

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

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven, we ask for a special blessing as we come before Your Throne to worship in spirit and in truth. We thank You for answering our prayer, in Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Gloria: Amen.

Barb: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Peter_Jr_18: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen. Happy Sabbath to everyone. This week, I would like to speak about the family of Yahweh, and what this concept truly means. The study, therefore, is called "The Bonds of Family." While we have several things that might be considered "tests of fellowship," it might accurately be said that the "core value" of the CSDA Church is unity.

Of course, we teach the importance of understanding the Law, for through understanding obedience follows naturally. We speak of the gifts of the Spirit, of manifesting love, joy and peace to the world. We teach clear, accurate communication, for this is necessary for any healthy relationship. We teach the absolute necessity of evangelism, for this is the purest expression of Agape-love, helping someone who would otherwise go down to the grave with no hope to realize that there is an everlasting destiny awaiting them with the Creator. The root of all these, however, is unity, and not merely an agreement, a "meeting of the minds," as they say, but rather a sameness of spirit, a deeper connection than may be found anywhere else.

Why is unity the core of the Church?

Whenever we are discussing something as significant as the nature of the Bride of Christ, it is always a blessing to get at the foundation of the concepts we are considering. Almost always, despite the many layers that may exist, the heart of the matter is simple enough for any child to understand. It is written, "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our Elohim is one Yahweh." (Deu 6:4)

This is one of the most quoted verses in Judaism, and it is called the "Shema," because this is the first word in Hebrew, which means "hear." The statement is not merely a declaration, you will notice, it is a call to take a position, to stand under a banner... to pay attention. The verse does not merely say, "Yahweh is one God," but begins with "Hear this, give this your attendance, this is important."

Amidst the various polytheistic cultures that surrounded them, Israel was unique in presenting the idea that there was one God, a supreme Creator and Judge infinitely beyond the group of demons masquerading as deities in order to obtain worship. The idea that human beings were to petition a single Being for all their needs, (Psalm 36:7, 8) and

then to reside with him in a world to come after this life has ended (Job 19:26, 27) was very different from the other religions of the day.

This was the plan, for ever since the corruption of the true faith held by the Sons of Seth, the world had not seen a people dedicated to Yahweh until Israel was raised up for this purpose. There were individuals, of course, like Abraham and Job, but never a "people," a nation that lived by the Law, and saw blessings because of it.

In that day, Yah gave His covenant to mankind, and it is no coincidence that we often speak of the Covenant as being as solemn an idea as a marriage. It is Yah's Covenant that gives rise to His spiritual Family upon the earth.

Unity is the core of the CSDA faith, because it is the core of Yah's character. When the prophet declares that Yahweh is "one," it means much more than the idea that He is only a single God. It does mean that, because in its first significance, to earthly Israel, it is a testimony against polytheism and paganism.

In its secondary significance, to Spiritual Israel, it means that He is One, one-ness; He is the essence of unity, even as He is love, and light, and truth – all these things. Before anything else existed, in Heaven or on the Earth, Yah was, and Yah was the only, the One. Everything else that exists, then, is created by the One, and owes its existence to Him. All things exist because of Him, and when the Son comes forth from Him in eternity, all things are given to the Son, to rule over and to hold together.

The Son of Yah is "one" with the Father, as John's Gospel tells us at the very beginning, while at the same time a separate Person. This is the pattern for the intelligent beings that the Father creates; He gives us life separate from Himself, and yet He desires to maintain the one-ness that exists between the Creator, and the ones created in His image.

As those who worship Yah, and who acknowledge these truths, it must necessarily be that every doctrine we accept has its origin in that unity, and manifests His character because of that unity. If this sounds a little complicated, it is actually very simple.

All that we are, because we are One with the Father and Son, is like Them at their very essence. Here, then, is the faith of the Creation Seventh Day Adventists, very simply explained in terms of unity: We are alive because the Father and Son are life, and because of our unity with Them they share that life with us. (John 10:10)

We are victorious over sin, because the Father and Son have overcome sin, and in our unity with Them we share this overcoming. (John 16:33)

We are holy, because the Father and Son are holy, set apart from anything common, and we are One with them. (1Pet 1:16)

This one is actually quite clearly expressed; the verse reads, "Be ye holy; for (because, since) I am holy."

We are also faithful to the Law of Yah, because the Law is the transcribed character of the Father and Son, and we are united with them, partakers of the divine nature because of Their love for us. (Isa 51:4, 2Pet 1:4)

Ultimately, we are One with our Savior and with one another, because the Father and Son are One. (John 17:22, 23)

All the good things we have received from the Father, we have done so because we are One with Him. It is certainly true that the worldlings and the ungodly may receive blessings from Heaven; as it is written, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Mat 5:45)

However, these blessings are the incidental ones, the courses in nature that Yah established from the foundation of the world, what most would call the natural processes. If an evil man plants a seed, it will grow into a plant he may harvest, for Yah has placed life in the seed regardless of who places the seed in the soil.

