

Becoming Yahshua

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, our study is called “Becoming Yahshua,” and, as you can imagine, such a title bears some explanation.

What I have been asking the Church to consider, over the past few studies, is the issue of the timing of the fulfillment of our Father’s promises. We “know” this truth of the Gospel; however, for the purpose of reaching out to others, whether we are speaking to them in person, over the phone, or by email, we need to be able to clearly state this truth. In addition, we need to be able to identify it (or its absence) in the words of others, lest we agree with error in the effort to establish some common ground with our hearers.

The Scriptures tell us to examine ourselves, to see that we are in the faith. The Biblical record indicates that those called into Yah’s service struggled with temptation, with the deceptions of others, and with uncertainties about the future. Ultimately, however, the question that will be asked of humanity in the Day of Judgment is a simple one: “Are you, or are you not, Christ-like?”

Christ Yahshua is the only Savior of mankind, and those who are Yah’s people know that this does not merely mean that we have been given a “name” by Heaven on which to call to avoid destruction. He has given us a Life, unborrowed, untainted by sin, as a replacement for those that have been ruined in the fall of our first ancestor.

When those in the world hear the truth of the Gospel from those in whom it has been placed, if their hearts are affected, and they respond favorably, they may well say, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) To put that in another way, “How does one become ‘Christ-like?’”

If asked this question, victims of the new theology will say something like, “Well, first, you must admit that you are a sinner, then you must accept Jesus as your Savior and be baptized. After that, you join a Church (or not, these days) and you begin to grow.”

While those words sound basically correct, there is a subtle difference in meaning to what the Bible portrays. When Peter was asked that exact question following his sermon on Pentecost, he said the following, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

Now, we need to have the discernment to see the difference. Yah has given us the discernment to see the difference, and it is critical that we do so. Remember, we are talking about issues of “timing.”

Both indicate that salvation begins with repentance. The sinner must accept the judgment of Heaven, and the authority of the Law. This is the first point of difference that the Bible has with modern theology on this matter. “Sin” is defined in the Bible as rebellion against God’s Law. That is clear enough. “Sin” as defined in modern Churches is a relatively vague concept. If one does something “bad,” by the standards of what the Bible seems to say in this or that passage, it might – possibly – be considered a sin. Even that seems to change based on culture, or popular opinion at times. Some say that a violation of conscience is sin, based on Paul’s statement that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom 14:23)

While that's certainly an element of it, a conscience that is not in harmony with Yah's Law is simply not equipped to identify or define sin. Romans 2 tells us that the "doers of the Law" will be justified before Yah. (Rom 2:13) But what of the Gentiles that were not raised to live in harmony with this Law? Paul says that those Gentiles who become saved "shew the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." (Rom 2:15) Now, this is very important. Those who are raised with knowledge of Yah's Law will naturally have a conscience for which its promptings will be in harmony with that Law. Those who were not raised in such a way will also have the work of that Law written in their hearts – by conversion if not by familiarity – and their consciences will likewise bear witness to the Law's virtues.

So then, whether Jew or Gentile, the conscience must bear witness along with the Law.

Because of this we conclude that true repentance must begin with an acknowledgement of the Law. It is not that nominal Christians, who believe the Law was nailed to the cross, cannot reject and turn away from something they know is wrong... but repentance unto perfection, unto true Christ-likeness, must begin with a realization that Christ's character IS the Law in its pure, spiritual form.

In both the answers above, repentance comes first. Leaving aside, for a moment, the difference between the Biblical and modern meanings of that word, the next step is to accept Yahshua and to be baptized in His name. Depending on the denomination, this also may or may not follow the Biblical instruction to be "baptized," to be "dipped" as a symbol of going down into death and then raised back to life. It is not sufficient to sprinkle or rinse, because the baptism is only a "washing" in a very symbolic sense. It is to represent a change in the entire person, therefore all the "person" must be submerged and resurface, or the ceremony fails to convey its proper meaning.

