

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 coming of Elijah.

Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of February 13, 2010

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.

So [Jesus] came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. (John 4:46-54)

1.

Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe—Jesus' initial criticism of the official pertains to endtime followers as much as it pertained to 1st-Century followers. Endtime disciples want signs ... with very few exceptions, Christians are overly superstitious. They look for "confirmation" for whatever they intend to do in a *sign*, such as a certain song being played on a local radio station, or only three of four eggs in a killdeer nest hatching, or a word spoken by an uninterested party in an action. But they

do not realize that meaning is assigned by auditors (readers) to all signs. Unless divine meaning is assigned, say, to the official's son taking a turn for the better at the hour when Jesus say, *Go; your son will live*, the lad's recovery from the fever would not be recognized as a healing. Certainly the official's servants didn't recognize the lad getting better as a divine healing until after they met up with the official.

Miracles can easily pass as coincidences. Unless the person experiencing a phenomenon assigns a miraculous meaning to the event, an intervention by God (or by angels of God) can seem like time and chance. And here is where problems enter into the Church: to not assign a miraculous occurrence to God is a denial of God, but to assign everything that happens to God transforms the Father into a hip pocket talisman whose belly is rubbed every time the person needs a parking space in the local Wal-Mart parking lot. Discernment is needed; for God will do for His sons what they cannot do for themselves.

Human maturation serves as the shadow and copy of spiritual maturation. When a disciple is first born of spirit [πνεῦμα θεοῦ]—like a human infant when first born—the disciple is virtually helpless and can do little more than bawl, with this son of God's bawling coming in the form of asking God to do everything for the disciple. And as a human parent or parents do about everything except having a bowel movement for a human infant, the Father and the Son do most everything for a spiritual son of God ... in 1973, a friend of this writer's family had their asthmatic son stay with the writer on the Oregon Coast during haying season in the Willamette Valley. The son lost a rather expensive watch. It couldn't be found. And in prayer, this writer implored the Father for help. But the watch was never found which was really the first time a prayer hadn't been immediately answered.

The above incident caused considerable reflection: what was different from previous times when similar prayers were answered? In essence, nothing was other than a developing awareness: does the Creator of this universe concern Himself with watches or parking spaces or any number of trivial items that pertain to the mundane affairs of disciples? Does the Father and the Son micro-manage the day-by-day, hour-by-hour affairs of sons of God? When a disciple is glorified as a younger sibling of Christ Jesus (Rom 8:29), will this son of God do things on his own? Or will this disciple need to figuratively ask the minister what color of automobile to buy? That has been done in the past within the former *Worldwide Church of God*—and one minister was taken back when an Alaskan disciple told the minister that he would prefer to make his own mistakes.

Has not the Father and the Son trusted disciples with the writing of Scripture?

In the Old Testament, the standard form of prophetic address was, *Thus says the Lord* [YHWH]. The prophet transcribed directly the words of *Yah*, the Logos [ὁ λόγος] who was with *the God* [τὸν θεόν] in the beginning (from John 1:1). Meaning must still be humanly assigned to these words—words do not come with little backpacks containing their meanings—but the words [the linguistic icons] themselves came directly from the Lord. However, this is not the case in the New Testament: the first disciples wrote their recollections of events; their recollections of Jesus' words, of Paul's words; their impressions; their opinions, all of which were inspired because they had the received life from above. But what they wrote was not directly received, a situation that

has caused many scholars much concern ... for example, Luke used the same rather stiff, formal grammar construction of Greek when he recorded historical events and when he recorded dialogue: Paul's speech is "not natural" as Luke records it, but is stilted. However, it must be realized that once the spirit was given, disciples as sons of God had responsibilities thrust upon them that were not given to the prophets of ancient Israel. They were not merely megaphones, transforming the otherwise unintelligible words of *Yah* into the language of the people of Israel. They were given the opportunity to speak as the spirit stirred or provoked them, meaning that they spoke and wrote their own words. They were inspired by God to speak as sons; they were not servants serving as scribes.

