

Our Brothers' Keepers

Introduction

Happy Rock: Loving Father,

We praise you for the double blessings of this day. We praise you for taking us to this point in our lives that we are able to see and understand what is required of us.

In these last days, may we take hold of the power that you have made available to us in this hour. Bless us as we enter in the new moon study...guide your man servant as he lead out in this meeting we pray in the name of Yahshua we pray,

Amen.

Ruthline: Amen.

Barb: Amen.

Jody: Amen

Sheila: Amen.

Daphna: Amen.

Guerline: Amen.

Naraiel: Amen.

Zahakiel: This month I would like to deal with a topic that I call "Our Brothers' Keepers."

While this name could rightly be applied to a wide variety of subjects, what I would really like us to go over this week and month is the responsibility that we have to others by way of our work in evangelism.

A lot may be covered in this topic by simply understanding what evangelism is. The word itself means a spreading of good news. What we, as evangelists, do is share good news with others. The good news that we share, specifically, is that of the ministry of Yahshua the Messiah, both on the earth, and in the Heavenly Sanctuary at this present time.

One of the things that sets the Adventist message apart from most other forms of Christianity, in fact, is our balanced focus on both aspects of Yahshua's ministry: His earthly work, leading up to His sacrifice on our behalf, and then His Heavenly work, which began at His resurrection and continues up until His return and the visible redemption of mankind.

Much of Christendom, especially those actively seeking to discredit the Adventist message, will claim that we focus too much on the Sanctuary, citing this verse: "When Yahshua therefore had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished,' and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30) Some will say that this verse indicates a complete end to the work of Salvation, and that Yahshua, being raised up to Heaven thereafter merely "sits" on the right hand of the Father (citing Mark 16:19) until He returns for us at some point in the future.

Now, it is true that Mark 16:19 says that Yahshua "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Unfortunately, humans have a very ingrained tendency to project their own ideas unto things that are beyond them. What does it mean that Yahshua "sits" on the right hand of the Father? We need not speculate, for the Scriptures have many examples.

We may read, from one verse:

“But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.” (Mark 10:40)

And more generally, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” (Rev 3:21)

The redeemed also “sit” with the Father and Son – but nowhere do these verses indicate that this is a position of idleness, or even relaxation in the sense of a lack of action. We are told that the 144,000 “follow” the Lamb wherever He goes, indicating movement and activity. The most glorified of the redeemed, even while “sitting” with the Father and Son, also become “pillars” in the Temple, having a significant role in the divine service. (Rev 3:12) The Books of the Prophets describe the re-created society as one of activity also – tending land, producing food, participating in useful, joyful labor. Sitting by Yah implies that one is given authority – that is all it implies from a practical perspective. What we do after we are sitting in that throne is not limited by location or certainly scope.

Does everyone understand that?

Jody: Yes, I think so.

Happy Rock: Yes.

Ruthline: Yes.

Guerline: Yes.

Daphna: Yes.

Qinael: Yes.

Barb: Yes.

Naraiel: Yes.

Zahakiel: The Book of Hebrews goes into great detail about the role of the Savior as humanity’s High Priest, and far too often the significance of this ministry (which deals directly with sanctification) is ignored by the Laodicean and sin-loving masses.

In a future study, I may go into the details of what Yahshua’s Heavenly ministry means to us directly, but for the purposes of this month, I just want to point out that the fact that Yahshua continues to be active on our behalf is a part of the good news that we are called to share with others.

But how do we approach people with this information? It is clearly different from what the majority of them have learned in their churches and studies. And then, how do we react to their responses? I would like to spend some time this month looking at that topic.

The Need for Care

Zahakiel: The “good” reaction to receiving the Gospel is the generation of interest. One who hears the message of salvation will, hopefully, become interested in learning more. I recall my own first experience with Adventism... it was not perfect doctrine. It was certainly not the Victory message that the CSDA church teaches. It was plagued with errors such as Trinitarianism and the sin-repent cycle; but, it was nevertheless new light to me in my existing place of darkness.

It was obvious to me that it was light, and it was also obvious to me that the most “comfortable” thing I could do would be to suppress my curiosity, to quench the “burning” in my chest at these new concepts and words, and go back to what I was doing before. And yet, I did not run from the call I was being invited to receive.

