

Zahakiel: Let's begin. Pastor, please offer an opening prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We pray for and expect the Sabbath blessing. May our hearts be joined in praise and thanksgiving as we worship You this sacred hour. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Lucan: Amen

nattie: Amen.

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Elyna: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's study is called "The Eye of A Needle." It is interesting that Pastor's opening prayer mentioned thanksgiving, because that is what tonight's theme concerns. The title, of course, is taken from this passage in the Book of Mark:

"And Yahshua looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Yahshua answereth again, and saith unto them, 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'" And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' "And Yahshua looking upon them saith, 'With men it is impossible, but not with Yahweh, for with Yahweh all things are possible.'" (Mark 10:23-27)

Let me know when you've read this.

Pastor Chick: F

Adriel777: F

nattie: F

Barb: G

Lucan: F

Barb: F

Peter_Jr_18: F

Elyna: F

Zahakiel: This passage came to mind a couple days ago, when Giselle and I were speaking about the need for constant thanksgiving. With so many things to pray for, so many things to ask of our Father, it is necessary to also, and constantly, reflect on the good things He has often given us even without our asking, or else we cannot be perfected according to the character of Christ.

We have spoken of similar matters before, examining the principle here in discussions of an "atmosphere of thanksgiving," but to understand the connection between this particular passage and our recent conversation, it's useful to start by examining the verses themselves.

The context of the initial statement Yahshua made is that it was a reaction to the young man that came to him to ask what he ought to do to inherit everlasting life. He was not pleased with the Savior's response, to sell his possessions and to become a disciple directly. It is written that "Yahshua, beholding him, loved him." It should go without saying that Yahshua "loves" everyone, but Mark specifically pointed out His affection for this individual. This suggests that this young man had particular talents that Yahshua wished to see directly among the company of His followers; we note He did not often advise others to sell what they owned and join Him on His travels. The reaction of the disciples is interesting; they were "astonished."

In modern times, it is far more common to see a wealthy person as being "privileged" in a negative sense, or spoiled. When the Gospels were written, it was the general understanding that since Yahweh is the source of all blessings and wealth, those who were well off were "good people." When we consider the heroes of faith, it is perhaps easy to understand the disciples' confusion. We read of Abraham, Job, and even Moses who was raised among Egyptian royalty. A number of the prophets (with the notable exception of Elijah) came from families that, if not wealthy, were respected in Israel, and of course there are the kings. For few of these was their wealth ever described as an obstacle to their faith, and so when the Son of Yah tells His disciples that the rich have a harder time manifesting the qualities that make for a good citizen of Heaven, they must have indeed wondered at His doctrine. When they expressed their astonishment, saying, in essence, "If even these people, who have been blessed by Yahweh, find it difficult to enter into the Kingdom, who can be saved," Yahshua replies that with man it is impossible, but with Yah it is not.

From the Bible student's perspective, however, this might only serve to deepen the mystery a bit. It is not possible for any man, whether rich or poor, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven by his own merits. Why, then, would Yahshua say, "With Yah it is possible" for a rich man (specifically) to enter? As with Mark's statement about the Savior's love for His wealthy visitor, it might seem to go without saying. It might seem too obvious to take the time to record; and yet, as with Mark's recording of Yahshua's affection, there is a reason for this as well.

The concept that "visible blessings means favor from Yahweh" was applied more generally than simply to monetary wealth. We read the question that was asked in another place:

"And as Yahshua passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?'" (John 9:1, 2)

There were many things that Yahshua needed to correct in the perception of His disciples. Consider what they were asking Him. According to their understanding of "sin," either this man was being punished directly for the transgression of his parents, or else he was somehow guilty of sin even before being born. Neither of these are correct. While it is true that children may suffer the consequences of their parents' actions, whether for good or for ill, direct guilt of sin is not passed down through generations. It is written, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." (Deu 24:16, and repeated in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.)

Because of these misconceptions, Yahshua needed to make statements that could appear – at times – to be very strange. Even we, who have had the benefits of 2000 years of Christian theology, and the actual Biblical books to read, occasionally come across a verse that prompts us to investigate further.

Yahshua indeed loves all mankind, but at times His special interest, for a particular purpose, is also described in terms of "agape." It requires a sublime miracle for any man, regardless of material possessions or position within society, to receive everlasting life, but Yahshua was emphasizing the difficulty, that it requires a particular blessing for those who have benefitted from the material advantages of this world to develop the traits of character that please the Creator.

There is nothing "good" or "evil" about wealth, just as there is nothing of spiritual significance about poverty. These are simply factors with which each human being encounters upon being born and passing through the events of life. What IS significant, though, is that the heroes of faith as described in the Old Testament were all chosen, just as that young man in the Gospels would have been chosen, to accomplish something specific in the world, and the backgrounds and resources Yah had given them had uniquely prepared them for their task. It is for this reason that it may appear that many of the Old Testament figures were of significant standing or wealth... it is not because of these things that Yah considered them to be significant. Rather, because Yah had chosen them to perform service for Him, they were given all these other, incidental, advantages to use for His glory.

