

## **The House of Yahweh (Part 2)**

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

Tonight we are continuing our discussion of “The House of Yahweh.” Specifically, we are looking at what it is that makes a “group” of people a Church. There are many groups, ministries, individuals, and organizations that claim to speak for the Almighty Creator. Most will use the Bible as the foundation for their teaching to one degree or another, even though they teach diverse ideas on every single doctrine we might care to name. I cannot think of a single Biblical doctrine that is not seen in at least two different, contradictory, ways by individuals who claim to be followers of the Savior.

This is a grand triumph of Satan, the enemy of souls. While diversity and individuality are wonderful things when it comes to the preferences of life, and to our decisions within the context of the Law of Liberty, there is only one Faith, for there is only One Creator of that faith. There is one truth, for there is only One who is the source of that truth. The world, that worships human opinion as the highest power, loves to praise differences and variations. And while this certainly has its place, we must recognize when we are dealing with the sacred, the holy, that which is above human authority. It is our obligation, therefore, not to create or locate a religion that “suits us,” but rather to find the truth as it is in Yahshua, and thereby His Bride, the people that love and live by that truth.

As we saw last week, Christ said that there was “one fold,” (John 10:16) which is a Greek word that has its roots in the idea of tending a flock of sheep, of feeding them, and of governing and guiding them. The idea that the “invisible Body of Christ” can be represented in diverse, contrasting ways by a variety of conflicting denominations dishonors the character of Yahshua, for His prayer to the Father was that we, His followers, might be not only one fold, one gathering of sheep... but that we might be One in Him to the same degree that He and the Father are One. (John 17)

In a recent study, we examined that this “one-ness” is so intimate that sin and death cannot distinguish us from the Son of Yahweh; clearly, then, it goes far beyond differences of doctrine and schisms of membership, which are specifically listed as “works of the flesh” (as variance and seditions, respectively) in Galatians 5:20.

Now, in the course of evangelism, we will encounter individuals whose experiences have led them along different paths, and to different outlooks on the idea of a “Church.” There are some who are not interested at all in the Biblical religion. There are some who believe that they have the truth, or at least, enough of the truth that they are “okay” with God, and are not driven to seek out any further light (or live up to the light they find). There are those who believe they are fully in the truth, so much as they know it, but would be willing to consider alternative points of view. There are those who know that there is something “wrong” with their current beliefs and traditions, and are seeking to find Yahweh’s religion.

The first two are difficult to reach. They are not willing to reason, and so our work on their behalf would be to merely give our testimony, and pray for them. We may attempt to initiate conversations on the faith, but if they express a lack of interest, there is little further we can do. The latter two, however, may be considered “believers” in the sense of holding or seeking genuine faith in the Father and Son.

To such as these, the Bible says they are given a “sign,” that they may know the truth when they find it. Unfortunately, many are not even aware there IS such a sign, but as we saw last week, that sign is

described in this verse: “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” (1 Cor 14:22)

Prophecy is a sign for those who already do believe in the reality and authority of Yahweh, and it confirms and strengthens their faith. Now, in the days of Paul and the other Apostles, a “believer” was already – or about to be – a member of the genuine Church. There were already little groups and individuals breaking off in the latter parts of their ministry, but the “Church” as it was established by Yahshua was relatively easy to identify.

Today, the concept of the “believer” has been largely expanded to those who may be sincere, but potentially deceived by the diversity of doctrines that I mentioned earlier. In this time of great darkness, Satan has not tried to destroy the truth so much by force as by “obfuscation,” which means deception, hiding, and confusion. It is the “darkening” of the intended meaning of a communicated message, so that its plain significance is lost. Of course, he will ultimately resort to force as is his nature; but he will only employ that force against those who cannot be deceived.

Our work is to reach out to the unbelievers through our various evangelistic tools and gifts, and also (in this generation) to the “believers” who have been taken captive by the enemy’s snares. In the Book of Acts, for example, we find passages describing the partially converted, not knowing the truth about the Holy Spirit, and these were brought into harmony with the Body.

