

The Hands of Angels

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, I would like to discuss the topic of the balance between faith and works. Obviously, this is something we have talked about before, but the line of distinction between the two, and the divine principles involved – while simple – are deep enough that we will indeed be examining this in eternity. Additionally, this is a matter that always comes up when we are speaking to those of a different faith, and when we have friends, family, spouses, etc. who are not Adventists, and not Sabbath keepers, the more examples we can draw on to explain this basic principle, the better.

For the sake of those who have difficulty understanding why we do what they consider the “works” of obedience to the commandments – including Sabbath observance, lifestyle reform, and so on, it is our responsibility to ensure that we can explain the relationship between faith and works as clearly as possible. One of the things that really helps is to show places where faith is praised, and places where works are praised, revealing that these two words are really not opposites at all; rather, they are complementary, and both are necessary for the perfection of Christian character.

By way of examples, I would like us to begin by considering the construction of the ark in the days of Noah. We read, “And Elohim looked upon the earth; and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And Elohim said unto Noah, ‘The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

“‘Make thee an ark of gopher wood. Rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

“‘And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.’” (Gen 6:12 – 18)

I find it interesting that Yah says here, “I, even I, do bring a flood.” He is being as specific as possible that He, and no natural force or indirect consequence, is causing the destruction of all breathing life on earth. The global flood is not something that the Father merely “permitted” to happen, as some claim, but was a direct result of His opposition to the sin of mankind on the earth.

What I want to focus on for this week, though, are the detailed instructions that Noah received concerning the construction of the Ark. Yah did not just say, “Build a boat,” but rather, “Build THIS boat.” The design of the Ark was of no human origin, but divine. It is very important to keep this in mind for the purposes of the study.

Another example of a divinely-inspired construction project followed Israel’s exile in Babylon. Under Ezra, and later Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were to be rebuilt. We read, “Then said I unto [the rulers], ‘Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.’” (Neh 2:17)

For yet another, as we’ve discussed briefly in other studies, the original work of Adam was to “keep” or guard, the Garden of Eden.

It seems that our Father is pleased to have human beings build barriers, walls, borders, lines of distinction. This should not be any real surprise, because humanity was created in Yahweh’s image, and the first thing the Bible records our Father doing is creating and then separating light from darkness. The first step in the creation of the universe was the establishment of “distinctions,” as if to say, “Now there will be THINGS, so we must learn to distinguish between this thing and that thing.”

As we have noted, the answer to the question, “What is a CSDA?” is very simple: A CSDA is a human being as our Father intended. A Creation Seventh Day Adventist, in doing always those things that please the Father, are made – become – the people we were always intended to be, and the people we would have been had Adam never fallen into sin.

As such, we obey the instructions given to Adam, and Noah, Ezra and Nehemiah. Yah has had us building barriers, walls, borders, lines of distinction. Spiritually, we distinguish between good and evil, between sacred and profane. We do this, not by creating a physical boat, or putting up physical walls, but by building up the spiritual “Ark” of this last generation’s Church, and by maintaining a testimony that says, “This thing is holy,” and “That thing is not holy,” reflecting on earth the character of the Son. Plainly spoken, a man who cannot distinguish between holiness and unrighteousness is not a “man” according to Yah’s plan for His creation. He is not being as Adam, or as Noah, in the days of another global destruction.

Speaking of which, we may return to the Genesis account and read this about the flood that Yah sent as a testimony against sin:

“In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

“Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.” (Gen 7:11, 12, 19 – 22)

In some recreations or accounts of the flood there is a torrential rain for forty days, and then the ark floats around a while before landing on a mountain. In reality, the flood was far more than just the result of rainclouds. The earth was shaken by the violence of the waters, which came not only from the sky, but also from out of the ground, breaking apart and reforming the surface of our world with the violence of the destruction. The earth was literally “broken up” at Yah’s wrath, and were it not for the few living creatures on the ark, the world would have been empty of human and animal life from that day to this.

As I have written, and as the Spirit of Prophecy writings support, even Noah’s best efforts could not create a vessel capable of surviving the destruction. Even following divine instructions, nothing that a human hand could fashion was able to withstand the forces to which it was subjected when the fountains of the great deep broke up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

We know, however, that the Ark did endure the power of the flood, and kept Noah and his family safe until the waters finally receded. How is this? It was only possible due to supernatural intervention. We read, “And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as Elohim had commanded him; and Yahweh shut him in.” (Gen 7:16)

After Noah spent the time and effort constructing the ark to divine specifications, Yahweh Himself shut the door and sealed it closed, and according to the inspired writings we also know that He sent angels to steady the ark during the flood. This prevented it from collapsing under the tremendous force of the waters, or shattering against the mountains as it rose higher and higher during the initial forty days.

It might occur to us to ask, then, “Why did Noah have to build the ark? Why did he have to spend all that time, obey all those detailed instructions, if Yah still had to do the work of preserving the faithful family Himself, and by the hands of angels?”

