

The following reading is offered to aid beginning fellowships. The format of this reading differs from most; the format is that of answers to frequently asked questions. These answers are given so that they can be copied and sent in e-mail correspondence without loss of characters.

## **Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of February 3, 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.*

*The format for this Sabbath reading is changed for this Sabbath only.*

### **The Second Covenant**

The writer of Hebrews says, “Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says, ‘Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their father on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people’” (Heb 8:6-10).

Note: the fault was not with the first covenant, but with the people who did not continue in it. Also note: the house of Israel and the house of Judah go to the singular house of Israel. The two physically circumcised houses become the one spiritually circumcised house.

This better covenant is not the covenant made at Horeb [Sinai], but is the unimplemented second covenant initially mediated by Moses—“These are the words of the covenant that the Lord [YHWH] commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides [in addition to] the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb” (Deu 29:1). And here begins the Second Covenant made with Israel that forms the copy and shadow of the covenant now mediated by Christ Jesus. It is not made on the day when the Lord took Israel by the hand to lead that nation out of Egypt, but made forty years later with the circumcised and uncircumcised children of “that nation.” And it is the Apostle Paul’s “law of faith” (Rom 3:27), and his “righteousness based on faith” (Rom 10:6); for the terms of this Second Covenant are not implemented until, ““And

when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I [Moses] have set before you, and you call them to mind among the nations where the Lord [YHWH] your God [Elohim] has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul [nephesh – this should be here be translated as “mind”], then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. ... And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul [nephesh], that you may live” (Deu 30:1-3, 6).

The blessing and the curse came upon Israel, but the nation did not—while in a far land—return to God and obey His voice in all He commanded on this day mere weeks before Israel crossed the Jordan under the command of Joshua. Rather, the house of Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians and has never returned as a nation to God. The house of Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians, and only a remnant returned after seventy years, and this remnant returned to fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 29:10; Dan 9:1-2). So Israel did not return to God and did not return to Judea with circumcised hearts.

Returning to God while in a far land would have been an act of faith on Israel’s part. The Apostle Paul writes, “What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who had pursued a law that would have led to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:30-32).

The law that would have led to Israel’s justification is the Second Covenant as first mediated by Moses. Upon demonstrated obedience by faith, Israel would have received circumcised hearts and minds. A better promise added when this law’s mediator became Christ Jesus is circumcised hearts and minds [a euphemistic expression for the equally euphemistic expression of writing the law on hearts and minds] are received before demonstrated obedience although obedience is still expected; for under this Second Covenant, Israel is to “obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law [i.e., Deuteronomy], when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul [nephesh]” (Deu 30:10) ... in Deuteronomy are the ten commandments, with the Sabbath commandment having emphasis placed on the liberation of Israel from bondage rather than on the seven days of creation [cf. Deu 5:15; Exod 20:11]. The Second Covenant as mediated by Christ is about liberation from sin and death.

Thus, the natural Israelite who by faith has returned to obedience to God and who now professes that Jesus is Lord and believes in his [or her] heart that the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9) stands on the same theological ground as the “Christian” who by faith keeps the precepts of the law (Rom 2:26) and has his [or her] uncircumcision counted as circumcision [cf. Rom 10:6-8; Deu 30:11-14]. Both will keep the Sabbath. Both will be under the Second Covenant.

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What is meant by Grace?

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace” (Rom 6:14), but what did he mean by using the Greek word (in Roman characters) “charin/charis,” translated as grace? And how did he perceive the modern tension that has developed between the concepts that grace is sufficient to cover any sin, and that grace does not free disciples from their responsibility to behave rightly by keeping the precepts of the law?

The tension between the two opposed concepts of grace comes from not understanding what it means to be born of Spirit.

