

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 *What Does It Take For A Wife To Submit To Her Husband?*

## **Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of February 24, 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 person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Matthew chapter 19, verse 1 through verse 12; followed by Mark chapter 10, verse 1 through verse 12.*

**Commentary:** Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of Israel's hearts ... divorce comes about because of a hardness that 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Americans value and encourage, an elevation of self, a currency of independence, an appreciation of assertiveness, the democracy of personhood. Two people marry but refuse to become one. They maintain separate checking accounts. They make purchases without consulting the other. They keep secrets, one from the other. They receive cultural affirmation for *standing up for oneself*. Yet all they demonstrate is the hardness of their hearts, encased in bodies that for both sexes repudiate softness, tenderness, dependency. They place more worth on friction than upon intimacy, on eye-appeal than upon character, on earning capability than upon loyalty. And they divorce because expectations were not met, expectations produced by novelists and screen writers, pop psychologists and financial consultants. In an age of previously unimaginable affluence, there is a poverty of character that places America among the poorest nations on earth.

America poor? Come-on, get real! Or so those who value democracy will say.

Hardness of hearts is an underappreciated attribute of disobedience, sin, which is usually thought to be the heinous crimes of hardened criminals: murder, prostitution, drug smuggling, racketeering, extortion, burglary, smash-n-grab thievery, the list wanders through the prisons of the nation, catching even Martha Stewart for insider trading. But disobedience is nothing more than determining for oneself right from wrong. It is the mindset to which humankind has been consigned (Rom 11:32), so Americans, like ancient Israelites before them, actually have little choice about whether they will keep the commandments of God: they won't, they can't, and they don't want to. Oh, they want the blessings that come with keeping the commandments—imagine if there were no stealing, no need for locks, no percentage added to prices to cover shoplifting—but they don't want to do the heavy lifting of standing tall and walking uprightly before God. They want to leave that to others so that they can enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, the feel of strange flesh, the allure of forbidden wealth, the

seduction of power. They want a world in which only they can commit and get away with sin. So does Satan.

If humankind were today released from bondage to lawlessness (sin, from 1 John 3:4), the hardness of just American hearts would cause nearly all Americans to return to sin within a day. One day. Not weeks or 220 days, but one day. How so? Who does not decide for him or herself what is right and what is wrong? In the Temptation account, the first Eve is approached by the serpent, who asks, “Did God actually say, “You [plural] shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”” (Gen 3:1). Where is the fault so far, except in the question, for the serpent knew what God told Adam before Eve was created? The asking of the question is a challenge to God, a questioning of God’s authority: *Did he really do that?* As if the one asking the question cannot believe that the other would do something so wrong.

And Eve, who had not been created when God [*Elohim* – singular in usage] gave instructions to Adam, does not know for certain what God said. Thus, she replied, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die”” (Gen 3:2-3) ... but that isn’t what God told Adam. God said nothing about touching the tree. Adam apparently added to what God said. It seems that he did not want even the possibility of Eve eating from the tree. But in adding to what God said, he set Eve up to fail.

Hardness of the heart prevents two from becoming one: the serpent told Eve, “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:4)—and right here is the lie the old serpent, Satan the devil, used to kill the Church, the last Eve. The Apostle Paul wrote that everlasting life is the gift of God, that the wages of sin is death, the antithesis of everlasting life (Rom 6:23). A lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to inherit everlasting life, for he knew that he did not automatically possess it, and Jesus asked the lawyer how he read the law (Luke 10:25-26). The lawyer replies: Love God with heart, mind, all one’s strength, and love neighbor as self (*v.* 27). Jesus said, “You have answered correctly; do this and you shall live” (*v.* 28), with the corollary of what Jesus said being that if the lawyer did not do as he had answered, he would not live. Yet, Augustine of Hippo wrote, concerning Christianity, “This faith maintains, and it must be believed: neither the soul nor the human body may suffer complete annihilation, but the impious shall rise again into everlasting punishment, and the just into life everlasting” (*On Christian Doctrine*. Book I, XXI. Robertson trans.).

Either Augustine got it wrong, or both Jesus and Paul had it wrong, which?

