

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 righteousness.

[Printable/viewable PDF format to display Greek or Hebrew characters](#)

## Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of February 28, 2015*

*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.*

---

Then all the men who knew that their wives had made offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you. But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster. But since we left off making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine." And the women said, "When we made offerings to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands' approval that we made cakes for her bearing her image and poured out drink offerings to her?" (Jer 44:15-19)

---

1.

During this past week, the world has seen ISIS thugs take sledge hammers to statuary of ancient Mesopotamia, some of the statuary dating to the 9<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE ... should Christians take a position on these thugs' deliberate destruction of ancient religious iconography? What would be God's position? Can we know?

Then the king [Josiah] sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of [YHWH], and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of [YHWH]. And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before [YHWH], to walk after [YHWH] and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And *all the people joined in the covenant.*

And the king commanded Hilkiyah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the threshold to bring out of the temple of [YHWH] all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel. And he deposed the priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the constellations and all the host of the heavens. And he brought out the Asherah from the house of [YHWH], outside Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron and beat it to dust and cast the dust of it upon the graves of the common people. And he broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes who were in the house of [YHWH], where the women wove hangings for the Asherah. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beersheba. And he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the gate of the city. However, the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of [YHWH] in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech. And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of [YHWH], by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the precincts. And he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars that Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of [YHWH], he pulled down and broke in pieces and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And he broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, that altar with the high place he pulled down and burned, reducing it to dust. He also burned the Asherah. And as Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the mount. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar and defiled it, according to the word of [YHWH] that the man of God proclaimed, who had predicted these things. Then he said, "What is that monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel." And he said, "Let him be; let no man move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. *And Josiah removed all the shrines also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which kings of Israel had made, provoking [YHWH] to anger.* He did to them according to all that he had done at Bethel. And he sacrificed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem. And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to [YHWH] in Jerusalem. Moreover, *Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were*

written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of [YHWH]. Before him there was no king like him, who turned to [YHWH] with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him. Still [YHWH] did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. And [YHWH] said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there." Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? (2 Kings 23:1–28 emphasis added)

A long citation, but one that needs to be known if endtime Christians are to understand how far from God modern Western culture presently is ... what ISIS thugs do not and cannot understand; what endtime Christians do not appreciate is that with the giving of the spirit when the glorified Jesus breathed on ten of His first disciples and said, *Receive spirit holy* (John 20:22), the Commandments of God moved from regulating the acts of hands and bodies to regulating the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart—moved from hand to heart—so it is no longer statuary and groves that offends God, but the reason why a Christian would possess statuary or plant a grove. It is not a stone statue from the 9<sup>th</sup>-Century BCE that offends, but worship of things of any sort—worship of the works of hands—that God will punish.

In June 1981, I was in University of Alaska Fairbanks' Lola Tilly Commons, upper floor, when author Robert Stone told an informal gathering of graduate students that *the veneer of civilization was extremely thin; if multinationals want to rule the world, let them*. As a confirmed socialist, Stone shocked the 20-plus graduate students able to hear him speak. And Stone went on to say, paraphrased, that the Abyss was underfoot; that little kept humanity from descending into savagery and barbarianism of the sort he had personally witnessed as a correspondent for Manchester's *The Guardian* in Vietnam and in East Africa; that if multinational corporations could keep humanity from descending into the Abyss, let them for secular governments weren't able to do so.

I had come to UAF's Midnight Sun Writer's Conference from Kodiak in hopes of selling a first novel ... and Stone sat on concrete steps and read that draft of *Shelikof*, all 580 pages. Doubleday's West Coast editor took the draft back to California with him, and held it for 20 months before returning it. But it is memory of the shock displayed on the faces of young graduate students that has stayed with me more than thirty years; for these graduate students couldn't imagine taking life with a knife—stabbing a person, or beheading a person, or hacking to death an American blogger with machetes as also occurred this past week on the streets of Dhaka, Bangladeshi—Avijit Roy, whose Mukto-Mona (Free-mind) blog championed liberal secular writing in Bangladeshi.

Terrorism will come to America; for what will prevent it from coming? The resolve of a President that plays another round of golf when an American journalist is beheaded? Net neutrality? Legal resident status given to millions of illegal immigrants? Madonna taking an on-stage spill that gave her whiplash? As a nation, where is America ideologically?

Preceding the head quote, the prophet Jeremiah delivered a message to the remnant of Israel the commanders of Nebuchadnezzar's army had left in the land of Judah:

The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Judeans who lived in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: You have seen all the disaster that I brought upon Jerusalem and upon all the cities of Judah. Behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, because of the evil that they committed, provoking me to anger, in that they went to make offerings and serve other gods that they knew not, neither they, nor you, nor your fathers. Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, 'Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!' But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods. Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day. And now thus says the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel: Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah, leaving you no remnant? Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live, so that you may be cut off and become a curse and a taunt among all the nations of the earth? Have you forgotten the evil of your fathers, the evil of the kings of Judah, the evil of their wives, your own evil, and the evil of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers. Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, so that none of the remnant of Judah who have come to live in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive or return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return to dwell there. For *they shall not return, except some fugitives.*" (Jer 44:1–14 emphasis added)

ISIS thugs presently stand condemned before the Lord, but this doesn't mean that God will not use these thugs as the Lord used Nebuchadnezzar as a tool to bring the remnant of Israel into repentance ... but how repentant was Israel even after Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem and razed the temple: *As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you. But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem* (Jer 44:16–17).

