

Lucan: It's time to begin; Bro. David, will you please offer the opening prayer?

Zahakiel: Almighty and loving Father in Heaven, We thank you for these sacred Sabbath hours, prepared for your people to come apart from the world and rejoice before your holy Throne. Bless us with wisdom from on high, as you give us rest in body, mind and spirit, for we ask it in the name of your Son, Yahshua. Amen.

Barb: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Adriel7777: Amen

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Gloria Bailey: Amen.

Kimberly: Amen

Elyna1: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Lucan: Tonight's message is called "Claiming the Promises," and we will begin by looking at examples of three different responses to promises of Yahweh.

This is the first: "And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD [came] unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." (Genesis 15:3-5)

And what was Abram's response to this promise?

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)

We see here the correct response to the promises of Yahweh, so much so that Paul later writes: "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which [he had yet] being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." (Romans 4:11)

Here is the second promise: "But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the

children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13-17)(LMK)

Adriel7777: F

Naraiel: F

Pastor Chick: F

Elyna1: F

Gloria Bailey: F

Peter: F.

Barb: F

Lucan: And what was Zacharias' response to this promise?

"And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." (Luke 1:18)

Abraham, in contrast, believed the word of Yahweh based only on the word of Yahweh. We will come back to Zacharias shortly, however we note that being old and stricken in years was not a matter far from his own experience, as we see in our third response to a promise of Yahweh:

"And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard [it] in the tent door, which [was] behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah [were] old [and] well stricken in age; [and] it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Genesis 18:10-12)

Sarah, we see, had a reaction more akin to that of Zacharias than that of her husband. Where Abraham responded in faith, Zacharias asked how he might know the thing would be, and Sarah secretly laughed at the absurdity of the promise. The thing promised was impossible in every instance, of course; if any other than One who created the concept of "possible" were to promise it, it would be laughable indeed. We know that Yahweh "counted it to Abraham for righteousness" that he believed the promise without qualification or evidence. We may see in this, and what is written of Abraham as the "father of faith," that even from the earliest interactions with humanity and regardless of covenant, Yah has not changed. Childlike trust and faithful duty in the promises of Yahweh is counted righteousness, as it is the only means of righteousness – any righteousness – existing in us. Any good deeds separate from faith are merely "our own righteousness;" good works, regardless of how good, cannot save or improve the soul. This is the difference in a "moral" person and a "righteous" person. As it is written, "But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

Even before Abraham, it is written that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Hebrews 11:4)

And what was that excellent sacrifice? Merely the thing Yahweh had asked for. And why did it obtain witness that he was righteous, if good actions do not save? Because he did not do it in order to "be good," but because he trusted and obeyed Yahweh who gave the instruction.

We see that Yahweh does not change in His response to those who believe His word. Those who believe the Creator without asking witness from His creation are counted righteous and given righteousness, and thus made righteous. These do not testify afterwards to being "sinners," but to being "righteous."

We know Yahweh approved the reaction of Abraham; how did He respond to Sarai and Zacharias?

To Sarah, we read: "And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh." (Genesis 18:13-15)

"Is anything too hard for Yahweh?"

Sarah clearly had a belief that this was so, though she likely would never have said such. There are many who, as Sarah, focus on their own weakness over the strength of Yahweh who has promised, and is able to perform. Few will say "I believe Satan is more powerful than Christ, and that God cannot keep us from Satan's power unless Satan is destroyed first." Yet how many will say "I believe I will keep on sinning til Christ returns, til then there's just no hope?"

How did Yahweh respond to Sarah's laughter and denial? Did He gloss over the matter? No; He asked her husband, "Why did she laugh? Is this too hard for Yahweh?" Here Sarah compounded skepticism with fear, and "denied, saying, I laughed not." Yahweh plays no games with Sarah in this interaction; He inquires as to the cause of her laugh, and when she denies it in fear, He tells her plainly "No, but you did laugh." The sooner Sarah acknowledged her reaction, the sooner she might examine and come to answer the "why," and be healed of her unbelief.

Love – agape love – requires confrontation. It requires heart work. It requires a mirror to be held up, and when fear and denial is the response, as with Sarah, it requires a straight testimony. Let us learn from this example well, for it is one required of us both to endure and to perform if we would see Yahweh in peace. Note that Sarah laughed

“within herself;” she might well have had an argument that she did not laugh, at least not physically. Yahweh gave her no such argument; “Nay, but thou didst laugh.” The truth of her heart was of more interest than the movements of her lips.

Yahweh has not changed; His Spirit has not changed. In our self-examination, we are to look deeper than the actions, and to the heart – to judge as Yahweh judges. In ministering to the needs of our brethren, we are to look deeper than the actions, and to the heart; to heal as Yahweh heals.

We have seen one who believed in heart, and one who laughed in heart; what was the response of Heaven to Zacharias, who asked “whereby shall I know this?”

“And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” (Luke 1:19, 20)

The way by which he would know it was that it was promised. No leeway was offered Zacharias for this unbelief; the Word had been spoken, the message delivered. More than this, as a ministering and faithful priest, Zacharias was familiar with the examples of both Abraham and Sarah.