To illustrate the above point, consider what Peter said on the day of Pentecost following Calvary:

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the
Lord shall be saved.’

Peter got Joel wrong; for in Joel's prophecy is an additional element:

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. (2:26–32 emphasis added)

After Peter spoke, Israel was put to shame in the 1st-Century, and there were no blood and fire and columns of smoke; the sun wasn't turned to darkness and the moon to blood on that day of Pentecost. The great and awesome day of the Lord has not yet come. So what happened on Pentecost wasn't the reality about which Joel prophesied, but a visible shadow and type (the left hand enantiomer) of endtime events that remain to occur when the world is baptized into life as it was baptized into death in the days of Noah. The filling of the room where the first disciples were meeting with the sound of a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:2) formed the "visible" [as in audible or discernable] shadow and type of when the world would be baptized in spirit, with this baptism being "invisible" or indiscernible except for the signs and wonders in heaven and on earth that occurs at the same time. Likewise, the tongues of fire formed the discernable shadow of the world being baptized in fire with the coming of the new heavens and new earth.

John the Baptist forewarned Israel that Jesus would baptize with spirit and with fire (Matt 3:11). Two baptisms, not one. Israel (i.e., the Christian Church) is baptized in spirit at the Second Passover as the shadow and type of the entire world being baptized into life when the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man 1260 days later. Likewise, the firstfruits are baptized in fire when they are glorified at the Second Advent (before Christ's millennial reign begins), while the remainder of humankind is baptized in fire when the world is so baptized after the thousand years.

If the Father and Son trust disciples enough to include their opinions and recollections in Holy Writ, then the Father and Son are not treating these disciples as infants but as younger siblings of Christ Jesus. Both the Father and the Son are "trusting" (because disciples have the mind of Christ) disciples to get things "right" when setting their opinions and observations down as Holy Writ. Although a great many scholars don't trust the first disciples to get things right, God does—and scholars ultimately don't matter, for at this time few if any are truly born of God. They are to genuine disciples as a championship Black Labrador Retriever is to its owner, a relationship that conveys the admiration genuine disciples have for scholars, admiration like that a person has for a dog able to remember, find, and bring back seven thrown retrieving dummies.

Scholars are as necessary as a good retriever is useful in a duck blind.

But the skepticism of scholarship precludes obedience based on faith ... miracles are never truly miracles when scholars analyze Scripture. Daniel doesn't write in the 6th-Century BCE, but in the 2nd. The Antichrist is a 1st-Century Roman emperor. And Jesus didn't really rise from the dead: resurrection from death doesn't happen in the realm of *higher criticism*. It only happens in fiction.

That is the dilemma, the disciple being overly superstitious when an infant son of God and being a jaded skeptic when educated by society. Few Christian pastors truly believe what they proclaim to their congregations. For them, preaching is a vocation, one chosen by the person. The person hasn't been called by God to preach, but preaches so as not to labor as a "common man." The minister is a *professional*, but is seldom a Believer for how could the pastor of the German Seventh Day Baptist congregation in New Enterprise, a messianic Jew, live in the parsonage of the United Church of Christ, Loysburg, Pennsylvania, and preach on Sunday to that congregation if this person were truly a Believer? This pastor and most others preach for money. They do not work on the same terms as Paul worked; they cannot imagine working on Paul's terms. They cannot imagine preaching without ever passing a collection plate, but that is how Paul worked; that is what Paul means when he said he "preached God's gospel to you [Corinthians] free of charge" (2 Cor 11:7).

This work of *Philadelphia* is miraculous, but not in a way that a person would recognize as a miracle. It is funded as Paul's work was funded. Day by day, year by year, it continues as the American economy weakens. It is not dependent upon anything other than a calling by God to do a work for the Most High.

2.