So, although there is a strong similarity between the original and modern answer to the question of how to become Christ-like, those with discernment can see, and explain, that the "similarity" is not the same as equality. They may sound the same, and maybe even look the same... but they are not the same. The repentance may be different, and the baptism may be different.

The most significant difference, however, is yet to come. For the modern theology, as well as for the Christian doctrine, baptism represents a beginning following an ending. However, they represent the beginning of two very different things.

The modern answer has baptism taking place at the beginning of the journey to becoming Christ-like. As I represented earlier with my "typical" answer, the conventional wisdom says that you get baptized, you join a Church, and you begin to grow. That "growth" though, is from death to life. It is becoming "less and less sinful, and more and more holy." The transition from non-living to living is a very evolutionary concept.

The truth is that one gets baptized into a Church (it is intended by Yah to be a single event, not two loosely-connected incidents as indicated by 1Cor 12:13, Gal 3:26-29 and various other places) and then begins to grow. That "growth" though, is from life to life. It is becoming more and more aware of the holiness of the Father and Son that they have placed within us – through no merit of our own, but received with faith and thanksgiving. The idea that life comes from life, and that in the beginning there was Yahweh, is a principle of Creation.

The issue is also one of timing. One “begins to become Christ-like” upon baptism in modern theology. One “becomes Christ-like” upon accepting the Savior, and declares it to the universe upon baptism, according to Biblical doctrine.

Now, every baptized Christian may ask, “Am I Christ-like?” This is not a question of scale, like “On a scale of 1 – 10, how Christ-like am I?” That which is eternal, that which is spirit, does not operate in that way. The statement is either true, or it is false. It is either “Yes,” or it is “No.”

If it is yes, and if the Law-and-Spirit enlightened conscience bears witness to one’s testimony, then such a person may rejoice in his or her life and service to the Most High. If it is no, then such a person must remember that Yahshua (and His character) did not come into the world to condemn, but to save. Fear will keep people from admitting the truth, even if the truth would set them free. If one is not Christ-like (meaning not, or not yet, or almost, or nearly, or “getting there”) then one has not yet been subject to repentance, faith, and baptism, which has been designed by Heaven to accomplish two things that are really one: to make a sinner into a Christ-like saint, and to unite that sinner with Christ’s Body. Church membership may be mentioned here, not that Church membership is a cause or source of salvation, but that it is the intended condition of the saved.

In just the same way, obedience to the Law of Yah is not a saving practice, but obedience to the Law of Yah is the practice of those who are genuinely saved, according to the Word.

As Adventists, we have additional inspired writings that teach no new doctrine, but confirm what the Scriptures have already said. Authors like Ellen White speak of Christ-likeness being “lost,” and being “restored” through re-conversion and rebaptism, but this is never, in any of these places, described as a process.

As I said last week, it is true that there is a “way” to Heaven, but that way is not a process, it is a Person. Accepting that Person is not a journey, or a procedure. It is an event. In an instant, when Yahshua takes up residence in the sinner’s heart, death is exchanged for life, and that individual is translated into the Kingdom of Heaven. (Col 1:13) After this, yes, there is growth, but the nature of that growth is different in the Bible and modern Christendom. One is a series of creative acts, of mental and spiritual recognition, while the other is an evolutionary process from a worse state to a better one as defined by human standards.

A newly-baptized Christian does not “improve” into a mature one. The newly-baptized Christian, according to the Biblical teaching, is Christ-like. That is the end of the judgment.

He may have things to learn, and a conscience to train into perfect harmony with the Law, but the nature of his character is the same as the nature of the character of the Savior. How can it be otherwise? It is the Savior, whole, entire, and complete, that dwells within the heart of the convert, whether that individual has been a convert for two minutes or two decades.

So, from the Bible we have the answer of how one becomes Christ-like. As Paul says, we repent of our rebellion against Yah’s Law and Will, we submit to the ordinance of Baptism and then we “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

We do not begin to receive the Spirit. We do not gradually accept the Spirit. We receive the gift of this Spirit; and remember (although this is more difficult for the Trinitarian mindset) the Holy Spirit that we receive IS Christ, all of Him, all of His spiritual presence, (2Cor 3:17) and we are re-made in that very Image, the express Image of the Father. (Heb 1:3)

That is the “becoming.” Now... what does it mean to “be” Christ-like anyway?

