

Religare

Introduction

Qinael: *Most holy and loving Father,*

We thank you for another miniature Day of Atonement, for your people to stand in your judgment and be refined. We thank you for the covenant we have with you and one another to joyfully and willingly endure this process, and the promise that you will lead us into all truth, cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

We ask for your Spirit to be with each here today, guiding us according to that promise.

In the name of Yahshua we pray, amen.

Pastor “Chick”: Amen.

Barb: Amen.

Guerline: Amen.

Jody: Amen.

Giselle: Amen.

Maria: Amen.

Jaime: Amen.

Peter: Amen.

Daphna: Amen.

Crystle: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Zahakiel: That is a most fitting prayer for today’s topic. Thank you all for attending. Today’s study is called *Religare*. It is a Latin word, and it is the basis from which we derive the modern English term “Religion.” Its meaning is “to tie fast,” or “to bind,” and in Religion it identifies a set of beliefs or practices that bind us to certain commitments and, uniquely in the case of the CSDA Religion, to Yahweh Himself.

It has become somewhat popular, at least in modern Evangelical Christianity, to espouse a sentiment such as, “I love Christ, but I hate religion,” indicating that they are in favor of faith and a lifestyle supposedly lived in harmony with the Scriptures, but they consider organized religion, covenant-making (and keeping) and such “outdated” concepts as Church Membership to be detrimental to God’s plan. Anyone who has read the Bible while led of the Spirit, however, can see the terrible emptiness of these words. The two places that the word “religion” appears in the Scriptures, it is presented in a positive light. Religion, rightly understood, is that link that unites humanity and divinity through the plan of salvation, and in so doing produces both faith and righteous acts that refine and purify that faith.

While yes, it is true, the modern connotations of “religion” are certainly not the best, it is certainly confusing to paint a Biblically valid concept in such a negative light. It is also true that the reason this sentiment has become so popular is because of the falsehoods being taught regarding the rejection of Yah’s Bible-based plan involving a structured, organized, orderly earthly Temple of believers.

“Religion” is, at its heart, a description of Yah’s plan for His people... but unfortunately, Satan also has a plan for the people of Yahweh. Satan also has “binding ties” with which He can ensnare the unwary. There are distractions aplenty in this world that will tempt our eyes to stray from the Redeemer and His glory, but the worst of these, the most subtle and deadly of these temptations, are when *good* things, pure and *holy* things, are used as the bait.

We will look at one of these potential lures today.

While Ellen White’s writings contain much regarding the earthly blood-family, our obligations toward it, and the limitations it must necessarily have upon our loyalties, the Scriptures are themselves powerfully equipped to demonstrate each point that we will be examining today.

The principles we are going to see today regarding the natural family can actually apply to anything that can be made an idol. Essentially, whatever holds your highest loyalty, whatever the thing is that demands your deepest dedication, that is – by definition based on the Latin root – your *religion*. It is the thing to which you have bound yourself with a tie, whether that is making money (a problem that has been with humanity from the beginning), excessive patriotism or nationalism (an alarming trend in light of relatively recent events), inordinate levels of individualism (this is different from “individuality,” which is a good thing), or any number of other possibilities.

Certainly, one’s true religion can take a great many forms, but the message of the Bible, which is both a warning and a Gospel (Good News), is that if it is anything other than Him Crucified, that life cannot be considered a success in the Eternal Record that is even now being formed. But the saints, the very elect, they are called to be victorious, and more than conquerors, and shining successes before the universe.

Are there any questions before we start speaking of specifics?

Crystle: I have none.

Guerline: No.

Qinael: No.

Barb: No.

Jody: No.

Peter: No

Daphna: No.

The Basis of The Family

Zahakiel: At the beginning of the creation of man, there was only one human being on the earth, Adam. Society began when a second human was introduced, and right at the beginning we are explicitly told the reason for this arrangement. We read, “And Yahweh Elohim said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.’ And Yahweh Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which Yahweh Elohim had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.” (Gen 2:18, 21, 22)

So here we see that society, and the family more specifically, was instituted in Eden at the specific declaration of the Most High. As such, it is an inherently *good thing*, and must be viewed in the light of

this original intention – with the greatest of respect – even as we speak of what Satan has often been able to do with it throughout the history of mankind.