If Yah wanted Noah in an ark, why not just give him an ark ready-made, one capable of standing up to the coming disaster? This question has direct application to the balance of faith and works in many contexts. I submit tonight that there are three reasons why, despite the fact that Yah did the actual saving, and despite the fact that Noah was saved by his faith, he nevertheless needed to do the “work” of actually putting that vessel together.

The reasons are these:

1) Noah's work showed agreement with Yah's will. The patriarch understood, and was in harmony with, the Creator's judgment that the world needed to be cleansed of its wickedness. This is not to say that Noah did not love his fellow men; as Yah did, he felt great love for them, and attempted to convince them to save themselves along with his family. But even as he had pity for individuals, he understood that "mankind" as a collective body was beyond help.

In this generation, we face a similar situation. We know that "mankind" has rightly earned our Father's wrath, and that almost all are on the "broad road" to destruction. We agree with Yahweh's coming judgment, as we discussed when examining the Justice of Yahweh last week, even while we labor in love to reach out and save individual souls.

2) Noah's work was a testimony to his fellow men. The fact that Noah was not making a secret of his construction work is a strong indicator that Yah would have saved all who were willing to enter into the safety of the ark. For us, our work, whether it be faithful Sabbath keeping, the principles that we apply to all aspects of our lives, or the more direct approach to evangelism, reveals our faith, and sets an example that we hope others will follow.

It is this aspect of faithful service that threatens to religious liberty most directly impact. In seeking to prevent us from using the divinely gifted name "Seventh Day Adventist," Satan and his agents are attempting to ensure that Creation Seventh Day Adventists cannot testify as we have been called to do. Other groups, fearing persecution, have said, "We will not call ourselves SDAs. We are SDAs in the spirit, on the inside, but we do not wish to war against the Beast."

Those who adopt such positions do not understand that Yahweh gave us the name "Seventh Day Adventist," and then "Creation Seventh Day Adventist" as a "standing rebuke" to those who oppose the causes of righteousness. The name was not given to us for our own benefit, who are already a part of the Family... rather, it was given as a testimony to the world. Those who say they are "Seventh Day Adventists on the inside," and do not gladly bear the testimony given to us by the Father have little to do with the work of saving souls in this generation, despite how "busy" they or their ministry may look to the undiscerning eye.

3) The work itself changes us. This is one of the most powerful benefits of finding the proper, divine balance between faith and works. While we acknowledge that it is ultimately faith saves, we can testify that our "work" has refined our faith, and prepared us to receive deeper and deeper levels of understanding and trust in our Father. Ultimately, Yah and His angels saved Noah from the waters of the flood, and that because he trusted in the Almighty; however, they did so by steadying the ark that the human being built. Had there been no ark, there would have been nothing to steady, and humanity's history would have been at an end.

Where we cannot do for ourselves, Yah sends the hands of His angels to complete our tasks. However, because He cannot use force, and cannot act without agreement, it is necessary that we do all that we can.

We read, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek Yahweh, ‘till He come and rain righteousness upon you.” (Hos 10:12) If John 17 is the “creed” of the CSDA Church, this verse could well serve as our motto. What saves us is the faith that causes us to “seek Yahweh,” knowing that the Latter Rain will refresh us at the last, but we can never be successful at this unless we “break up” the “fallow ground.”

Spiritually, we know that while we may plant and water, “neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but Yahweh that giveth the increase.” (1Cor 3:7) Yet in a sense Yahweh will no longer bring forth something from nothing. At the end of the sixth day, the work of initial creation ceased. After that, it is our duty to work with what already exists in order to create new things. The same principle applies spiritually. Yah will honor our work, and give us increase, growth as we plant and water... but we must begin to work the ground, to break up the hard, abandoned places, before we can ever see His miracles.

In our work of sanctification, we do not sit back and wait to be perfected. We rest in the promise of perfection that comes, but we must nevertheless do the work of men, and build our ark, build our walls to separate the holy from the unholy. When we have done this, having followed the divine instructions, then the hand of Yah seals us, and His angels preserve us through the catastrophe. It is His Spirit that completes the perfect work of character-building in the willing hearts, and His angels do the work in the physical world of bringing to success and perfection the plans we set in place... but those plans must be there to receive the divine blessing.

With the General Conference stirring again, having recently taken another of our websites, it becomes very important to keep these things in mind. Will we ever build an Internet presence completely immune from destruction? Most likely not. Will we ever put together an aspect of the ministry that succeeds in exactly the ways that we anticipate? Possibly not. But we shall neither fail nor be discouraged; we are building the ark of these last days. We are preparing the walls of character and doing the originally intended work of mankind. We are keeping the Garden. We are building the borders between the holy and unholy, and we will see what our work has done in breaking up the fallow ground, when Yah does things with our work He would not do “from scratch.”

In these last days, let us pray for the clear guidance of Yah’s Spirit, and the discernment to know It. Let us pray, in this and the coming times of trouble, for the hands of angels to steady our vessels, that disaster will be turned into triumph, and even the best efforts of Satan and his fallen ones will be turned into victory.

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