

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

Pastor Chick: Greetings. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before Your Presence with thanksgiving and expecting a blessing from Your Spirit. Thank You for bringing us together for this sacred hour. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Barb: Amen

Gloria: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Guerline: Amen

Kim: Amen

Nattie: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Peter: amen

Naraiel: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight we are continuing a study that we began two weeks ago, so this is "Accusing the Pharisees Part 2."

We note, from the Gospels, that Yahshua Himself did not speak at great length on any given topic. At least, we do not have extensive written records of His sermons on any particular subject. What we have as a part of the permanent testimony is His ability to draw crowds from bystanders, and others from among relatives and friends that had seen Him, and then He would deliver short, but powerful messages best designed to reach the hearts of those present. The Spirit's inspiration has led witnesses to pass down selected messages that they recalled, as well as writing about their direct experiences with Him. One of the central themes of what remains for us is the distinction that the Savior placed between Himself (and thus, His followers) and the religious establishment that had not followed the spirit of Yah's directions to them.

In our recent weekly meeting with Giselle's family, we were speaking about the history of Adventism between 1844 and the present. I outlined the great blessings that the Father and Son had given to our pioneers, but by creeping compromise they lost their high moral and spiritual character, becoming like the world, and thus taking on the character of the Beast itself.

We find ourselves, therefore, in a very similar situation to the early Christians. We are few, but called by the Savior out of the larger but corrupt Churches, in order to complete the work given to mankind from the beginning: to worship Yahweh, and to teach others about Him. Now that "the hour of His judgment has come," so says the First Angel, it is all the more urgent that we testify to the Savior and His Covenant, known only to His Body on the earth, a small and faithful number.

What we were looking at last time were the differences between Yahshua's teachings and those of the Pharisees. What separated the false religions from the true in ancient times

separates the false religions from the true today, for while Satan's methods may change, His character remains the same.

While Yah's promises and instructions are sometimes situational – a topic I wish to pursue next time – His character also remains the same. In fact, the character of Yah is perhaps the one constant in the entire universe – literally everything else is subject to change, but the Word of Yah, which is the description of His character, "liveth and abideth for ever." (1Pet 1:23)

Going through some of the teachings of Christ, specifically regarding the example of the Pharisees and Sadducees, we might note that while doctrines are certainly mentioned, they are not really the focus. It is the spirit, the character, that drives the actions that is critical. As He said in one place, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." (Mat 23:26)

This verse is part of a passage that I will reference a little later on, but here we see Yahshua's direct teaching on what we have come to call Righteousness by Faith. This is not a recent idea devised within the Adventist movement, but the very outworking of the Gospel itself.

Righteousness does not lead to faith; no matter how we may polish the outside of a cup, if the inside is filthy it should not be used for drinking. If the inside is clean, however, the water will not be polluted, and in spiritual matters the outside will follow the inside anyway. The actions follow the beliefs; the works of righteousness follow the faith.

Tonight, we are continuing to look at examples of where the Messiah drew a line between the true faith, which He had come to exemplify, and the faith being promoted by the religious leaders of the soon-to-fall Jewish system. In this we will find parallels to our own day. This first one has particular relevance to Christianity in this generation.

We read:

"And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, 'Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days? And Yahshua, answering them said, 'Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him, how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?' And He said unto them that the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.'" (Luke 6:2-5)

Looking at the last statement first, Yahshua is indicating His authority to dictate what is and is not appropriate for the weekly holy day. Nowhere in the teachings of Christ or His disciples is any indication ever given that the 7th Day Sabbath was to be changed or annulled by the Cross... indeed, more mention is made of the weekly Sabbath in the New Testament than any other element of the Decalogue, and always in a positive light.

Here is just one example of the Savior instructing His followers in Christian behaviour for the time after which He would be removed from the earth. There is no commandment to restrict walking through a field and eating grain, but the Jews, so fearful of condemnation – because they did not understand the Father's character – added further rules of conduct to ensure that they would in no way displease the harsh and exacting judge they had come to believe in.

Yahshua is Lord of the Sabbath; had the Pharisees come to see Him for what He truly was, they would have gladly put down their burdensome embellishments and seen the Sabbath as it was intended.

As it is written, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of Yahweh, honourable [...] then shalt thou delight thyself in Yahweh, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken it." (Isa 58:13, 14)

Here we see cause and effect.

Are any not delighting in Yahweh? Do any not love to hear His promises, or fail to see wisdom in His instructions?

Such individuals are not experiencing the Sabbath of Yahweh in its proper glory. Of all the 10 Commandments, only the Sabbath directly builds the relationship between the Creator and His Creation, strengthening our understanding of His will and purposes. By their legalism, the Pharisees had taken away the pleasure of the Sabbath, and Yahshua took time and space in the everlasting record to declare their misdeeds in this matter.

More generally, while false religions erect creeds to ensure their members' obedience, CSDAs know the Father and Son. This does not give us license, of course, to violate either the letter or the spirit of the Law, but there is no desire in us, no rebellion against Yah within us, that would ever cause this to be a concern. Because we have the faith of Yahshua, we also bear the testimony of Yahshua, and we consequently perform the works of Yahshua...including observing the Sabbath as He did and taught in His earthly ministry.