Special blessings, the ministry of the angels, miracles of healing, these are reserved for "them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:14)

They are aspects of His goodness, of His glory, and He has said, "I will not give my glory unto another." (Isa 48:11)

When we are one with Yahweh, when we are in Covenant with Him, when we are Family with Him, then will He share with humans His glory, even as He gave it to Christ, and through Him gives it to us. (John 17:24)

To be clear, and I want to be precise in my wording, this unity of which we are speaking does not mean there will always be perfect agreement on every aspect of our perception. We have made note of this before in other studies, but it is worth stating again, especially here in the context of unity.

The Father and Son are One, but they are Individuals; this means that they have separate experiences. It was not the Father who said, in the Garden of Gethsemane, "If you can, take this cup from me, nevertheless let Your will be done." The Son said this, and the Father heard it. But here is where the unity comes in: if the Father had been the one to assume the likeness of sinful flesh, and if He had experienced the limitations of humanity, His desire to have the burden removed would have been precisely the same as the Son's was in that sorrowful evening. Adventist writings since that time have indicated to us that if the Father had walked with us in the flesh instead of the Son, history would not have been one bit different. The Father and Son love humanity equally, and their ministries would have been the same in every significant aspect, for their goals are the same, and their understanding of the perfect method to accomplish those goals. The Bible tells us this

Itself, after all... we read, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2Cor 5:19)

Yahshua said that when we, as His followers, behold Him, we are seeing the Father. The verse from 2 Corinthians tells us that the Father was in the Son, reconciling the world unto Himself, not that the Son was reconciling the World unto the Father by some separate process. Through the experiences and sacrifice of the Son, the Father Himself was reconciled to us by His own love and goodness. It is important to see beyond the mere "wording" of this idea, and to the heart of it. It has deep implications for the Church Family.

For example, since the members of the CSDA church are ONE, then it does not matter which member Yahweh sends to any given individual with the Gospel message. He may choose, of course, to send one or the other based on some issue of convenience, such as who speaks the relevant language, who is physically nearby, who can relate more closely to the one being evangelized... but ultimately, in terms of that individual's opportunity to hear the Truth as it is in Yahshua, and the "fairness of the test" to use humanity's perspective, it does not matter if Bro. Luke, or Sis. Daphna, or Sis. Jody, or Sis. Giselle, or Pastor "Chick" is the one who speaks.

None may think, "I am not a teacher," for each is One with all the others, and with Yahshua Himself, the greatest of Teachers. It is not that there are no differences; each of us expresses the Gospel as we understand it, and as we focus on one aspect of its power and beauty over another.

For the hearer, however, and in a way that goes deeper than a surface understanding, the same power, the same conviction, will fall upon them, and the ground is broken up for the Holy Spirit to act in each case.

This is our faith; this is what it means to be One with each other, that our work for the Father and Son may be different in "flavour," but equal in nutritional value, so to speak.

I would also like to point out that although the Oneness we have from Yahweh and Yahshua is a gift, freely given, this does not mean that it is "automatic" in every aspect. We are, after all, given the Sabbath as a free gift, but it is our responsibility to guard it, to "keep" it holy by our choices, deciding to come apart from the world in mind as well as body, and sit at the spiritual feet of our Savior.

Every gift from Yahweh requires maintenance, and requires our participation and agreement. Even the garden in Eden that was given to Adam and Eve... this was their home, their freely appointed gift, and yet they were given work, to "dress and keep" it, that it may continue indefinitely. (Gen 2:15)

Our family unity as a Church must be maintained in just the same way, and our Father has given us light on how these bonds of family must be maintained. As the blessing of the family and the blessing of the Sabbath are tightly bound together (they are the two

blessings that Adam and Eve took with them when they left Eden), the Sabbath may be seen as the pattern of this light.

We remember the seventh day, and keep it holy, according to three principles: Time, Rest, and Trust. Time is perhaps the most obvious; it is marked out for us from sunset to sunset, the time upon which Yah has placed His particular blessing. Within the family, time spent together strengthens bonds, and while we have our Friday night meetings "marked out" for us, this is not sufficient for all, and therefore we have been meeting more frequently of late, weekly Bible studies among some of us, and the Wednesday meeting in chat for those who can attend.

Next, there is rest, what many see as the "objective" of the Sabbath. It is, indeed, a large part of the blessing that we receive from the seventh day; that we should put down our weekly cares and concerns, and be consumed instead by the joy of our Father's presence. Within the context of the family, we read this, written to the Church:

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2)

It is the work of the Church that the members care for one another, offering prayers, encouragement, and at times more material assistance. In so doing we fulfil the law of Christ, and give one another rest.

