

Help Thou My Unbelief

Qinael : Most holy and loving Father...

We thank you for the double blessing of these sacred hours, as we come before you in praise, rejoicing, self-examination, and humility.

We thank you for the ability of all to attend this week, and we pray your blessing on each gathered here.

Qinael : We ask your Spirit to be with each, enlightening our understanding.

Qinael : In the name of Yahshua we pray, amen.

Sandiie : amen

Guest_Pastor_Chick : Amen

Guest_Peter : Amen.

Adriel : Amen

Guest_eagle : Amen.

Zahakiel : Amen.

Guest_Giselle : aMEN

Guest_daphna : Amen

CrystleM6301 : Amen

Zahakiel: This month I would like us to look at the concept of faith. We all know what faith “is.” In modern, common language it is accepting as a fact something that is not yet proven to the natural senses. But there are different kinds of faith, just as there are different reasons for trusting.

There is blind faith, which is accepting something with no evidence at all; or simply based upon the statements of a single (not always trustworthy) witness. There is intelligent faith, which is based on some evidence, and being convinced intellectually based upon our thinking about that evidence. Finally, there is experiential faith – in older English “experimental” faith. This is belief based upon some evidence of our own direct experience, and not merely reported by another. This last kind is the “saving faith” of Christianity because, while the experience of most people with Yahweh begins with the testimony of another, (Rom 10:14) in order to truly become a friend to the Savior, we must “taste and see [for ourselves] that Yahweh is good.” (Psa 34:8)

I am going to share with you a somewhat unusual practice that I have, and take you through one of the things that I consider to be a vital process. Every now and then, I will actively run through each of the beliefs of the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church and ask myself, “Why do I believe this?” Now, at

first glance, this may seem like an admission of doubt, or at least an invitation to temptation in that regard. In reality, however, it is nothing of the sort, and in fact I always end up being strengthened by the experience.

Let me share with you a relevant example. A few days ago, I was checking the calendar and I saw that this Sabbath was also going to be a New Moon. I thought to myself, “Why do I keep the New Moon?” Clearly, most other Christian Churches do not keep it as a sacred day – I am certain most have no idea what it is, perhaps only hearing it in passing. Even the mainstream SDA Church knows nothing of its significance. It is not mentioned very often in the Bible. It’s not one of the Ten Commandments. As far as I know, Messianic Jews don’t even have very much to do with it... and even those that do have a different timing, considering the “first sliver” as the New Moon. They say that this is when it is “renewed,” because you are seeing the first light of a new cycle. What they do not take into account, of course, is that in Yah’s system of ordering, darkness comes *before* light – therefore the LAST sliver of the moon is the end of any given cycle in a perfect accounting. The fully dark moon is the renewed one.

But looking at all that, the weight evidence against a modern-day keeping of the New Moon seems fairly heavy. But I believe in keeping the New Moon. Why?

Well, like most “Christians,” when I first came into contact with the CSDA Church, someone told me. “We keep New Moons as a sacred day.” Therefore, like most people’s experience with the Gospel, I got my first exposure to the doctrine from the testimony of someone else. Now, this “someone else” was also introducing me to the victory message at the same time, therefore I had every reason to trust that testimony. If that had continued to be my only reason, however, I would not have very much defense against temptation and doubt.

Let me explain the mechanism this way: the temptation that comes to a human being to doubt a doctrine can only overcome them if it is on a deeper, or the same, level as the degree to which that doctrine is truly believed. To put that in general terms, if I am not really convinced of something deeply, it may not take much of a temptation to convince me to stray from it. To put that yet another way, if I accept a doctrine on the testimony of another, it would only take the word of another to convince me it was false. If I accept a doctrine based on intelligent faith, then a well-reasoned argument may convince me that I am wrong – and this is where the majority of “religious debates” take place. But if I have something stored in my heart, and based on experiential knowledge... then it is mine forever, because Satan’s sole allowed method of temptation to Christians is through the senses.

The Born-again believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot be directly possessed by fallen angels. My “self” is already caught up, and in unity, with Yahshua’s “self.” We have been talking quite a bit about the Holy Spirit lately, and I think if we understand that the Holy Spirit is the personal “self” of Christ, we may begin to see our role as members of Yahshua’s Bride in a different way. Our selves become united with Christ’s self, because we are one through the divine marriage.

