

Zahakiel: Almighty Father in Heaven, as we come apart from the world to stand in spirit before your Throne, we rejoice in your indwelling power, and the victories that we have experienced in the week that has passed. May our time of rest and fellowship be a sweet savor before you, and a witness to the onlooking universe, for we ask it in Yahshua's holy name. Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Gloria: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen.

Elyna1: Amen

Barb: Amen

Peter: Amen

Peter Jr 18: Amen.

Marie: Amen

Zahakiel: Happy Sabbath to everyone. Tonight's study is called "Who I am," and it is the first of two parts.

The most fundamental, the most important, element of the Christian life is spiritual unity with the Creator of Heaven and earth. The talents we refine on the way to glorification, the works that we do, and even the beliefs we hold on specific matters, these are all secondary to the knowledge of the Father and Son, which is itself everlasting life. (John 17:3) The Scriptures speak of knowledge of the character and nature of Yah, and also point out the importance of agreement. We cannot walk in unity with anyone on a spiritual level if we are not agreed with them in the principles of the faith. (Amos 3:3) The Son, knowing the importance of agreement in the relationship between humanity and the Father says to us, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:15)

The privilege, to be called a "friend" of the eternal and infinite God, and to know what the Master is doing, cannot be measured. No earthly treasure can purchase this favor. No effort of will, however extreme, can attain it. In the words of the prophets, in the lessons of the spiritual teachers, and in the Person of Yahshua, the Father reveals Himself to mankind. He says, "Come to know me. Come to know who I am."

When the face of the Father, when His loving nature, and longsuffering, when His willingness to suffer the presence of sin in His universe for a time – for our sakes – is known, the truly free and rational mind can only react with gratitude, and with overwhelming awe.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: It is the knowledge of this that drives the demons to pull mankind from their freedom... to make them slaves to sin, and irrational, immunizing them from saving faith. We do not say, like some in Christianity, that Yah's glory "forces" those exposed to it to become holy. There are some who say that human destiny is fixed from conception; those to whom Yah reveals Himself become Christians, and are ultimately saved, while some are guaranteed destruction, and therefore never encounter the Holy Spirit on an internal level.

We believe, for the Bible teaches, that Yah causes His rain, which symbolizes His Spirit, to fall on everyone. (Mat 5:45) In Yahshua, and by His Spirit, the grace that gives man the ability to choose righteousness has appeared to every person. (Titus 2:11) Yah actively seeks for those who will serve Him, as it is written, "How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? [...] But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." (Matt. 18:12; John 4:23)

These statements, particularly the last few, are neither symbolic prophecy nor poetry. They are doctrine, and therefore written for the sake of plain knowledge. Yah desires that all should come to the knowledge of who He is, and therefore be saved. He seeks them actively, sending His Spirit and servants out as messengers, evangelists, angels. They are commissioned to teach the world who He is.

The very last thing John writes in his first letter to the Church is, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (1 John 5:21)

After speaking out against false teachings and a faulty understanding of spiritual "security," and after explaining in clearer language than anywhere else in the Bible just what "victory over sin" is, this is how John chooses to end his letter. This is the lasting message he wished to leave with the readers of this first epistle.

Victory over sin cannot be experienced or maintained in the presence of idols. It is Yah's perfection within us that keeps us from committing sin, and brings us into the path of sanctification in which previously unknown transgressions are identified, confessed, and put away. Idolatry of any kind disrupts this process, and makes it impossible for the soul to "see" and "know" the Father, because the affections are centered elsewhere, rather than the glory of the Almighty.

There can be no such thing as a "little" idolatry, because the brightness of Yah's character entirely arrests the attention of the genuine seeker; therefore if love for anything, to even the least degree, is placed above the love of Yah, it means that His brightness is not being seen at all. It would mean the soul is not genuinely seeking the light after all, or else it would be drawn to it according to the promise that those who seek Him will find Him.

Perhaps the cleverest form of idolatry devised by the Enemy, and therefore the most dangerous, is idolatry of the holy. I use the word "holy" there without a capital H, because

what I am indicating is that there is a genuine holiness, of the Father and Son, and then there are things that mankind considers sacred, but are not truly edifying in the spirit.

A recent study asked the question, "What is truth?" This week we ask a similar one: "What is the truth about our Father in Heaven? Who is He?"

The truth of who Yah is, when received into the soul, destroys all idols, brings victory over sin, and leads that soul to life everlasting.

The very name "Yahweh," which we are given to call Him, means "I am." This can be taken by itself, and in such a case it would mean, "I exist." This is fitting, for Yah created all things, and is therefore the only Being that exists of Himself, with no origin or dependency outside of Himself. And yet, this name, "Yahweh," "I am," comes to us in one of the earliest books of the Bible. This revelation of Yah as "I Am" was only the beginning of the sacred record of His relationship with mankind and, while Adam, Enoch and others had centuries to come to know Yah personally, little is preserved of their particular experiences.