In Luke’s gospel, Jesus is twice asked what a person must do to inherit everlasting life (cf. Luke 10:25; 18:18)—asking about what is required to “inherit” implies the person knows that he or she does not then possess eternal life. In fact, the concept of a person being physically born with eternal life is contrary to Scripture (an immortal soul is eternal life). Everlasting life is the gift of God (Rom 6:23), given when the person is born of Spirit and thus has life in the spiritual or heavenly realm. Prior to being born of Spirit, the person only has the life given to the first Adam, this life making the person a breathing creature, a nephesh, like other nephesh that are the beasts of the field. Solomon writes, “I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all returns” (Eccl 3:18-20). It is vanity to believe that humankind, prior to being born of Spirit, have lives that differ from the lives of beasts. It is also not biblical.

Birth from the womb is birth by water (John 3:5-6). Receiving the Holy Spirit is birth by Spirit; for as the first Adam became a nephesh when the Lord breathed into his nostrils, the last Adam [of whom the first Adam was a type – Rom 5:14] became a life-giving spirit when the man Jesus fulfilled all righteous (Matt 3:15) by being baptized and rising from this watery grave to have the Holy Spirit, the divine Breath of God [Pneuma ’Agion], descend upon Him as a dove, light, and remain, thereby giving to Jesus a second life, one apart from the flesh ... the Logos was Theos, who was with Theon from the beginning (John 1:1-2). Natural Israel knew only the Logos/Theos. The physicalness of the creation concealed Theon, the Father, from Israel. Thus, Jesus as the only Son of the Logos/Theos entered His creation (cf. John 1:14; 3:16) to reveal the existence of the Father (John 1:18; 17:5, 25-26) to endtime Israel. He did not come as the Son of the Father, but was sent by the Father. He came as His own Son, His only Son, for He could only enter His creation once as a flesh and blood human being, commissioned to fulfill all righteousness, part of which was being born of Spirit. Yes, the unfinished creative work of the Logos/Theos, finished on the Cross, was to be born of Spirit and to live without sin as the First of the firstfruits, the firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29), all sons of the Father who mature spiritually while dwelling in tents of flesh. [Jesus did not need to mature, but to fulfill all righteousness. However, all those who would be born of Spirit as firstfruits after Jesus would need to grow to spiritual maturity.]

Jesus became the Son of the Father when He received a second life from the divine Breath of the Father, made visible in the form of a dove. That which is visible reveals the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20); that which is physical precedes the spiritual things of

God (1 Cor 15:46). The first Adam, a clay corpse before the Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, serves as the visible, physical shadow and copy of the last Adam, a living human being before the Holy Spirit [again, Pneuma 'Agion, or Breath Holy – Pneuma is the Greek word most often used to represent moving air as in wind or deep breath] descended upon Him as a dove, thereby imparting a second life within the same mortal tent of flesh.

Disciples as former sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2-3), consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32) from their birth by water because of the disobedience of the first Adam, receive a second birth and a second life when they receive the Holy Spirit, the divine Breath of the Father. This second life is invisible in this world, for it is of the heavenly realm. In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is only seen when it is being used to create a physical shadow and copy of a spiritual event. Thus, the first time it is seen (when it appears as a dove) creates the model for how humankind will be born of Spirit. The next time it is seen (Acts chap 2), it creates the model for the empowerment and/or liberation of Israelites, with its appearance in the house of Cornelius forming the model for the empowerment and/or liberation of Gentiles. It is then seen when the twelve are rebaptized by Paul (Acts 19:1-7), with these twelve serving as the copy and shadow of the 144,000 Observant Jews coming out of the first half of the seven endtime years that follow Jesus wherever He leads (Rev 14:1-5). The Holy Spirit is not now seen when disciples are born of Spirit; the Holy Spirit will not be seen when disciples are liberated, at the beginning of the seven endtime years, from indwelling sin and death that has resided in the flesh (Rom 7:21-25). It will not be seen when it is poured out upon all flesh when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Father and the Son (Rev 11:15; cf. Dan 7:9-14). However, because of the importance of this fall of Babylon and giving of the kingdom to the Son of Man, which also occurs when the Holy Spirit is poured out, heavenly signs—blood, fire, columns of smoke, the sun becoming dark, the moon appearing as blood—will mark or signify that the world has been baptized in Spirit, thereby causing all of humankind to be born of Spirit.