Eve was created to be a suitable “help” for Adam. This did not, of course, mean that she had become his servant. Whatever work Adam had before sin, it was pleasurable and required no unpleasant effort. Laborious work was introduced only after the curse, (Gen 3:19) and as such the tasks that the first man had set before him, or which he set for himself, did not require heavy assistance. The “help” that Eve offered was in direct response to the Almighty’s observation that “it is not good that the man should be alone.” In other words, the help Eve provided was to be a suitable companion, a partner in headship of the world, an equal unlike the animals who were of an entirely different order of creation. This has ever been Yah’s purpose in the role of the wife, even after the lines of headship and submission were drawn as a necessary consequence of sin’s entrance.

Now unfortunately, no children were born before the sin of Adam and Eve. I imagine that, had Cain been born beforehand, we would have learned a great deal more about the original condition of our first parents. Whatever role children were intended to play, except for the purpose of filling the earth, we must now learn from post-fall doctrine. There is quite a bit to learn, however. We read:

“Lo, children are an heritage of Yahweh, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” (Psa 127:3-5)

The Bible almost uniformly speaks of children as a blessing. While certain *individual* sons and daughters may have been a source of grief to their parents, the siring and bearing of children was seen as a sign of Yah’s favor. In fact, so much did the Hebrew mindset value childbearing, several of the great women of the Old Testament are often seen as particularly sympathetic because they were barren, and then as particularly blessed because they were released from this great curse.

Even in New Testament times, the apostles had a word of comfort for those who were unable to have natural children, quoting from the Scriptures, “For it is written, ‘Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.’” (Gal 4:27)

Speaking of husbands, the Scriptures give us a clear description of the role the male is to take within the home, to the degree that great trouble is indicated when this role is not fulfilled:

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph 5:23, 25)

It is interesting to me that many religious cults, which claim to be closer to the ideals of the Bible than the “secular” world, run entirely into the ditch on the other side of the road. It is quite true that in many forms of “Christianity,” the roles within the marriage are either diluted to the point of ineffectiveness or outright reversed. However, in those extremist groups that swing in the other direction (there have been notable examples on the news recently) women appear to be little but possessions.

The Bible places the headship of the home on the shoulders of the husband, yes, but we see that the duties of the husband involve being a sanctifying influence on the wife, often giving himself for her with such sacrificial love as Christ has for His Church. We do not see this arrangement often at all today. The husband's role is to provide sanctification for the wife, but he does not sanctify the wife by some passive ability he gains upon becoming a husband. It takes work. It takes stepping into the authority of family priest, and in this way he, the wife, and the children are blessed.

To summarize this section so far, then, the roles are as follows, ordained in their duties by Yah Himself:

The Husband: The provider, the lawmaker, the standard and guide, giving of himself for the good of those under his care.

The Wife: The supporter, the counselor, the comforter and partner, reflecting the blessed principles of the true Christian way to all who behold the family.

The Children: The representatives of the love within the family. They are the strength and future of the home, and (under most circumstances) demonstrate the blessings of Yahweh by their very presence.

These descriptions represent the ideal; and every family that ever existed would indeed have functioned in exactly this way were it not for the influence of the fallen angels.

Are there any questions at this point?

Barb: No.

Guerline: No.

Qinael: No.

Daphna: No.

Jody: No.

Peter: No.

Crystle: No.

The Ties of The Family

Zahakiel: The family is an institution created by Yahweh, and as such – properly organized – it is THE greatest tool in the work of preparing for Heaven. Now, some may object to that characterization, and some who are Adventist may point to Ellen White's statement that the Church is the channel of truth to the world. Nevertheless, the Church itself is a communal expression of what was, and is, supposed to be represented on a personal level by the Churchgoing family.