We are invited to gain knowledge of our Father through the words that were written long thereafter, with our understanding of these texts guided by His Spirit, and by walking thereafter before Him in righteousness that comes through faith. Yah was not finished telling us who He was by the mere revelation of the name, "I Am," and therefore what He says about Himself afterwards, and the characteristics that He reveals, allows us to complete the picture, and to avoid the subtle idolatry into which so many have fallen in the various churches... the worship of the person whom they think God is, whom they believe Him to be, and not who He really is, as defined by what He says of Himself.

For some, the Father is a harsh judge, or an uncaring absentee, or (on the other hand) merciful without an element of justice. For some the Son is inferior to the Father, or a godly spirit who merely wore the illusion of flesh, or one who will save people that are yet within their sins. These are all impressions gained from misunderstandings, and the traditions of men rooted in the love of spiritual darkness. They produce idolatry, worship of a false god separate from the God of Israel and Christianity. These are hard truths for those who are experiencing a measure of joy and spiritual light within impure traditions, but without judgment or condemnation we say to those seeking the Excellent Way, "Come and see."

What we are inviting them to "Come and see" is the Father and His Son in Their genuine glory, acting according to the genuine record of Their divine character as revealed in the Scriptures and the ever-increasing light set before the Bride. As midnight of the spiritual clock approaches, only the lamps that are held by the wise virgins, who have bought sufficient oil before sundown, give off any illumination, and that light is the glory of Yah as revealed in the faith and works of His people.

Who does Yah say that He is? This is what lights our way.

As we search the Scriptures we find our Father and the Son describing Themselves in various ways... "I am..." something. Many times He will say, "I am the Lord," or, "I am the God of Israel," and those are expressions of His absolute authority, but in other verses He will either give a symbolic description of Himself, or state a characteristic that describes Him. Each time He does this, it tells us more about the divine nature.

Briefly, we will go through several of these across the Old and New Testaments. We will take these according to the Books in which they appear, beginning with the Old Testament in this study, and continuing with the New in the next that deals with the Son's descriptions of Himself.

Our first Scripture is this verse:

"After these things the word of Yahweh came unto Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.'" (Gen 15:1)

This is actually the first time the phrase "I am" appears in the Bible... and it is the Almighty declaring Himself to be the Defender and Reward of His faithful servant. While the prophets describe Yah in various ways, and the words of the Bible identify Him with numerous characteristics, this is the first testimony that He gives of Himself directly. Yah declares that He does not cause His servants to come to any harm beyond what is strictly necessary for the perfection of their earthly experience, and to draw others near to Him.

"If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down, for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin, wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me that I will hear, for I am gracious." (Exo 22:26, 27)

Here in Exodus we find another "I am." The Creator is speaking here of what some might consider to be a minor thing. We see an expression of concern for the sleeping comfort of a poor debtor. The way of the world is to emphasize the grand, the outwardly glorious. Here Yah identifies Himself as "gracious," as concerned with kindness, courtesy, and goodwill between neighbors. These things ought never to be overlooked by the Christian, and you may recall that a few weeks ago I described sanctification as the "perfection of the ordinary." Courtesy and kindness should be common indeed, but no less valuable for being commonplace among the saints.

"And Yahweh spake unto Aaron, 'Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.'" (Num 18:20, repeated in Ezek. 44:28)(Ezekiel also includes the phrase "I am their possession")

This is Yah's portioning of land divisions in Israel, singling out the Levites, and specifically the descendants of Aaron, as having no set land. Instead, they were to dwell among the other tribes as teachers and judges... ensuring that the Word of Yah would be known in every place.

For the Christians, who are the modern and eternal priests of the Almighty, Yah is our Reward, as He said to Abram in Genesis, and also our Inheritance. That which we received upon the death of Christ was Yah Himself, "Yahshua answered and said unto him, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.'" (John 14:23)

It is not enough that Yah favors us, and blesses us, and guides us toward salvation. The nature of the sinful flesh is such that even with perfect "guidance," it will wander out of the path. This is why faith can never be merely an intellectual thing, or a theoretical understanding. The natural heart is "deceitful above all things," and those who think that they can get to Heaven "with Yah's help" are unaware of the darkness in which they have been living.

Mankind cannot, even with infinite help, attain everlasting life, just as no amount of encouragement will cause the dead to return to life. What is needed is a new birth, an entirely new creature... a resurrection by and of an entirely different spirit, and that Spirit, Yah's own holy presence, defeats the flesh by His own power, and we dwell in this new life, this new land, our inheritance.

Yah is our Inheritance.