The new creature, born of Spirit, is under no condemnation (Rom 8:1-2), and is not a bondservant of disobedience. This new creature's Father is not [however many generations removed] the first Adam, but the Most High God. However, this new creature is born into a tent of flesh that remains consigned to disobedience, a mystery that the Apostle Paul said he didn't understand (Rom 7:15). This new creature, now, is in a fight against the desires of the flesh (1 John 2:15-17), a fight that will produce spiritual maturity, but a fight in which rounds will be lost to sin. And Grace, the mercy of God, covers the new creature's lost battles. The sins of disciples will not be remembered if the disciple prevails in the end against sin.

Grace is the garment or mantle of Christ Jesus' righteousness that covers disciples as they grow to spiritual maturity. It is put on daily, just as ancient Israel offered its "daily" sacrifice at the temple. And it will not be needed or available when the Son of Man is revealed—following the liberation of disciples from indwelling sin and death at a Second Passover, every disciple will be made a spotless sacrifice to be offered to God. And some will die as their fellow saints were martyred (Rev 6:9-11). But most will rebel against God in the great falling away. This majority of disciples will return to lawlessness, thereby committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which had just liberated them from indwelling sin and death. And the point of law that this majority will break

first—before murdering their righteous brothers—is the Sabbath commandment, for the lawless one [the man of perdition] will attempt to change times and the law (Dan 7:25; cf. 2 Thess 2:3-12). The mystery of lawlessness that was already at work when Paul yet lived is evident today in the Body of Christ every Sunday.

Grace cannot be sold; it cannot be bartered; it cannot be stored up. It is the reality of natural Israel's twice daily sacrifice of a lamb. It is the putting on of Christ's righteousness; it is the mercy of the Father, who sent the Logos into the Logos' creation to die on the Cross, thereby fulfilling all righteousness. And this putting on of Christ's righteousness will end when Israel is liberated from sin and death, and Israel's obedience will end 2,300 evening and mornings [days] before the sanctuary is restored to its rightful state (Dan 8:14). The great falling away will be far greater than Christendom now imagines; for two sons struggle in the womb of the living Isaac, one hated, one loved, even though no sin is imputed to either because both are covered by Grace (cf. Rom 9:6-13). But in the hated son, the mystery of lawlessness is fully manifest.

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## Speaking the Father's Words

At the time of the Feast of Dedication, Jesus, in the temple, was asked by the Jews, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). But Jesus did not then even speak to His own disciples plainly. On the Preparation Day, the day of His crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples, “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf” (John 16:25-26). So *that day* was not the Preparation Day as His disciples then thought (v. 29); for the period when the first disciples would ask the Father directly in Jesus' name did not begin until after Calvary, until after they were born of Spirit through receipt of the divine Breath of God.

After Jesus told the crowd that followed Him a series of parables, Matthew records, “All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables; / I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world’” (Matt 13:34-35; cf. Ps 78:2-3 — note Ps 78:4. The dark things of God will not be forever hidden from Israel, but will be made known to children).

However, when Jesus' disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables, He answered, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the gathered crowd] it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (Matt 13:11-13). Yet still, Jesus spoke to His disciples in figures of speech until He was with them following His resurrection—even when His disciples were hearing Jesus' explanation of the parables, they were hearing explanations given in figures of speech.

How does a person recognize a figure of speech when the language used seems straightforward as in Jesus' explanation of His parables? Jesus told Nicodemus that being twice born (being born of water and born of Spirit, with Spirit/Pneuma being like wind

[same Greek word]) was an earthly thing; then asked Nicodemus how, if Nicodemus could not understand a metaphor, could Nicodemus understand heavenly things (John 3:12). The answer is that Nicodemus could not, and neither could anyone in Israel, including His disciples. Including the tens of thousands of theologians who have since spent their lives wrestling with the figures of speech recorded in the Gospels. Only to those to whom understanding has been given is understanding available. And this understanding is not from human intellect, but from “hearing” the quiet voice of Christ Jesus.