If you look at Ephesians 5, we find that the basis of any Christian relationship is the unity between the Father and the Son by virtue of their common Spirit. The Father is the Head of Christ, just as Christ is the Head of the Church, just as the Husband is the head of the wife (and, by extension, children). The Father-Son unity is the binding power of the entire universe. The Christ-Church unity is the binding power of this planet. We actually teach that this world would have been destroyed long ago had it not been for the presence of this preserving force embodied by the Church, even as Sodom and Gomorrah would have been spared had 10 holy men have been found within its gates.

And, as the Father-Son connection is to the universe, and the Christ-Church connection to the world, so in the same way is the Husband-Wife relationship to the individual. I think that almost all of us who are currently members, and most likely all who are studying with us on a whole, come from families that are noticeably dysfunctional if not broken completely. That is nothing unusual in this generation. It is lamentable; it is a real tragedy, but it is nothing unusual. And... it is not without a cause.

Had the family remained a solid unit in history, the Churches would have been a much more influential and powerful institution for the teaching of doctrine and the refining of character. What the Church is intended to do for us generally, the family is intended to do on a much more personal and intense level. The earliest of sinful tendencies can be caught and gently dispelled in a child by godly parents, preparing them for the society of the Kingdom of Yahweh. Personal weaknesses and character deficiencies appear most commonly to those of a single household, whereas it might appear only periodically in even the most close-knit Church community. Again, the opportunities for character growth and development abound in a loving, Christian home. This was Yah's intention, that the family be the preparation school for Heaven, and the Church as an overseeing body to ensure that the families are all growing in the same direction.

As it stands, the Church has had to step in and do the "personal work" because modern families are not equipped to do so. And I use the word "modern" loosely, because even in Paul's day the Church was having issues with an expectation that it was to do the work that Yah intended to be the sphere of the blood family. We read, "If any man or woman that believeth have widows [older, female relatives], let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed." (1Tim 5:16) This is specifically about financial and living arrangements, but the principle is not a difficult one to generalize.

Almost all of Satan's "master plans" throughout history can probably be traced back to an attack on the family. Any form of addiction will ultimately take a toll on family relationships. Homosexuality and other forms of aberrant practices are destructive to the image of Yahweh that is supposed to be reflected in human love. The so-called "progressive" political views are often favorable to the viewpoint that the traditional nuclear and extended family structures are becoming obsolete, and should be replaced by something more in line with modern sensibilities (which is to say, carnal inclinations).

But despite all these things, the Church continues to see the value in Yah's original purpose of the blood family. And despite (again) the often counterproductive influences that modern families may have upon genuine faith, we have committed to taking a balanced view of our responsibilities toward our relatives in light of that original purpose.

We have seen what the roles of various family members are. Let us see what the specific responsibilities involved in being the head of a household are.

We read verses such as these:

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." (2Th 3:10) This is a general statement, signifying that each Christian ought to have a place in society that is an honorable one, not dependent upon others for their welfare (a significant term in many

countries today) and capable of providing for his own needs. But those who have a family have a greater responsibility also of providing for its members.

Of this more specific instance we read: “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1Tim 5:8)

This is from the same passage about “widows” from earlier on, and uses some very strong language. If anyone does not provide for his children (deadbeat and absentee fathers, poor moral examples) or his wife (both materially and spiritually!) he has denied the faith. He has undone any influence that his spoken testimony might have, and is worse than an “infidel,” or one who has never declared the Christian faith to begin with.

The promises of Yahweh have never declared that we shall be rich, but that we will have enough. Our giving may often be sacrificial, but then, husbands are called to give themselves for their families even as Christ gave Himself for the Church. This is the true measure of a husband. Thus, if any truly desires to be a good provider for his household, he cannot fail to be so.

This is an obligation, and a blessing.

Christ, while He often had to sacrifice familiar comforts for the sake of His ministry (as we will discuss soon) had great respect for the earthly family, to the point of including in His doctrine the following passage: “And He said unto [the Pharisees and Scribes], ‘Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, “Honour thy father and thy mother,” and, “Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death.” But ye say, “If a man shall say to his father or mother, ‘It is *Corban*,’” that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, “he shall be free.” And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.” (Mark 7:9-13)

Let me know when you have read that.

Qinael: Done.

Pastor “Chick”: Finished.

Jody: Done.

Daphna: Finished.

