

Hearing

Happy Sabbath to everyone (Creation 7th day Adventist Church)

Last week, we had a study called “Sight,” in which we looked at the Biblical concept of signs. We know that Yah requires of His people an intelligent faith, one that is based on reason as well as obedience, one that traces from cause-to-effect while at the same time relying on the promises of our Father for those things that we cannot fully predict.

Specifically, we examined Yahshua’s statement that a “wicked generation” asks for a sign. We saw that, in context, this was directed at individuals that asked for signs in such a way as to avoid duty. The Pharisees and Sadducees asked Him for signs in order to invalidate His influence over the Israelites, and to cast doubt over His teachings and His claims.

Yet if we look at the record of Yah’s dealings with His faithful people, it is full of signs. Prophets are sent with messages, providence opens the way before the saints, and miracles attend their actions. This was not limited only to the “Biblical days,” for we are told “And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark 17:17, 18)

Of course, there is always a ditch on either side of the road. Skeptics and mockers may demand that Christians show them these things, tempting us to be presumptuous. Fanatics will handle snakes (some denominations do this as a sign of faith), and the deceived will speak in “tongues,” following a false understanding of the Bible’s definition of that gift.

In reality, signs come to us from the Father in His good timing. It is not something that we are called to hold before us as evidence of our faith. Nevertheless, our spiritual “sight,” our ability to see and discern the will of our Father, is vital to our success as Yah’s people, and as evangelists of His Gospel.

Even among ourselves, as members of Yahshua’s Church, we have things to learn. Our testimonies are not yet “invincible,” to the degree of those that perfectly follow the Lamb. Most of us know the right words to say, and the correct answers to questions, but there are yet heights to which we must rise with regard to exercising our eyes of faith. As I mentioned last week, this is not about denying challenges, or ignoring obstacles, but it is about presenting our honest concerns before Yah and His people, praying for a solution, and then seeing our troubles swallowed up in victory.

The Bible certainly does not hide the facts from its readers. It does not present its heroes as flawless examples; it shows them learning, growing, and – as they follow the faith – becoming examples worthy of our study. Some, again, those who would ask for a sign in mockery, will look at the record and see the mistakes. They will say, “How can you teach victory over sin, when King David, a man after God’s own heart, was such a terrible sinner?”

The saint will see the record and say, “Thank you, Father, for preserving these examples, so that we may learn from them, and never stumble as those who have gone before us that outlined the way.” The Scriptures tell us that this latter is the proper approach. (1Cor 10:6, 11)

Now, at the end of that previous study Bro. Luke's closing prayer included the line, "We ask for your continued presence and blessing on us as we examine our eyesight and hearing."

As often happens, the wording of my brethren will inspire me with thoughts that I feel led to examine, and they often turn into studies or articles. In last week's study, we did not speak much about hearing; however, it is clear that this has as much Biblical significance as sight. The two are not used interchangeably; therefore, we who have things to learn about faith, speaking faith, seeing signs, and walking according to our beliefs, have something to gain from examining this as well.

I do not know if what we have begun will become a full series about the natural senses, but I am certain that sight and hearing, at least, belong together in our thoughts.

Let us look at some examples from the Holy Record, of Yah's communication with His servants:

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I; send me.' (Isa 6:1, 2, 8)

"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of Elohim. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

"And He said unto me, 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.' And the Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard Him that spake unto me." (Ezek 1:1, 28; 2:1, 2)

"And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a Man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, 'Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.'" (Dan 8:15, 16)

In 1 Kings 19, without quoting the entire passage, I would remind you that Elijah, when going forth to meet Yahweh, experienced an earthquake, a whirlwind, and a flash of fire... but Yah's true communication with him was by means of a "still, small voice." (1 Kings 19:12)

These four examples I have chosen are with specific intent. Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are, perhaps, the most "visionary" of the Old Testament prophets. And I note there a common theme their "sight" is opened up, and they see great things. They see the glory of Yah. They see scenes from the future. They see symbolic images that outline the future of entire nations. But often, these visions leave them astounded, or confused.

Many others who encounter the angels are rendered speechless, until they hear the messenger's voice that says, most often, "Fear not."

From my own experience, I know that as I attempted to return to the Seventh-day Adventist Church after my time in the world, Yah showed me many things. I saw a wall-hanging behind the podium at the local

SDA Church where I had been attending in Florida burning with a fire that floated through the air. I saw two paths set before me, one leading to darkness and the other to light. I saw other things as well of which I have not spoken... but in each case, the vision alone was not sufficient to communicate to me what my Father wanted me to know.

When I saw flames in the SDA Church, Yah's voice came to me and said, "This is no longer my home." Shortly thereafter, I met Pastor "Chick," and I learned about the victory message and the trademark law. When I saw the two paths set before me, the voice of an angel spoke to me and said, "You must choose."

