

Zahakiel: Hello to everyone. Let's get started.... Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor: Dear Father in Heaven. We come before Your Throne asking for the Spirit's refreshing, and thanking You for all Your benefits. Bless this gathering according to Your good pleasure. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

daphna: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Barb: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Elyna: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Gadriel: Amen, Amen

Zahakiel: I pray that everyone is having, or is about to have, a happy and peaceful Sabbath. Tonight, our study is called "In Their Own Eyes." It comes from this verse, which I've read many times before, but about which I noticed something new just this past week. Actually, I am going to share it with you twice...the first way is the way I have always understood it, and the second is the way the Bible actually records it.

The first way reads, "In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was evil." (Judges 17:6)

Again, this is not the way the Bible says it, but this is the way I read it, and the way I understood it. Now, the understanding is not incorrect – that is, indeed, what that verse means in a general sense; however, the actual wording is significant. Here is the real verse:

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (Judges 17:6)

These words also appear, almost identically, in Judges 21:25. I find it quite interesting that the Scriptures use the word "right," and give us the perspective of the Israelites, rather than plainly telling us Yahweh's judgment on the matter. Certainly, the fact that the Israelites were doing their own thing required divine intervention, moral reform; however, there is a reason why, sometimes, the Scriptures are indirect.

Perhaps you have wondered, for example, why Yahshua spoke in parables, rather than plain doctrine. There were actually several reasons for this. For one thing, He did not always want the impact of His words to be immediately apparent to His enemies, or else His earthly ministry might not have lasted its three and a half years. For another, He

wanted His followers to think, to reason within themselves, so that when the truth appeared to them, it would not just be accepted on His authority, but rather because they had decided – after considering both the parable and the principle – that what He said was true.

There is great power in this idea, and beauty in the approach. The Bible can tell us, "Do not steal," but when Yahshua says, "Treat others the way you would like to be treated," even if He does not always list out the 10 Commandments word-for-word, we understand why they are given to us as they are. As Paul wrote, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" (Rom 13:9) As I pointed out some weeks ago, Paul's phrase "if there be any other commandment" is not dismissing the particulars of any of them; rather, he is grouping them together by their great similarity, that they are all "one" in spirit and in truth.

Again, Yahshua did not say, "All my followers must keep the Sabbath day." Instead, He kept it Himself, and He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," and repeatedly pointed to the importance of the Father's Law. We have more records of His teaching and healing on the Sabbath than any numbered day of the week. As a result of His doctrine and example, His followers kept the Seventh Day holy all the days of His ministry, after His death, (Luke 23:56) and for hundreds of years thereafter.

Sometimes the indirect approach, by engaging the reason, provides hearers and readers with the most significant and longest-lasting impact. So, the Scriptures here in Judges do not tell us that every man did evil, giving us the plainly-stated judgment of Yahweh. Instead, it tells us, "Every man did what he considered to be correct according to his own judgment," and then it shows us the result – chaos, moral decline, national calamity. We are then invited to consider the connection, and to confirm by reason and history the truth that was later stated more directly by inspired writers. We read of the conclusions they have drawn, thus, "Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Pro 3:5)

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." (Pro 30:12)

The prophet says, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa 5:21)

The psalmist says, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of Elohim before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." (Psa. 36:1, 2)

One more (for there are many), "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." (Pro 12:15)

What we have here is called the "preponderance of evidence." It is clear, it is perhaps one of the most often-repeated principles in the Bible – a man is not equipped to judge righteousness or evil for himself, absent the Word of Yah. This is not limited to the Old Testament either. Paul says much the same, (1Cor 4:3, 4) and then points to the Scriptures as the standard for truth and practice. (2Tim 3:16)

Everyone in Israel did that which was "right" in his own eyes. They were humanists; they believed that humanity was smart enough, and moral enough, to direct its own course. If that sounds a lot like today, that is no coincidence; it is one of Satan's favorite pieces of propaganda, and it has proven to be very successful in every generation since the fall. The Israelites of the days of the Judges, just like most people today, are not actively trying to do evil. They do not rise in the morning and say, "How can I be evil today?" Most think they are righteous to an acceptable degree; again, the Scriptures tell us that what they did was right, from their perspective. We are invited to share their perspective so that we can learn just how deceitful the heart can be, and just how effective a deceiver this flesh we inhabit actually is.

