those, even those who praise Him for the gives they have received, really “know” Him?

And for all who hear this testimony, as I said, I want you to have a full understanding. If, during this feast, or at any time, you see that perhaps you have had one of these experiences, which your past or your expectations have led you to believe is “all there is” about being born again, then I invite you to come to a deeper understanding of love. There is a deeper intimacy that awaits you with Yahshua. There is a “rest” into which you may still enter.

The good works, the feelings, the social aspects of “Church,” the many blessings for which we are grateful, these are elements of the relationship, but they are not – and should never be confused with – the relationship itself.

Yahshua did not mean what He should have meant to me until I found that, despite all my good feelings about these earlier experiences I am describing, they had no power to keep me from sin. All they did was increase my guilt when, in the course of time, I fell away from the Church, and into deeper darkness than before I had ever become a Christian.

But it is during that time, when I was in no shape to call myself a follower of Christ, that He came to me. There were no “good feelings” when He met me in that place, because I knew that I had failed what I thought my relationship with Him was supposed to be. There were no good works, because I had betrayed what I knew of Adventism, and was enjoying my life in the world. There was certainly no faith community around me to give me nice Sabbath afternoons such as I have described.

But, in that time, He visited me, and He broke me open. I did nothing to deserve the knowledge that I was standing in Yahweh’s presence. I had nothing to offer, nothing to bring or give Him... and I did not feel that He would accept anything I could offer anyway. This was not some gentle light... it was a presence that was terrifying, that was overwhelming... because Holiness is destructive to the wicked. I realized that, despite all my experiences, which I have described to you tonight, I really had no conception, no idea, of who my Creator was, or what it meant to be in the presence of true light, true love.

I believe that, in every sense of the word but the most biological, I died when Yahweh revealed Himself to me. The person that I was before was consumed, because sinners cannot stand in the presence of even one of our Father’s angels. When the atheist, the agnostic, and especially the nominal Christian, come to see Who it is they have been despising, belittling, or taking for granted... I have a glimpse of what a day of regret, and what a day of shame, that will be. There is such a thing as dying of shame...

But as I lay there, in a kind of Gethsemane, Yahshua strengthened me, and He raised me up. That which was old, that which was incomplete, that which was sad, and lonely, and destined only for destruction, that passed entirely away. But what was left?

Nothing was left. There was nothing left of me once the “sinner” died, and yet, somehow, I lived. As I opened my eyes, I knew that everything was different; and, the new life I had, it was only Yahshua’s strength in me that allowed this life to exist. I was, like any newborn, ignorant about the nature of this new life. But my Father did not allow this to last. I was placed in contact with the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church – a miracle if ever there was one, considering the many, and larger, Churches out there.

I learned what it meant to be born-again. I learned what it meant to have a life of faith. I learned of Satan’s work in the world to keep people from learning about true conversion, and how important it is that we who truly serve Yahshua should let our voices be heard whenever there is deception, or oppression that causes innocent souls to perish in ignorance.

That that all came with time. The most important thing at that moment was that I knew who Yahshua was. It is not something that can be taught like doctrine, or explained in a sermon. It is only something that can be shared, so that the Holy Spirit can touch the hearers while they receive the testimony. Who Yahshua is to me is all of my life, from the moment of the death of the “sinner” until this moment. He is the entirety of my experience, without which nothing has

any meaning at all – no joy, no satisfaction, no peace – none of these have any purpose outside of the meaning that Yahshua gives them, and it is from this life that all thought, and work, and action, flow.

In Yahshua, all the promises of the Word, which I has loved to hear before, have become a part of me, and not just a part of my beliefs, or a part of my experiences. The life of Yahshua has become what I am, and that is an intimacy that cannot be replaced by all the good feelings, or all the good works, in the world. I am not Yahshua in the sense of one person being or becoming another... but the life that I now live, I live only as Christ IN me, for everything else has passed away.

These are words from the Scriptures. They are from passages, and verses, that we have seen before. But even they cannot convey the reality of it – that can only be experienced, and then shared. The Bible exists to tell us that this experience exists, and to each us who Yahshua is, and that He can make it possible. The Church exists to draw us into an ever-deepening relationship with the Savior. But each of us will have to know, for himself or herself, that Yahshua stands and knocks at the door of each individual heart, and those who let Him in will have, today, and forever, the answer. They will be able to say, to their Church, to the world, to their worst enemies, “Let me tell you what Yahshua means to me.”

This is my testimony, which I joyfully share with you tonight. I pray that this Feast of Unleavened Bread will be a great blessing to all who attend, and I pray further that, by the end of these days of enlightenment, everyone will be able to say, “I know what Yahshua means to me.” Pray for this, brethren, for yourselves, and for one another, and let us present this petition to our Father in Heaven as One.

Creation 7th day Adventism
flyingcreature@hotmail.com