

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 about separation from the Bridegroom.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of February 16, 2008

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 person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Matthew chapter 9, verses 18 through 38.

Commentary: Jesus spoke only the words of the Father during His earthly ministry—and the words of the Father established the difference between this physical world and the spiritual realm that is heaven.

Perhaps the greatest failing of the church of God has been to make the transparent spiritual kingdom of God visible in this era, where laborers are needed to gather the harvest of God to God.

Physical death in this world is no more than sleep in the heavenly realm:

- In the dark of the day, lying down to physically sleep spiritually corresponds to dying before enlightened by being born of Spirit.
- Physically awakening with the rising sun corresponds to resurrection from death through a second birth.
- The daughter of the ruler's return to life (Matt 9:24-25) spiritually corresponds to someone awakening during the night to do whatever the person has to do.

Physically and spiritually, a "day" is divided into darkness and light, with the light coming from the darkness rather than necessarily following the darkness, a use of syntax that allows for two harvests of disciples, one that corresponds to the early barley harvest of Judean hillsides and one that corresponds to later main crop wheat harvest. The darkness that ends for those who are of the early harvest continues for those who are of the main crop wheat harvest; so it isn't that "light" follows darkness for then the wheat harvest would also be in the "light," but that *light* comes to the early harvest while the darkness remains over the earth as night remains until the sun rises, with this sunrise corresponding to the return of Christ Jesus as the Messiah.

A lamp set on a hill cannot be seen during the light portion of the day; it can only be seen in the darkness of night, in the darkness of the world having twisted or turned away from God.

The Apostle Paul divided the world into three groupings: Jews, Greeks, and the church of God (1 Co 10:31), which isn't Christendom as the world knows it but a sect of Judaism like that of Sadducees and Pharisees. According to the Mishnah, a new synagogue could be formed anywhere by ten male Jews; so the ten upon whom Jesus breathed (John 20:22) were a newly formed synagogue that "with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer [προσευχῆ]" (Acts 1:14 – cf. Acts 16:13, 16). The Greek icon used by Luke and translated as "prayer" is also the word used for the regular prayer assemblies of the synagogue. The disciples of Jesus were (and functioned as) a synagogue within greater Judaism.

When Paul was on trial before Felix at Caesarea, Tertullus accused Paul of being a ringleader for "the sect [αἰρέσεως] of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). Paul answered that he was indeed of *The Way* that the Jews called a sect [αἵρεσιν] (v. 14). The Sadducees were also described as a sect [αἵρεσιν] (Acts 5:17), as were the Pharisees [αἰρέσεως] (Acts 15:5 – αἵρεσιν was used by Paul in Acts 26:5). The early Church functioned as a competing sect of Judaism within greater Judaism, and its assemblies were meetings of a newly formed synagogue.

Therefore, so there is never any mistake, the church of God that Paul references is a sect of Judaism that began with one synagogue formed by ten of the first apostles, and is not Christianity, the *Jesus Movement* that moved beyond its origins to become a viable religion that could be mass marketed to Greeks and Romans. The movement away from what Jesus taught was a movement into darkness—was the loss of spiritual life as the ruler's daughter had lost physical life. The church of God died! But as the gates of Hades could not prevail over Jesus' physical body, these gates of Hades will not prevail over His spiritual Body (Matt 16:18), which will again "breathe" when Jesus, as the last Elijah, restores all things, including life, to the church of God.

The fellowships that Paul formed were synagogues of the sect of Judaism known as "the Nazarenes," for all ten of the founding disciples were Jews from Nazareth. Jesus was identified with Nazareth even though He was born in Bethlehem. But a fellowship that is obviously not a sect of Judaism that appropriates the name *Nazarenes* misuses the name and the identification in the same way that *Christianity* misuses the name and identity of Christ Jesus.

Before Jesus raised the ruler's daughter from the dead, a woman who had a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of His garment (Matt 9:20) ... before the church of God is resurrected from death, a remnant of the church, after 1200 years of spiritual captivity [325 CE to 1525 CE], figuratively touched the fringe of Jesus' garment of Grace and was made well, the remnant coming to Jesus by the preaching of Andreas Fischer and Oswald Glaidt, not names generally known to greater Christendom or even to many Protestant historians but teachers on the fringe of Grace.

The woman was healed by her faith; two blind men were healed by their faith (Matt 9:28-30). Although Jesus sternly warned the blind men to tell no one, these two spread Jesus' fame throughout the district (v. 31). ... Why did Jesus warn the two not to tell anyone? Was it because John the Baptist was still making straight the way to God? It was not yet time for two witnesses to prophesy—authority would not be given to them (Rev 11:3) until the church of God had been restored to life at the beginning of the seven endtime years of tribulation.

It is during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation that the two witnesses testify; it is during this period when the good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved is proclaimed to all the world as a witness to all nations (Matt 24:13-14). Yet Jesus also says to the twelve that “the one who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matt 10:22); so His sending out the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (vv. 5-6) becomes a type and shadow of a work that will be done during the second half of the seven endtime years, a work that will be done after the good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved has been proclaimed to the world, a work of the end of the age when “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (v. 7).