The “credentials” for hearing the voice of Jesus do not come from letters behind one’s name, but from simple Election. The sealed and secret visions of Daniel would be unsealed in the generic time of the end (Dan 12:4, 9; 8:17, 26). Likewise, all things must be restored. And someone or ones will be the voice of Jesus as He does the endtime work of preparing a people to harvest what was planted two millennia ago.

Many will come (and have come) claiming to have been sent by God—the test of those who have come is threefold: (1) does the “thing” they say come to pass; (2) do they teach Israel to obey God, keeping His commandments; and (3) do they give freely what they have been given, asking men for neither the tithes or offerings to which they are entitled. If they ask for money, they are to be rejected. If they teach lawlessness, they are disguised ministers of Satan. If what they say does not happen, they have not heard the voice of Jesus, but speak their own words. And if they add to Scripture, such as inserting Rome and the Roman Empire into the visions of Daniel, they are false prophets who have taken upon themselves the curse for blasphemy against the Spirit.

To understand figures of speech, a few basic concepts must be grasped. First, words do not have inherent meaning, but must be assigned meaning by every reader. If in the assignment of meaning, a word stands as a representation of a “real” thing or action, the word is said to be used mimetically (from the same root as “mimic”); the word seeks to mimic the thing or action. And this word usage is not usually employed in figures of speech. So because Jesus only spoke to His disciples in figures of speech, it should be understood that so-called “literal” meanings cannot properly be assigned to Jesus’ recorded words.

The most familiar figure of speech used is that of a metaphor, where one thing is said to be another thing. A thing that would not be recognized or understood is described in words which the audience can comprehend. The essence of typology is that this visible, physical world reveals the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20), and precede the things of God (1 Cor 15:46); thus, this creation functions as a metaphor for, not language, but of heavenly things themselves. And language now that describes the things of this world becomes metaphoric language by extension—it was this concept that Nicodemus could not understand. To Nicodemus, being born meant exiting the womb. In Jesus’ use of the earthly example, being born equates with receiving life, not exiting a womb. Thus, receiving spiritual life is a metaphoric expression for a heavenly happening that can only be comprehended by human beings through a figure of speech: “receiving spiritual life” is a figure of speech to which no mimetic thing or action can properly be assigned.

Because Jesus only spoke the Father’s words, which were not about earthly things, Jesus could only speak to His disciples in figures of speech. Assignment of “literal meanings” is, again, not possible; for Paul wrote that the “man” caught up to the third heaven heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter [or cannot utter] (2 Cor

12:4), for human languages have no words [signifiers] for things in heaven, where flesh and blood cannot go.

Words come from the modulated breath of a person. Unless inscribed, they quickly dissipate in the air, returning to being indistinct movements of atoms bouncing into one another. The words of God come from the “Breath” of God, or the Holy Spirit, which both created “what is” and renews the face of the earth (Ps 104:30). Thus, the utterances of the Father delivered through the Holy Spirit are not limited to the movement of air in sound waves—and Jesus, when speaking the words of the Father, does not merely utter sound waves in figures of speech. Rather, the words of the Father are speech-acts that cause the renewal of even the face of the earth. These speech-acts “renew” or make whole human beings. They are the miracles that Jesus performed ... since Jesus did not speak any of His words, but only the words and speech-acts of the Father, all that Jesus did become the renewing speech-acts of the Father, become the sending forth of the Breath of God.

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## The Father’s Confirmation of the Sabbaths of God

The hidden things of God are not to be revealed to human beings who have not been born of Spirit; for without being born of Spirit, no person can begin to understand these hidden things of God. Circular reasoning certainly, but the logic for why those who are not born of Spirit remain skeptics. They are unable to attach sufficient meaning to the earthly examples [i.e., metaphors] of heavenly things that they can believe.