Crystle: Finished.

Barb: Finished.

Guerline: Finished.

Zahakiel: This is an often misunderstood passage, but what it essentially means is this: the Pharisees were technically in harmony with Moses’ teachings, and the care that children are to have for their parents. However, if a man did not wish to support his parents, he could take the money with which he would have helped them and declare it to be *Corban*, or a sacred offering. Now, whether or not he actually donated that money to the Temple later on is uncertain, but he could, nevertheless, legitimately claim to not have enough resources to assist his relatives.

Yahshua declared that to be a violation of divine principles, even though the very Temple was involved in the process. The ties of the family are indeed to be considered binding ones, and in fact, this forms a vital

part of even the final work of the Gospel Ministry. We, as Creation Seventh Day Adventists, claim to be the Elijah People, those who fulfill the second coming of Elijah, the prototype of John the Baptist who prepares the way for the coming of the Lord. We are called to restore all things to their proper alignment, to teach right doctrine, and to exemplify proper Christian practice.

One of the elements of Elijah's mission, specifically prophesied to be a part of his latter-day ministry, is this, found in the last two verses of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Mal 4:5, 6) The work of the Church is to restore the family which, in turn, will strengthen the Church through the means I have described earlier... by becoming a training-ground for the individual saint.

Are there any questions about these obligations and ties of the earthly family?

Guerline: No.

Jody: No.

Daphna: Even though my dad was not ideal the way I see it. I am glad that I knew him and he was always in my life and in the house whole that I lived in. He was married to my mom. He did however instill in me some very good principles. I feel or know that my life was better because of a father in the home.

Zahakiel: Well, certainly. There are always blessings to be found even in non-ideal circumstances.

Qinael: Actually, now that I think about it, I can relate to what Daphna is saying as well. It would seem that a present parent that provides well with a poor character is better than an absent one that has a "Christian belief."

Zahakiel: If they do provide well, they are at least partially fulfilling the obligations of the family covenant, yes. One who is absent entirely really cannot do much that is useful.

Daphna: I believe that my dad, and most dads, do love their children, but do not know how to show it properly.

Zahakiel: That is a fairly common problem, yes.

Pastor "Chick": No one loves until they are genuinely converted, and even then, discovering the deep love of YAH is a process never-ending.

Zahakiel: Ok, thank you for adding that.

Daphna: Pastor, I heard you say that my dad could not love me because he was not a Christian.

Pastor "Chick": Those who have their mind on the flesh cannot please YAH (which includes loving family members properly).

Daphna: Yes. I agree not loving me properly.

Pastor "Chick": I did not intend to derail the meeting...

Zahakiel: No, this is an important clarification.

Pastor “Chick”: But, LOVE in our language does not express what the Bible teaches about it. Maybe we can review that later.

Zahakiel: Well, I think we can mention that there are different kinds of love, and that the goal is that divine love called *agape*, which can only be experienced, as pastor wrote, by the converted heart.

Jody: There is a type that expresses familial affection that Daphna was speaking of right?

Zahakiel: Expressing affection is certainly one kind, yes.

Beauty and Bands

Zahakiel: Now, the Jewish nation says, “Israel is blessed of God, and it shall never fall.” Yet we believe, spiritually, that they fell indeed, and the promise was passed on to another. The Roman Catholic Church, which is the direct descendant of the Apostolic Movement, says, “We have been given the keys to the kingdom through the apostle Peter. We have been promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against this Church, and it shall never fall.” Yet we believe, spiritually, that it fell indeed, and the promise was passed on to another. The Protestant Churches say, “We have been called by God to be reformers. We have been given the power of the Holy Spirit, as at Pentecost, and we have seen the evils caused by the union of a Church and a state. We shall never fall.” The Seventh Day Adventists say, “We have been called out of Sunday keeping Protestantism because of their failure to advance. We have been given the Spirit of Prophecy and are never to be called Babylon. We are in the ship that will go through, and we shall never fall.”