To go back to my description of this process, which is really self-examination, and examination of my faith... I find that I was first introduced to the doctrine of the New Moons by the word of another, and one that I had every reason to trust. Trusting the witness to Yah’s truth is important... it is vital, because without it no real learning can be done. The purpose of the apostles, and prophets, and pastors, and teachers is to instruct us in righteousness, toward attaining the character of Christ. But remember, the

wise virgins, however wise they are, cannot actually give their oil to the foolish ones. We must, must, have these doctrines in our very own hearts, so that no testimony of another, and no merely intellectual argument, can sway us from the path of truth. Remember, the sealing is settling into the truth so that we cannot be moved by any means that Satan is allowed to employ.

Accepting the testimony of this new teacher allowed me exposure to this doctrine of the New Moon, and so I began to study it for myself. I found that there were lots of verses that discuss it – mostly in the Old Testament, but a few in the New Testament – and even a prophecy that it will be significant even beyond the last days, on into Eternity. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I had of course seen the verse that quotes Yahweh saying, “from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me.” (Isa 66:23) Unfortunately, that verse in our weekly studies would invariably spin off into a discussion of how we were right (and most other people were wrong) for having a day of rest on Saturday, and the part about the “new moon” was universally ignored. So commonly was that verse used to lead into a Sabbath discussion in the mainstream organization that I don’t think it ever even occurred to me to ask what a “new moon” was; and I am certain that, had I actually asked, I would have been given an answer that would merely have swept it under the rug.

I can be sure of that, in fact, because after becoming a CSDA I have indeed asked many mainstream Adventists about that verse, and those who had even noticed the words “new moon” in there before would say something like, “Oh, that is one of those Jewish holy days like the Feast of [something] that isn’t significant for us any longer.”

“But,” I would reply, “this is a prophecy of the future.”

The response would be one of several justifications, but the most reasonable-sounding would be something like, “That’s true, and so this just means it will be re-instituted when Christ returns, just as we once had a Temple, and will have one in the future, but don’t have one now as the Church.”

This is an example of a reasonable-sounding argument that, had I only believed the New Moon doctrine on an intellectual level, might have the power to sway me. Do you see what I mean by that? If I am only convinced on an intellectual level, then intellectual arguments are sufficient to cause doubt.

But we continue in the process. As I continued to study, I began to realize that not only does the New Moon appear in lots and lots of places in the Bible, (whenever, for example, it speaks about the “first day of the month”) but that the meaning is usually significant. There is nothing arbitrary about it. What takes place on New Moons? Trumpets are blown – trumpets that symbolize both judgment and victory. New Moons are a time of both judgment and victory. They are appointed times that are called “solemn feasts,” (Psa 81:3) which sounds a lot like one of those many paradoxes of Christianity: humble yourself and be raised up, surrender to death in order to live, stand fast in order to move forward, submit to judgment so as not to be judged.

I saw that the New Moons were a vital aspect of the Christian life, not only because a human told me (which would be faith with little evidence) or because the Bible says so (which would, by itself, be an intellectual reason) but because it makes sense on a personal level.

Now, a couple words of caution before we move on. Yahshua would often, and rightly, counter temptations by saying, “It is written.” He did this when facing off against the Pharisees, who based their

religion on the Law, and against Satan, who knew that the words of the Bible were a true and accurate record of reality. With the common man, however, He would not quote Scripture. He would use parables. I want you to understand how significant this is, because we recently had a study about how to reach peoples' hearts, and if someone comes in seeking advice, or spiritual guidance, the most common mistake people will make is to begin to quote a bunch of Scriptures at them.

We must first agree that the Bible is true (this is initially an intellectual activity) before we can begin to search it out for spiritual wisdom. To put that very simply, something is not true because it is in the Bible – it is in the Bible because it is true. That is a very subtle point, but a key one... if I make an argument that includes the phrase “it is written,” it is because I am convinced that the one with whom I am speaking has at least made a nominal commitment to believe the words of Scripture. But if I am dealing with my own beliefs, and examining why I believe them, I treat myself as a “common person,” as one who is even examining why I intellectually chose to believe the Bible at all. I want to go as fundamental and basic as possible.