The Spirit of Prophecy, if it is accepted, is the means by which we identify the Body of Christ to the believers, although the enemy has already been busy at work distorting this blessing as well. Perhaps it began with the best of intentions, but within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the most recent “keepers of the faith,” the Spirit of Prophecy is now largely understood to be a completed body of work that is not subject to further light’s influence, or the conditional nature of even Biblical foretellings, rather than an actual spiritual gift. As with the religious leaders of Yahshua’s day, the life and flexibility of the true faith has been replaced with traditions, policies, and cold formality.

The fact that there is one, unchanging, truth, should not make us rigid. This is not a contradiction; that stable truth is the foundation of a living religion with fixed principles that nevertheless grows and changes with the progressive revelation of the Father. It is this understanding that distinguishes the true House of Yahweh from temples of stone, free of creeds and artificial scales. The Law, which does not change, was written “in fleshy tables of the heart.” (2 Cor 3:3) This image, this concept, means much to us as we balance principles and freedom, unity and individuality in religion.

In addition to prophecy, there is another indication (although it is not really “another,” as I will discuss tonight) given to seekers of truth with regard to where the Church of Yahweh is located. We read, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35)

We have signs and wonders, including our testimony of victory over sin (which IS both a sign and a wonder) for the unbelievers. We have the Spirit of Prophecy for believers who are not yet settled into the truth. We have yet another sign, agape-love, that is equally effective among both groups.

Now, any Church that claims to be of the Messiah will say, “That describes us! We love one another.” Is that true, though? If such love, such unifying love, existed among all who claimed to be Yahshua’s why,

then, are there such divisions? Why is it that some stand outside the Body and yet say, “I am Yahshua’s child?” Is it possible for an individual to be convinced that he loves, and yet be deceived with regard to the nature of his own feelings?

Peter, who denied the Savior three times during His trial, (Luke 22:54-62) was asked three times by the Resurrected One, “Do you love me?” (John 21:15-17) In asking these questions, Yahshua used two different words for love, asking the first two times if Peter had “agape” for Him, and in the third whether he had “brotherly love.”

Peter was grieved by the repeated questions, but it was necessary for him to understand his true position, his true feelings, and the questions led him to reflect on his thoughts.

I wonder if the Christians of the world would be grieved if Yahshua were to appear before them and ask, “Do you love me?” I imagine most would immediately declare that they do... but they would answer out of their own understanding of “love,” which is “brotherly love” at best in most cases, not the divine love described in 1 Cor 13, for that love is designed to bring an individual’s affections into harmony with the Law of the Creator, who is Love, and whose Law is the Law of Love.

“Therefore thou shalt love Yahweh thy Almighty One, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and His judgments, and His commandments, alway.” (Deu 11:1)

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:21)

“For this is the love of Yahweh, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3)

As Adventists, we are quite familiar with these verses, and the meaning they convey. Because we cannot be deceived with regard to this message from Heaven, communicated to us through Yahweh’s prophetic Spirit, Satan really only has one option to use against us – force.

But now, some have indicated that the “commandments” of Christ are not the same ones as those of the Father. Yet John’s verses constantly speak about the “commandments of God” with no distinction made. In speaking of the Son, the Father says, “If His children forsake my Law, and walk not in my judgments... If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.” (Psa 89: 30–32) Thus the Bible itself teaches that in the Age of Grace, the time of the Son and His children, the commandments of Yahweh are the standard of righteousness.

But what is this talk about “stripes” in a discussion of the Law of Love? Even this is agape. Again, practically any Church, if shown that verse, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,” will say, “Of course we have love one to another.”

But many will say, “Lord, Lord,” and yet, they have not so much as known Him, much less loved Him. They must be corrected, therefore, so that their “love” and Yah’s “love” are the same.

Love and prophecy cannot be separated from one another. Those who have the love of Yah will have the Spirit of Prophecy, and vice versa. How do we know this? It is because of what the Spirit of Prophecy IS, and what the Spirit of Prophecy DOES. Ultimately, this is a very simple idea.

