

## Touching The Ark

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week I would like to talk about the topic of “Holiness.” If we are to be a holy people, and a royal priesthood, then we ought to have an understanding of just what it is our Father has called us to be. We may read the following preliminary verses:

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to Yah, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” (Rom 6:22)

“But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” (Oba 1:17)

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” (1 Th. 4:7)

“And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy.” (Exo 29:33)

There are a great many verses we could cite that use this word, or some form of it, to describe an aspect of our Father, or the things He has created on the earth.

We see from these few that holiness has meanings such as “deliverance,” “safety,” “completeness,” “healthiness,” and “apart-ness.” The first few are fairly obvious in their application to our lives, but what does it mean to be set apart?

This study is called “Touching the Ark,” because the concept of contact in the Scriptures shows us how important this aspect of holiness is to our Father.

On reading this title, one might immediately be led to recall this incident from the Book of 1 Chronicles:

*“And they carried the ark of Elohim in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab; and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before Elohim with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark; and there he died before Elohim.” (1 Ch 13:7 – 10)*

[Don't continue reading before reading the above passage, thank you]

This is not an entirely unique event. We may read of similar ones in the Scriptures here, following the same principle, if not the actual series of incidents: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from Yahweh and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh.” (Lev 10:1, 2)

In my own writings, I describe an incident from the war in Heaven, in which one angel attempts to protect another, rebellious angel, by shielding him with his wings. Yet, not only does the fallen angel justly receive the power of Yah's wrath, but the protecting angel has his wings burned by divine fire that does not affect any other part of his body, or any of the righteous angels that are caught in its way.

In each of these three cases, there is a common thread. The individuals who are punished by Yah are doing something that appears to be good. It appears to be helpful, even kind... but in each case they are violating specific instructions that the Father has given, and must therefore be considered transgression. What this tells us about holiness and transgression is quite significant.

The Scriptures tell us to learn of Yah as He is, not to lean on our own understanding. The Scriptures tell us that what the Almighty declares to be "holy" is holy indeed, even if we – with apparently good intentions – seek to make alterations or omissions from His plainly declared will.

"But," one might ask, "Why does Yah not honor motives in cases such as this? After all, it is written that He 'trieth the hearts and reins,' (Psa 7:9) and 'Yahweh looketh on the heart,' not just the outward appearance." (1Sam 16:7)b

The reason why Yah does not consider motives where matters of stated holiness are concerned is because those who reject holiness, even for what the world might consider "a good reason," are following in the path of Lucifer, and training themselves to reject genuine worship of Yahweh. This is a strong statement, so I must explain what I mean by this.

The Great Controversy, as we have seen in recent studies, is about the vindication of the Law and character of the Father. The point being made to the universe is that the Creator knows best what is the proper way for His creatures to be, that His laws are absolute, and designed to facilitate a peace that will last for all eternity. These are high aims, and the security of the universe is being weighed in the balances, therefore if any "exceptions" can be insinuated to exist in the Law by the Enemy of souls, it would become impossible to justify the Law with absolute confidence.

Consider, how many people have been turned away from the message of righteousness by faith because of the adultery of King David? We who have been faithfully continuing the work of the SDA Pioneers have heard, more times than we might care to recount, "How can you say that God expects perfect righteousness? David sinned with Bathsheba, and yet was called 'a man after [His] own heart.'" Of course, Mrs. White herself gave a response to this, and we have certainly been happy to explain... but many harden their hearts at the first suspicion of error... and such souls are difficult to restore.

In more recent examples, how many people have refused to consider the benefits of Ellen White's writings because she once said this-or-that statement that was difficult to understand, or seemed to go against the traditional wisdom of Christianity?

Satan will take any apparent contradiction, any assumed favoritism or partiality, and use it to turn souls away from the truth.

We, who are our Father's representatives, must know well when we are dealing with the realm of the "holy," and consider our words and actions carefully with regard to what we are saying about the Father and Son through the testimony that we give.

One of the Biblical definitions of "blasphemy" is the placing of one's self in a position that should only be occupied by divinity. When seen in that light, the examples we have been examining, when holy things have been treated lightly, should make perfect sense.

Lucifer's great sin was to say, "I will be like the Most High." (Isa 14:14) This statement comes at the end of his open declaration of rebellion, and represents the height of his pride and self-deception. The prophet Isaiah cites this series of statements specifically as the point at which the fallen angel made himself worthy of judgment, saying, "For thou hast said in thine heart..."

We would learn a great deal if we paid particular attentions to the words "for" and "because" in the Bible. As we learn to more perfectly reason from cause to effect, it would educate us greatly to see how the Scriptures identify the causes of various effects described in the holy writings.

Isaiah 14:14 records the first incident of blasphemy in the universe. Lucifer declared his intention to be like the Most High, to sit in His place, to be as He is, and in so doing he declared himself divine and worthy of worship.