There are a great many differences we could cite and examine between Yahshua and the Pharisees beyond those we have already seen, but I would like to spend the remainder of the study on one particular passage. I believe I wrote something about it before, perhaps on an old New Moon study, and I called it "The Seven Woes." It is found in Matthew 23, and I will go over each of them here, because it is perhaps one of the most dramatic series of statements in any of the Gospel books, and it involves precisely what we are looking at tonight.

These Seven Woes are seven specific denouncements of matters in which the traditional religion had become guilty, and as our study is revealing, in which modern traditional religions have again become guilty. These are seven sins that are not found in the Bride of

Christ, making their recognition one of the key ways that the genuine Faith provided to mankind by Heaven may be identified beyond any question.

We read, then...

1) "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." (Mat 23:13)

How do religious leaders "shut up the Kingdom of Heaven?"

They cannot physically restrain them from the Kingdom, for it is not a "place" as such, to be found and entered bodily at this time. They cannot imprison them and keep them away from knowledge of the Kingdom, for every synagogue was supposed to be helping their attendees find the way in. The only way, then, that the Pharisees could be guilty of this great crime would be to teach falsehood for truth. They were called to teach the worship of Yahweh, and some may have genuinely believed they were doing just that... but they had inherited traditions instead of faith, as even the Savior said, they were "making the word of God of none effect through [their] tradition, which [they] have delivered..." (Mark 7:13)

How has the Bride of Christ avoided this?

It has done so by critically examining every doctrine it has encountered, every one that it has received by tradition, either its own or the tradition of others, to see if it perfectly lines up with the Word of Yahweh.

Over the years, we have examined the sacred names "Yahweh" and "Yahshua." We have looked at the teachings of those who believe the Sabbaths should be kept on a lunar calendar. We have considered the Feast Days and their modern applications. We have read articles and emails by those saying we ought to dress a certain, specific way in preparation for Christ's return. We have dialogued with many who have their own interpretation of the "Mark of The Beast."

We have approached each allegation of new light with open minds and prayerful hearts, and the Spirit has taught us how to separate the sweet from the bitter, the light from the false glow of deception. We are both confident that we are led by the Father and Son, and of opened eyes to the possibility of correction... in this balance, we have kept open the Kingdom of Heaven before us, and also brought others along on the journey to Everlasting Life.

2) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore, ye shall receive the greater damnation." (Mat 23:14)

Greed and pretentiousness in religious matters go hand in hand. Using the sacred tithe, given by sincere believers, for worldly and self-serving purposes, while claiming to be involved in great and holy work, is an offense to the Creator and Judge of all mankind. The Pharisees would use what they received from their followers, many of whom (as in every generation) were quite poor, and would buy fancy clothing, large houses, private jets... well, you see how the ancient and modern blend together in a common avarice.

In this generation we would add to the list the Seventh-day Adventist lawsuits, which do indeed devour the substance of those who faithfully give to the cause they believe is Christ's, and return to them the condemnation of being enablers and co-plaintiffs against the little flock that follow the Lamb of Yahweh whithersoever He goeth.

When asked, they will say, "It is for the good of the Church's reputation," and to protect its members against the theft of their spiritual identity. Like all "long prayers" it can be made to sound very pious and noble, but it is "for a pretence," to protect the earthly kingdom, and those who lead the congregations into destruction will bear the heaviest weight, for "that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke 12:47)

3) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." (Mat 23:15)

I remember very well my baptism into the mainstream SDA Church. I attended a single local crusade meeting and, having never spoken a single word to a pastor or elder before that day, I was taken to a pool and pushed backward under the water. I was, of course, very sincere, perhaps more convinced that this was God's Church than the pastor who officiated the baptism. I had been speaking to Seventh-day Adventist friends for a little time before this, and I did not enter into the decision blindly.

From the Church's perspective, though, I was a complete stranger, having made no profession to indicate that I understood anything at all that they were teaching. The SDA Church prides itself in its rate of growth, and its wealth as drawn from its many global members...but as a former member, I can say with assurance that the numbers give an entirely false impression of the reality. The General Conference SDA Church is not making converts to Christianity according to the writings of the Bible or its own inspired pioneers. It is "sanctifying" spiritual ignorance, and saying to those who stop eating the wrong meats, and rest from their work on the right day, "This is the right place. This is where God wants you to be."

Victory over sin, true righteousness by faith, atonement that follows on after forgiveness, these are not things that the Seventh-day Adventist hears from his leaders. He learns a religion of works, which sounds a lot (to its greater destructive effectiveness) like a religion of faith.

4) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Mat 23:23)

As with the example of the Sabbath given earlier, the religion of the Pharisees had become an affair of outward piety, of performing the right actions, and omitting four things: obedience to the Law, having wisdom in judgment, being rich in mercy, and holding an undefiled faith. These are all matters of character, and no exacting adherence to outward forms can substitute for true obedience, true righteousness, based on faith and the knowledge of the Father and Son.

5) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." (Mat 23:25)

We spoke of this earlier, and the follow-up verse 26 speaks of making the inside clean so that the outside may also be without spot. If the religion one is taught seeks merely to correct behaviour, but does not kill sin in the heart, which is the source of sin or righteousness, then it is a religion like that of the Pharisees, and Yahshua says, "Woe unto you."

The closest most religions come to truly transforming character is to provide a series of "shoulds." A religious person "should" do this and "should not" do that. A saint "should" have these characteristics, and whether or not you actually do might determine how holy you become, but as long as you're on the path, and not where you used to be, you're in good shape. So the teaching goes, but the Bible does not describe levels of holiness.

Some may be deceived by the teaching, and it is a true teaching, that sanctification is a process. They might reason, according to natural reasoning, that "If becoming holy is a process, then this means I might be partially holy, or mostly holy, before becoming absolutely holy."

The Scriptures say this instead, "The Temple of Yah is holy, which Temple ye are," (1Cor 3:17) and "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Yahweh by Yahshua the Messiah." (1Pet 2:5)

Holiness is a "true or false," not a percentage system. Those whom Yah has called holy are holy indeed, completely and entirely.

Sanctification is a process of learning what this means, and understanding how to apply being holy. A baby does not become "more human" by growing up, it simply matures, and so it is with the spiritual birth as well...a new born saint is as much a saint, and every bit as holy, as a spiritual veteran, but there is growth, maturity, and education, to ensure that the saint can function as effectively as possible in the service of the Father and Son.

6) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." (Mat 23:27)

While this may seem similar to the fifth one, the imagery invoked by Yahshua is different. Not only is the religion of traditions and cold formality "unclean," it is also "dead." Not only does it teach and do the wrong things from Heaven's perspective, it is also without life, without the ability to accomplish anything of everlasting importance.

This is the nature of spiritual life and spiritual death... that which is spiritually dead may have an appearance of life to the carnal senses, but like any dead thing it makes no impact on that which is eternal.

That which is alive can move, and act, and speak, and its activities ripple through the universe, drawing others after it. The spiritually alive can worship Yah, who is Spirit. The spiritually alive cannot be destroyed by the great Beasts of Revelation, for they have been cleansed of all their sin, and Satan has no claim over them. The world cannot overcome them, and the grave cannot keep them, because their lives are hid in Christ, and they are therefore beautiful both outwardly and within.

7) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." (Mat 23:29-31)

Here we have it, perhaps the greatest error a religious movement can commit: self-deception, self-imposed blindness. Such as these genuinely think that they are doing the work of righteousness and the service of Yah, and yet they betray the very One whom they are claiming to serve by doing just the opposite of what He has commanded. They do not recognize the messengers of Heaven, and instead abuse them as deceivers or obsessed.

How can those who are deceived in this way ever be convinced of their error?

It may be accomplished only by a direct miracle of Yahweh. We recall that Stephen and the other evangelists of the early Church would go about reasoning with the Jews, convincing them of the Savior's true nature and mission...but Saul, who eagerly pursued the Church as one believing himself to be confronting a dangerous enemy, Yahshua Himself had to intervene on the road to Damascus.

The work of the saints for those who are self-deceived can only be to pray, for they will be rejected in almost every case if they try to lay the Gospel out for them with Biblical reasoning. This is not to say that such attempts are not to be made; Yahshua entered the synagogues and taught, and so did His disciples, but only the Holy Spirit working with

mighty and supernatural power, perhaps utilizing our efforts to prepare the way, can bring about the soul's transformation.

In all the examples we have seen over these two studies, Yahshua has placed a line of distinction between the religions of the world, influenced by human reasoning and tradition, and the religion of Heaven, given to us at the hand of the Creator. To those with eyes to see, the separation is too clear to miss or misunderstand. The nature of sin, however, is that it ensnares those who fall into it, bewitching the senses so that they do not know their true condition.

To those on Christ's side of the line, they can see the separation, and it is therefore their duty to call out to the ones on the other side, and to say, "Here it is." It is our duty to say, with our Savior, "Beware the leaven of the Pharisees," in all its manifestations, in and through all the religions of the world.

The great difficulty in many cases is that the false religions began as the genuine article, and retain much of its outward appearance. It is only with prayer, and only with sacrifice, that the saints of Yah can reach out to those under the veil so that we may stand together under one Banner, one faith, and receive the inheritance that we have been offered, even promised, from the foundation of the world.

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

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: If there are none, then I'll ask Bro. Luke to offer a closing prayer.

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you for the examples of those who have come before us, whether for our warning or example. We thank you that you have cleansed our platters from within, and brought us into communion with others who may see any remaining dirt without. As we pour forth your water of life without corruption, may the Spirit bring both your scattered and your covenanted people into perfect unity. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Gloria: Amen

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Nattie: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Kim: Amen

Elyna: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Peter: Amen