Backing up now, the events that are described in Matthew chapter nine are now the shadow and copy of what happens leading up to the second half (the last 1260 days) of the seven endtime years ... chapter nine serves as a roadmap leading into the Tribulation.

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The reader should now read Matthew chapter 8, verse 1 through chapter 9, verse 17.

Commentary: When John’s disciples asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast, Jesus compared Himself to the Bridegroom of a wedding, and said that when the Bridegroom was taken away, His disciples would fast (Matt 9:14-15).

Jesus’ testimony was that a day would come when He would not be with His disciples. The casual assumption has been that this day occurred when He was sacrificed as the Passover Lamb of God on the 14th of Abib at Calvary. But on the dark portion of the 14th, following the eating of the Passover, Jesus told His disciples,

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you will also live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. (John 14:18-21)

The day when Jesus is not with His disciples has not yet come, for Jesus did not leave the first disciples but was seen by them and was in them (John 14:20) ... if Jesus is in His disciples, He certainly has not left His disciples.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:9-11)

As long as Christ dwells in disciples, these disciples are with the Bridegroom. The Comforter [παράκλητον] has not been sent from the Father, has not come to disciples. But the time will come at the beginning of the seven endtime years of tribulation when the Bridegroom is taken from disciples by the Father. Then disciples will fast for they will not eat of the bread of life, the manna that came down from heaven in the form of Christ Jesus, nor will they drink of living water. Rather, they will hunger and thirst, but they will not be orphans for in the name of Christ the Father will send the παράκλητος to teach disciples all things. Then, no longer will disciples tell each his brother to *Know*

the Lord (Heb 8:11), for all will know the Lord because of the Comforter having been sent. Then all will be filled with the Holy Spirit, the divine Breath of the Father, so that sin and death no longer dwells within the fleshly members of disciples.

Jesus said that new wine is not put into old wineskins, a declaration that sets forth the analogy that the Comforter does not come to disciples who already have the Holy Spirit ... all of Israel, a spiritually circumcised nation, will be liberated from indwelling sin and death when the second Passover occurs. But this nation can be compared to an old wineskin. New wine is not put into a new wineskin, so the implication is that those who already have circumcised hearts and minds will not receive the Comforter, for Christ will not leave them, the reason why the third horseman hears a voice in the midst of four living creatures say, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and *do not harm the oil and the wine*” (Rev 6:6 emphasis added). The oil and the wine are in old oil jugs and old wineskins, that have been eating the Passover on the night that Jesus was betrayed, thereby annually renewing the covenant by which Christ Jesus bears their sins (Matt 26:28).

Although some disciples have eagerly looked forward to receiving the Comforter, what they really want is to experience empowerment by the Holy Spirit so that sin and death no longer dwells in their flesh. But most disciples believe that the Comforter was given to the first disciples “to tide them over” until they received the Holy Spirit and birth from above. So to the first group—those who look to receive the Comforter—losing the day-by-day presence of Christ is not worth what would be gained by receiving any additional spirit from God. If this first group were not “old wineskins,” the group would not know to look forward to the coming of the Comforter instead of looking backwards to the 1st-Century.

There is a large number of disciples to whom the Holy Spirit has been given and who were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but who have never renewed the covenant by which sins are forgiven, meaning that they have never taken the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed. This large number fills pews in Anabaptist and Adventist services, and perhaps in other fellowships. Without taking the sacraments, though, this large number who have slain their old selves in baptismal fonts are still new wineskins awaiting being filled—and it is into these new wineskins that the new wine of the Comforter is poured so that they will know to keep the commandments when there is none to teach them; for Christ will have left them. The Father will have delivered them into the hand of the man of perdition (Dan 7:25). And they will be most of the two parts slain (Zech 13:7-8) before the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh, thus empowering the third part of humankind (v. 9).

Christ will not leave those who stay in covenant with Him through renewing this covenant annually by taking the Passover sacraments on the night that He was betrayed.

But very few disciples now take the Passover sacraments, and of the few who do, most take them unworthily thereby bringing damnation upon themselves, with this damnation becoming apparent when Israel is liberated from indwelling sin and death. This damnation will cause the loss of life, physical and possibly spiritual.

Disciples will fast beginning with the second Passover liberation of Israel because Christ will no longer be with them. For three years—a period foreshadowed by the three days and three nights that Jesus was in the grave—disciples will have the Comforter instead of the Spirit of Christ. They will hunger and thirst, but they will not be orphaned. Sin will make merchandise of them, but Sin, the third horseman, cannot harm the oil

and the wine, the already refined harvest of God. And today's disciple who will take the Passover sacraments again this year on the night that Jesus was betrayed is an old wineskin.

Sometimes those of us who labor to get additional disciples into Passover services feel as if, indeed, we are old wineskins.

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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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