

Satan's Kingdom

Happy Sabbath to all.

Last week Sabbath during the day, I went over the second letter in the *Letters to Rachel* series, and this one covered the fall of mankind. In tonight's study, I would like to share with you some ideas that stuck with me after reading that document, particularly as it pertains to some issues that were raised in the discussion of last week's meeting.

During the conversation that followed the study last Sabbath, the question was asked, "Why did Yahweh not destroy Satan immediately when he sinned?" As we spoke about this, it appears that a satisfactory answer was given, but I found it interesting that Rachel had asked that same question after reading the first letter. The response to this, which I gave in the second letter, I will post here: "The answer to this question is the history of the human race. The newly-created earth was to be the focal point of all the universe, a place where Lucifer would be allowed to have his way for a time, and then all who looked upon it would see exactly what sin was, and why God's law was not some arbitrary set of rules, but a perfectly harmonious system by which all creation would function in unity."

The earth has become the demonstration to the universe of what creation would become if Satan had "won" the argument in Heaven. Human beings have become the example, along with all the risks that this involves; but we have been provided with the opportunity to vindicate our Father's character, and His law, before all the intelligent creatures in a way that no other being can do. This is an unspeakable privilege, one that Christians scarcely understand or appreciate – but we, of the 144,000, must understand and appreciate what it means to be a human being in the service of Yah, and this will be a foundation of our praise in eternity.

To understand the temptation in Eden, we need to understand the nature of mankind both before and after the fall. Human beings were created in the image of Yah; this involves our mental and spiritual nature, which was placed within us in order for us to communicate with the divine. On the other hand, in terms of our physical nature, we are made of the same substance, the same system of organs, as the beasts of the earth. We have many of the same instincts, the same needs and desires, but mankind was created after a higher order than mere animals, and in fact of humanity it was recorded thus: "And Elohim said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'" (Gen 1:26) That is the first time the word "dominion" appears, and it is used again in verse 28, where Yah repeats this instruction directly to Adam.

Just as in English, the Hebrew word there means to dominate, to rule, and – in some contexts – to step on or tread down. Mankind was to have complete authority over the creatures of the earth... and this is one of the things that makes the fall of Adam and Eve so meaningful on a spiritual level. It might be asked, "Why was the temptation a matter of a fruit – an item of food?" And it

might be asked, “Why did Satan appear to Eve as a serpent, and not a bright, glowing angel who could more deceptively represent a spiritual authority?”

These two matters are related. As Adventists, we have additional writings that point out directly what is actually already obvious from the Biblical record – the first sin of mankind was a matter of appetite. But we can go even further than that. Adventist writings will often speak about the “animal nature,” the base urges that, if followed, make us no different from the beasts of the earth. Men that are particularly carnal or cruel are called “bestly,” and in fact the Beast of Revelation is precisely this – the principles of Satan acted out by the warm bodies (as opposed to reptilian flesh) of human beings and institutions.

Satan appeared to Eve as a serpent, the “most subtle” of the beasts of the field, because in urging her to eat the fruit, he was tempting her to reject her divine-oriented nature, that thing that set her apart from the animals, and in this context to submit to the promptings of appetite. There is nothing wrong with desires and urges themselves; even the prophets, like Elijah, had “like passions as we,” (James 5:17) but in rejecting the snake, in turning away from the temptation, what they – and we – are doing is saying to the universe, “The Spirit of Yah within me dominates the things of this earth,” including the beasts of the earth and the common urges that we share with them in these physical bodies.

Now, in some religions this is taken to the ditch on the other side of the road, in which all desires are seen as “sinful,” but a follower of Yahshua will, while keeping the body under subjection, (1 Cor 9:27) acknowledge that the drives placed within us were a part of the original creation that was “very good.” Satan did not cause Eve to be hungry. Instead, he used her hunger as an opportunity to have her cast off her divine nature, and submit to the impulses of her appetite without consideration for the instructions of her Creator and her husband.

This is why humanity has the opportunity not only to display the character of Yah to the universe, but also to vindicate His holy Law and show the connection between these two. The Law of Yah cannot be appreciated or kept by the beasts of the field, or the creeping things of the earth. The animals do not have any moral sensibility related to stealing, killing, adultery, or Sabbath-keeping. We may learn much from observing the bees, and the ants, and even the spiders, as King Solomon advises us, but that is limited to diligent works and persistence; little about obedience to the moral law.

Last week, I spoke about becoming so used to unrest, to a lack of Sabbath, that it becomes common, normal to us, and this is what kills the ability of the conscience to hear the voice of the Spirit.

The fact of the matter is, just as Sabbath-keeping is a function of the spiritual self, of the mind and not just the body, so we see the difference between a Christian (that is, a true “human being” in the spiritual, moral, and psychological completeness that we were created to be) and an animal that merely acts on instinct. That animal has no sense of rest. It seeks food, and safety, and the

opportunity to reproduce... and without the Law, and the “rest” in the Law, mankind quickly degenerates into pretty much the same state.

“Sin,” as we would understand the term, is natural to animals. They do not have any guilt as a result of this, because the Law was created for man. Nevertheless, we can observe the results of life without Law in the animal kingdom... the struggle, the violence, the hardship... and this is precisely what Satan would have be the case with mankind. His argument has always been, “God has created you with desires, and inclinations... why, then, does He add a Law to these things? Do as you want, and you will be fulfilling the purpose of your creation naturally.” “Even though God said, “Do not eat the fruit of this tree,’ aren’t you hungry? Isn’t the fruit right here?”