In this generation, when we see men doing evil, we may talk about false doctrines, and cults, and misleading counterfeit messages. We have many opportunities to blame false teachers for the errors in modern Christianity. But the truth is, Israel of old had no such excuse; no great false religion (save scattered acts of idolatry) arose to take the place of Yahweh's worship, and yet they fell into the same trap. It is made quite apparent: the unconverted need no guide in order to find destruction. Those who are partially Christ's are wholly Satan's... and while today there may be more opportunities to find a pleasing falsehood, the flesh that is left alive will always find a way. It is the flesh that is attracted to the sin. It is the flesh that causes the mind to invent justifications, to cloud the vision so that unrighteousness appears to be righteousness. It is the flesh that allows mankind to be led astray by the distractions and deceivers. It is the flesh that is the true enemy of salvation, and though we call Satan, his angels, and his agents the "Enemies of souls," they have fertile ground with which to work.

The common theme of the various verses I have shared with you tonight is a warning against self-justification. Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ have no barrier against error. We read, "But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." (Job 32:8) If the Spirit of Yah unites with our spirit, then we have unity with the Father and Son. Then we have protection from mistakes; and as I have said in a few studies, we can justly be expected to be perfect because, even if we do not have a map to Heaven, in terms of every choice to make at any given moment... we "know" the right turn at every crossroad, because we know Those in whom we believe.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: As evangelists, as messengers of a Gospel that is too righteous to be popular in this generation, we frequently encounter individuals who have fallen prey to this curse of humanism. Often, the thought is that Christianity and humanism are mortal enemies – and that is true; however, many who think they are Christians actually turn out to be humanists. We should all be familiar with the sermon of Adventist pioneer A.T. Jones, who draws the distinction between Christianity and evolution, and then points out that many who believe themselves to be Christians are actually spiritual evolutionists. The same holds true here; many will say, "I am a Christian. I am not a humanist, because I believe that God should guide our path." And yet, if we examine their beliefs, many of them consist of human traditions and not the teachings of the Bible. Perhaps less obviously (and therefore more dangerously) many of them will claim to believe the Bible's every word, and yet their testimony is not of consistent victory over sins. They say, "Of course, we should do this and that, but the flesh..." And that is the true nature of that individual. The human, the flesh, is made the judge of what is right, or applicable, about the Word. If the flesh causes a "but" after an acknowledgement of truth, then that flesh is not dead... and it becomes the controlling, humanistic factor in that individual's thoughts.

We know the verse, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of Yah; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1Cor 2:14)

Within Adventism, paradoxically, the problem is sometimes worse. Because we have such a wealth of writings, such a treasure of principles and doctrines, one small error in understanding, or lack in judgment, can cement an individual into a terribly incorrect course. One with an extensive, but incomplete knowledge of Bible and Spirit of Prophecy writings may easily convince himself that a certain cause is just. As Peter warned about the writings of Paul, which in comparison are far fewer and generally more straightforward, there are "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2Pet 3:16)

Of course, this verse is often applied to those with whom an individual simply disagrees. Of course, we will conclude that those who oppose us are either ignorant, or deceived, or evil... and this is why the principles teach us whether or not we have a right understanding of the particulars. If the doctrines we accept seem ever-so-righteous, and we may even point to good results as we judge them... if they nevertheless do not kill sin in the heart, and do not cause us to treat our fellow men with Yahweh's own agape love... then we can know that we are simply doing that which is right in our own eyes.

