

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

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We come before Your Presence with joy and thanksgiving as we expect a Sabbath blessing and refreshing from Your Spirit. May our worship be acceptable in Your sight, in Yahshua's holy name, amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Nattie: amen.

Marie: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Ruth: Amen

Martha Williams: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's relatively short study is called "Speaking the Testimony." I will share with you the central idea for tonight right off the bat, and it is this: as CSDAs, we have been blessed with great light from Heaven. Over the years, we have had many powerful studies on a vast number of topics, and through prophetic insights and inspired scholarship, we have been given knowledge to share with the world that it has never heard before. Sometimes, what may seem to be obvious and oft-repeated doctrine may actually be just the revelation that someone in the world needs to hear. It is therefore our blessing, our privilege, to speak often and to as many as will hear, at every opportunity, of even the "basics" of our faith.

The reason why I bring this up is related to an incident that happened this past Thursday, perhaps a significant evangelism opportunity. I got into a conversation that evening with a teacher from a local primary school. We were initially speaking about some software I have been writing to help students become familiar with the things they are learning in their classes, and his suggestion that I attempt to market the program in Belize.

At one point, however, seemingly out of the blue, he looked at me and said, "You are a good person. I could tell just by looking at you. I have met a lot of people who seem to be good on the outside, but I don't know of many, maybe one or two, that are genuine all the way through."

I was surprised by the statement, because it really wasn't directly related to what we had been talking about. In the past, I have had people tell me that I looked "like a Seventh-day Adventist," but never anything this spontaneous. When he saw that the word "good" was about to prompt a response from me, which made it clear to me that He knew something about the Bible, he said, "Well, not 'good,' but noble, sincere." He then said, "You know, I used to be a Mormon."

He then proceeded to tell me about his life, and spiritual journey, including how he began to lose his faith when he read books about secular philosophy and evolution. As he spoke, with me wondering what exactly prompted this phase of our discussion, it came to my mind that the Scriptures warn us of this very thing he was describing:

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col 2:8)

Perhaps the least common word in that verse is “rudiments.” It is translated from a word that means “foundation,” or “elements.” It is rendered quite appropriately as “first principles” in Hebrews 5:12, and it adequately describes the way that evolutionary philosophy is the basis for the worldview of those who reject Yah’s revelation through the Bible. Tragically, it also underlies the “new theology” of most Churches, which apply evolutionary principles to salvation, even if they are among the increasingly few that reject it as a scientific explanation of our origins.

He became animated as he spoke, at one point seemingly attempting to convince me of his position, saying, “You cannot deny the fact that evolution happened. Anyone who has studied the sciences...”

Now at this point, I had concluded that the Spirit was motivating him to reach out to me, but so far I had told him nothing about my own beliefs, beyond a brief statement that I was familiar with Mormonism since I had read extensively about many religions. My reply to his statement about the “fact of evolution” was that I would never deny facts, but that the interpretation of certain facts have led people (even scientists) to the wrong conclusions on a number of very important matters.

I don’t intend to recount the entire lengthy conversation here, but after I gave him my understanding of the Bible’s record of creation, and the role of the global flood in the production of much of the evidence now used to support evolution, I ended by speaking about the real issue, the spiritual implications of believing in a system that has death preceding sin. He looked confused for a moment, and then he said, “I have never heard anyone explain it that way before.” He asked me what Church I belonged to, and I told him that I was a Creation Seventh Day Adventist, that it was similar to mainstream Adventism in some respects, but had a few key differences.

We continued to speak for a couple of hours after that, during which he asked me – and this is the part that is particularly relevant to the study tonight – “What is it that makes your beliefs right and others’ wrong? There are sincere people in every religion in the world, and all of them are convinced that their beliefs are correct, so how do you know yours is the true faith?”

I replied with what most of us would consider the very “milk” of the Gospel – the rudiments, the very basic core of the Faith of Yahshua. And yet, it was at the “rudiments” that this man’s faith had been spoiled, to the extent that he had once sincerely held a religious position.

To break the Enemy's hold on the human soul, we must lay the axe to the very "root" of the tree, and this is what I said: "The religions of the world all have the same basic definition of righteousness – to do things to help other people, and to avoid harming them. And yet they will make these acts, these works, the foundation of salvation, rather than the result."

"The other day I heard," I continued, "that this most recent pope, shortly after his inauguration, said something to the effect that even an atheist, if he lives a good life, and helps people, can get into Heaven." The teacher looked thoughtful for a moment, then said, "But you don't believe that..."

I said, "No, I don't. The faith revealed in the Bible teaches that Christ is the only way to the Father, and any other way is only a religion based on man's abilities and limitations. "All other religions, to one degree or another, are based on works, even if they do not state it as explicitly as Catholicism."

"I believe in exactly the opposite of that arrangement; when one comes to believe the truth, the right actions follow naturally. Yes, we must learn what righteousness is based on the Bible's teachings, but it is not the obedience that gives our experiences value. Rather, it is the faith that gives us both the will and power to obey, and learning what righteousness is allows us to choose it intelligently, purposefully, in order to manifest that faith through works. "It is the faith that destroys sin in the heart, and changes our very nature so that righteousness – a life of good works – becomes our 'ordinary' estate."

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: There are many things about the Mormon religion with which I disagree, but I assume that at some point they at least pay "lip service" to the idea of salvation based on faith and not works, especially since Paul's writings are so clear on the topic.