Augustine accurately reported the foundational construct that unpinned the faith of 4<sup>th</sup>-Century CE Christendom, but this *Christendom* was the Trojan horse faith that Greek philosophers introduced into Asia Minor in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century to win back an empire from Rome. Once the Body of Christ, crucified with Christ, died on the Cross as Jesus had died, Greek philosophers “borrowed” the Body and used it to logically extend late classical Greek thought, finding in the concept of “Grace” the solution to the dilemmas raised from Pythagoras to Plato about how can one be assured that he [or she] is good enough to escape hell. (This dilemma remains at the core of Islam and contributed to why young Arabs went to Afghanistan in the 1980s to die fighting against Soviet invaders, for only by dying in *jihad* can a Muslim be assured of entering heaven.)

The Roman Empire was maintained by standing armies, but was ideologically supported through a cult of Emperor-worship, depended upon its citizenry revering the

Emperor as God, thereby making revolt against the Emperor revolt against God. To defeat Rome required defeating the technically superior and militarily better trained legions on the battlefield—or, and here is where Greek brilliance excelled, required overturning the Emperor-worship cult, replacing one human being as God with an invisible construct as God, doing to Rome what Paul had done to philosophers on Mars Hill. And as loss of life would occur on the battlefield fighting against the Roman legions, lives would be lost overturning the Emperor-worship cult.

It remains questionable whether Greek philosophers actually sat around a table and agreed upon a philosophical battle plan for how to win the Empire away Rome. That's not what happened, for the king of Greece with whom the angel that brought the prophet Daniel the words written in the book of truth would have to fight was not a human king, but a powerful angel aligned with Satan, the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4-21). Greece won the Empire through its spiritual king affecting the mindsets of his subjects once the Body of Christ was dead. Dominion over humankind was given to this king—to its first horn, then to the third of the four horns that grow from the stump of the broken first horn, and finally to the little horn that grows from the head of the fourth horn (*cf.* Dan 2:39; 7:6; 8:12; 7:25). But the giving of dominion does not mean that there will be a peaceful transition of power; for the defining characteristic of disobedience is rebellion against authority, with this rebellion producing hard hearts so that two are not one, but remain as two even when sleeping together.

Whether consciously or inadvertently, Greek philosophers constructed a Trojan horse deity that appropriated the name Jesus Christ, but incorporated none of the “Jewishness” of Jesus, and these philosophers placed this Trojan horse where the Roman Empire was sure to pull it into itself. Once inside the walls of Roman philosophy, these Greeks left the horse as Odysseus had with his chosen men, and Christianity engaged Roman Emperor-worship directly in a showdown that would leave the Roman cult defeated and Greek philosophers in control of an empire that Greeks could not win with swords and spears. For it was not long after Constantine saw a Cross in the sky that Roman Emperors were crowned by the Bishop of Rome, such was these Greeks' victory over Rome.

There was nothing “Christian” in the *Christianity* that emerged as the logical outgrowth of late Classical thought. Scholars who study the early history of the Church find a philosophical evolution throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE. What they find is the stealing away of a rotten corpse that was no longer recognizable as the Body of Christ, for the Body disappeared from sight when disciples ceased observing the Sabbath. When the Body is resurrected to life and reappears [for the gates of hell will not prevail against the Body], it will observe the Sabbath, the sign that Israel knows that God sanctifies that nation and no other.

Augustine is said to have provided the fundamental layout for Christian culture; yet Augustine never understood even the most basic doctrines of the Body of Christ, such as spiritual birth. He did wrong by his mistress, and even more wrong by those who read his writings, which is **a shame** that has made the name Jesus Christ a hissing and a cursing in this world.

The Christendom that has descended from Augustine has not caused any hearts to soften, but only to become even harder as secular culture reacts negatively to the abuses allowed and even encouraged by the Roman Church and her “reformed” daughters. The divorce rate within visible Christendom and in secular culture is identical—neither has

its heart softened by obedience to God. And it is obedience that softens hearts, for obedience requires that a person become child-like in nature, believing and trusting parents, in this case God the Father.

When a child is unable to believe and trust parents, the child hardens inside, becomes quiet, withdrawn, determined, a survivor that is mentally scarred and physically scared. This child will no more believe and trust God than the child will believe his or her own parents; this child has probably been condemned to the lake of fire before ever being born of Spirit, such is the damage done to abused and abandoned children. The worldly success this child may or may not achieve comes at a very high price to the child's psyche.