Of the Old Testament books, Isaiah perhaps most often records Yah speaking for Himself. We find here numerous passages in which the Almighty speaks through His prophet, using the human's voice, but His own omnipotent witness. Here are a few of them...

"For I am Yahweh God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." (Isa 43:3)

"I am Yahweh, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." (Isa 43:15)

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isa 43:25)

"Thus saith Yahweh the King of Israel, and his Redeemer Yahweh of hosts; 'I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.'" (Isa 44:6)

"Thus saith Yahweh, thy Redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, 'I am Yahweh that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.'" (Isa 44:24)

"I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;" (Isa 51:12)

We have quite a number of powerful descriptions in Isaiah. Yah calls Himself the Savior, the Holy One, the Creator, and the King. He is the One who blots out transgressions (for

His own sake, not because we have anything of ourselves worthy of merit) as our Redeemer and Comforter.

As you read through Isaiah, you will come across multiple passages in which Yah says, "I alone created this," and "By myself I performed that." This is significant, because in the days of Isaiah even the priesthood was corrupted by paganism. The worship of other supposed gods was a spiritual plague in the land, and even those who claimed to be faithful teachers of His law were compromised with a measure of respect for other, dark, spirits. Yah, through Isaiah, repeatedly tells His people, "There is no God but me. There is no one like me in glory and power."

While the Israelites saw the mighty armies of the Heathen, and their worship of other gods, they were tempted to give credence to their idolatrous worship. In fact, time after time they submitted to that temptation. But Yah, the "I Am," declares that, though invisible, His is the only true power in the universe.

Adriel777: Amen

Zahakiel: From Jeremiah we read these two passages in which Yah speaks of Himself:

"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, 'Return, thou backsliding Israel,' saith Yahweh, 'and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful,' saith Yahweh, 'and I will not keep anger forever. [...] Turn, O backsliding children,' saith Yahweh, 'for I am married unto you, and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:'" (Jer 3:12, 14)

"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." (Jer 9:24)

While Isaiah focuses on the glory and redeeming power of Yah, Jeremiah's testimony of Yah is one of mercy, forgiveness, and love. In Isaiah we see Yah declare Himself as a Husband, a Leader and Guide, to His people, an intimate portrayal of affection. He does not leave out judgment and righteousness, but these are portrayed in the context of a loving relationship designed to save mankind from sin, and to bring delight to the Creator. It is not a different message, by any means, from Isaiah's work, but it is brought to us through a different divinely inspired mind, and provides us with a new perspective from the heart of the Almighty to His people.

In the final book of the Old Testament, Yah speaks for Himself directly once again. We read:

"But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King,' saith Yahweh of hosts, 'and my name is dreadful among the heathen.'" (Mal 1:14)

Yah ends His pre-Christian record with a declaration of Himself as a "great King." The majesty of Yah, the authority that His Law holds over us, is precisely what the Hebrew religion required in order to remain faithful in the time between Malachi and John the Baptist. Because they forgot Yah's Kingdom, and submitted themselves to the ways of Greece and then Rome, they lost their divine character... or rather the divine character that Yah intended they should have. It was this; that they forgot that Yah was their King; that led to their condition of Babylon Fallen, sealing their fate with the dreadful words, "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15)

Yah says nothing idly, or without perfect calculation. His love for us is His supreme motivation, and every revelation, however seemingly minor, is designed to best prepare us for judgment and the divine society of Heaven thereafter. The last testimony of Himself that He left to Israel is that they should beware of sacrificing the wrong lamb, beware of corruption, and never forget that He is the King of Israel. This testimony they rejected, and because of this they did not recognize His express image in Yahshua the Son. They rejected Him, and crucified Him, and as a result we who are the remnant of Israel are now an Ekklesia, a Church that has been "called out" to take up the work of teaching the world of Yah and His worship.

Because the precise instruction of divinity as delivered through His testimony was ignored, the Jewish Church fell, just as other, more modern Churches have fallen for exactly the same reason, before and in our own generation.

May the words of Yah, as He describes Himself to us, leave a mark, a seal, upon His people in this age and forever after.

Adriel777: Amen

Elyna1: Amen

In our next study, we will continue from this spot, from the expression of Yah's divinity through His Son, and we will find His testimony continuing through the words of the Savior, who says to the world, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."

Are there any comments or questions about what we have examined this week?

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 revealing yourself to us, through your Word, your Son, and your indwelling Spirit. We thank you for being our shield and our reward. As we dismiss into the remainder of the Sabbath hours, we ask your blessing on our fellowship with you and one another. In Yahshua's name we pray, amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Adriel777: Amen

Barb: Amen

Gloria: Amen.

daphna dee: Amen

Peter: Amen

Elyna1: Amen

Peter Jr 18: Amen.

Ruthline: Amen