In a sense, then, and based on Yahshua's teachings, it is even more impressive what Abraham, Moses, and the others were able to accomplish. They overcame not only the temptations that are common to all men, but also Satan's attempts to distract them from their purpose because of the very blessings that would aid them in accomplishing that purpose.

They passed through the eye of a needle.

There are many great and faithful people in the world's history, and some of them we will not know until we see them in the resurrection – but these whose names we do know were chosen to be a part of the eternal record for a reason. We are to learn all that we can from their experiences. (1Cor 10:11)

Satan's work is to transform every blessing that Yah has given to mankind – wealth, skills, talents, friendship, even love – to curses, and the more blessings we have, the more material he has to work with.

What Giselle and I were discussing was the difference we see in the character of some of those who have received many blessings from Yahweh. We compared, among other examples from history, Abraham and Nebuchadnezzar. Both had a lot of political power; Abraham was a kind of "chieftain" that was respected by the region's kings, and Nebuchadnezzar was the king of a very large area of the ancient world. Both were quite wealthy. Both were prepared for a purpose by Yahweh, and given many advantages to best serve that purpose. Both made mistakes along the way, and endured the consequences of their choices. And yet, while Nebuchadnezzar appears to have turned to the true faith near the end of his life, he had quite a journey to get there – and the cause for the curse was his own reaction to his wealth. We read, from the Book of Daniel, of a time after which the King of Babylon had already been through several encounters with Yahweh through his own dreams and through various messengers:

"The king spake, and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?'" (Dan 4:30)

The result of this was an immediate curse, a fulfilment of a warning he had received some time before, and that had been faithfully interpreted for him by Yahweh's prophet. Yet despite this divine counsel, he could not prevent himself from rejoicing in his own glory and not realizing, like Lucifer himself in his heavenly majesty, that all that he was, and all that he had, was merely a gift from the Father of all.

Whatsoever talents and possessions we have, they are all from Yah, and they are all given to us so that we might rejoice in them while using them for His sanctified and sanctifying purpose. It is in forgetting this that pride takes root, that arrogance becomes manifest, and that the Kingdom of Heaven is sealed away from us through the eye of a proverbial needle.

We read, by way of contrast, of Abraham, "And Yahweh said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Yahweh, to do justice and judgment; that Yahweh may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.'" (Gen 18:17)

I do not know if anywhere there is a greater compliment paid to a human being than this. Abraham, a man of dust like ourselves, is "known" by Yah, and the Almighty One has said, "he will command his children... and they shall keep the way of Yahweh." Even Adam could not lay claim to these words, nor could David or Samuel. And he did so by prayer, and by faith, for "Abraham believed Yah, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God." (James 2:23)

As evidence of his favor, we read of Abraham's intercessory prayers: "So Abraham prayed unto Elohim, and Elohim healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children." (Gen 20:17)

Based on these passages, the contrast in the personalities of Abraham and Nebuchadnezzar, and the subsequent course of their lives, should be clear.

The factor that made it different should also stand out: Abraham was faithful to Yah. He believed in His promises, and walked faithfully before Him. His life was one of praise, and of thanksgiving – as we know quite well from his willingness to offer his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. Only one who has great confidence in the purposes of the Almighty could possibly endure such an ordeal as that.

Now, considering the principle we are examining here, what does this have to do with us? None of us are particularly wealthy, certainly not when compared to these individuals that we are discussing tonight. And yet, they are included among those given to us as examples from which to learn. It should be clear, therefore, that it is not necessary to be wealthy to become prideful of our achievements or our possessions. The enemy of our souls is a deceiver, and the actual facts, the truth of our circumstances, are not as important as our reaction to them, should we submit to temptation.

Anyone, from any station in life, may be tempted to be caught in their needs and wants, and lose sight of what they have. As Yahshua made clear from the Parable of the Sower, there are dangers for every kind of seed, from those that fall on dry, rocky ground to those that fall in good soil.

We may have less cause for arrogance and pride than the king of a large, golden city, but sin to a "lesser degree" is no part of our faith – there is no acceptable degree of unrighteousness in one who will be among the 144,000, therefore we must "watch and pray" lest we be taken in the most delicate of snares.

It is time, in our sanctification, to talk, not about "sins" but about "imperfections," blemishes, that the Father would have us polish away if we are to be equal to the light that has been shed upon our path. In our day, as in all others, our spiritual enemies are permitted to bring us tests. In our day, the Mark of The Beast demands our worship, and any darkness, any bowing of the knee, to the spirit of the beast... will unsuit us to endure the trials and temptations of the time of trouble that comes upon us as the darkness even now gathers.

So, what must we do to be saved? When Paul was asked this question, the first word of his response was, "Believe." "Believe on the Lord Yahshua the Messiah, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31)

We believe not only "in," but also "on." We rest "on" Yahshua, our Sabbath. We live, and build, and grow, on the foundation of the Son of Yah, who is our Rock and firm place. We are to have faith of the same kind as Abraham, of King David, and of Moses, who were constantly in prayers of thanksgiving.

