

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *the Spirit of God, continued*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of January 20, 2007

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

This Sabbath's reading is a continuation from the previous Sabbaths.

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The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read 2 Peter chapters 1 & 2.

Commentary: Peter addresses his second canonized epistle to “those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:1). Thus, there is no inherent difference between the first Apostles and endtime disciples that obtain faith by the righteousness of Christ Jesus, but obtaining this faith does not come from continuing in sin or by making oneself the bondservant to sin. A person cannot willfully transgress the laws of God: if God did not spare angels when they sinned, and if God did not spare the ancient world of Noah's day, and if God did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah, why would any disciple believe that God will spare the disciple when he or she transgresses the laws of God?

Jesus said not to think that He came to abolish the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17), that the person who relaxes the least of the commandments contained in the Law and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, that the person who keeps the commandments and teaches others to do likewise will be called great in the kingdom (v. 19). Paul said that if an uncircumcised person keeps the precepts of the law the person's uncircumcision will be counted as circumcision (Rom 2:26).

But false teachers—those who teach lawlessness—have arisen in the Church; they rose early, causing the fellowships Paul had started to leave Paul while he yet lived (2 Tim 1:15). And not enough can be said about the harm those early false teachers did to generations of disciples.

Scripture primarily covers how a matter begins and how it ends. The four gospels address the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry and its end, with very little said about the intervening three years. Jesus said that He is the *alpha* [a] and the *omega* [w], the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13). Although implied that He also represents all of the alphabet in-between, He doesn't make that claim. His claim [the

declaratory portion of His statement] is that He is the first [the cornerstone] and the last [the capstone]. His ministry begins the Church and ends the Church. Thus, in Scripture, attention is paid to the beginning of the Church and to its end. The Church began well, and it will finish well, but during the generations between the 1st-Century CE and the 21st-Century, little is said in Scripture about these two millennia; for despite flurries of activity and domination of much of the world the Church doctrinally went awry early, and God delivered this spiritual nation into the hand of Satan for the destruction of the flesh in a manner similar to what Paul told the saints at Corinth to do with the unrepentant sinner (1 Cor 5:5), and similar to what God did to ancient Israel when He delivered that physical nation into the hand of the physical king of Babylon.

The Elijah to come who will restore all things would not be needed if the Church had not gone awry and if *the way of truth* wasn't in need of restoration.

Throughout the middle of the 20th-Century, Herbert Armstrong alienated many disciples by claiming that the true gospel hadn't been preached for 1900 years: from 31 CE until 1931 CE. His claim represents unabashed hubris, but he correctly observed that the teachings, practices, and traditions of the 4th-Century Church were not those of Christ Jesus or any of the first Apostles. Historically, evidence exists to show that from the days of Roman Emperor Hadrian on, the Church exchanged transgressing the commandments of God for a measure of physical security. The Church became comfortable in its lawlessness, with this lawlessness already evident but restrained while the Apostle Paul yet lived (2 Thess 2:7).

Consider what Paul writes in his second canonized epistle to the Thessalonians: "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath [*pneuma*] of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming" (2:7-8). These two verses cover the entire period of Christendom, from Paul's day [*already at work*] to the Second Advent [*the appearance of his coming*]. And what is again seen is the application of "beginning" and "end." For all of the period between the beginning and the end, the mystery of lawlessness has been at work, producing millions of lawless disciples covered by grace but hated by God ... yes, hated by God as Esau was hated by God (*cf.* Mal 1:3; Rom 9:6-13) but loved by his physical father Isaac (Gen 25:28) as those disciples who are physically minded cleave to the lawless Church, spurning fellowships that have not made themselves instruments of the prince of this world.

The mystery of lawlessness is not a hidden doctrine of some obscure sect. It is the principle teachings of today's visible Christian Church.