Following the Second Passover liberation of greater Christendom from indwelling sin and death, similar words will be spoken by the majority of Christians—by all those who rebel against God in the great Apostasy (2 Thess 2:3), which hasn't yet happened regardless of what Sabbatarian Christians claim about the first centuries of Christianity when false apostles prevailed over those disciples who walked in this world as Jesus walked ... false apostles prevailed through the three "C"s: Canon, Creed, and Clergy.

In a similar way as ISIS thugs force their literalist reading of the Qur'an onto moderate Sunni Believers, early proto-orthodox theologians—false disciples who had gone beyond the truth, beyond love—determined what would be canonical texts, what

Christians had to recite and profess to believe, while using an ordained clergy as cops to enforce *right belief*.

An M.O. God has employed is to turn rebellion against Him back onto itself, causing rebellion within the ranks of the rebels to give the rebels a sample of their own rebellion. If this M.O. is applied to orthodox Christendom, what will be seen is God bringing into the ranks of orthodoxy rebellion of the sort seen when false apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Centuries went beyond the truth, with these rebels against the rebellion becoming so-called *legalist Christians* that will now tap the vitality of today's orthodox Christian denominations as orthodoxy is being attacked from all sides by secular humanism, by secular governance, by ideological fundamentalism of the sort for which King Josiah was commended.

The reforms made by King Josiah would have seemed as radical to the citizens of Jerusalem as reforms presently being attempted by ISIS thugs; for Josiah took from the temple vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, for the host of heaven—the artifacts of antiquity—and burned them in the fields of Kidon. He took priests ordained by his ancestors; priests ordained to make offerings in the high places in Jerusalem and surrounding cities; priests ordained to burn incense to Baal, to the sun, moon, stars, and he “deposed” these priests, with the edge of the sword being a means of deposing. And in all that Josiah did in rooting idolatry from Israel, what did he do differently than what ISIS thugs do today, other than to keep the Passover according to the Book of the Covenant, with no such Passover having been kept since the days of the judges; since the days of Obed, the root of Jesse, father of David.

Again, with the giving of the spirit, the Law moved from outside of the physically circumcised Israelite to inside the circumcised-of-heart Israelite, the Israelite born of spirit through the indwelling of Christ Jesus. Thus, for the Israelite born of spirit, putting away idolatry isn't about forcing the community to turn to God by the edge of the sword or by the muzzle of an AK47, but about the Israelite him or herself no longer loving this world or the things of this world (1 John 2:15–17), including jetting around on Air Force One for date nights in New York City.

Collectively, American Christians are so far from God that they can't see Him even if they remove the lens covers from their binoculars: they are spiritually blind, with their salvation laying in the good words they do in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and giving shelter to the homeless, which might be enough to justify them in the general harvest of humanity; for they will be the first who are last, their judgments being made in the great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11–15). And this is not where they would be if they had the zeal for God and Christ Jesus as ISIS thugs have for Allah, their dead God [dead from having entered His creation as His unique Son, Jesus the Nazarene].

An ISIS recruiter can turn to Scripture [the Bible] and to the example of King Josiah as *proof* that the righteous of this world are to kill infidels and to destroy the idols of the infidels—and the Christian can argue that everything changed when the spirit was given, a valid argument. However, the next words that will come from the Christian's mouth will be false; for the Law has not been abolished but has moved from outside of the outwardly circumcised Israelite to inside the circumcised of heart Israelite, thereby moving sin from being an outward transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4) to being unbelief, disbelief of God (Rom 14:23 in Greek). Thus, the Christian troubled by gay

marriage (a physical and theological abomination) need not be overly concerned about his or her State government approving gay marriage; for gay marriage is simply another mile-marker on humanity's journey away from God, with the midnight hour of the darkness in which humanity presently dwells coming when humanity can get no farther from God but must turn back toward God. This will be the hour of the Second Passover liberation of Israel, when all uncovered [by the blood of Christ] firstborns will be suddenly slain: a third part of humanity, approximately 2.4 billion persons, with a disproportionate percentage of the population slain in industrialized nations with birth rates at or under population replacement rates. In these nations, half or more of the population will be slain in a day because all firstborns belong to God unless redeemed. And the firstborn—Christian or otherwise—who doesn't take the Passover sacraments on the dark portion of the 14<sup>th</sup>-day of the first month (on the night when Jesus was betrayed) doesn't cover him or herself with the blood of the Redeemer.

If God will send His death angels forth to slay uncovered firstborns who, by the standards of this world, are utterly innocent of wrongdoing, then would God not permit ISIS thugs who seek to bring about the end of the age through their horrific acts of terror—acts intended to draw America whom they read as the King of Greece into a ground war with the Islamic State, a ground war whose outcome will not be determined by military might but by the righteousness of hearts—would God not permit the Islamic State to humble America if such a humbling were for the good of America's Christian theology? This is a question that will be shortly answered, especially if Iran gets nuclear weapons and a Shia'-Sunni conflict spills out of the Middle East and into industrialized nations.

The only real protection a Christian has against terror is the Christian's relationship with God, with the Christian needing to take two journeys of faith, not one, with the first journey being into the Promised Land represented by keeping the Sabbaths of God. This is the journey most American Christians refuse and will continue to refuse to take.

\* \* \*

"Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

[ [Home](#) ] [ [Sabbath Readings](#) ]