

## The Testimony of The Magi (Part I)



I don't know how many of us are continuing to follow the online discussions about the SDA General Conference's most recent motion against the Church.

I've found it pleasantly surprising that many people commenting on such revelations as the *Adventist Today* article are opposed to the Conference's legal actions, at least to a point. I say "to a point," because while it's certainly a positive thing to see an acceptance of the (obvious) teachings of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy on the matter of lawsuits, we know that it is not enough to merely give lip-service to the right principles.

But this is where we see that blindness that Yahshua mentioned. Here is where we see the "veil" over their eyes, because while they will "see" the problem, they will not have a realistic vision of their own standing before the Throne. They do not understand that they need not chant "Stone them" against the saints to be worshipping the Beast, the heart of Satan disguised in human flesh.

It is sufficient to merely do nothing in order to be swept away into destruction, and this is something that we – and again I encourage the brethren not to let these opportunities fall by the wayside – need to be able to communicate clearly. "Do you understand the Biblical basis of the Victory message? Do you see the need to belong to an organization that is 'clean' before the Father and Son?"

"If so, then you must not draw back from acknowledging the importance of unity, covenant, and membership. You must not avoid the sacrifice of departing from the decaying 'city,' leaving (if necessary) friends and even family." This is the choice we must hold up clearly.

As we hold this choice before our nominal brethren, we must also remember the barriers that we had to overcome when it was held before us. In addition to those factors I mentioned, such as the loss of familiar fellowship and the potential disapproval of SDA family members, there are also personal challenges. Doctrinally, some have had problems with the Trinity issue. Some have questioned the feasts and New Moons. Many Adventists have had a serious problem with a broader understanding of the Mark of The Beast than has traditionally been held.

Now, one of the things that really impressed me about the CSDA message, thinking back to my first experiences with the faith, is how easily things fall into place once the "keystone" is present. Once I

accepted the Gospel, Christ in me the Hope of glory, the Victory doctrine, and determined that, no matter what, I would live by this new light, everything else seemed natural, integral, and obvious.

In accepting the Victory, I no longer considered traditions the most important determining factor in evaluating truth. It was simply, "What does the Bible say?" It seemed obvious that, now I was filled with the Spirit, it was "Christ Himself," that abode within. It seemed to make perfect sense that, being the Bride of Christ, there should be some spiritual counterpart to the monthly cycle, and so New Moons were a natural addition to the Sabbath rest. It seemed clear that, if there was a Sabbath more fully, and the SDA Church was not teaching the pure Gospel, a Sunday Law could not be the dividing line between the saints and the sinners... there had to be something that ONLY those who knew the Spirit of Christ could really accept, and so the Trademark Law as the Mark of The Beast for this generation was clearly a fulfillment of the relevant principles.

I know that many of us have had this experience, but I write it out here to remind us of our first love, to give a testimony to any who are not yet "with us" that may read this transcript, and also to explain that this process, as simple as I make it sound, was also facilitated by learning the details of the Three Angels' Message, particularly the third, the one that unites the Church in the last days, and that warns about the Mark.

We as CSDAs must clearly understand the spiritual truth behind what the Mark is, and be able to explain it to others. Just earlier today, in fact, someone posted the often-repeated statement that, "If you do not believe that the Mark of The Beast will be a National Sunday Law, you are rejecting genuine Adventism."

There is an answer for this, and it is one we must be able to clearly give.

We need to examine the expectations associated with the fulfillment of prophecy. One of the elements I included in my reply to the poster of the above statement was this question: When has any prophecy been fulfilled exactly as God's professed people expected?

Except for those predictions that were immediately fulfilled, I really cannot think of a clear example of a prophecy given to one generation that was fulfilled to another in the way that the latter generation anticipated. There are a couple reasons for this. The first is the naturally conditional element of prophetic fulfillment, and the second is a tendency to use traditions rather than genuine spiritual discernment to interpret the prophecies' meanings.

Let me give you a brief example of each to clarify.

We read many times of Yah's covenant with Israel, to take away its sin and redeem it as a nation; and yet "so [by the sacrifice of Christ and the inclusion of the Gentiles] all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, 'There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.'" (Rom 11:26, 27, cf. Isa 59:20)

It is a general principle that all prophecies including an element of human behavior are conditional. We have read the passage from Jeremiah before, which I also included a few days in a form post, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

“And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.” (Jer 18:7-10)

Zechariah tells us that, while Yah does not break covenants, neither does He honor those that have already been broken by others, (Zech 11:7-10) for “God is not mocked.” (Gal 6:7)

And what about those prophecies that do not depend on human behavior? Even these have not seen a fulfillment in line with the expectations of Yah’s professed people. The clearest example I can give of this one is that of the first Advent of Yahshua.

