

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 *gender/flesh versus Spiritual*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of March 31, 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.

One of the “hot” topics within Christendom is the relationship of the Church to those whose sexual orientation differs from their biological gender: is there room within Christendom for gays, lesbians, and transsexual disciples? Fundamentalists say, NO! Whereas liberal fellowships would have God's love covering all who want to come to Christ. And indeed, God's love does cover all who would walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:3-6), keeping the commandments by faith, thereby demonstrating love for God and neighbor; for it was God who consigned humankind to disobedience (Rom 11:32) and to mental bondage to the prince of this world (Eph 2:2-3) so that He could have mercy on all. Therefore, a person's sins do not surprise God. It is from sin or lawless [from 1 John 3:4] that the Father draws or calls a person (John 6:44). But when the drawn person is born of Spirit, the new “creature” is not born consigned to disobedience—sin has no dominion over this new creature (Rom 6:14)—but is born liberated, free to keep the commandments, and keeping the commandments is the expectation of all who are of the household of God, with the mantle of Christ Jesus' righteousness covering those times when the born of Spirit person is unable to do the things that the law expects. Hence, disciples are to abstain from sexual immorality (Acts 15:20) in all of its various forms.

Sexual immorality is sexual activity outside of wedlock, in which two are joined together to become one in the image of, and after the likeness of *YHWH Elohim* (cf. Gen 1:27; 2:24; John 1:1-2; 14:9-10; 17:21-23).

The man and woman who cohabit outside of marriage do not walk by faith as Jesus walked; they are not ready to be in fellowship with Believers. And if they persist in cohabitating together outside of marriage while attending a fellowship of Believers, they are to be delivered back to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that their spirits might be saved in the Day of Judgment — this is a harsh standard, but it is the standard agreed upon at the Jerusalem Council. And it will be the standard for all endtime fellowships that are of God.

If a pastor's human love for the cohabitating couple exceeds the pastor's love for God and for the things of God, then this pastor is really a servant of the prince of this world (2 Cor 11:14-15).

Compromise is not permitted, for to compromise with the “truth” as delivered by Jesus is to introduce error to the degree which compromise was made ... what happens if the cohabitating couple includes the pastor’s son or daughter? Will the pastor place parental love ahead of love for God? In the case of those pastors who are genuine, no. And the objections can be heard: what about—

Forget the objections. There will always be objections, with the foremost being that love covers all. Yes, love covers, but love doesn’t condone all or there would not be a purpose for the second death, the lake of fire. All would be saved for God loves all and is not a respecter of persons—and to construe this to mean that anything goes produces disagreement with what Jesus said concerning those who would be His disciples (John 5:28-29). If the one who has done evil is resurrected to condemnation, then “love” temporarily covered but did not condone what was evil, which can be nothing more than deciding for oneself what is right and what is wrong (Gen 3:5-6). In deciding what is right and what is wrong, the person becomes a judge of the law, and by extension, a judge of God. This person briefly made him or herself higher than God, a situation that cannot exist when judgments are revealed. To decide that cohabitation is right for the person is to judge both the law and God. The person who decides to cohabit makes human logic and biological hormonal needs of more importance than obedience to God by faith. So objections to preventing cohabitating couples from entering the fellowship of Believers belong in this world and to this world, where there is only death and darkness.

Now, move to the person whose sexual orientation differs from the person’s biology: if the standard for fellowship is that cohabitation is not acceptable within the Body of Believers, then cohabitation is not acceptable regardless of whether between male and female, male and male, female and female, or male as female with male or female. With God, there is no distinction. Sexual immorality is of this world, not of God, and sexual immorality shall not persist among disciples. It can be briefly concealed from other disciples; it might be concealed for long enough that the immorality ceases; but it cannot be hidden from Christ Jesus, who will cause what was hidden to be shouted from rooftops as certain televangelists have learned. And we are now ready to begin an exploration of gender identity.

The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7, through chapter 7, verse 1.

Commentary: The concept of humankind being jars of clay descended from the red clay formed by *YHWH Elohim* [singular in usage] into the first man Adam (Gen 2:7) is a fundamental principle that must be grasped before the Bible can be understood. The flesh is the clay. And into the clay, now formed into a jar, is inserted “personhood,” the essence of what it is that makes a person a human being.

When 1st-Century Greek philosophers encountered this concept of human personhood being separate from the flesh, the teachings of Plato and Aristotle seemed to agree with what the Apostle Paul was teaching; so these philosophers identified this human personhood as the *immortal soul*. And in making this association, these early philosophers started Christendom down the broad path that would lead to destruction, for eternal life only comes to a human being as the gift of God through Christ Jesus (Rom 6:23). It does not come to a human being through fornication in the backseat of a Chevrolet, nor through being consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32). It comes from the

Father, who raises the dead and gives them life (John 5:21). It comes when the Father causes the person to be born of Spirit, not when the elements of this earth, as clay, come together through biological processes to form another human being born of the water of the womb (John 3:3-8).