I was baptized very shortly after that initial indoctrination... but after a year or two I fell way, because, despite the initial light, and my favorable reaction to that light, I was not educated in the Gospel, nor was I taught the pure doctrines of the Bible in the mainstream Church.

I bring this up to illustrate two things: one good, and one bad.

First, the good news is that if we are sincere in our evangelism, even if we don’t have the perfect words, (or even if we didn’t have the right doctrine, for that matter) the Spirit of Yah works with the messengers to convince those who are really willing to seek the truth. In the CSDA Church, we have received our doctrine directly from Heaven. It is that right doctrine that “kills sin in the heart,” so we should have no hesitation in confidently sharing all that we have learned from our Father. If my friends from the days of my youth, who had so many misunderstandings, were attended by the Spirit because I was sincere in my desire for truth, how much more should we not be confident in the Spirit’s attending us when we spread this good word?

Sheila: Amen!

Zahakiel: Remember, it is Yah who sends His Spirit to us, and it is the Spirit that seeks souls to save, using us as the vessels for Its light.

But second, I was baptized into the mainstream SDA church with very little evaluation, very little examination, and certainly no confirmation from that Spirit to that ecclesiastical body that I was converted. I was blessed by the light I had received. I was emotionally, even spiritually, “charged up,” because I was excited about the truth and my new resolutions to accept it completely. But this, by itself, does not constitute conversion... and I was never told this, because none who should have told me this knew it themselves.

Conversion is the death of the old self, and the new life begun within you through Yahshua Himself. The old self does not, of course, want to die, and this is why “few” find the way to life, and why “many” are baptized into churches and movements never knowing that they cannot be saved IN sin, only saved FROM sin. Because “the heart is deceitful above all things,” (Jer 17:9) meaning the unregenerate heart, Satan has a very powerful weapon to use against people who are being drawn closer to the truth.

When someone accepts a message that is false, because they are, perhaps, a little closer to Yah doctrinally, the heart experiences a powerful emotional reaction. Satan, having seen this event thousands and thousands of times before, employs the most effective technique possible at this

time – he does nothing. At least at the very beginning, he does not tempt the new “convert.” He does not strive to throw them off their new path. Instead, he lets them believe that this new doctrine must be the truth from Heaven, because it has the power to make them feel as they are feeling... and the heart, being naturally deceptive, goes along with the illusion completely.

Most if not all of us who are currently members of, or studying with, the CSDA message, have had powerful religious experiences already... and in the wrong churches. The doctrines were not such as would lead to salvation, no matter how sincerely we believed them, because the last temptations of Satan will not allow even the most sincere person who is not truly a Christian to survive spiritually. It will be very clear in the end who is serving what Master, and only those who truly follow the Lamb can be protected.

So how do we know, then, if someone who has received our message has truly been converted, or if they have just had a “religious experience” that makes them excited for a few weeks, maybe a few months, and they just fade out afterwards and become “lay-people?” Remember, the true Church is not like the popular churches where you have elders, and pastors, and a few deacons... and then everyone else.

There is no “everyone else” in the Bride of Christ, and if the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church were to suddenly swell to 10, or 100 times its current size, there would still not be a single person who could be considered “everyone else.” We are all messengers, witnesses, and evangelists. We are all priests and sub-shepherds of the Savior in Heaven. But why do we all become this? How do we distinguish the spiritually healed from the merely emotionally joyful?

There is a need for care. One of the best ways is found in a quotation from Ellen White that we have seen, and used, fairly often. Of examining subjects for baptism, she writes:

“Not one should be buried with Christ by baptism unless they are critically examined whether they have ceased to sin, whether they have fixed moral principles, whether they know what sin is, whether they have moral defilement which God abhors. Find out by close questioning if these persons are really ceasing to sin, if with David they can say, I hate sin with a perfect hatred.”
[*Manuscript Releases Volume Six*, page 165]

I hope that familiarity with this passage has not led to a lessened impact of its words or meaning. It is a paragraph to be studied prayerfully for principles, and for an examination of self, asking, “Where do I stand in relation to this teaching?”

There is a need for care, and we have learned as a Church to be wary of that “first flush” of excitement that comes with learning the message, even the pure message of the Gospel in its fullness. When the excitement of learning the truth ends, a new believer is left with the duties of sanctification, and the walk of living that new life. And I do not mean, by drawing this contrast, that the life that follows conversion is not exciting or joyful. It is indeed so but, and here is the point, only for those whose hearts are truly changed.