This is why I say the Bible would “by itself” be an intellectual reason. There is also the testimony of the Holy Spirit that gives life to the Bible, because many will read the Gospels and never accept salvation. Without the Spirit of Truth that testifies in our hearts, the Bible may as well be an “interesting story,” as many indeed take it to be.

Second, and to re-emphasize something I said before, this process I am describing is not designed to invite doubt. Early in my new life, I was told “Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts.” Some of you may have heard this one before as well :) This got me through several challenging times when I was attempting to grasp a lot of new concepts at once. The reason one has doubts is very often because of emotional, not just spiritual, reasons. The question I am asking here is not, “Do I believe this doctrine?” I accept it as a fact that I believe the doctrine I am examining. If I am tempted to doubt the truth of the doctrine, I deny the temptation immediately. I believe my beliefs. What I am looking at is this: “I *accept* that I believe the doctrine. I accept the words of Scripture as true, and that I have a proper understanding of the Bible’s teachings. But, why is it a fact that I accept this doctrine? What is it that led me to accept it, and what is it that maintains me in this state of belief?”

It can be a subtle line, but it is the most important concept I want to express in this study, and without this understanding the practical applications will be useless.

Those who have studied with the CSDA Church for a time, and gone away, I think a part of the problem is that they accepted a lot of doctrines without this kind of examination process, just because they trusted that “the teachers know what they are talking about.” Because this was their only reason, and they did not have an experiential faith, they were vulnerable to all manner of temptation. Again, it is not wrong to accept the words of the messengers on doctrines – but like the concept of forgiveness... this is only the first step, not the goal. Forgiveness is not salvation, it is the means of receiving atonement. Accepting true doctrine from a genuine Gospel teacher is not success, it is the doorway to the journey that ends in the Seal of Yahweh.

So to describe the conclusion of this process. I believe the New Moon is a day that Yahweh has set apart for His people. I know I believe the New Moon doctrine, and I do so “without doubting.” But why? Well, I started by hearing about it from a teacher of the Word. This is the beginning of faith. I studied it

for myself and I found that the Old Testament, New Testament, and prophecies of the coming Age all instruct us to keep the New Moon sacred. This is the growth of faith. As I began to keep it and experienced its benefits for myself, I “tasted and saw” that it was a good gift, and one designed by infinite wisdom to maintain the Body in proper order; that the symbolic truths and practical activities harmonized into a perfect whole.

Now, what argument can shake me from this conviction? The testimony of a man (or demon) could never do it, because my faith is founded on a deeper level, and I can respond to those kinds of temptations with “It is written.” An apparently well-reasoned Biblical argument could never do it, because the experience of faith has demonstrated (in “reality”) that there are blessings associated with the day, and therefore my understanding of the Scriptures that are written is accurate. Does everyone see how this works?

Now, I use the New Moon because it is appropriate to this occasion, but I could really use any genuinely Christian doctrine.

Why do I believe the Victory Message? Once again, it is not a lack of faith, or an invitation to doubt, if I ask myself that question from time to time. It is the process by which I “settle” into the truth. Hear a parable... If I take a cup and I place cubes of ice into that cup, will the ice “settle” into that cup? Ice is frozen, it cannot move, therefore it cannot “settle” anywhere. If we are rigid (in a sense) in our beliefs, and we never examine our motives for belief, the depth of our beliefs, and the reasons for our faith, we are like cubes of ice. We are, and we know that we are, and we don’t move from that position. Ice can be broken.

But if that ice should melt, and move around, and even be agitated, then it can settle into the cup where it is placed.

It is better to examine our faith than to leave it unexamined and discover, perhaps too late, that we have been followers of men, rather than followers of God.

So why do I believe the Victory message? That question can strengthen my faith by reaffirming my proper reasons for accepting it. Well, I began to believe it by the testimony of a Christian. I examined it in the Word and found that it was written. Upon my acceptance of this interpretation of the Gospel, I found that I had begun to live a life free of known sin, and I began to testify the “testimony of Yahshua.” My faith is not blind, as if I were following a man. My faith is not merely intellectual, as if I had come to a conclusion based on a clinical study of the words of the Bible. My faith is experiential. It is faith that has been verified by my spirit, and in my personal experiences. I moved around on it, and finally “settled” into it.