The visions of Daniel relating to Christ’s earthly work constitute, without a doubt, one of the most specific prophecies in the Bible. It outlines the year of His appearance, the duration of His ministry, the nature of His sacrifice, and the aftermath. There were signs and events for which to watch, and yet – for all this – “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11) “He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” (Isa 53:3)

Why did this happen? Why were the people of Israel spiritually sleeping while the Messiah walked among them? It was because they believed in the interpretations of their elders. They accepted the common wisdom, and did so to the degree that they were thus unable to receive any new light, any new understanding, than the Messiah as a military figure, as a redeemer from the oppression of Rome.

It is true, Christ Yahshua is a Redeemer from all oppression; however, His ministry consists of two distinct phases. The Son of Yahweh is both Sacrificial Lamb (Acts 8:32) and Conquering Lion (Rev 5:5). He is both the meek Teacher who would not break a bruised reed, (Isa 43:2) and the Ruler of all nations who wields a rod of iron. (Rev 2:27) It was an inability to accept both these aspects of His character that led the Jewish Nation to reject the Savior they needed in favor of the Deliverer that they desired.

We see that Yah’s professed people have not, generally speaking, been able to understand the fulfillment of the prophecies that concern them. The Bible has therefore used its later books to point out the ways in which prophecies of the past have been fulfilled, and to use these fulfillments to teach sanctifying lessons. But, and this is very important, this observation does not indicate that nobody at all understood the fulfillment of the prophecies as they came to pass.

While it seemed that nobody noted the birth of Yahshua except for the shepherds to whom the Angels gave a direct revelation, there was a small group, little understood, and not mentioned again, who had read the ancient promises of Yahweh to Israel, and rejoiced that the Christ had come into the world.

We read, “Now when Yahshua was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. [...] For thus it is written by the prophet, ‘And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.’” (Mat 2:1, 2, 5, 6, cf. Micah 5:2)

Next week, I would like to speak a bit more about those wise men, but for tonight I would like to draw a simple parallel.

When speaking with Adventists, as I mentioned above, one of the barriers we find is our acceptance of the conditional nature of prophecy; in particular, we believe that certain predictions given by Ellen G. White to the Seventh-day Adventist Church were conditional on the spiritual state of that Church. Now, this should be obvious in light of Jeremiah's statement and Zechariah's prophecies, and especially since Ellen White herself points out that time and circumstances are essential for understanding and rightly applying her testimonies. It should be obvious because a Sunday Law, that would divide Christians into convicted Sabbath-keepers and non-Sabbath-keepers, would do nothing to separate Christians from non-Christians for the final Harvest when the Sabbath-keepers have become the persecuting power in the last days.

When we speak to those who seem to have an ear to hear, we need to address this issue. Even if the individual himself or herself might seem inclined to listen, those nearby (especially in public discussions online) are sure to chime in on this issue.

Some may imagine that, because the prophecy is more "modern," and because the wording is more recent, the Sunday Law prediction will happen just as anticipated. And yet, it has going against it BOTH those factors I mentioned above. The Sunday Law prophecy is dependent upon human behavior, and it is also subject to misinterpretation based on the conditions under which it was first written.

As I've pointed out, if Sabbath-keepers become a persecuting power, the Sunday Law would have absolutely no function as a test for Yahweh's true people. In addition, since it is conditional on human behavior, it would have absolutely no impact on determining who true "Seventh-day Adventists" are. The way that Yahweh works is through faithful, spiritually discerning people. This holds true even if they are not whom the world may accept as "His."

Looking at the CSDA Church through the world's eyes (and through the eyes of some Adventists who have commented on our recent discussions) we're a tiny, insignificant people. We have little-to-no impact on the culture or the spiritual conversation. We are attempting to profit (financially or otherwise) from the "good name" (such as it is) of the mainstream Body, and at best we are a distraction from the work of teaching the Three Angels' Message to the world.