This is how we know. If one is excited upon learning the truth, but his or her commitment to the truth fades away when the novelty of learning “more” than that person’s previous church taught, then we know the heart was not truly changed. It may have had a powerful spiritual reaction, yes, and it may have been cleaned out from many sins, certainly... but if the Holy Spirit does not

enter into that newly cleansed heart, the demons do return, and set up residence once again. (Mat 12:43-45)

But if one is excited upon learning the truth (this is universal, after all), and after time passes and this person maintains faith, and begins to show the effects of this faith (the Fruit of the Spirit) then this is evidence of a new heart. As John wrote, the “commandments are not grievous,” nor do they become so with time, (1John 5:3) to the genuinely born-again. We certainly do not want to give premature or false baptisms, because this is devastating to someone who thinks they “got it,” when they don’t. Should an emotional reaction be mistaken for genuine faith, then when this is revealed even the initial joy becomes a curse, because it hardens the individual against a potential genuine experience in the future. It is better to wait, show them to be confirmed in the faith, and then the tempters will not have nearly as much with which to trouble them.

Are there any questions or further comments on what has been said so far?

Qinael: No.

Sheila: No.

Daphna: No.

Pastor “Chick”: None.

Happy Rock: No

Jody: No.

Ruthline: No.

Guerline: I do agree.

Barb: None here.

Zahakiel: Now, in the past, some have been impatient... and have asked, “Why don’t you baptize me now?” While we can understand the desire to enter fully into the covenant, we must be cautious, especially with the current, dispersed state of our membership. This new situation, largely the result of persecutions, offers to us a set of unique challenges not faced by the apostles and disciples in the first century following Yahshua’s resurrection.

The Messiah’s Approach to Accepters and Rejecters

Zahakiel: So we have seen the two types of reaction to the Gospel we bear. There is acceptance that leads to genuine faith, and there is that “surface” acceptance that fades out over time. There is another reaction, and that of course is rejection. This may be initial rejection of our message, in which the person will either not want to hear us at all, or listen for a while and then stop listening as soon as we say something that does not agree with what they already hold to be true.

But this can also be rejection that takes place after studying with us for a while. How do we deal with these two different kinds of rejection? This is not an unimportant point, because we, the converted, do not fail, nor do we become discouraged. Even the most potentially discouraging of situations become refining tools for us, as we press onward to the mark. But we must ask ourselves, as we are examining this month, how much responsibility we are to take for the decisions of those to whom we witness.

How did Yahshua react to those who accepted His message? And then, how did He react to those who rejected Him? By examining these things, we may learn just how the converted heart responds to these situations, and this will keep us on the right path. After all, we may say, “The

converted heart does not fail nor become discouraged,” but it is also true that a part of the process of sanctification is learning what we already are in Christ. This is another one of those apparently paradoxes of Christianity. We are declared to be something by our Father, but then we must learn what it means to be that thing... that learning (Isaiah 1:16, 17) becomes a condition of being that thing in truth, and for eternity.

Do you understand what I mean by that?

Pastor “Chick”: Yes.

Abraham: Yes.

Jody: Yes.

Barb: Yes.

Sheila: Yes.

Ruthline: Yes.

Happy Rock: Yes.

Qinael: Yes.

Guerline: Yes.

Zahakiel: So with that in mind, then, how did Yahshua deal with those who received Him? We read:

“And going on from thence, Yahshua saw other two brethren, ‘James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.” (Mat 4:21, 22)

“So when they had dined, Yahshua saith to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?’ He saith unto him, ‘Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.’ He saith unto him, ‘Feed my lambs.’” (John 21:15)

There are many other examples that could be cited, but the basic idea is clear. Those who accepted, and claimed to accept, the message of Yahshua were told 1) to follow Him, meaning not only physically, but in the pattern of their lives, and 2) they were put to work. Not all had the exact same work to do, although it always involved speaking the Gospel verbally and otherwise.

And those who rejected him?