Finally, there is trust. While the "obvious" blessing of the Sabbath is rest, its ultimate blessing is to teach us the great spiritual lesson, that it is not by our works that we accomplish anything of everlasting significance. It is Yah who is the eternal One, the only One that can affect anything on a truly permanent basis, and as we permit Him to work through us, He permits us to have a hand in His everlasting plans, almost nothing of which we yet know.

Ultimately, our trust is in Christ; nevertheless, the relationship that we have with our fellow covenant-members, the others in our spiritual family, also reflect this reliance. As we spend time together, and as we bear one another's burdens, we are strengthening that sense of belonging, of fitting in, of being home, even as it is written, "the whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:16)

The actions we do, the thoughts and prayers we share, these are like the more obvious aspects of Sabbath worship – time spent, and rest. These things also lead to a lasting spiritual impact, a reliance on Christ to do within us that which is ultimately for our everlasting benefit, and also for the blessing of those around us.

Adriel777: Amen

In the Church Family, all that we do together builds our capability to more perfectly manifest the unity that we have received in Christ, the better to complete the Gospel work that has been given to us.

As in any relationship, and indeed, as in any aspect of human existence, thoughts and feelings may vary with many factors. What we know spiritually, that is what is real. As we claim the Family that Yahweh has declared us to be, that is what we are in Spirit and in Truth. The blessing in this is that as with all forms of genuine love, the feelings follow naturally along with the decision, and as our bonds are tighter than even those of a blood family, no amount of distance or time can change the spiritual reality that we are bound together in Christ.

As we rest in that, and cultivate it with time and trust, then we will seek the Kingdom together, for ourselves, for one another, and for all mankind. And as we seek first this Kingdom, we know that all else, all other good things, will follow in their due course.

Are there any comments or questions about the study tonight?

Adriel777: Amen

Lucan: C

Zahakiel: Go ahead.

Lucan: I find that blood family is often compared to spiritual family. Personally, my experience with blood family is rather "thin..." In general, and in part due to how I was raised, when personal presence has been removed, most of the continued relationship has as well. So, much of my practical experience has come from the spiritual context. I can recall, particularly in the early days of my experience, having to very often exercise faith in "oneness" with my brethren who were separated by states. Miscommunications and misunderstandings were not uncommon. And, frequently matters seemed to be at an impasse. Now, if I had given into the leanings of the flesh, I might have become sullen and given up, or stopped responding, or decided to "let Yah sort it out" while contributing nothing to that process. But, that is not the "oneness" that the Scriptures speak of. I note that, with very little exception, we are all now very scattered, and lack personal presence with one another. I am happy that we are making movements to gather more frequently in the ways we are able to. My prayer is that we will, each one, take seriously the claims of faith on the promise of unity given to us. If we are ONE, nothing can be allowed to cause division, or variance, or separation, or suspicion, or lasting unpleasantness. And if a matter arises that seems to lead to this end, it is our duty to see it through to the end - unpleasant though it may be - for the blessing of all involved. Then, we can have the sweet fruit of realized "oneness," in addition to the "oneness" we claim by faith. And, as we labor with our brethren to work out any differences, spending the "time," we may see the fruit of our "trust" and, through that experience, have "rest." <End.>

Zahakiel: Thank you for sharing that. Actually... as I was putting together the notes for this study, I had the opportunity to reflect on all our members' experiences with their

physical families. While some are definitely more healthy than others in this regard, all of us come from a background of dysfunction. It was Yah's plan, of course, that the physical family was to be a foretaste of Heaven, a way of preparing us for the larger spiritual community, and ultimately the everlasting inheritance.

As we read in our baptismal vows, a part of the faith of Yahshua is to overcome negative traits of character that are not only inborn, but also "cultivated," which includes those that developed upon exposure to dysfunction, so we know we have all the tools to accomplish exactly what you're describing, to deal with miscommunications, misunderstandings, and variance, so that each may be perfected individually, and the Church perfected collectively, for Yah's glory.

Are there any others with thoughts to share? All right, then I will ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you that, even as you are One, so are your people One. We know that it is through your love that this unity is shown; your love for us, and through us to one another. We know that your love is fulfilled in sacrifice, in unity, in rebuke, in chastening, and in kindness. As we demonstrate these perfectly to one another before the world, may our understanding ever be opened to more of your character, as we become One with it in the very moment of understanding. For, we know that the prince of the world comes, and has nothing in us; even as in your Son, with who we are one. In the name of Yahshua we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen

Gloria: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Peter Jr 18: Amen.