And yet, like the Magi of the Gospels, we have appeared at just the right time to worship the King of Kings. We have come from an unexpected direction and, while Israel is asleep, we have followed the signs and understood the message. To some, we are "Spiritual Gentiles," citizens of a heathen land, because we are not a part of the mainstream organization; yet, there is a good reason for that. The mainstream organization, just like the Israelites, is under the rule of Herod, and is unable to direct itself according to the leading of the Spirit of Yahweh.

Like the Magi of the Gospel, we represent the free, the unbound, the unattached to the traditions that have become such a force for evil over time. Traditions that have been received, uncorrupted, from the apostles may be a blessing, (2Th 2:15) but more often than not the Scriptures, and even the writings of Ellen White, have served to make Yahweh's professed people cold, hard, and without natural affection.

The testimony of the Magi, and the conclusion I wish to have you draw tonight is this, a simple one: The fact that we are not numerous, and are apparently "outsiders" to modern, mainstream Israel is no cause for dismay. In the Gospels we see that it is the few, the unexpected, that have shown the greatest respect and love for the Redeemer. During His ministry, Yahshua praised a faith that was great, to the degree that it

impressed even Him, and yet it was not found among the people thought of as Israel. (Mat 8:10) In the Day on which all things will be revealed, it will be shown to the universe that, though we have seemed to be small and weak, though it may have seemed at times that we were “about to fall,” it has always been the case that “they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” (2Kings 6:16)

This is important for us to keep in mind as we go up against the venerated traditions of mainstream Adventism, and the Sunday Law statements in particular. This is important as we attempt to teach both SDAs and non-SDAs that it is the Gospel that is the critical factor. It is the Victory that makes all else significant, for what profit would it be to know the truth about doctrine and the Mark of the Beast, if one has not overcome all sin through the power and grace of the Most High?

And, if one HAS that Victory, if one has received that gift, then – as it has been in my experience – the eyes are opened, the mind is made capable of accepting change, and new understanding, so that these other pieces fall into place. At such a time, it is a joy to explain the new light; it is not a struggle to put new wine into old wineskins, but rather a fulfillment of the promise, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Mat 5:6)

And let us be educated about such matters, and able to explain them clearly, lest we lay a stumblingblock where none need exist.

Let us pray to find those souls that are left that indeed hunger and thirst for righteousness more than they are comfortable with their chosen state, more than they are satisfied with the traditions of the elders and the commonly accepted understanding of the prophecies, more than they value their own lives and freedom... for the Kingdom of Heaven is of such as these, and it is our privilege to gather the precious wheat, even as all around us tares are being bound.

Next week, I would like to go into a bit more detail about the Magi mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel, for from the brief passages that mention them, we have yet more light to attain. But for tonight, are there any comments or questions about the study?

Next week: The Gifts of The Magi

Basics

Many parallels to us. Three angels, three witnesses. Three gifts representing the message? Seeking the open-minded. If true to Gospels, won’t have many joining. SDA Church once identified with the weak and downtrodden, but, gaining power, finances, etc., becomes the very thing it once feared. Numbers nothing to be proud of in spiritual matters. Still a relatively small denomination, but nowhere near the numbers of Noah’s family. Some believe, shaken out... but?

Luke’s Comments:

Guest\_Lucan : Well, I have a thought about the gifts the magi brought, and how they would fit with the idea that we are in some part symbolized by them, or vice versa...

Guest\_Lucan : But, it sounds like you're wanting to hold further discussion on that kind of thing until next week. Is that accurate? <end.>

Zahakiel : The gifts that they brought was something I wanted to touch on next week; but don't let that restrict you from giving a comment The study will take care of itself.

Guest\_Lucan : Well, they came to present offerings to Yahshua...

Guest\_Lucan : One was gold, which we know symbolizes faith; that is something we offer to Yahshua...

Guest\_Lucan : Another was myrrh, which is a spice crushed for it's aroma. It's the same root word for the town Smyrna, and was used to symbolize the persecution they endured, and the aroma that gave. That is something we offer to Yahshua...

Guest\_Lucan : The last was frankincense, which I'm a little less clear on. It's a white resin that's lit on fire; it's name is literally "white incense." It seems to be what's mingled with the prayers of the saints in the heavenly sanctuary in Revelation...

Guest\_Lucan : So, I suppose that one would be our prayers / intercession on behalf of others? <end.>

Zahakiel : Thanks for sharing those Those would be my understanding of the spiritual meaning of the gifts, yes.

Zahakiel : What I planned to talk about next week is another angle, so there isn't any problem over overlapping...

Zahakiel : but those are good parallels.