Why do I believe that the Trinity is an incorrect paradigm for the Godhead? I heard about it from someone, I examined it, and to that point it was an intellectual belief. But when I began to really understand the implications of what it would mean if there was a “third Person” dwelling in believers, and how this picture of Elohim differed significantly from the Personality revealed in the Bible, then I settled into the doctrine of the true nature of the Godhead. Now, I believed it from the initial testimony. Again, I had no reason to doubt the messenger who gave me this knowledge. I believed it as I studied it out from the Bible, believing my beliefs and doubting my doubts. But I “settled into” that belief, when I experienced the wisdom of rejecting the Trinity doctrine for myself.

We may believe a doctrine for most of our lives... but to survive the coming time of trouble, we must settle into those beliefs that we have, and that we have had. I think that many (and I am being perfectly frank here) here at this study have beliefs and doctrines that they obtained from studying the CSDA message. They believe those things, and praise Yah for that. But they may believe it because they were told those doctrines were true. If their journey were to end there, that is not enough. There are others who accepted the testimony of various doctrines, and did some Bible studies and became convinced that the words of the CSDA teachers were correct. That is very good, so far as it goes, to confirm that we have been speaking and teaching Biblical truths. But for the believer, in light of the coming time of trouble, that is not enough.

Each of us must search our hearts, and discover our true reasons for holding the beliefs we do. I do not here invite us to doubt our beliefs, or to put Yah to the test in that way... and I apologize if my earlier wording may have invoked that idea in some. But I invite us to continue to accept our beliefs, while at the same time looking for the truth of these things in our own experiences with the Holy Spirit, so that we can settle, immovably, into the saving power that those doctrines are designed to convey.

Remember, it is not the right doctrines that will save us. It is the Person those doctrines indicate. If we look at the doctrines, even the right ones, and do not see the Person of Yahshua in them, we are not receiving any life from the inspired writings. We would be ever so close... but infinitely far away. We would be, in the words of Paul, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (2Tim 3:7) This is a New Moon... it is a day for examining ourselves, and overcoming the subtle traps of the enemy with divine simplicity.

It is a simple question to ask ourselves, "Why do I hold these beliefs." Hopefully, the answers for all of us will be simple as well. But now, what if we find we have only believed because of another's testimony. What if we find our beliefs are only intellectual, and not spiritual, or not to the level of the "heart?" Well, this is not cause for sorrow, but an invitation to come up higher. It is an opportunity to identify weaknesses that could well be exploited by the Enemy with fatal consequences, so let us find and confess any such areas of weakness.

And more importantly, let us cry out for help from the One who can actually settle us into the truth by His power. I called this study, "Help thou my unbelief," because it comes from a passage of Scripture that sounds like another one of those paradoxes. Here is the passage from which it was taken:

"And one of the multitude answered and said, 'Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.'

"And He asked his father, 'How long is it ago since this came unto him?' And he said, 'Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.'

"Yahshua said unto him, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.'

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'

“When Yahshua saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him*, ‘Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.’ And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, ‘He is dead.’ But Yahshua took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.” (Mark 9:17, 18, 21-27)

I put a “*” by that “him,” because – as a little side-note – the word for “him” there is the personal Greek pronoun *autos*, not the neutral pronoun *ekeinos* used of the Holy Spirit. It would seem that, if the Holy Spirit were a Personal Being, even the demons get more respect from the Gospel writers than they give to “Him.”

But now, looking at that passage and the words of the father, we see those stages of faith that I have been talking about. Obviously, this man did not know Yahshua personally before this incident. He is introduced as “one of the multitude,” a background figure who has previously played no part in this record of Yahshua’s ministry. Why was he even there? Well, he must somehow have heard about Yahshua from the testimony of another. He must have accepted the testimony of this individual that Yahshua’s teaching was something to see, and based on that first level of faith, he came out to see “if [He could] do anything” to help his son. In fact, he brought the son, so he clearly hoped this was indeed the case.