These boasts are all founded on the concept that “Yahweh is faithful to His promises, and will never break a covenant.” This is very true – none would dispute that. Yet the boasts become idle, the faith becomes presumption, the assurance becomes pride, when we realize that the foundation of this confidence is the very mistaken idea that Yahweh is faithful to *broken* promises, and that He will abide by covenants that are *already* violated.

We read a passage that I quoted in the article The Five Towers that deals precisely with the falls described above. It is a long one, so I will post it all at once, and let me know when you have read it:

“And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

“And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of Yahweh. And I said unto them, ‘If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear.’ So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

“And Yahweh said unto me, ‘Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them.’ And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of Yahweh.

“Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. And Yahweh said unto me, ‘Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.’” (Zech 11:7-17)

Crystle: Finished.

Qinael: Done.

Jody: Done.

Barb: Finished.

Guerline: Done.

Daphna: Finished.

Pastor “Chick”: Finished.

Zahakiel: So here we have the history of Israel from its inception to its desolation. Yahweh took two staffs, Beauty and Bands, and used them to represent His covenant with Israel. He cared for them, and gave them sustenance, and placed before them shepherds to lead them through the wilderness. Unfortunately, those shepherds proved to be unfaithful, and because of this (and the principle of corporate accountability) Yah withdrew His protection – symbolized by the breaking of the first rod – and testified against them. Israel responded to this, not by repentance, but by betraying the Son who had come to confirm the covenant (see also Mat 21:33-45) for thirty pieces of silver.

When they did this, He broke the second staff also, paving the way for the ultimate fall of Israel and the coming of the “foolish shepherd,” which I would imagine signifies the Papacy that ultimately replaced the Sanhedrin as the head of the recognized “Church” after the Jewish Nation fell away.

Now, what does this have to do with the family?

Remember that from Ephesians 5, the earthly family, just like the Church, is to signify the connection between the Father and the Son. Remember that both are based upon a covenant. Both the family and the Church community were raised up by Yah to be basic social structures of human interaction, and both are to be institutions preparing the faithful for glorification.

Just like the Church, the family is subject to the blessings, promises and protection of Yahweh. But, just like the Church, it is also under obligation to abide by the particulars of the covenant.

In other words, if a family – any family, even the most worldly and ignorant of true faith – fails to abide by the roles ordained for husband, wife and children (but husband especially)... and, if it persists in this condition of rebellion, disregarding the ties of the family and the obligations thereof, it will find that Yah is under no obligation to continue to provide it with protection. When this happens, and the staffs of blessing are broken, it paves the way for the “foolish shepherd” to enter in. Then we find the order of the home entirely disrupted and a localized “papacy” of one form or another will arise.

To break that down very simply: Earlier in this study I outlined Yah’s plan for the husband, the wife and the children. Each role has blessings, and it also has obligations. This is the writing of the Covenant that

Yahweh has with each family formed in His name before witnesses (*i.e.*, the marriage ceremony). But if that family's members – in particular the husband, who is the head of the household and the most responsible – should break that covenant, Yahweh cannot continue to protect it any more than He could continue to protect Israel, and disaster will surely follow.

The staffs Yahweh chosen to represent the family members' relationship to Him (Beauty) and their relationships to one another (Bands) are well named. The obligations of the family are "beautiful bands." They are ties of great honor and loveliness, second in "Religion" (which, remember, means bindings) only to our relationship directly to the Most High.

Israel was a family. All those Churches listed above were families of spirit if not of flesh. But the lesson we gain from the passage built around these staffs is that a broken covenant is no longer a binding tie. A family that has rebelled against Yahweh, while it may still have some claims upon us by virtue of its very existence, loses all its *religious* significance, we must be careful to specify that, all its beautiful bindings, and must therefore be seen, and treated, differently than one that is spiritually intact.

Are there any questions at this point?

Daphna: No.

Guerline: No.

Jody: Are you going to go into the specifics of that?

Zahakiel: Yes.

Jody: Ok then, No. :)

Barb: No.

Taking Up The Cross

Zahakiel: As we read through the New Testament, we may come upon sentiments that apparently conflict. This is because Yahshua, who is the highest Authority, had much to say about the family beyond the passage about *Corban* that I quoted above. This is true even of a family as well-chosen as His.