Lawlessness is sin (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness means, literally, being without "law." And the person who teaches that disciples do not have to live by the laws of God [the commandments—the *Decalogue*] teaches lawlessness, and will be denied in his or her judgment (Matt 7:21-23). So the mystery of lawlessness begins with the doctrinal position that keeping the commandments by faith is the "yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1) [what's at issue in Paul's epistle to the Galatians is physical circumcision].

In the 1st-Century CE while Paul yet lived, the teachings of Jesus were being radically overhauled by Greek converts. The antifamily message that Jesus taught [as an example, see Matt 10:34-39] was morphed into a pro-family theology, which again made blood thicker than the water of baptism. Plus, the de-emphasis of the flesh (especially the biological gender and social status of the disciple — Gal 3:28) inherent in Paul's

rhetorical question, “So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision” (Rom 2:26) removed the special status of being male and being of Hebrew descent.

A woman, uncircumcised in the flesh by nature, who kept the precepts of the law would have her uncircumcision counted as circumcision—and if counted as circumcision, then this woman had as much right to speak the words of the Father and of Christ Jesus as had an uncircumcised male who kept the precepts of the law and had his physical uncircumcision counted as spiritual circumcision. The disciple wasn't the flesh, but the new creature born of Spirit that dwelt in the tent of flesh of the old creature or man. Therefore, Christianity, as taught by Jesus and by Paul, gave to the woman born of Spirit and to the slave born of Spirit the same rights and privileges as it gave to the freeborn man. And this aspect of Jesus' and of Paul's teachings—coupled to the de-emphasis of family ties—had to be changed by Greek philosophers before “Christianity” would be widely accepted across the Greco-Roman world. These aspects were changed.

Once change started [again, it started while Paul yet lived], then making additional changes was easy; so it did not seem to be a major thing when fellowships ceased assembling together and worshiping on the Sabbath when the Emperor Hadrian banned Judaism and all Jewish practices. It seemed necessary and logical, especially if the fellowship wanted to attract additional disciples, particularly those who were influential in the community ... one error after another entered into Christian theology throughout the 2nd-Century. The mystery of lawlessness was at work, and was working hard to take the gospel about Christ Jesus to the world. But in doing all of this “good work,” the mystery of lawlessness was also poisoning future generations, transforming those who should have been vessels sculpted for honored usage into vessels of wrath that would be endured for a season.

Studying the history of the lawless Church has some small value as physical exercise has some small value to the born of Spirit disciple. But the history of the lawless Church is best seen through the shadow it casts from the heavenly realm onto this physical realm, not through the writings of early Church fathers—and this shadow is the history of physically circumcised Israel, from Joshua to Samuel. Israel's rebellion against God in the days of Samuel foreshadows spiritually circumcised Israel's rebellion against God 220 days into the seven endtime years in the same way that Israel's rebellion in the wilderness of Paran foreshadows spiritually Israel's rebellion and return to 8th-day worship.

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The reader should now read 1 Samuel chapters 4 through 7.

Commentary: The Philistines' physical return of the Ark of the Covenant is representational of Radical 16th-Century Anabaptist Reformers' rejection of the Roman Church and participation in the politics of this world, an argumentative claim that cannot be fully explored in one Sabbath's reading, but a claim that is related to the equally argumentative claim that King Solomon's reign over Israel was a type and copy of the Millennium. Thus, extending the claim without yet arguing it, the men of Kiriath-jearim who came and took the ark and brought it to the house of Abinadab for some twenty years represent Anabaptist disciples who lament after the Lord (*v.* 2), ever praying for Christ's hurried return. And in this analogy, the prince of this world was physically represented by the Philistines, and spiritually represented by the Universal

Church (Roman and Greek). Therefore, the Philistines' capture of the physical Ark of the Covenant anticipates and is the shadow and copy of the Universal Church's capture of Christendom ... every disciple is a representation of the Ark of the Covenant. The disciple's tent of flesh is the reality of the wood ark. And in every disciple's tent of flesh is the Spirit of Christ Jesus (Rom 8:9), the true Bread that came down from heaven (John 6:31-35).