We read of some of these:

“Then Yahshua, beholding [the man], loved him, and said unto him, ‘One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.’ And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions. And Yahshua looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!’” (Mark 10:21-23)

Yahshua used even the rejection of His message as a lesson to those who followed Him. This is not to say that He Himself was not grieved by their decision. We read of incidents such as this:

“‘He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.’ And He said, ‘Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.’ From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Yahshua unto the twelve, ‘Will ye also go away?’” (John 6:56, 65-67)

One can clearly read the sadness in that question, and though it was not a fleshly sadness (generated by personal insult at being rejected) it was sadness nonetheless for those who were surrendering their lives to the comforts of sin. The hard words He spoke were a necessary test for those who were following Him for the wrong reason, but many could not endure such a trial. The Father also shares such sentiments when His erring children refuse the cure for their condition:

“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” (Hsa 11:8)

And yet even this great sorrow does not discourage the Divine mind (in Yahweh, OR in us – 1Cor 2:16) nor cause it to deviate from the principles of its purpose. Even Yahshua, the greatest Shepherd, the greatest Keeper of those whom He was “not ashamed to call [...] brethren” (Heb 2:11) knew when a decision was final; or at least, final for that moment so that further attempts to draw them closer would only have the opposite effect.

Paul also encountered this point even with some who had already been confirmed as members of the early Church, determining “to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yahshua.” (1Cor 5:5) In other words, perhaps if this individual were to live out the sin, and see the consequences, perhaps this would trigger repentance in a way that merely piling on more verses and exhortations would not.

And this brings up an important issue, and an interesting one as well. How did Yahshua Himself deal with those who were very close to Him, among His most visible followers, yet who later turned out to be rebellious? We read of this incident at the very close of His ministry:

“When Yahshua had thus said [that whosoever received His followers also received Him], He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.’ Yahshua answered [to Peter, who had quietly asked Him about His previous statement], ‘He it is, to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it.’ And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Yahshua unto him, ‘That thou doest, do quickly.’” (John 13:21, 26, 27)

I find this to be a very interesting passage, and an aspect of the perfect Character that is not revealed in many other passages... but it is certainly vital for our understanding. The fact of the matter is, no rejection of Yahshua, His message, or His people, is a fast process, even if it seems so to the onlookers. Yah “bears long” with sinners, often drawing them close to ensure that they have access to as much light as possible... but once they make a decision to depart, despite the light and mercy they have been shown, then Yah bids them to “do quickly.”

The passage continues to explain that the other apostles did not know what Yahshua was talking about, and they would no doubt have been shocked to learn that Judas was the traitor. He was,

after all, a very respected member of their number, even being entrusted with the little group's treasury.

But despite the appearance of abruptness, Judas' sins did not fall upon him in a day. There were examples of his true character all along, such as when the woman was anointing Yahshua's feet with ointment in a way that was significant to her personally, and significant to the universe spiritually. But instead of acknowledging her gesture as one of thanksgiving, he said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Now, this might be a legitimate question to ask, for why would Yahshua, who always seemed to show such care for the unfortunate, feel comfortable accepting such a lavish gift? But the problem was not with the asking itself. The next verse tells us, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." (John 12:5, 6)

Yahshua did go on to explain, in the two verses after that, that this was a fulfillment of prophecy, and a very useful lesson that was well worth the three hundred pence, but the spirit of the one asking the question had already been revealed. When one openly rejects Yahshua, after He has borne long with them, He says to them "Go quickly." This does not mean He has ceased to care for them with an everlasting love. It does not mean He has ceased to be the loving Savior for all who will come to Him for rest. It simply means that all must be done in the best interest of the flock, and humanity in general. Corruptive influences must be removed, and what better example could be given of this principle than the Final Judgment?

Not only do the plagues fall upon unrepentant humanity "in one day," or a very short period of time (Rev 18:8) but the Judgment of Penalty, for those who come up in the second resurrection, all takes place at once before the assembled masses. The spirits have all been shown, the decisions have all been made – and approved by the redeemed during the Millennium Reign – and all that is left at that point is the passing of sentence.

The passing of the sentence is quick, just as the dismissal of Judas was quick... but this is only because the longsuffering and patient mercy of Yah had already been offered, and cast aside by the guilty.

Do you see what I mean by that?

Jody: Yes.

Qinael: Yes.

Pastor "Chick": Yes.

Abraham: Yes.

Barb: Yes.

Sheila: Yes.

Guerline: Yes.

Happy Rock: Yes.