There was nothing particularly "bad" about Yahshua's family. It was chosen for a reason. In fact, any of us in this generation would be thoroughly blessed to have had the upbringing enjoyed by Yahshua and His brothers; they had faithful parents who raised them in the relatively un-fragmented Church of Judaism, and in harmony with the best existing social structure of that age.

Nevertheless, even this sanctified family could not be allowed to interfere with the mission that Yah had ordained for His only-begotten Son. In addition to pure Agape, Yahshua also had the strongest of filial love toward His brothers and His parents, which we discussed briefly above. So, we need to understand that it was *in the spirit of this love*, that He said, "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? Behold, [my disciples are] my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mat 12:48-50)

In another place He said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” (Mat 10:37, 38) This is from the same voice that expressed such care for his mother Mary’s welfare even while He hung upon the cross.

Again, “And Yahshua answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.’” (Mat 10:29, 30) Notice it mentions brothers, sisters, mothers and children will be restored “an hundredfold now in this time” but not wives. I will return to the significance of this in a moment, and explain this verse in a way that I don’t think you will have ever heard it explained before.

Jody: It also doesn’t mention fathers.

Zahakiel: That is true, but that is also taken care of :) I will talk in a moment about how this applies, but before that, we need to ask ourselves, “Why?” How could these statements, which some may take to be dismissive, even offensive, be uttered with a spirit of love?

It is because without Yahshua’s ministry being successful, even those people whom He loved dearly, even these righteous, well-chosen ones of the very earthly household of Yah, even they, would have had no hope in this world. Consider the truth of this carefully. If Yahshua had let His familial love eclipse His agape love, He would have not only lost the world, but also those specific ones as well. It is because, not in spite of, but *because*, His love for His family was so great, that He was able to put aside the temporary comforts of house and home for the eternal joy He was seeking to provide for them (and us) all.

Now, how is it with us? We may not have been called to hang on a cross and endure the torments of a planet’s worth of sin for our fellow man, but we also have a part to play in the plan of salvation for all with whom we have contact.

Are we setting an example before our family members, and – let us extend it once again – our friends? Are we showing them the way to Yahshua, the way to everlasting life? It is certainly pleasant to appease those who care for us, and especially those over whom we have care. It is nice to feel appreciated... but it is infinitely better to demonstrate the necessary attributes of a saint, and this often involves sacrifice.

Never let it be said that we advocate the putting-away of family relationships. Far from it, the Elijah Mission, for which we are all responsible, is exactly the opposite! We are to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers. We are to restore families to the original ideal, to that picture provided for us in Eden, and that includes – if at all possible – our own families. We are called to be the restorer of all things, and this must surely include the two great blessings we took with us when we were turned out of Paradise: The Sabbath and The Family. When we let Agape reign, even over familial love, we disarm the demons who would seek to turn that blessing against us into one of the most subtle of curses. We can sacrifice, and because we can sacrifice, we can do what is best for those whom we love. And yet... and yet doing the best good for people is not always obvious. We must be prepared for the consequences of that knowledge.

In the very worst of cases – and this is not unlikely in this last generation – it will come to pass as Yahshua has predicted, that “a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” (Mat 10:36) When that happens, we will have no choice but to separate from, or be separated from, those who have not walked the Holiness Highway with us. It is written, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3)

We dare not force that separation, but we cannot hide from it either. Yahshua, I am sure, would have loved for the brethren of His household to be an active part of His ministry. In fact, I think we can clearly demonstrate that from the honor paid to James, His brother, when He finally (and literally!) “saw the light.” (1Cor 15:7, Mat 13:55, Acts 12:17, Gal 2:9)

If others, even those whom we love, set themselves resolutely on a path of darkness, our love cannot save them. At least, it cannot do so directly. Remember the parable of the Ten Virgins; we have oil in our lamps sufficient to light our own paths, and hopefully to show others the way to that path... but we have not been given oil enough to sustain another along the length of that path. Of one wicked city Yah said, “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver [only] their own souls by their righteousness.” (Ezek 14:14) How much more, then, in this generation when even the righteous, even those most dedicated to truth and divine knowledge “scarcely be saved?” (1Pet 4:18)

These are perilous times, and we must love our families. We must love them with every bit of dedication that our duties to them, and the promises associated with our roles within them, but we must love them with agape first and foremost, with the knowledge that we are called to greater things because we are of the brotherhood of the saints.