Divorce continues a cycle of hardened hearts, begun by disobedience; i.e., sin. For divorce causes the child to be protective of his or her inner self, thereby becoming unwilling to crucify this self when born of Spirit. Instead, this grown child strives to support and continue the existence of what the Apostle Paul called *the old man* when it is this *old man* that must die on the cross. And unless this *old man* dies, the new creature born of Spirit will succumb to the disobedience of *the old man* when sin has no dominion, no authority over the new creature. This person, rather than keeping the precepts of the law, will present his or her members to sin, making what had been set free to keep the commandments the voluntary bondservant of sin; thus, condemning this person to the second death.

What Satan has no authority to harm [infant sons of God], he potentially kills through damaging the corpse before it is made spiritually alive through spiritual birth. He has authority over those human beings who have been consigned to disobedience; he has authority over those disciples who present themselves to sin as its willing bondservants; but he has no authority over the born of Spirit disciple who, by faith, keeps the precepts of the law, thereby presenting this disciple's members to God as instruments of righteousness. And all he can do to the one who by faith keeps the commandments is exclude this person from receiving the perks of his kingdom, enforcing the separation begun by the disciple who visibly rejected this world through his or her Sabbath observance ... to break the law of God in one point is to break the law (Jas 2:10), and to make oneself a lawbreaker, a sinner. It really does not matter whether a person breaks the law in six points, or in eight, for once the law is broken in one point, the person is a criminal. And the person who willingly breaks the law in one point makes him or herself a bondservant to sin.

Satan disguised as an angel of light had servants disguised as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14-15) even while the Apostle Paul lived—has anything since changed? Has Satan ceased reigning as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2-3)? He has not, has he? Has Satan “discharged” his servants disguised as ministers of righteousness? He has not, has he? His servants still appear as ministers of righteousness. They encourage disciples to keep eight or nine points of the law, but they consistently teach disciples to break the law in one point, Sabbath observance. And again, when the law is broken in one point, the person breaking the law is a sinner, either unwillingly or willingly. The one who willingly breaks the law is not covered by grace, for this person has presented his or her members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; this person liked Satan as his or her master better than this person liked Christ Jesus. (The perks in this world were better.)

Disguises are masks publicly worn. Satan publicly appears as an angel of light. His servants publicly appear as ministers of righteousness; and to make these masks function as reflections of character, Satan and his servants would have disciples keep some or most of the commandments: nine is enough for them. Only one commandment needs to be broken, that commandment being whatever seems to be the least of the commandments to the disciple (Matt 5:19). And the person who knowingly breaks one of the commandments has condemned him or herself as a hypocrite. This person's righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees (*v.* 20). This person will not enter the kingdom of heaven. So Satan can send a person into the lake of fire—power he should not have—by causing the person to knowingly break one of the commandments, such as habitually engaging in business on the Sabbath.

The disciple who returns to disobedience produces children who see disobedience to God as the “standard” for Christian behavior—and disobedience produces hardened hearts that manifest their hardness through further disobedience or unbelief. And disciples now see the history of the Christian Church in perspective, for the disciple in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE who was overcome by the mystery of lawlessness then at work but restrained produced biological and spiritual offspring who were equally overwhelmed by lawlessness.

The disciple overcome by the mystery of lawlessness, having made him or herself the bondservant to sin, will have returned to this world where his or her words were preserved through the auspices of the prince of this world; thus, the historical record of the Body of Christ “disappears” as if the Body were buried when disciples quit keeping the precepts of the law ... the Apostle Paul laid the foundation for the spiritual house of God, in which *Philadelphians* are pillars that rest on that foundation. Endtime *Philadelphians* don't rest on the work of nearly two millennia, but on Christ Jesus as laid by Paul, meaning, simply, that no work of consequence was done between Paul and the end of the age. There is nothing to study, nothing to build upon done in the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a humbling realization for those now building on the foundation Paul lay. Oh, there was a lot of activity conducted in the name of Christ Jesus throughout these many centuries, but all of this activity was built on lawlessness, even work done in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when a significant number of disciples returned to keeping the weekly Sabbath—these disciples did not, however, return to keeping the annual Sabbaths. Their work was built on lawlessness of a differing [i.e., lesser] magnitude, but to break the commandments in one point is to break the commandments; thus, to not observe the annual Sabbaths, with the weekly Sabbath listed as the first of the annual Sabbaths (Lev chap 23), is to break the Sabbath commandments.

