

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 walking with Christ.

## **Weekly Readings**

### **For the Sabbath of February 20, 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.*

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Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." / Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "*Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.*" After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:1–16 emphasis added)

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Elsewhere Jesus said, “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).

If Jesus is the “light” of the twelve hours of “day” when a person can walk without stumbling, and if the absence of Christ equates to darkness, to sleep, and to death, then those who walk but stumble have fallen asleep. They are dead. And they are many.

The following is a long excerpt from the manuscript version of *A Philadelphia Apologetic 2010*, Chapter One:

Paul expresses the concept that those who say they are of Christ ought to walk as Jesus walked when he says,

“I urge you, then, be imitators of me” (1 Cor 4:16);

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1);

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph 5:1);

“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us” (Phil 3:17);

“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1 Thess 1:6);

“For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea” (1 Thess 2:14);

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:7–8);

“Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I [Paul] committed any offense” (Acts 25:8).

No Christian can walk as Jesus walked or imitate Paul as he imitated Jesus and attempt to bodily enter into God’s presence on the first day of the week—and that is what Sabbath observance represents, bodily entering into God’s rest, with *God’s rest* being a euphemistic expression for God’s presence. Thus, the person who attends Christian worship services on Sunday does not walk as Jesus walked, but seeks darkness rather than light regardless of what this person thinks his or her relationship with Jesus is; for John continues beyond his statement that sin is lawlessness [1 John 3:4]. He says,

You know that he [Jesus] appeared to take away sins, and in him [Jesus] there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil. (1 John 3:5–10)

Simply put, the *Christian* who makes a practice of sinning is a child of the devil regardless of what this *Christian* believes about him or herself ... inevitably this *Christian* will say that he or she is *comfortable* with his or her relationship with Christ, but the person has no relationship with Christ, the point John makes. The person’s relationship is with the devil, who appears as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), and this person will fight and kill genuine disciples in the name of Christ, sincerely believing that the person does the will of God (John 16:2), but our *Christian* will kill genuine disciples because he or she has “not known the Father nor” Christ Jesus (v. 3).

Paul writes,

For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? *Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.* For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Rom 2:25–29 emphasis added)

It's difficult to reason from Scripture with the person who, today, believes that he or she is presently under the new covenant, or that faith alone is sufficient for salvation ... this person will inevitably cite Paul's epistle to the Galatians:

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. (Gal 2:15–18)

Yet elsewhere Paul writes, "For it is not hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rom 2:13). So in Paul's discourses, the "works of the law" that justify no one do not negate disciples doing what the law requires—doing what the law requires does not justify anyone, but is simply virtue being added to faith (2 Pet 1:5).

Doing those things that the law requires (i.e., keeping the precepts of the law) becomes the prerequisite for circumcision of the heart, which in turn is the prerequisite for entrance into the household of God. But a person is not justified by merely entering into the household upon which judgment has come (1 Pet 4:17). The uncircumcised person must now add to his or her faith that has this person keeping the precepts of the law the fruit of the spirit; for the faith that let the person escape "from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Pet 1:4) must be supplemented by virtue (i.e., living without sin), with virtue being supplemented by knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love (*vv.* 5–6). Thus, faith that has not been made complete is not enough for salvation; faith merely cleanses the heart (Acts 15:9), with circumcision of the heart coming when faith is supplemented by virtue. The uncircumcised person is then inwardly a Jew, with this son of God's praise coming from God, not other men or women.

To the Roman converts, Paul wrote that "we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he [God] predestined he also called, and *those whom he called he also justified*, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (8:28–30 emphasis added).

The works of the law can justify no one for it is the Father who justifies disciples that have been predestined *to be conformed* (sculpted) *to the image of Christ Jesus* ... but not every person submits to being sculpted into the image of Christ; for Paul adds,

Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory

for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? (Rom 9:21–24)

The same lump is not now humankind as too many Christians contend, but those human beings who have been called by God, with some being called to be vessels of honor and some for dishonor; for Jesus said in the parable of the wedding feast,

But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, “Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” *For many are called, but few are chosen.* (Matt 22:11–14 emphasis added)

The man without a wedding garment did not look like he was part of the wedding party; he looked different. He did not conform to the image of the Bridegroom ... when the originally invited guests paid no attention to the king, or seized the servants of the king and treated them shamefully, the king retaliated by destroying the murderers and burning their city, an apt metaphor for what happened to Israel following the reign of King Solomon. The nation under Solomon was not found worthy of the “rest” into which the nation had entered; Israel under Solomon actively engaged in hypocrisy, professing to worship the Lord but setting up idols for Solomon’s many foreign wives. Thus, God disinherited the nation when he stripped all but one tribe from the house of David:

And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the Lord commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.” (1 Kings 11:9–13)

Instead of Israel being chosen, Jerusalem was chosen—the polis of Jerusalem replaced Israel as the promised inheritance; thus, Paul in Antioch in Pisidia, said, “And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he [the Lord] gave them [Israel] their [the seven nations’] land as an inheritance [for] about 450 years” (Acts 13:19–20) ... the translation of what Paul said into English is not well handled, for it has not been understood that Israel was reduced in size from all of Judea to the polis of Jerusalem because of Solomon’s rebellion against the Lord. Yes, when Solomon’s heart turned away from the Lord, Solomon rebelled against the Lord; for Solomon did not keep what the Lord commanded. Therefore, in the Lord giving all but one tribe of Israel to Solomon’s servant Jeroboam to rule, the Lord disinherited these tribes that would become lost in history.

The remainder of Chapter One can be found at the following URL:

[http://homerkizer.org/APA2010\\_Chapt1.pdf](http://homerkizer.org/APA2010_Chapt1.pdf)

To walk in light requires the disciple to walk as Jesus walked. To walk any other way is to stumble, fall backwards, be snared by the Adversary, and to be broken by Christ when judgments are revealed.

Is the above simple enough that everyone can understand that there are no Gentile “Christians”? If a person walks as those of “the nations” walk, the person is of *the nations* and is not of *Israel*.

The primary disease of the Egyptians that the Lord promised by statute [covenant] not to put on Israel if the nation listened diligently to the voice of the Lord and did what was right in His eyes and gave ear to His commandments and kept His statutes (Ex 15:26) was death, the “disease” that had overtaken Lazarus.

The healings that John records so that those who read His gospel may believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31) includes Jesus calling Lazarus forth from death: for the Lord, death is no more difficult to overcome than is causing a blind man to see.

When a person looks at the healing, miracles, that John records, turning water into wine (John 2:1–11) is analogous to turning physical breath (being born of water) into spiritual or divine breath (being born of spirit); for until a person receives a second breath of life, the life of a person is as bitter water (Ex 15:23). This life cannot be “held”; it quenches no thirst; it is not *living water*, which John identifies as the spirit of breath of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] (John 7:39). Thus, the healing of men begins with the first of the signs that Jesus did, with Jesus “explaining” this sign to Nicodemus:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered him, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit [πνεύματος], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit [πνεύματος] is spirit [πνεῦμα].* Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind [πνεῦμα] blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit [πνεύματος].” / Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” (John 3:1–10)

Those who teach Israel should understand what it means to be born of spirit [πνεῦμα]; for until a person is born of spirit (or said in other words, receives a second breath of life, the breath of the Father), the person is not of God but is of this world—is as water is to wine.

Once born of spirit [πνεῦμα θεοῦ], the person is to worship the Father, who is spirit [πνεῦμα] (John 4:24), in spirit [πνεύματι] and in truth, with Jesus’ words being “truth” (John 18:37). This person can be Jew or Greek or a Samaritan, a dog to outwardly circumcised Jews. The person can be pious or an adulterer as long as the person doesn’t remain a sinner; for the harvest of the earth had already begun when Jesus spoke with the woman at the well.

So when Jesus heals the official’s son, disciples see that healings don’t require the bodily presence of Jesus but come by faith and Jesus’ spoken word.

But being born of spirit requires that the person who was before a spiritual invalid walk uprightly before God; hence, John records the healing of the man at the Pool of Siloam (John 5:2–17).

The disciple who walks uprightly before God *hears Jesus' words and believes the One who sent Him and thereby passes from death to life without coming under judgment* (John 5:24). But to hear Jesus' words requires that the person believe the writings of Moses (*vv.* 46–47).

The turning of water into wine occurs before Jesus' hour comes (John 2:4); thus, in the construction of John's gospel, a person must be drawn from this world by the Father (John 6:44) before the person can come to Jesus, the living Bread of Life that has come down from heaven. And eating of Jesus' body (i.e., taking the Passover sacraments of bread and wine on the First Unleavened) causes most of those who initially follow Jesus to turn away from Him, leaving only those who have been given to Jesus by the Father.

To walk in the light, a person must be able to see the light of this world; thus, when Jesus saw a man blind from birth, He healed the man—

As he passed by, he [Jesus] saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. (John 9:1–7 emphasis added)

Like the Pharisees who had denied that they were blind, Christian pastors everywhere deny that they are blind—and because they say that they can see when they cannot, their sins remain (John 9:41).

The above is enough to ponder for one Sabbath reading. The structure of John's gospel will be discussed in a forthcoming position paper.

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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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