Speaking of which, let me return to the passage I quoted above:

“And Yahshua answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.’” (Mat 10:29, 30)

If the family of which we are a part is not willing to walk the strait and narrow path to Heaven, it is possible, even likely, that we will be led into circumstances that will cause a separation. Some may find it necessary to be set apart from lands and property, but also people: fathers, mothers, sisters, wives, children. This is not something to be desired, surely... and were it not for the claims of the ministries to which we are all called – in one capacity or another – the very idea would be unthinkable. But we are given the comfort that the people will be restored to us, the brethren, and sisters, and children. Wives are not mentioned... and why?

It is because Yahweh always replaces a broken covenant with another covenant. When Beauty and Bands were broken and Israel fell, the Church arose to guide the sheep. When the physical family violates the covenant with Yahweh, we may be drawn from it... but we are drawn to the Spiritual Family that is ready to impart upon us the blessings we should have gained from the home circle. As Jody pointed out, “fathers” are not mentioned either... but it should be obvious by virtue of the nature of the new covenant that the Father in Heaven fulfills that role. Some have said that this verse’s promises are talking about the resurrection, but that cannot be the case as it specifically says, “in this time.” It is talking about right now. In this new family, in this spiritual family, we may find comfort for our souls. We find the Father,

and also mothers, sisters and brothers (but no replacement-wives if we are already married, contrary to the claims of many fringe groups). We find that we always have a place to stay (houses and land) and all that we could require in this world.

Now, just as we would never advocate the voluntary separation of an individual from his or her family except in the most destructive of situations, so we are not, by these words, advocating a revocation of all familial responsibilities. A husband with an unbelieving wife is not to say “I have no more obligations toward you,” and then cease to support her or their children. No, indeed, the Bible says just the opposite, “for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband,” (1Cor 7:14a) – but this is only effective if “she be pleased to dwell with him” and vice versa (verses 12 and 13). Any attempts to force the situation to “work out” despite a spouse or child’s protests will only make things worse.

What we are talking about here are religious obligations, about spiritual ties.

If the Christian-Family Covenant is broken by persistent rebellion against the principles and will of the Father, the blessings, promises, and highest claims on our devotion pass on (as it does with any broken Covenant) to the inheriting party, in this case the Spiritual Family. The idea, of course, is for one to be a member of both a functioning Church AND a functioning blood family, but the wickedness of this generation makes that happy circumstance increasingly unlikely. All that we must do is pray for the discernment to know a broken covenant when we see it, whether it is on our churches, or in our personal lives.

Are there any questions at this point?

Pastor “Chick”: Have you made a list of “indicators” that might assist in refining our discernment?

Zahakiel: No, but that might be an excellent idea for a follow-up study.

I think we can do that this coming Sabbath. Actually, the signs of a broken covenant in general would be a useful thing for the group to review, I believe.

Pastor “Chick”: Amen.

Conclusion: The Claims of Blood

Zahakiel: A spiritually broken family continues to have carnal obligations upon its members, because in so doing we who maintain those responsibilities reflect the character of Yahweh. A man who breaks his covenant with Yah will have no protection from spiritual forces, and certainly no hope of salvation... yet it is rarely the case that he will be struck down immediately with a disease or act of nature. He may continue to enjoy the physical pleasures of this world for many years, because Yahweh will continue to show His care for this person until cause-and-effect calls in the reckoning. Yah continues to provide for His (former) people, physically and materially, even if they are no longer faithful to Him.

We, who are members of unfaithful families, continue to uphold our roles as best we can as husbands, wives, and children; but we do so with the knowledge that our ministry comes first, and should we indeed be called to service in a way that will separate us from the physical environment of our family members, we are willing to so serve.