In the physical Ark was the jar of manna; in the spiritual ark is the Spirit of Christ. In the physical Ark was Aaron's budded staff; in the spiritual ark is the promise of resurrection, which brings life anew to that which is dead. In the physical Ark were the two stone tablets upon which were written the Law by the finger of God; in the spiritual ark are the two tablets of flesh [the heart and the mind] upon which the Law has been inscribed by the soft Breath of God. Outside the physical Ark was the Book of Deuteronomy, placed there as a witness against Israel (Deu 31:26-27); outside the spiritual ark is the Book of Deuteronomy, placed there by God as a witness against Israel (John 5:45-47). Therefore, the Philistines' capture of the physical and visible Ark of the Covenant precedes and reveals the invisible spiritual capture of disciples by the prince of this world. In typology and typological exegesis, the visible reveals the invisible (Rom 1:20) and the physical precedes the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46). So in typology, the scriptural link between manna and Jesus is solid; the link between the commandments being inscribed on the two tablets of stone and inscribed on the heart and mind of disciples is solid; the link between Aaron's budded rod and resurrection is solid; the link between the Ark of the Covenant being under the Mercy Seat and in the Holy of Holies and disciples being covered by Grace and in the presence of God is solid. Plus, the link between the Jerusalem temple and disciples collectively being the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17) is solid, with each disciple being a living stone being hewn off-site (1 Pet 2:4-5) is solid. Christ Jesus is the cornerstone of this spiritual temple, the stone rejected by builders. He will also be the capstone [He is the first stone laid and the will be last stone set in place].

If the physical Ark of the Covenant is a copy and shadow of spiritual arks of the covenant as the physical Levitical priesthood served as a shadow and copy of the heavenly priesthood (Heb 8:5), then the capture of the physical Ark of the Covenant forms the shadow and copy of the capture of spiritual arks of the covenant—and the realization that spiritual arks have been taken captive opens up the possibility of the return of these arks from captivity in the same way that the Philistines returned the wood Ark when the hand of the Lord was heavy on the Philistines for having taken it.

Note: the Philistines had no concept of God, and thought of the Ark as the God of Israel that had destroyed the Egyptians. Likewise, the Universal Church has no concept of the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thinks of churches as being in the position of God; hence, a man within the Universal Church proclaims himself the "Vicar of Christ." But as the lifeless statute of Dagon bowed to the wood Ark, the spiritually lifeless synagogue of Satan will bow to the living arks of the covenant (Rev 3:9). Thus, what is here seen at a glance is that the Universal Church is as spiritually lifeless as the Philistines' statute of Dagon was physically lifeless.

In typology, the Genesis story of the first Adam in chapter two through four forms the copy and shadow of the story of the last Adam: the placing of the first Adam in the garden of God models the placing of the last Adam in the temple of God. The first Adam's naming of the animals represents the last Adam's calling the scribes and

Pharisees hypocrites and vipers. The creation of Eve represents the creation of the Church; the temptation of Eve represents the temptation of the Church, with the Church believing the same lie that Eve believed, that she would not die [as an aside, it was lawful for the last Adam to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, for He is God]. Being driven from the garden of God represents God delivering the Church into the hand of Satan for the destruction of the flesh as Paul instructed the saints at Corinth to do with the man guilty of being with his father's wife (1 Cor 5:5). And all of this occurs at the beginning of Christ Jesus' ministry—these two chapters [2 & 3] of the Genesis story represent the “alpha” portion of Christ. Chapter four represents the “omega” portion, which begins when the seven endtime years of tribulation begin: two sons will be *born* to the last Eve through spiritual liberation of disciples from indwelling sin and death. These two sons, like Cain and Abel—and like Esau and Jacob—are both sons of promise, but one is a murderer, his spiritual father being Satan the devil, and the other is loved by God but deceitful. Eighth-day Christendom will slay its righteous brother, leaving his brother physically dead (except for a remnant — Rev 12:17) but spiritually alive; whereas by slaying his brother, eighth-day Christendom will remain physically alive but will die spiritually. Thus, both brothers will be dead: the elder will be spiritually dead; the younger will be physically dead. Therefore, halfway through the seven endtime years, a third son will be born to the last Eve when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh. This son, represented by Seth, only has to endure to the end to be saved, to be accepted by God as Seth was accepted.