Returning to words being preserved, Satan does not want rebellion in his kingdom. Obedience to God is rebellion against disobedience, a logic juxtaposition that seems to have escaped too many Christians. A person freed from bondage to sin is free to keep the commandments. If this person does not now keep the commandments, why did Christ Jesus free this person? What was the point? Why did not Christ just leave the person a bondservant to sin and accept the person as he or she was? That is what some biblically illiterate fellowships teach: *Come as you are!* God draws you from this world as you are, but when He draws you, He implants a second life within you that is not in bondage to disobedience. He has set this person free from bondage to disobedience even though sin and death continue to dwell in the flesh of every disciple. The “person born of Spirit”

and the fleshly body or tent in which this person dwells are separate entities that function as one unit—and here is where marriage returns to this discussion.

The woman who will not listen to and obey her husband as Christ obeyed/obeys the Father is like the fleshly body of the born-of-Spirit disciple, who is to rule over “his” body as Christ rules over His Body. Because of the hardness of hearts, caused by disobedience, Moses allowed divorce. The *Theos* who spoke from atop Mt. Sinai made a covenant with Israel that was likened to a marriage covenant, but this same *Theos* put away and divorced Israel because of this nation’s lawlessness. He came from heaven as the man Jesus (John 1:14) to die at Calvary so that He would be free to marry another. Likewise, the fleshly body of every disciple up to this point has died so that the born-of-Spirit disciple would be free to marry another, a body that is imperishable, one that is immortal, for this first body [tent of flesh] would not be ruled by the inner self, liberated from disobedience and free to keep the commandments. If however this inner self was like the first Adam and went along with “his” flesh and willfully sinned, “he” will not enter God’s rest but will perish in the lake of fire. Likewise, the wife who will not be ruled by her husband is like the flesh in which dwells sin and death: she will perish. But the wife who is a disciple has a liberated inner self that should want to obey her husband, just as the inner self of the husband should want to obey Christ. And this is what Paul knew and expressed in his epistles when he wrote concerning marriage.

The tent of flesh in which the new creature, born-of-Spirit, dwells remains consigned to sin and death; it will die because of its lawlessness unless it too is liberated from lawlessness. And its liberation from lawlessness comes at the second Passover. Until then, the relationship between the inner self, born-of-Spirit, and the flesh can be likened to the relationship between a natural Israelite and a foreign wife, a relationship condemned by God and Moses because too often this foreign wife caused the natural Israelite to worship her gods and not *YHWH*. Yet both Rahab and Ruth are in the lineage of David and by extension, in the lineage of the man Jesus. So it isn’t the “foreignness” of the foreign wife that is the problem. It is her commitment to her foreign gods that is her problem. When this foreign wife was committed to serving *YHWH*, then her natural uncircumcision would be counted as circumcision (Rom 2:26), what the Apostle Paul understood but what too few others have since understood. Her natural Israelite husband would dwell peaceably with her, the two becoming one flesh.

But it was a rare occasion when the foreign wife did not keep her foreign gods, just as it is a rare occasion when the flesh of a disciple no longer desires the pleasures of the flesh: those things that are of this world. It is rare when the flesh of a disciple doesn’t lust after wealth, food, seeing a new thing, extramarital sexual gratification, self-preservation. Likewise, in America today, it is rare when a woman surrenders herself to her husband. The culture has taught women that they have rights that must be respected, that they are persons that do not surrender their personhood when they enter into a marriage contract, that they have the right to dress however they wish, reveal however much of their body as they wish, go where they wish, do what they wish, be fully equal to the first Eve—and there is the problem, the determination for oneself right and wrong. The flesh of a disciple does not have this right. The Body of Christ does not have this right. The wife does not have this right.

Before the second Passover will occur—when the Church is liberated from bondage to disobedience; when the dead Body of Christ is resurrected to life—the Church must experience enough to soften its heart so that those who have already been born of Spirit

can receive spiritually circumcised hearts, the circumcision they should have received long ago if they had made a mental journey of faith equivalent in distance to the physical journey the patriarch Abraham made by faith.

What does it take for a wife to submit to her husband, or for the flesh to be ruled by the mind? The answer to these two questions reveals what will occur between now and Christ Jesus' return, when the third part of humankind will be like an obedient wife, and like the fleshly body being fully ruled by the mind. And the human being who does not become as an obedient wife will perish in the lake of fire ... the democracy of personhood is a teaching of that angel of light that is Satan the devil; for when the flesh rules over the mind, both will perish.

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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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