As Yah's people, we are concerned with His eyes. We are concerned with His judgment so that, even if something is different than what we have learned, or have been taught, we are willing to be educated. This is a critical aspect of humility within the realm of Christendom. This is essential to the child-like faith, (Mat 18:4) and ultimately to sanctification for everlasting life.

The more we know of truth, of light, the more careful we need to be. It was within the most knowledgeable, the most enlightened, that sin first arose. And as for us, not only does Satan attack us more fervently for fear of what we might do with righteous knowledge, but if any "flesh" remains alive, it can easily become hardened into a course that is easy to justify, regardless of its objective righteousness.

To do what is right, not only in our own eyes, but also in Yahweh's eyes, we need two things. The first thing we need is to learn the truth. We have spoken of this numerous times before. Yahweh has provided us many channels by which we may learn. We have teachers and preachers. We have the written Word. We have the Spirit-led conscience. We have the counsel of the Brethren. We have, to a degree, the natural world. "But," some might say, "everyone has access to these channels of truth. Why isn't everyone a CSDA?" This is because merely having access to the truth is not sufficient. Ancient Israel, which fell apart because everyone did that which was right in his own eyes, had the Temple with its rounds of priests and Levites. They had the traditions handed down from Moses, and elders to consult for wisdom. What they lacked was the discernment of the Holy Spirit, which would give them an understanding of righteousness and its rewards, as well as sin and its consequences. They needed the Spirit to convict them of the truth to which they were exposed, so that they could accept it, and reject the errors and enticements of the flesh.

Today, we have more sin and distraction than at any time in human history. And yet, we have more hope, proportionally, for as Paul says, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom 5:20) Where there is great sin, there is also great grace, for our Father will not leave us alone, but is more than eager to protect and deliver His people.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Now, some have tried to apply that verse individually, as an example of the self-deception we are discussing. They will say, "This means that even if I sin a lot, God's grace will become that much greater for me, so that I may repent each time." Paul answers this error in his next chapter, however, asking, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom 6:1, 2) Paul points out that the very taking of this position indicates a lack of the saving knowledge of Yahweh. There is a sin called "licentiousness," which amounts to taking the grace of Yah for granted. It is not a matter of merely being

incorrect, but rather of being "alive" to sin, when one ought to be "dead." This is not an issue of degrees, but of being true or false. One must be dead to sin, and the grace of Yahweh is greater in a more wicked time to allow us to be this, to choose this, so that we shall be entirely righteous today, just as the Israelites had the opportunity to be entirely righteous in the days of the judges.

Ultimately, then, we must "watch and pray." We must be aware that Satan will seek to tempt even the very elect, and to convince them that their flesh is alive, justifying unrighteous tendencies and actions. But if we are dead indeed to sin, then we recognize his voice as that of an enemy. We then recognize the voice of the Savior, (John 10:27) and also of His true servants, for "he that knoweth Yah heareth us; he that is not of Yah heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1John 4:6)

The heart is easily led astray; the Scriptures call it "desperately wicked," which is quite a powerful condemnation. (Jer. 17:9) Let, therefore, the Spirit of Christ reign in our mortal bodies, and as we do the work of Heaven, let us heed the words of the Savior in one of His final recorded messages to mankind: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. And anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Rev 3:18-22)

Let us do, always, those things that are right in His eyes.

Are there any comments or questions about tonight's study?

Adriel777: Amen. C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Adriel777: I praise Yah for these studies and the way He uses them. I see them as one of the ways He manifests His grace to us...I usually find in them something that pertains to a conversation or situation that occurred in the previous week. That has been especially true for the last 2 studies. End

Zahakiel: Amen. Any others? If there are none, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

8-5-2016 In Their Own Eyes

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for the blessings you have provided us that we may know, through diligent application, your will and judgment. We thank you for the Spirit you have placed within us that we seek out the things that are of you... May you guide us individually and corporately through the Sabbath hours and beyond. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: Amen

daphna: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Gadriel: Amen, Amen

Ruthline16: Amen