This is a powerful, potentially dangerous doctrine. Just as the New Moon, if observed by a Church that is not truly sanctified, can become a destructive and divisive force, so an examination of Biblical Christianity, Biblical Christ-likeness, can be destruction to the unsanctified mind. In examining the nature of Christ, we are touching the Ark of Yahweh, and we had better be Priests of Heaven in the spirit, and members of the divine bloodline, or we are subject to the judgment.

Many have looked into these matters, and they have not survived. Some of us know individuals, some of them personally, who have come to believe, “I am Jesus.” Some have said, “I am the new savior of mankind.” Some have said, “I am the return of Yahshua.” Some have said, “I am the reincarnation of Michael – He who is Like unto Elohim.” They have held this doctrine with impurity, and it has corrupted them.

Consider... the Father and Son are so united that – in a certain sense – They cannot be told apart. This does not mean the Son IS the Father or that the Father IS the Son. Trinitarianism blur the lines too much, but They are distinct. They have Their own wills, yet in terms of Their glory, Their authority, and Their Spirit, they are indistinguishable.

Now, we are called to be “one” with Them. What does this mean? What does this truly mean? To one another, we are individuals, but the genuine, truly-converted Christian is so similar to Christ that sin cannot tell us apart. We are so similar that diseases and misfortunes cannot tell us apart. The demons can scarcely tell us apart, and they therefore become subject to our rebukes exactly as they are to His.

Perhaps most significantly, death cannot tell us apart. Death cannot distinguish the Christian from the Son of Yahweh. This is the power of the doctrine of the true Gospel. This is why we are indeed “Sons of Yahweh” by adoption. The origin is different, but we are no less “sons and daughters” because of that distinct origin. We are sons and daughters in spirit and in truth; therefore, the quality of our child-ness to the Father is no less than that of the Only Begotten Son.

Do we become Yahshua? No, just as the Father and Son are distinct, so every Christian is unique. This must be kept in mind as we draw nearer. Yahshua is unique in the universe due to His unborrowed divinity, His everlasting nature, and the perfection of His life and glory. He was begotten, uncreated, from the Father. Nevertheless, once He gives these things to His people as gifts, this glory, this everlasting life, this divine nature, there is NO difference in the quality of these things within the Christian. The only difference is in the source; they are Yahshua’s gifts that we bear, but there is no difference in what they are, and what they can do.

When sin approaches Bro. David, or Sis. Guerline, does it encounter the resistance of Bro. David or Sis. Guerline? No, it encounters the infinitely powerful resistance of Yahshua. If a demon should attempt to destroy Sis. Barbara, or Bro. Luke, does it encounter the defense of their power, or their will? No, it encounters the exalted defense of the Son of Yah. Now, the demon, being an intelligent spirit, knows that

neither Bro. Luke, nor Sis. Barbara, are the Person of Yahshua; but the distinction makes no difference to his success in overcoming the soul. For all intents and purposes, with regard to our relationship with life and death, there is no difference between us and the One with whom we have become... One.

If we admit to any difference in the nature and quality of the things Yahshua has given to us from those that He retains within Himself, we cannot say we are One with Him. But just as we do not say, "The Father is the Son," so we can never honestly say, "I am Yahshua." We are One, just as the Father and Son are One. His life is mine. His presence dwells within me. His inheritance is mine, and His character is my own so much as I can comprehend it. It is my comprehension – not His character – that expands through the events that compose a life of sanctification; nevertheless, His character in its entirety and its purity, is already placed where He has intended it. In this way, each one of us does "shew the work of the Law [i.e., the character of Christ] written in [our] hearts, [our] conscience also bearing witness."

There is more of this I wish to examine, and may do so next week, but let us consider the glory and righteousness of our Father with holy reverence, and let us consider His love, His desire to be one with us, and the reality that in Christ He IS one with us, as we continue to rest in these holy Sabbath hours.

David.

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