Paul, again, tells us what is to be the theme and central consideration of our every day: "Giving thanks always for all things unto Yahweh and the Father in the name of our Lord Yahshua the Messiah." (Eph. 5:20)

If this is the constant thought of our hearts, and the mind with which we begin and end each day, we are giving a "sacrifice of praise" in the morning and in the evening. We are priests indeed of the Father, and not only will we not be swayed from the truth by our gifts and other resources, but we will be "safe" to entrust with more and greater blessings, that we may in turn use these for our Father and Savior's glory, and to the salvation of the souls of man.

This is the time, brethren, to give thanks for what we have, even in the midst of any sorrow, or trial, and then pride, arrogance and presumption will be as far from us as the east from the west...and ours will be the character of our Lord Yahshua the Messiah.

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

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: Amen. C.

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Elyna: I want to praise Yah, our heavenly Father, who has blessed me and my family as I am a part of them and them of me, in the midst of my fiery trials. I started, a prayer chain for others and intend to pray for friends and foes that Yah will bless them and cause them to know his matchless love. It was a bit surprising to me of the token of love and care He showed to me. I praise Him for that, though I still have a lot trials to go through, but He showed me that He is with me in them all. AlleluYah! End.

Zahakiel: Thank you for sharing that.

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Are there any others with thoughts to share? Go ahead.

Lucan: "Wealth" can be a deceptive concept. Many do not know how wealthy they are, and think they are poor. Many who are poor think their situation would be improved by wealth. "Those who trust in riches," whether they think they have them or not, will find faith in Yahweh difficult. I pray that among CSDAs, our measure of "wealth" will not be the number in our bank accounts. Numbers and paper mean little, and will soon mean nothing at all. I have been blessed to have grown up in something of poverty. On one hand, I consider myself to have been poor, as we lived in challenging conditions with few resources. On the other hand, there are those who work for a month to make the same resources that, even in the greatest of American poverty, we might make in an hour or two. Since coming to "the city," I have been blessed (or cursed?) to see the other extreme of wealth, and to have tasted a bit of it, relatively speaking. I am thankful to Yah for the opportunity to have learned some things in responding to that, and covet the prayers of my brethren in continued growth. All coins and dollars aside, CSDAs are the wealthiest people in earth's history...

Adriel777: 😊

Lucan: What will matter in a short time is where the ledger stands on character, and the balance of what we have done with what we have. What we have is the greatest amount of light that has ever been entrusted to mankind, designed to perfect the character of Christ...

Elyna: Amen

Lucan: We must handle our riches more wisely than Solomon, and our children more circumspectly than Abraham. What we do with the light given to us is the test of our "wealth," and whether we will pass through the eye of the needle. <End.>

Pastor Chick: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead, Pastor.

Pastor Chick: I hear Brother Luke loud and clear. Living in Uganda is a great experience in so many ways and I have so much to say on that, but in brief we have been blessed to continue the work here and that, by the influence of one wealthy and powerful man in the Uganda government. And it is truly mysterious how Yah sometimes accomplishes His will...

Elyna: Amen

Pastor Chick: I was amazed to hear that man look at me and say, "I don't like your project, but I like you." Even though we healed his wife some years ago (through Yah's wisdom), he still does not believe and yet, he had compassion upon our desire to stay in his country and do our work and he assisted us not once, but twice. Africans respect wealth as a blessing from God, and we are not likely to soon overcome that, but with the wisdom of Yah, we shall utilize our temporal and spiritual wealth to bring glory to Yah and His kingdom. END

Zahakiel: Thank you for sharing that....

Adriel777: Amen

Barb: Amen

Zahakiel: I am reminded by your experience of Martin Luther, how he was protected by a wealthy, political figure from the wrath of the Catholic Church. I recall reading in the Spirit of Prophecy that Yah has men in the last days who will put forth efforts to aid the work, even if they don't join it themselves necessarily. These may be modern examples of those I mentioned in the study, who are given resources and position to glorify Yah.

Are there any others?

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: A verse that comes to mind... "Thus saith Yahweh, Let not the wise [man] glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty [man] glory in his might, let not the rich [man] glory in

his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I [am] Yahweh which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these [things] I delight, saith Yahweh." (Jeremiah 9:23-24) <End.>

Zahakiel: Right 😊

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

gadriel: Amen

Elyna: I will post the story of my testimony on FB of how Yah shined his blessing on me during this week, and indeed I know it is for HIS glory. End

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: Ok. If there aren't any other comments, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer the closing prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for the blessings of the past week, both known and unknown. We thank you for supplying all of our needs through the riches of your glory in Yahshua. As we rest from our labors in body and mind, may your eternal rest continue to bless our spirit. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

nattie: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen

Barb: Amen

Elyna: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

gadriel: Amen

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen

6-2-2017 The Eye of A Needle