The official whose son was healed traveled far enough that when he met his servants coming to get him, at least five hours of traveling time had occurred "yesterday" and some hours had passed that day. The official had undertaken a reasonably long journey to reach Jesus, and the official had not been put-off when Jesus said, *Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe*. The official apparently believed the words Jesus spoke but was not fully convinced until he received word that his son was recovering; i.e., received confirmation of his belief.

The official wanted Jesus to go with him to lay hands on the child or touch the child in some manner as if healing could only occur if Jesus was physically present. Nevertheless, when Jesus said, *Go; your son will live*, the official accepted Jesus' words and went on his way.

The above incident somehow distinguishes itself from the "many other signs" Jesus did "in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book [the Gospel of John]" (John 20:30). The incident is "written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (v. 31).

The incident is recorded so that we may believe—how will a few words about a man asking Jesus to heal his son cause endtime disciples to believe, especially when the problem was a fever or inflammation that may have well run its course; for if the man met his servants coming to get him after he traveled more than half a day, then he would have traveled at least as far to get to Jesus, meaning that two days or more had passed since the child became acutely ill and near the point of death.

In this age of movie special effects, of computer-generated reality, of avatars, a narrative about healing a child of a fever does not seem "special," but seems rather ordinary. In fact, the narrative is so ordinary most Christians will read over it without giving the story a second thought; yet John thought the story important enough that he included it and not one of the many other signs Jesus did *in the presence of His disciples*

in his Gospel. And it is in the phrase—“in the presence of His disciples”—that causes this story to differ from other signs, for the healing did not take place where disciples were present; so how was it that John knew that the official met his servants or that a healing that actually occurred? Obviously, the official and his household who all became Believers had to relay the outcome of the incident to Jesus and by extension to John.

Endtime disciples live in a jaded world, one not easily impressed by a child recovering from a fever, for children given antibiotics regularly recover from fevers. But to speak a word and to have something happen a day’s travel away doesn’t regularly happen. Victims of the Haitian earthquake require hands-on attention. Someone has to dig them from the rubble piles, set bones and close wounds, feed and clothe them—and the work done by human beings is little short of miraculous. But no human being can heal Haitians by simply saying, *They will live*.

However, when the glorified Lamb of God grants authority to His two witnesses in the Tribulation, these two “have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire” (Rev 11:6) by simply speaking. Their words will cause things to happen. Just as Jesus’ words caused things to happen, the words of the two witnesses will shut skies as the words of Elijah shut the skies in the days of King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1).

Elijah probably didn’t make many friends in the northern kingdom of Samaria when he called a drought into existence, the effects of which are seen historically in mass emigrations from the region, both east and west. Certainly the inhabitants of Sidon, the homeland of Ahab’s queen, Jezebel, would not have welcomed Elijah if they had known he was dwelling with the widow in Zarephath. The widow would not have welcomed him except that the Lord had “commanded” the widow to feed him (1 Kings 17:9).

When Elijah encounters the widow, he tests her:

So [Elijah] arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” And she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.” And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah. (1 King 17:10–16)

When Elijah comes to the widow, she has only a handful of flour and a little oil—she and her son are ready to die as soon as they eat a last meal. And the situation that Elijah encounters is representative of the present state of circumcised-of-heart Israel, meaning

that in the sudden appearance of the prophet Elijah coming as he did from the land of the settlers; in his pronouncing a drought on all the lands of Israel without warning; in the time he spent by the brook Cherith—all form the shadow and copy [the left hand enantiomer] of the last Elijah’s ministry from the end of the 1st-Century CE until, say, early in the 4th-Century ... the last Elijah isn’t a dubious *essential endtime man* as some sincere but woefully ignorant disciples label this teacher or that teacher of Israel. The last Elijah is Christ Jesus, who restores all things and to whom they did as they pleased (Matt 17:11–12). The disciples believed that Jesus spoke of John the Baptist when referencing *the Elijah to come*, but John didn’t restore all things. He baptized with water unto death (repentance), and he said about Jesus: “[H]e who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:11–12).

About John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel said,

Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John [Ἰωάννης]. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and *he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared*” (Luke 1:13–17 emphasis added)

The prophet Malachi records the Lord saying, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And *he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction*” (4:5–6 emphasis added).