Any act of righteousness performed by an atheist, or nominal Christian for that matter, is compared by the Bible to "filthy rags," (Isa 64:6) because it is the corrupted, unconverted heart that motivates it, rather than Christ in the individual, revealing His own perfect character through the work.

Our Father in Heaven is Sovereign over all things; He does not "need" anyone to build a church or hospital, or to feed the poor. The success or failure of individual human actions do not advance or disrupt His perfect plan beyond what He explicitly permits; therefore it is impossible to please Him with any act, and impossible to disappoint Him with any apparent failure of our endeavors. It can only be faith, and not the successful completion of a supposedly holy activity, that brings His smile. It is our faith, even when we suffer what we might consider to be a set setback, that wins the victory over the world.

I expected his reaction to this to be a nod, or a smile, or some acknowledgement that this was something most religions claim, but once again I was surprised by his response. He

looked at me as if he'd never heard words like this before, and he said something to the effect that he would have to give that viewpoint some thought.

All in all, it was a fascinating conversation in which Yah had included me last Thursday evening, and I have felt the compulsion to pray for this man and his family. I hope you will join me in that, as open hearts and minds have been increasingly rare finds in this dark generation.

As he shared with me some recent events involving his family, some of which are quite tragic, I was brought to the brink of tears more than once. While he has become weary of spiritual things, he does not seem bitter, only "burned out" on religion. He even confessed to me, in fact, that while he no longer holds to Mormon beliefs, for the sake of his sons, to give them stability and a strong foundation for morality, he continues to attend services with them.

As I reflected on our conversation later that night, I realized that we had spoken of quite a variety of subjects, some of which were quite technical. Despite this, it was the simplest of answers, the very "rudiments" of the Christian faith, which we might assume most people would already know...it was these things that seemed to bless him the most.

My conclusion, therefore, was this...The world is in deepest darkness. Even Churches that say the right words do not often explain what their doctrines mean, and they never fully realize the ideals represented by those words in practice. This is not an insult or undue criticism; they freely admit that they fall short of Yahweh's will for them both individually and corporately.

But to be direct, to be plain, it is a different god than the God of the Creation Seventh Day Adventist that requires an impossible standard of mortal men without providing them with the means, in great excess, to perfectly fulfill His expectations. It is a god of a different type, of a different character, that would require this. It is a god that sets up his worshippers for obvious failure, and then uses their guilt to keep them trying to be good. It is a god, in short, of the religions of works.

As we have seen recently, Yah our Father has given us "all things" that pertain to both this life and to the divine standard of godliness. To deny this in words or in deeds not only dishonors the infinite worthiness of Christ who laid down His life for us, but directly contradicts the inspired words of the apostles who have said so.

Christ Yahshua does not fail; Christ in us is the "hope of glory," and that cannot fail either. One who fails cannot have Christ within, or else the sin that dwells within the unregenerate flesh is declared to be stronger than the spirit and character of the Messiah.

Such a thing is an absurdity. Any Gospel that does not teach perfect victory over sin and self is an absurdity, and ought to be rebuked by all who know the truth of our Father, and who seek to reveal His character to the universe.

From our perspective as the saints of Yah, it is only right to "take it for granted" that what a Church accepts as doctrine its people will do, because that is our experience. And yet, as we go about and encounter others, we know that this is not the case for the churches of the world and their members. Even what they should know, even what they teach on paper, it does not often enter the heart. It does not become character. They know this, but like the demoniac of the Gospels, they do not even know how to ask for help. The faith that they have accepted does not allow them to choose righteousness consistently, to transform the personality into Christ-like-ness.

But there is good news.

The power of the "living witness" is that it may say the same words, speak the same truths that have always been spoken, and because it is spoken with the testimony of genuine faith, and the authority of holiness, furthermore through a vessel that has experienced victory personally, it can cut through the illusions under which the Enemy has his captives bound. The power of the redeemed human evangelist, as opposed to an angel or a voice from the sky, is that the sinner can see himself, his future in Christ, in the face of the speaker. This likeness, this affinity, proves false the claims of Satan, that humanity cannot be united with divinity, and therefore humanity can never fulfill the righteousness of the Law.

When we live in harmony with our Father's will, we do indeed fulfill the righteousness of the Law, and it is not that the actions we perform bring us into that harmony. The choice to be in unity, the choice to accept Christ Yahshua, this allows the Father and Son to bring us into harmony, and the works flow out as water from a wellspring. Then there shall be an oasis in the desert, and the Spirit will lead us into the paths of those who may receive the blessing of our testimony.

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Zahakiel: Then we can say, without any worldly pride, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." (A paraphrase of 1Co 11:1)

I do not know if anything will come of the specific conversation that I've shared with you tonight, but I pray we all have similar experiences and opportunities to this. Deep and insightful doctrines have their place, but they are really only of value to those already committed to the walk of sanctification. The apostles were eager to move those whom they taught on to the "meat" of the Gospel, but what the world and those that dwell therein need is the first Angel with its one message expressed in its many forms, speaking judgment and worship, and holding out the promise of salvation from sin, separation from destruction, and the simplicity of the Gospel's power.

Are there any comments or questions about the study tonight?

Adriel777: Amen

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

Lucan: Dear heavenly Father. We thank you that you have lead your people beyond the first principles of the gospel. We thank you that no experience is wasted; that those rudimentary lessons will ever be a blessing to those in need, as we once were. May your Spirit bring all who will into the path of life, being lead and prepared of you for your Son's return. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Elyna: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

Barb: Amen

Peter: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Ruth: Amen

Kim: Amen

Nattie: Amen.

Peter_Jr_18: amen.

Marie: Amen