Daphna: Yes.

Ruthline: Yes.

Zahakiel: We, who are shepherds of the flock – and each one of us has a responsibility to someone, whether it be friends, family and so on – must understand these principles, and know truly what it means to be the keepers of our brethren. It also means knowing when to close the pen against the attacks of wolves and, of course, wolves in the clothing of sheep.

Those who accept the message we bring to them, we embrace and begin to teach. And while we teach... we put them to work. There is always work to be done for the Gospel, and in this age evangelism has more forms than ever before. We can speak to others, yes, but we can also write letters, emails, post in forums, chat in virtual rooms. These are all very effective means of spreading the Gospel, because the truth of the matter is, the vast majority of the membership of the CSDA Church is the result, either directly or indirectly, of the Internet ministry!

So those who accept are taught and put into the mission field. Those who reject are not immediately cast aside; they are approached with love and meekness; and we seek to convert such ones as these as long as they are willing to hear us. But those who reject the message decidedly, whether they are new to it or have heard it for many years, we put those away from us (quickly, as Yahshua had to do) and move forward in the work.

If this seems a little “cold,” even with the example between Yahshua and Judas, it must be understood that this is a heartbreaking occurrence. The “quick” nature of the outward separation is only, again, because of the long process of separation that has already taken place. This has been the divine pattern, and it is clearly the most effective for the sake of the brethren.

Paul wrote, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” (Titus 3:10) He wrote, as we saw above, about turning over one who was rebellious to the consequences of his actions, that perhaps he may be saved in the future. Even the act of putting someone away in this manner is an act of mercy. If they have any spark of conscience left, it may be awakened by the circumstances in which they find themselves. If they have thrown away all hope of mercy and become truly condemned, at least they will not pollute others with their spirit, nor will they learn even more light for which they will have to give account.

Embracing the Covenant

Zahakiel: The Book of Hebrews reads, even after dealing with potentially unpleasant topics, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” (Hebrews 6:9)

One of the blessings of true faith, and of true love, is that it genuinely “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (1Cor 13:7 – from a passage we are encouraged to read every day) We always expect the best, from ourselves, and from others who share our covenant. In fact, as we have seen in our last couple of New Moon studies and several sermons, expecting perfection from ourselves is one of the conditions of obtaining it. It is as I said above, one of the blessed paradoxes of the Christian faith is that it becomes our duty to learn what Yah has already declared us to be.

The faith of Yahshua is an invincible faith, and the only time it can fail – ever – is if one does not actually receive it, if one does not actively embrace it. The most effective medicine in the world can do nothing against the weakest disease, if it is not received by the sufferer.

Let us, therefore, embrace the covenant, with no hesitation, with no holding back of any part of ourselves from the curative light of the Gospel. Let us resolve to be our brother’s keepers, to seek ways to serve them in the Spirit, and in any way that we genuinely can. Let us learn the

principles that Yahshua taught, by word and example, of how to deal with those who accept the message, those who reject the message, and those who rebel against the message. By diligently learning these things, we can be the most effective, and most powerful, representatives of the character of Yahshua that any generation has ever seen.

So are there any questions or comments as we close?

Pastor “Chick”: None.

Barb: No.

Qinael: No.

Abraham: “Very timely.”

Sheila: No.

Jody: No.

Daphna: No.

Happy Rock: No.

Ruthline: No.

Guerline: No.

Zahakiel: All right. I will ask Bro. Luke to offer the closing prayer.

Qinael: Our holy and loving Father,

We thank you for the responsibilities you have given to us in the gifts you have provided. We know that we do not have a ‘private faith,’ cut off from others; every aspect is one to be used with our brethren, and those we seek to bring in as our brethren.

We are thankful for this, and the responsibility it entails to reach out to others outside and within, for as long as we may do so. Yet we also know there comes a time when this is no more received. We thank you for the strength to endure these sorrows, knowing you have endured them before us, and endure them through us.

We ask your blessing on each among us, and those not among us, as we prepare for the time when all such sorrows will be passed forever. In the name of Yahshua we pray, amen.

Barb: Amen.

Ruthline: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Pastor “Chick”: Amen.

Abraham: Amen.

Jody: Amen.

Happy Rock: Amen.

Daphna: Amen.

Guerline: Amen.

Sheila: Amen.