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts to understand is that the man Jesus, having entered His creation as His son, His only (John 3:16), did not speak His words during His earthly ministry, but spoke the words of His spiritual Father, the Most High God, Theon, previously unknown to Israel. Jesus’ actual Father, Theos, was the Logos, the spokesman for the Most High. Their relationship is represented by two metaphors, the first that YHWH Elohim made humankind in the image of YHWH Elohim; “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27); so to be created in the image of YHWH Elohim, humankind is male and female, with the “female” aspect of God contained in the Logos who came as the man Jesus ... biological gender makes comprehending that which the metaphor describes difficult. In this case, biological gender, itself, forms the metaphor.

The other metaphoric relationship is disclosed by Moses being as God to Aaron (Exod 4:16), two brothers according to the flesh, with Aaron delivering the words of Moses to Israel, the two functioning as one entity in a manner analogous to how a man and his wife become one flesh through unity even though they are two.

Before now proceeding one important scriptural passage needs referenced:

Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”

But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had

healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:9-18)

Jesus spoke only the Father's words as Aaron spoke only Moses' words to Israel [with the notable exception of the golden calf incident]. Jesus did not speak His own words; thus, the utterances of the Father delivered through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit are not limited to the movement of air in sound waves. Therefore, the work being then done by the Father is the work that Jesus was visibly doing, perhaps the best assignment of meaning to verse 17. The utterances of the Father were the work that He was doing, for all things came into being through the Logos, or Word. So the miracles Jesus performed should be perceived as the speech-acts of the Father, who dwells in timelessness.

Heaven is outside the physical creation, an aspect of which is time. Thus, heaven is timeless. And without the passage of one moment to the next moment in heaven, all activity takes place within the same moment.

Heaven, itself, is represented by both the Millennium rest, and by the weekly Sabbath rest. Therefore, the Father's delivery of His speech-acts on a particular day within the created universe causes special significance to be assigned to that day; for the Father could have delivered His speech-acts on any day of the week or month or year. He does all of His work within the same unchanging moment; so He has to make a concerted effort to have His speech-acts delivered on a particular day if they are not to be delivered on any changing moment within time. In plainer speech, if the Father did not choose to figuratively deliver a sermon on the Sabbath through His speech-act of healing the invalid, He would have caused the invalid to be healed on another day, or most likely, healed without any attention being attracted by the healing.

By Jesus delivering the speech-acts of the Father on Sabbaths (seven times in the Gospels), the Father does more than connect the Sabbath to the redemptive work of God. The Father places His stamp of approval on the Sabbath, thus transferring the holiness of YHWH Elohim resting on the seventh day to the renewing work He does through the man Jesus, this work the on-going activity of giving life to that which is dead. So by healing on the Sabbath as opposed to Sunday, the Father through Jesus makes the Sabbath the day of renewal and not just rest.

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## What is Sin?

Sin is, simply, the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). The person who breaks the law in one point breaks the law (James 2:10), and is a sinner, having presented him or herself as a willing or unwilling servant to sin.

Before a disciple is born of Spirit, the person was consigned to sin (Rom 11:32) as a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2-3). The person had no choice, but was condemned to disobedience because of one man, the first Adam. And it is this concept of being consigned to disobedience that separates Western Christendom's understanding of free will from both Eastern Christendom's and Rabbinical Judaism's. In both the Greek



Church's and in Judaism's understanding of sin, it seems that a person can, through good works, prevail upon God to accept the person, thereby making Calvary an interesting but not needful phenomenon; whereas in the Roman Church, Calvary was absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sin, and the redemption of the inherently sinful nature of humankind. The Western Church held the doctrine of "total depravity," meaning that there was nothing good in human beings. So while "consigned to disobedience" and "total depravity" are not two faces of the same dogma, the concepts are closely enough linked that "original sin" is a useful term.

The antithesis to original sin is a second birth by Spirit, with this new creature born free, sin having no dominion over this new creature (cf. Rom 8:1-2; Rom 6:14). The redemptive work of God is not a regeneration of immortal souls doomed to hell, but the "renewing" of the creature through a second birth, the creation of a new life within the tent of flesh of the old self. And because sin no longer has dominion over these new creatures in their fleshly tents, human beings who have been called-out of this world, these called-out ones can be raised from the dead as the glory of the Father raised Jesus from the dead, with this resurrection from the dead to occur when judgments are revealed (1 Cor 4:5) upon Christ's return ... Jesus said those who hear His words and believe the One who sent Him do not come under judgment, but pass from death to life (John 5:24). He also said not to be surprised when some are called forth from death to life, and some are called to condemnation (vv. 28-29). For the new creature that returns to sin when sin has no dominion over this new creature spurns the mercy extended by a second birth, and thereby mocks both the Father and the Son.