Additionally, in typology the above story or portions of the above story will be retold with greater details added time and again. The reality of the Church being delivered to the spiritual king of Babylon for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit might be saved when judgments are revealed is first seen in Adam and Eve being driven from the garden of God; it is also seen when king Nebuchadnezzar sacks Jerusalem, burns the city and the temple, and hauls all of Israel (except for the poorest of the people dwelling on the land) to Babylon as his serfs. And it is seen when the Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant.

Same story, same reality, but this same story casts many copies and shadows, as sunlight passing through water droplets casts many rainbows, each a little less intense than where light first exited the water droplets ... the splitting of invisible light into the visible spectrum does, indeed, disclose how the play and interplay of shadows that makes up Scripture work together to reveal the otherwise invisible events that occur in the heavenly realm.

Therefore, as a remnant of ancient Israel left Babylon by the decree of King Cyrus to rebuild the temple in physical Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity, a remnant of the Church left spiritual Babylon and its representative, the Universal Church, after 1200 years [325 CE to 1525 CE] to rebuild the spiritual house of God in heavenly Jerusalem. But as no sound of an iron tool shaping a stone for the temple was to be heard on the temple mount, no tear of a living stone will be heard on the heavenly temple mount as disciples are sculpted off-site into stones and vessels intended for honored usage. This sculpting can occur anywhere in this world, but it will not occur in the heavenly city while the spiritual temple is being assembled on the day of the wedding feast. The work of sculpting will already have been finished.

An assertion will here be made that the return of a remnant of Israel from Babylon to Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah foreshadows and is a copy and type of a

remnant of the Church leaving spiritual Babylon to rebuild the house of God in heavenly Jerusalem. This remnant of spiritual Israel was led by the Radical Reformers of the 16th-Century. This remnant has been historically identified as Anabaptists, but it was their non-participation in the governance of this world that signified their exit from spiritual Babylon, the single kingdom of this world over which Satan reigns as the prince of the power of the air. And when this remnant returned to civil governance as in New England when ruled by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, or in Pennsylvania when governed by the Quakers, this remnant returned to spiritual Babylon, leaving only a remnant of the remnant to continue on toward spiritual Jerusalem.

The assertion that the return of physical Israel from physical Babylon is the shadow and copy of the return of spiritual Israel from spiritual Babylon is true ... if this assertion is true (and it is), then the Philistines' return of the Ark of the Covenant foreshadows and is a type and copy of the prince of this world's return of spiritual arks of the covenant to obedience to God

Before the Philistines returned the Ark, God afflicted the Philistines. Before the Universal Church returned the spiritual arks, God afflicted the Church with the Borgias, a family of scoundrels the likes of which the world seldom sees. The boils or tumors that the Philistines suffered were no more physically painful than the Borgias were spiritually painful to the Church. So while the case that the Philistines' return of the Ark symbolizes or models that which is also represented by Israel under Ezra returning to Jerusalem cannot be convincingly proven to the person who rejects typological exegesis, enough support should now have been made to proceed:

When the prince of this world hijacked Christendom—this capture beginning in the 1st-Century when the Jesus Movement was without form or structure but existed as an energetic fog of electrons surrounding an atom's nucleus exists—the prince of this world needed to create a structure by which he could compel disobedience to God while not seeming to reject or rebel against God. The first Eve rebelled against God when she listened to the serpent, then decided for herself to determine good and evil. The last Eve rebelled by determining for herself what is good and evil, and taking upon herself the authority to determine good and evil is, itself, evil. The woman is to remain silent, learning from her husband. She [the Church] is not to speak words that are not her Husband's. But the Universal Church was never of God. It is an organization of men that began as a coming-together of Greek philosophers steeped in Platonism. So in the story of the Philistines capturing the Ark is the shadowy details of how that old Serpent, Satan the devil, convinced the last Eve to eat forbidden fruit.