The Spirit of Prophecy is never sent merely to punish behavior. It is silence that comes before judgment, not correction. The Spirit is sent to correct hearts and minds. We read, “Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so Yahweh thy God chasteneth thee.” (Deu 8:5)

When the world, which has neither the love of Yah nor the Law, is judged, it is destroyed, “But when we are judged, we are chastened of Yahweh, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1Cor 11:32)

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Heb 12:7)

It is His people, not the world, to whom the Father sends His correction. The Father and Son will, at the necessary time, judge the world so that sin shall not arise a second time. But in this time of our judgment, we His people are judged in such a way that our residual sins are revealed, not for condemnation, but to be “open beforehand, going before to judgment,” (1 Tim 5:24) so that they do not follow us to the brink of eternity.

The Spirit of Prophecy is given to the Church for chastisement – for “discipline.” Unfortunately, the world today associated the word “discipline” with punishment, with scolding. Discipline simply means teaching, which is precisely the way that the Scriptures describe their own purpose: “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2Tim 3:16, 17)

It is written, “Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the Law, happy is he.” (Pro 29:18)

The purpose of Yah’s Law, and His discipline regarding that Law, and His prophetic revelation of that discipline, is for our happiness. It is for our salvation, and it is a sign of His love for us. When we have accepted that love, from Him – and not according to our own understanding or devising – then we show that love openly, one to another. The sign of Yah’s love among His people comes forth only because of the Spirit of Prophecy, the voice of the Father and Son, through their Spirit, that instructs and corrects our knowledge of love among the members of the Church.

The presence of Yah through prophecy brings love and, as a direct consequence, drives off sin. This is how we know it from the false spirits of the enemy. The prophets of the nominal and ecumenical churches do not teach that those who are born of Yah are freed from the bondage of sin and death. But we cannot afford to be victims of diversity of doctrine in this regard – let the Bible speak as it was written. “We know that whosoever is born of Yah sinneth not.” (1 John 5:18)

We know it. It is not an interpretation of some ancient, irrelevant teaching, but a living testimony, and the spirit of love.

To summarize, then, I would say this: To the world, Yah has given the testimony of His children, and may provide them with signs such as the diversity of tongues. To the believers, Yah has given the spirit of prophecy. To the world in general, Yah has given His love.

In the Church, which we must teach people to identify, all three of these gifts unite. In the Church, the understanding is held that the Love of Yah, that divine Agape that goes beyond mere feelings of affection

that others (even other Christians) consider to be love, is that same spirit that causes us to seek perfection and speak the truth as it is in Yahshua.

We may then ask both believer and unbeliever alike, "Where is the Bride?" Where are a group of people who claim, who have a testimony, of living with uncompromising victory over sin? Where are a people who are blessed by the living Spirit of Prophecy, the voice and presence of the Father and Son among them?

I know of no people on earth to whom these things all apply but my own. Let all examine themselves, their understanding of love, and their commitment to finding and living by the truth. Specifically, let those who believe they are in the Church of Christ take notice: You must either Be the people, or Find the people. If you, by examination, see that you are not the people, do not wait for that people to improve. Do not say, "Someday the leaders will straighten themselves out, and get all their doctrines right." That is not the revelation of the character of the Father through the Spirit of Prophecy (including, primarily, the Bible).

Yahweh has a people now; He always has... and each sincere Christian has the obligation to be among that people, or to find that people, to join unto them and receive Yah's gift of perfection of character, and the life of His Son, given through the covenant He forms with us, and refined through the interworking of our beloved brethren. (Eph 4)

Let us rejoice that we have the testimony of Yahshua, the Spirit of Prophecy, and that we have received infinite, divine love for our own salvation, and for the salvation of all with whom we speak. And let us, even as we rejoice, work while the day yet lingers. (John 9:4) There are many hearts waiting to be turned back to the Father through the power and ministry of Elijah. (Mal 4:6) We now, as he once did, bear the Spirit of Prophecy, the Love of Yahweh in His voice to us, to a dying and corrupted world.

David.

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