We read of this from the Testimonies: “Zacharias well knew how to Abraham in his old age a child was given because he believed Him faithful who had promised. But for a moment the aged priest turns his thought to the weakness of humanity. He forgets that what God has promised, He is able to perform. What a contrast between this unbelief and the sweet, childlike faith of Mary, the maiden of Nazareth, whose answer to the angel’s wonderful announcement was, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”! Luke 1:38.

The birth of a son to Zacharias, like the birth of the child of Abraham, and that of Mary, was to teach a great spiritual truth, [...] In ourselves we are incapable of doing any good thing; but that which we cannot do will be wrought by the power of God in every submissive and believing soul. It was through faith that the child of promise was given. It is through faith that spiritual life is begotten, and we are enabled to do the works of righteousness.” [Desire of Ages 98](LMK)

Zahakiel: Finished

Ruthline: F

Pastor Chick: F

Elyna1: F

Adriel7777: F

Peter: F

Kimberly: F

Barb: F

Lucan: The promises of Yahweh are not limited to offspring and the establishment of nations. The power of Yahweh, so far from being dependent on or limited by the vessel, is more marked and pronounced the weaker the vessel is. Yahweh might have given Abraham, Sarah, and Zacharias children in their youth; yet that would have been no miracle or glory to His name. Yahweh might have poured His Spirit on, and given the gospel commission to, unfallen and holy beings; yet that would have been no testimony.

In the world to come, and eternity thereafter, we will have a unique testimony among all creation. Only humanity will be able to speak of redemption from slavery to sin, the results of rebellion, and the infinite transaction by which we were created new and born again. We may say from experience, having known both, that the life of Yahshua is greater than the life of sin; so much so that we "love not our lives unto the death."

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9, 10)

This song and testimony begins now, just as the victory over sin, Satan, and self begins now. The new life begins now, and on what basis?

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

And what is that Word? What is the promise we are given as surely as Abraham?

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:6, 9)

"Cannot" is the promise; and why? Is it because of our own abilities, or talents, or righteousness? No; "Because he is born of God." And to be born of God is to be born "of incorruptible seed;" the seed cannot be corrupted, and therefore, the tree cannot be corrupted; we "cannot commit sin." This is the message that the world and unconverted churches consider laughable, an impossibility.

It is the message that we therefore live - demonstrating Yahweh's power to do the impossible through us. The promise of new life in an elderly body was counted impossible; how much more the promise of the very life of God in a body dead through trespasses and sins?

We note that Zacharias was rebuked and judged for doubting that which he had familiar evidence to support. The life of Yahshua removes all possible doubt that the promises of Yahweh extend to keeping us perfectly from falling to temptation, and moreso give us the very righteousness of Yahweh. Yet even among those who profess to be Christians – who profess to be Adventists! – such promises are met with unbelief, laughter, and the doubting question of “Whereby shall I know this?”

“Is anything too hard for Yahweh?”

Much like Zacharias, the root of all such questions is looking to the weakness of the flesh and not to the power of Yahweh, who performs what He has promised.

Another example of looking to the flesh and not to the power of Yahweh, as we have seen in some recent discussions, is to focus on the messenger rather than the message. Zacharias was not excused that it was Gabriel and not Yahweh Himself who delivered the message of truth. When a soul responds to the gospel and Word of Yahweh with questions intended to bring low the messenger (“So you never sin?” “So you never go over the speed limit?” etc.), it is evident that the focus is on the flesh and not the Spirit. It is an attempt to find hypocrisy - not to heal the hypocrite, but to excuse self from conviction. If a hypocrite gives me a true message that brings life, I will thank Yahweh for that hypocrite, and rejoice in the healing of Yahweh.

It is this failure that is at the root of all apostasy; to look to “the creature rather than the Creator.” Lucifer looked to the creation rather than the Creator, and became enamored with himself. Eve listened to the creature rather than the Creator, and ate of the fruit. The Jewish church looked to the creature rather than the Creator, and crucified Him for fear lest “the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” (John 11:48) The Adventist church looked to the creature rather than the Creator, trusting in the second beast rather than Yahweh to protect their name and punish dissenters. In every case, the promises of Yahweh, received and cherished, were both antidote and vaccine against apostasy.

We are not to pray for the promises of Yahweh and then wait to see “whereby shall we know this” has been fulfilled. We are not to hear the promises of Yahweh and laugh within ourselves, accepting the lie that these must be for others better or more fit than ourselves. We know full well how Yahweh views such responses to His Word, even among those who had millennia less experience. We are to pray for the promises, and thank Yahweh that He has fulfilled His Word; we are to receive the promises, deciding and proclaiming that in that very moment, and for all eternity thereafter, Yahweh has fulfilled the Word in us. Divine power combined with human effort is the recipe for success.