In every event during which Yah activated my "sight," He also spoke to me in a way that seemed like a voice. It gave meaning to the vision, and confirmed what it was I was to know, or to do.

Sometimes, even when there was no visible "sign," I have heard a word, teaching me something important, inspiring me to speak, or to write on some occasions. And what this tells me, in conjunction with the Biblical examples, is this: Sight, of which we spoke last week, is very important for revealing to us things we must know. They show us events, and signs, and details. However, the sense of hearing, when applied spiritually, gives those visions context. Hearing gives meaning to those things that Yah has shown us, or is showing us, and it provides us, both individually and as a people, with direction.

This is not limited to the Old Testament either. One of the final examples of prophecy shows how consistent our Father is with this method of speaking to His servants. We read: "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in Heaven; and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, 'Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.'" (Rev 4:1)

I have quoted that verse because both the elements of sight and hearing are together in one place, but spend the time, read through Revelation and see. Time and again, the pattern appears. Yah shows His servant a scene or a symbol, and then a voice comes that inspires the witness. Ezekiel said, "the Spirit entered into me when He spake unto me," and John writes, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." (Rev 1:10) There is a connection here that runs through the Word, between hearing the Father's voice, and being "in the Spirit," being filled with the Spirit.

Those who have been given the gift of prophecy may misuse this gift. Those who falsely prophecy and claim to be Yah's servants will claim to see things, and to know them... but it is the voice of Yah, faithfully followed, that identifies the true servant of the Most High. With this voice comes the Holy Spirit, to give meaning to the vision, and to edify the Church with which that vision is shared.

Now, I said that I had chosen those four previous examples previously: Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Elijah. I spoke mostly of the first three, showing that Yah will pair His visions with His voice, so that we may not only know the information He is revealing, but also what we are to do with that information.

But let us consider Elijah, for this prophet is the model for our translation, for the way in which we will ultimately meet the Father and Son. We may read, "And I will wait upon Yahweh, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." (Isa 8:17) This is certainly an unusual verse.

Why would it be said that Yah hides His face from His people? There are a couple different ways that the Bible uses this idea. In some contexts, Yah actively hides His face from His people as a sign of displeasure. For example, in an earlier chapter of that same prophetic book, we read, "And when ye

spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.” (Isa 1:15)

In other contexts, Yah hides Himself from His people in order to give them a chance to repent. We examined this a long time ago in the study called “Araphel,” the “thick darkness” in which Yah dwells while His people become sealed so that they may endure His brightness.

Ultimately, though, and in both cases, the real “reason” for the hiding is because of sin. Whether Yah is expressing His displeasure at His people’s sin, or whether He is awaiting their restoration from the sinful state, the “sight” is cut off. When Yah’s people are uncertain of where to go, or what to do, they say they cannot “see” the way ahead. Yah’s Word is “a lamp” unto our feet, because an unclear path is represented as being shrouded in darkness.

But even in the darkest of times, even when the way forward is unclear, we have this: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of Yahweh, make His paths straight.’” (Mark 1:3)

Even when the visions fail, and the people are without understanding, Yah sends His messengers. These are they who are called by His voice, and sent by His voice, to bring good news. It is the spirit and power of Elijah that hears this message, bearing it upon himself for others to hear. This is who we are. The hearers of Yah’s Word – as the “still, small voice” – and receive it, become the Elijah-people, the witnesses to the final generation. These are they who know the principles of the Father’s character. These are they who hear the voice of the sanctified conscience and, by the power of divine conviction, accomplish the good pleasure of the Creator.

We are promised, “All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Yahweh thy Almighty.” (Deu 28:2)

So then, as we have seen, the sense of spiritual sight shows us impressions of Yah’s will, either in the form of general ideas or fine details. It is the spiritual hearing, however, that gives direction. Sight does not always give an interpretation, for we saw that prophets such as Daniel struggled to understand what they witnessed. But when they come before the people, the messengers of the Most High will know His meaning, because His voice comes to them, filling them with the Spirit, and thus building up the Church.

Now, this applies not only to those who are known as “prophets,” but there are principles here for every believer. As CSDAs, we have often spoken about a “vision of Excellence.” This is good, it is necessary for both individuals and the Church as a whole to have “sight” of our goals. But in order for this vision to be effectual in our lives, to bring about sanctification, we must also “hear” the call, for it is the voice of Yah that brings the Spirit; and that – if received – brings conviction to follow after the vision that we see. Again: truth and conviction. Sight and hearing. We have spoken of the importance of individual and corporate conviction before, and here we see it brought before us again.

Thus, sight and hearing work together to perfect the Christian, to give a goal, and to allow conviction to take root and therefore inspire true faith. Consider this, brethren, as you rest in the Sabbath hours. Let us pray, therefore, to both see and hear the will of our Father. Let us, as a Church and as its members, see and recognize the signs that Yah shows to us, and let us also hear the promises. As it is written, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Rev 3:22)