Upon asking for help, Yahshua replied, “All things are possible to him that believeth.” This must have convinced the father that he had come to the right place, and so his belief moved from second-hand to first-hand, for he now had a reason to trust the Healer before him. But it is then that he says his curious statement, for which he would be remembered until the end of human history, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”

Some teachers have explained this in various ways, such as, “He didn’t really believe yet,” or “He believed, but didn’t know he believed,” or “He wanted to have even more faith.” The truth is, he knew that just thinking his son “might” get better would not be enough. If, as Yahshua said, his son’s health truly depended on his faith, his faith had better be real, and genuine. The father believed based on the testimony of another, and was intellectually convinced that Yahshua could help his son. But... when faced with the question that could just as easily have been phrased, “Do you believe so much that your son will actually be healed?” then he came up against the reality: he had not experienced the outworking of this new faith yet. So then, “I believe, because I have come this far, but help me to truly believe. Help me to settle unwaveringly into my faith, because a life depends upon the quality of my belief.”

I vaguely remember a teaching we had some time ago at a camp meeting in Tennessee. We were talking about faith vs. works, and the parable was that those who have a works-based religion are in a canoe, paddling with oars against the current. The river is trying to take them to where they are supposed to go, but their works are actually impeding the progress. One in attendance of the meeting said, “Then they should stop rowing, and trust that the river will take them to the right place.” But another said, “What they should do is throw away the oars, because why keep them just to add to the weight of the boat? If they truly believe the river will carry them, they would not be keeping the oars as insurance ‘just in case’ the river begins to lead them in the wrong path.”

To throw away the oars would require true faith. Intellectual faith would say, “Stop rowing,” but because it depends on human reasoning, we keep the oars just in case. Experiential faith knows the river, and that its course is true. It does not need the oars at all.

But many are in the boat, looking at the oars and saying, “I know I should throw these oars over board, but I can’t do it! I need these, just in case things don’t work out later on.” That is quite a temptation. It certainly tests the heart. Like the father in that parable, the trial may bring tears to our eyes... but we all need to come to that point where we surrender to faith, and cast our oars overboard... where we “settle” into the beliefs that we have had all along.

It is okay to say, if we realize we have only believed things because we were told they were true, “Lord, help my unbelief.” It is okay to say, if we realize that our doctrines are only intellectual positions rather than heart-held convictions, “Lord, help my unbelief.” You look at the record, Yahshua never once condemned someone who said something like this for a lack of faith. He rebuked the Pharisees, who were *content* with authority-based doctrines (their traditions), and intellectual dogmas (their teachings to others) for their unbelief. And why? The Pharisees based their lives around the Law; it would be wrong to say, “They didn’t believe Moses.” I am sure they believed what Moses wrote to a large extent... but they did not settle into the meanings of those doctrines, and this is why they so often misinterpreted and reinterpreted the personality of Yahshua within those words. Indeed, so misinterpreted were those doctrines in their minds that when those same Doctrines made Person appeared to them, they had never seen Him before!

I encourage all of you to believe your beliefs, and doubt your doubts, and look at your beliefs critically – not skeptically, but critically. Look at them closely. Look at them in detail. Recount to yourself how you came to believe the doctrines you hold to be true. Evaluate the reasons you still believe they are true, and how you can explain them to other people. Look for the Person of Yahshua in each belief you hold, and see how accepting that doctrine, and performing that practice, makes you more like Him. Ultimately, that is the whole point. If a belief is true, it leads you to be Christ-like. If a practice is in harmony with the Law of Yahweh, the doing of it leads you to be Christ-like. But it is not enough for you to even accept my testimony that this is so. You must see it yourself. You must “taste and see” each doctrine, each as a new flavor of the Fruit of the Spirit. If you can do this, if you have been doing this, then “happy art thou” for this genuine faith. But if this has not been your experience in the doctrines of the Church, then do not fear, and do not waste any time with remorse, or casting blame, or even wondering what is “wrong” with you. These thoughts do not profit. Instead, look upward to the next rung, and see that you have not grasped it, and then say to Yahshua, “I believe, I DO believe! Help my unbelief. Help me to SETTLE into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so that I cannot be moved.”

Are there any questions as we close?

Key words, review and affirmation. Review also mentioned by Bro. Peter in his closing prayer. Do not want to accept on authority, that makes a Church into a cult. Do not want to accept on a merely intellectual level, that makes a Church into nominal Christianity. As Bro. Luke mentioned, entirely possible to become settled into the wrong things.