We read in the Testimonies: "A close connection with Heaven will give the right tone to your fidelity and will be the ground of your success. Your feeling of dependence will drive you to prayer and your sense of duty summon you to effort. Prayer and effort, effort and prayer, will be the business of your life. You must pray as though the efficiency and praise were all due to God, and labor as though duty were all your own. If you want power you may have it, as it is awaiting your draft upon it. Only believe in God, take Him at His word, act by faith, and blessings will come." [Counsels on Health 367](LMK)

Zahakiel: Finished

Peter: F

Adriel7777: F Amen

Elyna1: F

Ruthline: F

Pastor Chick: F

Barb: F

Lucan: Abraham "acted by faith," having confidence to use his new name, "a father of many nations," though the promised child was yet unconceived. Zacharias had confidence to write the name that the angel had told him to write for his son, and his muteness was ended.

We, too, have confidence to use the name, character, and gifts Yahweh has freely given us. Every good and perfect gift – "all things pertaining to godliness" – are poured out of heaven and into us through Christ. Everyone who has put on Christ has put on His Spirit, and the fruit of that Spirit.

Have you seen a lack of patience? Then repent, ask, and receive; let there never be a confession of anything but Divine patience thereafter, for Christ has it, and has given it. Why not receive it, and live it to the very fullest extent of your understanding from victory unto victory?

Do you have love, joy, peace, a thankful and cheerful spirit, kindness, wisdom, etc.? If you do, then rejoice in these gifts that others might see where to find life. If you do not, ask and receive the new life; be converted, and then let the words never imply anything but the fullness of the gift of God.

Let there be no "laugh," in heart or in speech, as to the promises of Yahweh in your life. Let there be no decisions made or actions taken on the basis of anything other than having received the character of Yahshua. To those who live the gospel, "What Would Jesus Do?" is a question that gives way to praise rather than guilt, for we both know and do what He would do according to His Spirit within us.

To claim these gifts, outrageous as they are, would be arrogance and folly if done on our own authority or initiative; this is where many who are ignorant of the Scriptures err. If Abraham had claimed to be the father of many nations, but Yahweh had not promised this to him, he would have indeed been deranged or a liar. If Yahweh had not promised us complete victory and a new heart, to claim any good thing in ourselves would similarly be folly.

Those who do not know Yahweh will accuse, and do accuse, the saints of the same; they do not know Him who has promised. Yet we know Him and His promises. We believe the One who has given the promises, for that is the very profession of a "Christian," and especially an "Adventist."

And yet there are many, even among Adventists, who have not heard these things. There are many who laugh at the notion of Yahweh raising up prophets in His church, despite His promise to do exactly that. There are many who laugh at the notion of Elijah having come, despite Yahweh's promise to do exactly that. There are many who laugh at the teaching that Yahweh will have a visibly united people, free from sin and reliance on the world, before Yahshua's return. All this despite the plain and unmistakable promises of Yahweh, who is able and willing to fulfill His Word.

Those who are saved at last are the "children of Abraham;" the children of faith, the children of the promise that believe on the basis of the One promising, and nothing else. The promises of Yahweh are our heritage, inheritance, and very life. They are the foundation of the kingdom into which we are translated, and the constitution of Heaven.

Yahweh has a people that stand perfectly united on the platform of present truth. May each of us stand resolutely on the promises, rooted in the Rock that cannot be moved. By the promise of Christ we can do no other: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29)

As we rest in that hand this Sabbath and all that will follow, let us rejoice in the Father that is "greater than all," and from whose loving, careful protection "none is able to pluck."

Are there any comments on the study tonight?

Adriel7777: Amen

Peter: Amen.

Zahakiel: C

Lucan: Go ahead

Zahakiel: I am struck by the examples that Bro. Luke has used in order to demonstrate this principle, that there is the response in faith, and the response in doubt, to Yah's promises... In each case recounted here, the Almighty has promised something good to His people. With regard to Zacharias and Sarah, they doubted because they were relying on their own senses, history, and understanding... It is a response of the flesh that Satan had instilled in them; for consider, if an angel had appeared to either of these two with a threat, with a warning of judgment, they would not have laughed, or doubted. The enemy of souls has prepared the human mind to accept evil from Yahweh and good from the world, and the reactions of the carnally minded demonstrate this... The saint must learn that this is exactly the opposite of what our expectation ought to be, so that we doubt what the world offers, and accept what our Father promises, including victory, holiness, and the entirety of the fruit of the Spirit. (End)

Lucan: Thank you for sharing; I am reminded of the saying, "doubt your doubts and believe your beliefs." ☺ Are there any other comments?

Adriel7777: Amen

Lucan: If not, I'll ask Pastor to please offer the closing prayer.

Piedad: I will ask you later. Since I need to write my questions.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in heaven, we thank You for the Truth... that Your promises are "yea", and Amen" ... in the hearts of Your people...

Piedad: Amen

Elyna1: Amen

Pastor Chick: As we grow up to the full stature of Christ... may our Sabbath reflect our resolve to rest in Your sure and precious promises to us in Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Elyna1: Amen.

Kimberly: Amen

Ruthline: Amen

Piedad: Amen

Peter: Amen

Barb: Amen

Adriel7777: Amen

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Naraiel: Amen

Gloria Bailey: Amen.