As a review for regular readers of the Sabbath readings, Scripture is based on narrative and linguistic typology. Jesus said He would build His church on the movement of breath [aspiration] from in front of the nasal consonant [i.e., the nose] to behind the nasal as seen in the name “John” [Ἰωάν] when compared to the name “Jonah” [Ἰωνά]. This movement of breath from in front of the face to where the blowhole of a whale is located is an essential aspect of understanding the only sign Jesus gave that He was from heaven. Thus, linguistic typology addresses this movement of breath, with the name “John” representing what is physical; i.e., the shadow or left hand enantiomer. The name “Jonah” represents what is spiritual or heavenly; i.e., the reality that casts the shadow. *John* is, therefore, the natural or spiritually lifeless form of *Jonah*, when both names appear in the context of Scripture.

John and *Jonah*, together, complete a thought couplet ... if Jesus is represented by *Jonah*, then John the Baptist and Jesus function as the “temple” functions, going from being a lifeless stone building to being the Body of Christ composed of living stones (1 Pet 2:4–5). Hence there could be no man born of woman greater than John, for there is no Son of God greater than the glorified Jesus. Again, together they form one “unit” or

entity as there is only one temple, which as a physical building declined in importance as John's ministry declined until both disappeared.

John the Baptist said,

A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him." The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:27–30)

As Jesus' ministry rose, the importance of the Body of Christ increased, a situation that plays itself out in the Tribulation and Endurance: as spiritual Babylon wobbles, staggers, and falls during the 1260 day long Tribulation, the kingdom of the Son of Man crawls, walks on wobbly legs and finally stands to run during the 1260 day long Endurance, with the fall of Babylon forming the mirror image of the rise of the Son of Man. Therefore, the ministry of the two witnesses in the Tribulation is analogous to the ministry of John the Baptist, with the ministry of the Lamb and of the Remnant in the Endurance being analogous to ministry of Christ Jesus and of the Body of Christ in the 1st-Century CE.

John and Christ, together, formed one unit [$\text{I}\omega\alpha\upsilon$ & $\text{I}\omega\nu\alpha$] in the 1st-Century CE, with this unit or entity being a representation of *the Elijah to come*. The two witnesses plus the Lamb and the Remnant, together—two witnesses [$\text{I}\omega\alpha\upsilon$] + (Lamb & Remnant) [$\text{I}\omega\nu\alpha$ —will form one unit in the 21st-Century, with this entity being the reality of *the Elijah that is to come*. The last Elijah isn't simply a man, or a ministry.

Narrative typology sees the movement from physical to spiritual in Hebraic thought-couplets (two presentations of the same thought, the first physical and the second spiritual), and in dual Greek contexts that will have the same thought presented in two differing contexts having two differing meanings. It is narrative typology that's seen in the words of Malachi versus the words of the angel Gabriel:

[The Elijah to come] *will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.*

[John the Baptist] *will go before him [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.*

The highlighted portion of the two passages discloses the movement from physical (*turn the hearts of the children to their fathers*) to spiritual (*turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*), with the outcomes being striking the earth with a decree of utter destruction in the physical and preparing a people for the Lord in the spiritual. Hence, by the name "John," endtime disciples can understand what the first disciples did not: John the Baptist was merely the type or shadow of the one who would go before "Christ" in the spirit and power of Elijah. The prophet Jonah was also a shadow and type of a spiritual "Jonah," with this spiritual *Jonah* representing both the Head and Body of Christ. Therefore, as John the Baptist preceded the earthly coming of the Head, another like John the Baptist (i.e., the two witnesses) will precede the kingdom being given to

the Son of Man, with this “another one” doing in the spiritual realm what John the Baptist did in the physical realm.

So the miracles that occurred in the 1st-Century—especially the healings of bodies—form the shadow and copy of endtime miracles that will be too numerous to record, with these healings being from the “disease” of death.

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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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