To elaborate, when a person is born of Spirit, there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). The person has been set free from disobedience [the law of sin and death], and can now live by the commandments of God, which before, while consigned to disobedience, was not possible. The person was not previously able to present his or her members to God as instruments for righteousness (Rom 6:13), for sin had dominion over the person (v. 14).

The redemptive work of God is about setting free human beings who have been consigned to disobedience because their father (however many times removed) is the first Adam, but this work is not that of human beings. No person can force the Father to draw a person from the world and give to this person a second birth. And unless the Father draws the person, he or she remains consigned to disobedience. There is nothing anyone can do to extract this person from disobedience ... Martin Luther made the observation that the law seemed to exist to prove that it couldn't be kept—and it cannot be kept by those who remain consigned to disobedience. They are not free to keep it. And being redeemed from sin is all about being born of Spirit so that the liberated person can keep the commandments.

The dogma of Christianity would have the born of Spirit disciple free from having to keep the commandments of God, thereby making this disciple an unwitting bondservant of sin, whereas the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:2) sets a person free to keep the commandments of God. Christendom's prevailing dogma is the exact opposite of what the Apostle Paul taught. Disciples are not set free to transgress the law, but set free to keep the law. Obedience equals life. Disobedience is sin, which equals death. Disciples have been set free from sin and death so that they can choose life, which comes through obedience by faith to God.

The redemptive work of God is simple: Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17). He came to demonstrate that when a person is not in bondage to disobedience, the person can live by the commandments of God. And when liberated from bondage to sin, the person is liberated from death ... again, twice born means that the person has two lives, one that animates the flesh [the birth by water], and the other that is of Spirit. The mystery that the Apostle Paul did not understand (Rom 7:15) is that the flesh—because the Body of Christ is presently dead—remains in bondage to disobedience until the Second Passover. The new creature born of Spirit and domiciled in the tent of flesh is born liberated from disobedience, and free to keep the law of God. But this new creature must wrestle against the tent of flesh as if fighting its way out of a paper bag. It must strive against the indwelling law of sin and death (Rom 7:21-25), and it must ultimately prevail. Grace covers those times when this new creature loses battles to indwelling sin. But if this new creature will not or does not fight against this indwelling sin, this new creature will perish in the lake of fire.

The fight into which the infant son of God is born can be won, and has been won by Christ Jesus. A disciple gives Christ’s victory to Satan, however, when the disciple makes him or herself a willing servant of sin.

Christians would not willingly present themselves as bondservants to sin, would they? No Christian would willingly commit adultery, yes? No? How about murder? Jesus disclosed the relationship between the old written code that regulated the actions of the hand and the body of a natural Israelite, not born of Spirit, and the inner written code inscribed on tablets of flesh [the heart and the mind] of a spiritually circumcised Israelite:

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the *Gehenna* of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift. (Matt 5:21-24)

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (vv. 27-28)

From hand to heart, body to mind ... the old written code that governed the actions of the hand and the body of an Israelite moved inward to govern the desires of the heart and the thoughts of the mind—same code. Not a new set of commandments, but the same commandments inside the cup, inside the clay pot that will be made into a vessel for honored use or into a vessel of wrath. And when the inside of the cup is clean, the whole cup is clean.

The Sabbath commandment, now, does not move to another day, but remains the seventh day. However, under the inner written code, the Sabbath commandment does not regulate what the hand and body does, but the desires of the hearts and the thoughts of the mind. And if the desires of the heart are to enter into fellowship with God—to enter into His rest—then the disciple will not do those things that are not of God; for when the inside of the cup enters into God’s rest, the whole cup enters into God’s rest.

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*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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