But if this were to be accepted, then human beings would not be in balance. They would only be submitting to the parts of our nature that are the least like the divine, the least like the character of our Father in Heaven. There is a “nature” about which the world knows nothing at all... that is, the divine nature. This is the system of laws, of principles, that are above and beyond the physical universe that has been corrupted by the presence of sin. It is the experience of love that mere animals cannot know.

Of course, animals may develop affection for other creatures, including human beings, and may be loyal and devoted to them in that capacity – however, agape love, that divine love that indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit, this is reserved only for creatures that can respond to the Father and Son in worship.

It is only in that environment of love that, to continue the idea begun last week, a conscience can be brought into harmony with the Law of Yah. It is only as we contemplate, and practice, and abide within, agape, that we become sensitive to sin, and that we come to hate transgression with a perfect hatred, because we see how painful, how deadly, how dangerous it is in both the animal kingdom and in human beings.

Because the world has rejected the Father and His Law, this world is now Satan’s Kingdom. It follows his principles, his mindset, and as a result, human beings are closer to animals than to Yahweh. Knowing this, what does the born-again believer do? First, we must know, and believe, and proclaim, that we have been set free. In uniting with Christ through true conversion – through repentance, and faith, and baptism – we cast off the effects of Adam and Eve’s rejection of the divine nature, and their submission to their base, animal nature. We return to the balanced nature of being in bodies of flesh while possessing spirits of divine character, which was Yah’s intended role for mankind from the beginning.

Then, we must work to reveal the nature of Satan’s Kingdom to others, so that they will come to reject this system, this world that has caused human beings to act as animals, and to accept the divine law intended to guide us into perfection.

The question has been asked many times, “If God exists, and has our best good in mind, why does He not show Himself more often?”

The answer is, at least in part, that He cannot without violating the authority that WE surrendered to Satan through the corporate actions of humanity in Adam’s sin. Yah allows this world to be Satan’s Kingdom, and since most human beings are without the Law, and thus subject to the beastly nature of their instincts and desires, the universe has been made the audience of what the Enemy’s principles do to the once-peaceful universe. In this second letter to Rachel, I talk about how this came to be... and as a Church, we work to teach people how we can break free from these bleak circumstances.

And it should not be forgotten, although Yahweh has allowed Satan to have his kingdom, He has also made a covenant with His people within that kingdom. We, as a Church, speak often of covenants, commitments, and membership within the Body, and the reason is because this is what allows us to live where we are, without being “of” where we are. Yahweh has said to us that if we will reject Lucifer’s rule, and choose to be citizens of a better Country, He will cause us to be His citizens, His royal subjects, His children. He will give us particular blessings, to preserve us from the influence and effects of living in this darkened kingdom. Further than mere preservation, He will cause us to become ambassadors, even to this wicked kingdom, in which we can teach others to live for the world to come, to dominate (to tread down) the animal nature, to keep the body under subjection with its passions and appetites, and to reveal the beauty of the Law and of Yah’s character to all who have eyes to see.

The citizens of Yah’s Kingdom fulfill all the original instructions that our Father gave to Adam, and that may be a good study in itself. For example, we “keep” the Garden by guarding the principles of the original creation. We replenish the earth by filling it with people, either biologically or – more commonly these days – through conversion of souls from darkness to light.

The citizens of Yah’s Kingdom reject the principles of Satan’s Kingdom that is all around us, turning away from the practices, and the mindset, and the policies, that have naturally come forth from humanity acting out its baser instincts – the drive to dominate others, and rule by strength, and seek reputation and wealth and power.

It should be obvious upon reflection on this topic that the things Protestants protest, including more modern issues like the SDA Trademark Law, are the very things that represent humanity dominated by its animal nature.

When animals are hungry, they devour. When they are angry, they attack. When they are fearful, they run away or lash out. We can see these very things in people who are not in harmony with Yah’s law, and this is exactly what is meant by worshipping “the Beast.” That term in Revelation is not, by any means, a coincidence. The Mark of the Beast is a sign that one is no

better (from a spiritual and moral standpoint) than the beasts of the earth, and the creeping things that cannot seek the face of the Almighty.

Similarly, it should be obvious that the things Protestants promote are in harmony with the divine nature – obedience, faith, agape love, victory over sin, covenant with the Almighty, evangelism, sacrifice, moral courage, sanctification.

Ever since Eden, there has been a conflict within humanity that mirrors the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. It is the conflict between instinct and desire vs. trust and obedience. Both are based on things that Yah has placed within us; however, He has given us the task of drawing close to Him in nature, using our free will to bow down in worship and receive the inheritance of glory. He has given us the work of learning the balance between the body and the spirit, with our mind as the valley of decision between the two. He has not left us alone, but He has given us the Law to direct our path, and the Spirit to give us the strength to walk it.

The 144,000 walk that path, being forgiven for Adam's transgression, dominating the god of this world, that old serpent who first led our parents to submit to the impulses of the animal nature, and receiving the promise written of us in the Word of Yah, "Beloved, now are we the sons of Yah, and 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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:1, 2)

Brethren, this is one of the most powerful, the most glorious, of the many promises that our Father has given to us. Let us labor to understand it perfectly, even as we abide in His Law, in His nature, and in His rest.

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