To a lesser – but no less dangerous – degree, the three incidents with which we began our study have other creatures doing the same. Nadab and Abihu said, in their innermost thoughts, "We will not offer the fire the way that we have been instructed." The Spirit of Prophecy writings indicate that these two had become drunken, and were intending to perform sacred rites in an intoxicated state. Should Yah have allowed this, He would have declared these most critical and symbolic activities to be common, able to be conducted by the careless and drunken... which is entirely contrary to the principle of "holiness."

The angel described earlier said in his heart, "I know that Yahweh has declared that the rebellious angels must leave Heaven, but I have decided that this one – my friend – may remain." What does this say? What would it mean if this very first judgment of Yahweh against sin were called into question, doubted, and then shown to have some validity by letting it pass without consequence? Surely, "sin" cannot be so bad, if we creatures can decide how it is to be punished, and to what degree... This is a serious matter, and rightly labeled "blasphemy."

Uzza, for all that might appear to be a well-intentioned, maybe even instinctual, act, would cause the entire Law of Moses to be of non-effect, because the Law states that only the Levites are permitted to touch the Ark of the Covenant. We read, "At that time Yahweh separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, to stand before Yahweh to minister unto Him, and to bless in His name, unto this day." (Deu 10:8)

Consider, as when we were looking at the directions given to Noah for the construction of HIS ark, how specific these responsibilities are. The tribe of Levi plays a major role in the symbolism of the Old Testament spiritual economy, and was “separated” (made holy) for this purpose. Should the Law be shown inaccurate, or unimportant in this aspect, consider what Satan would have done with the rest of the writings of Moses. The Enemy of souls does not play “fair,” and is not interested in presenting matters in their true light.

Our Father, then, for the sake of those who are to learn from the record of these things, must uphold the righteousness of His Law at every event, on every occasion... and where it even appears that He does not (such as His mercy to King David) the tempter will hold Him in contempt.

Satan, and the humans he inspires, will deride our Father where He is wrathful, and as much if not more where He is merciful. Because of this, our Father has declared a state of holiness with regard to the matters attending His ministry, and His most sacred symbols. These things are “set apart” for absolute righteousness, and there can be no human “hands” that have any part in the deciding of these things.

The holy things of Yah are complete, because they require no human improvement. They are designed to assist in our deliverance, our salvation, and are both perfect and intended to facilitate perfection.

So what has our Father declared to be “holy?”

Well, there are obvious applications here to the Sabbath day. Yah has declared this time, these hours, to be “holy.” Regardless of human reasoning and perception, there is a blessing that has been placed upon this period of time, a blessing that has never been revoked.

Our Father draws near to us as in no other duration, and though we worship Him every day, and are dedicated to Him every day, He has nevertheless declared something to be “perfect” and “set apart” about His Sabbath.

Human minds, and demonic minds, have of course attempted to steal this blessing from humanity. We could discuss the alternations made to the Sabbath in terms of church politics, historical corruption, and the lazy following of established traditions. But what really matters from a sanctification perspective is that it was inspired by blasphemy, by someone saying, “I know what Yah has declared to be holy, but we are going to do it this way,” and it was designed to steal a blessing from “man,” for whom the Savior declared that the Sabbath was made.

Our Father has declared His Church to be holy. Some have treated it as an object of worship itself, and thus fallen into a cult mentality, while others have seen it as unimportant.

Remember, holy things are designed to help us to worship, they are not themselves objects OF worship. At the same time, if we reject the holy things designed to aid in our salvation, we will never attain the high calling to which we have been intended.

If we say, “The Church is not important,” when Yahshua has said it is, we set ourselves in His

place, and in fact above His judgment, and we make ourselves of that same mind that has said, “I will be like the most high.”

As I began by saying, Yah has called His people “holy.” He has set us apart from the world, and given us all that we are – a ministry, a commission, and also a name. If we believe indeed that Yah has given us a particular character, represented by a particular name, and that no other name is sufficient, and that this name was specifically designed to set us “apart” from the counterfeit churches, then we must conclude that the name He has given us is also holy. It is perfect and complete... and it is not subject to alteration or control based on human reasoning.

We believe that the names Seventh Day Adventist, and more recently Creation Seventh Day Adventist, are sacred names. Now, they are not objects to be worshipped, but neither are they to be lightly regarded and considered unimportant. They are designed to give us a testimony, and because Satan’s hatred has been stirred against it, they are designed to bring the Gospel into full view of humanity one last time, to show them what their options are.

Our choice is between righteousness and unrighteousness. In terms of what we are discussing tonight, our choice is between holiness and blasphemy. These are the two actuating principles, and any decision that can be made with regard to spiritual matters may be judged as one or the other of these.

Our Father is therefore calling us to take decided positions on holy things, to declare (as mankind was designed to create boundaries, which we covered last time) the difference between the sacred and the profane.

Whether it is a day, a name, an action, a word, a thought, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we may know what is of faith, and what is of sin. By Yah’s grace, we are called to apply this principle to all aspects of our lives, and thereby to go on into perfection, through which we behold always the face of our Father in Heaven.

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