And the hand of the Lord was heavy against the early Universal Church, causing many to be martyred (including Justin Martyr) as they errantly practiced lawlessness in the name of Christ Jesus.

The martyrdom of so many saints, especially during the reign of Nero, wasn't because of how righteous these saints were, but rather, occurred so that God could see if they loved their physical lives more than Him; for these saints were unwilling to openly obey God, unwilling to keep the commandments of God, unwilling to practice Sabbath observance or observe the High Sabbaths of God. These saints were unwilling to do any thing that might be perceived as "Jewish." They derided, ridiculed, spurned disciples who, by faith, clung to the traditions of the first Apostles. Therefore, because the majority of then visible Christendom was unwilling to be openly identified with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God brought open demonstration of faith to them in the

form of mass martyrdom ... Jesus said that a disciple isn't above his or her teacher, nor a servant above his or her master (Matt 10:24), that it is enough for a disciple to be like the teacher. "If they called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household" (v. 25). Hellenist converts rejected the teachings of Christ Jesus rather than be maligned as *Jews*. And the spiritual glory that should have been theirs returned to God when they denied Christ by the lawless practices.

The dead, wood Ark of the Covenant disappeared when the glory of the Lord left the temple (Ezek chap 10). It never returned: neither the Ark of the Covenant, nor the glory of God returned to the destroyed temple. Nor did the Ark return to the two temples built by decrees from representatives of the prince of this world [i.e., Cyrus, and Herod]. And without the Ark, the glory of God was not in either temple. The Holy of Holies was missing its most important element: God. But because of the veil and because only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year, the absence of God was barely noticed. Sacrifices were being offered. Showbread was being brought into the sanctuary. Tithes were being paid. The Law was being read. But once Jerusalem was taken and burned by the king of Babylon, the temple at Jerusalem was like a post-70CE synagogue in any other town. The glory of God was not in it. And the glory of God would not return until the Ark of the Covenant returned.

The glory of God wasn't in the Church once God delivered this last Eve into the hand of Satan for the destruction of the flesh, but God's absence was barely noticed as the Church dealt with emperors and despots, generals and infidels. God's absence wasn't noticed as the Church sent forth crusades to capture a Jerusalem from which God's glory departed in the days of king Nebuchadnezzar. God's absence wasn't noticed as the Church became the largest landholder in Europe, crowned emperors, and caused human princes to beg indulgences. His absence wasn't noticed when the Vatican was transformed into a brothel ... well, maybe it was noticed by the Reformers, who thought they could apply enough leverage that they could compel God to be present in Geneva, or in Bern, or in the governance of some other Swiss city. But as the Ark of the Covenant was not again seen, the glory of God has not been seen since the Church was delivered into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon.

The Ark wasn't returned when Cyrus, king of Persia, brought out the vessels of the house of God that King Nebuchadnezzar had carried away (Ezra 1:7-11). The physical Ark was no more to be found. And while speculation exists that the Ark exists in an African Coptic Church, the fact is that the Ark has disappeared. And with its disappearance, the glory of God left Israel. The covenant made at Horeb or Sinai ended in divorce (it would permanently end at Calvary). When the glory of God left Jerusalem, Israel ceased being the people of God—the nation returned to being bondservants to the prince of this world as the nation was in Egypt.

Many disciples have wondered about why no miracles; why isn't God working in the same way now as He worked in the 1st-Century? The answer is simple: the glory of God left when God delivered Israel into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon in a manner spiritually analogous to how He delivered physical Israel into the hand of the physical king of Babylon. This glory will return, though, when spiritual arks of the covenant return to the Jerusalem above and are revealed as the unclothed Body of the Son of Man.

As with the last three Sabbaths, this subject will be continued next Sabbath.

The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

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