The broken covenant leaves us with material obligations, but no longer spiritual ones (beyond the general work of a witness). We may (especially if we are the husbands) have secular responsibilities, but not religious ones. Simply, the family that is not a family of the Christian Covenant has lost its *religare*, its beautiful bonds. It has emotional ties, of course... who would not desire their family members to be saved? But it is the spiritual family that inherits the promises, the spiritual blessings, and the devotion "as unto the Lord." (Eph 5:22)

In particularly unpleasant circumstances, membership within a family must be "endured," particularly if we are in the submissive roles of wife or child. We would not like to think that our people are undergoing such a thing as to say that our relatives (by blood or by marriage) are merely to be "endured," but such is often the unfortunate reality. Nevertheless, we may recall the promises that we rehearsed this past Sabbath regarding the nature of peace: Peace is not something to be earned or obtained; it is a gift that we are invited to receive. And if, because of external pressures or forces, we are troubled and feel sorrow or anxiety, we are further invited to take it to the Savior in prayer, and to retain our peace in the face of warfare.

And so what of our families? Have they lost their *religare*? If so, we know what to do. The Word tells us to provide for them. The Word tells us to love them, and even to sacrifice for them, that hopefully they may be won by our example. We must be, like Christ, willing to testify against them: that those who are members of the Restored Covenant are our true brothers, and sisters, and mothers. We must be, like Christ, willing to take up our crosses and walk. We must allow none to obstruct us, even to the point of being willing to tell those whom we love (for did not Christ love His disciple Peter?) "Get thee behind me, Satan," if we see that their savor for the things of the flesh will prove to be a distraction for us. It is a hard saying, but sometimes a necessary one. And it is to be done in the spirit of love and respect for Yah's will that we have taken the time to establish in this study.

Above all, let us not give up hope and our intercessions. But, it was not until Yahshua's death and resurrection that James received the knowledge that He was the Messiah. It may not be until our families see that we are willing to give up the comfort of their presence that they realize how powerful our faith has made us. It may not be until we are willing to step out with hope and courage that they will be inspired to join us on the Holiness Highway. Blood is able to testify from the earth all the way to Heaven. (Gen 4:10, Heb 12:24) There is a reason we have been placed in our various blood families, and we must seek our true duty toward its members by the leadings of the Holy Spirit, whatsoever it may be. That endeavor is something worthy of our most fervent prayers.

Are there any last questions and comments as we close?

Pastor "Chick": While Peter was part of Christ's "inner circle," we know that YAHSHUA held the same unconditional love for those He called "vipers."

Jody: Amen

Zahakiel: Yes, thank you. Quite correct. Even the subjects of our strongest rebukes must also be the objects of our greatest love.

Pastor "Chick": Amen!

Pastor "Chick": Thank you for the excellent study. I will note that EGW gives much counsel on our proper relationship to "worldly relatives" (for those who may benefit from further study).

Zahakiel: Amen, yes. And it is a part of our duty toward them to discover what that counsel is.

Crystle: No questions or comments, but a lot to pray about.

Jody: Yes.

Zahakiel: I will be doing the follow-up this coming Sabbath, Yah willing, so we may be able to revisit some specifics at that time. It may be good to hold this concept in our thoughts for that occasion.

All right, will you offer the closing prayer, pastor?

Pastor "Chick": Before praying, I would like to suggest that anyone who has a perplexity about their own relationship with family members might stay and discuss further in a heart-work session.

Pastor "Chick": *Dear Father in Heaven,*

Thank you for leading Your people onward and upward. Thank you for bringing us to the Prophet for New Moon, just as You did in ancient Israel.

May we understand that Your teaching is "law" for the 144,000... And Your "law" is LOVE.

Thank you for the "truth as it is in YAHSHUA;" and, thank you for the truth that is deposited with the mighty movement of the 4th angel.

May our characters be shaped and formed into the Divine similitude of Christ. In the holy and blessed name of YAHSHUA, our Savior, AMEN!

Peter: Amen.

Qinael: Amen.

Barb: Amen.

Zahakiel: Amen.

Crystle: Amen.

Guerline: Amen.

Daphna: Amen.

Jody: Amen.

Abraham: AMEN, and thank you.

Jody: Yes, Thank-you.