In the natural world, a clay jar or a tent of animal skins and fabric is unanimated and easily recognized as being physically lifeless. In moving from this natural world to the spiritual realm, an animated human being is just as spiritually lifeless in the heavenly realm as a clay jar is physically lifeless in this natural realm, but because human beings cannot physically “see” into this heavenly realm, the spiritual lifelessness of the human being is not as easily discerned although the flesh of a beast and of a human being is the same (Eccl 3:18-20). Both are of dust, and both return to dust. It is the essence of human personhood that causes the problem, blurring vision and confusing theology.

Human beings are genetically similar [almost identical] to the great apes; yet an apparent significant difference in “personhood” separates human beings from the great apes. However, since a few of the great apes have learned to communicate with human beings through sign language, the similarities of observed character attributes that would constitute personhood are actually much greater than was formerly believed possible. Sentence length constructs of language was used by the apes that learned to sign: these sentences expressed intangibles such as happiness or sadness. Their learned behavior exceeded “instinctive responses.” So-called beasts down to ravens have demonstrated problem-solving abilities. Thus, arguments that will have human “personhood,” human beings’ ability to think and create—all of those things that seemingly separate human beings from animals—being the manifestation of an immortal soul are not supported by research and are not in agreement with Scripture. They entered Christendom through pagan Greek philosophers, and they need to be returned to these ancient philosophers, for a thing borrowed should not be kept.

What causes a ladybug to migrate hundreds of miles or a butterfly to migrate thousands of miles or an Arctic tern to fly from the Arctic to Antarctica is not a product of their biology, but revelation of the nature God has assigned to each of these creatures. And this divine assigning of an “animal nature” to an animal and of “human nature” to a human being is disclosed in the story of King Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and vanity.

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The reader should here read all of Daniel chapter 4.

Commentary: The story is told by the king himself, and told in his words—and the essence of the story is that heaven rules over men, giving kingdoms to whom the Most High wills. But contained within the story is awareness that human nature has also been given to human beings by the same Most High who gives kingdoms to whom He wills. This same Most high can give an animal’s nature instantly to a human being, or vice versa; can cause an animal to speak in sentences as in the case of Balaam’s donkey (Num 22:28-30).

Yes, skeptics will doubt both stories: assigning of personhood to animals is a commonly used literary device. Assigning animal natures to human beings is a less common but nevertheless still seen literary construct. So within the realm of human storytelling, the basic natures of men and beasts have been shuffled and reassigned to create narrative fictions employed to disclose some aspect of “truth.” But the qualities of “mind” that separate human beings from nearly identical biological species cannot be explained by DNA difference, and is explained by God assigning the respective natures

(as if these natures were computer software) to each species of living beings. Observation confirms a qualitative difference between human beings and the great apes that neither great lengths of evolutionary time nor possession of a better thumb can explain. To each, God has assigned a “nature” as He saw fit to give. To the cow, He gave the nature of a bovine. To the lion, He gave a predatory nature. And he will modify these assigned natures when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh.

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The reader should now read Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 through 13.

Commentary: Not only will there be no harm in all of God’s holy mountain, but the competitive natures of the sons of Israel will be altered.

Before being able to, as a *Christian*, understand gender identity, the disciple must first realize that **a person** is the sum of (1) the body that is a clay jar or a tent of flesh (same relative analogy), and (2) the *personhood* that has been assigned by God to every human being. This *personhood* is not an immortal soul, but the “human nature” that activates the flesh as software makes computer hardware usable. This human nature is automatically given as is breath to every son of the first Adam when conceived in the womb of a woman (or now, in a Petrie dish). It would seem to be the product of biology, but to make this assumption starts a person down a long, dark road that leads nowhere.

An angel is the sum of its body of *spirit* and of the nature God has given to this son of His; therefore, the nature of an angelic being can be instantly changed as seen in Daniel chapter 7, verse 4, when this described king (from *v.* 17) has its wings plucked off, is made to stand on two feet like a man, and is given “the mind of a man” ... to be given the mind of a man is to cause this angelic king to think like a man, and to think like a man will produce human nature. A human being differs from a great ape because he [or she] thinks like a man [or a woman], which is now described as “human nature.”

A beast thinks like a beast because it has been given by God the mind of a beast, thereby producing beastlike nature within the flesh of a bear or a bovine. A human being thinks like a human being because he or she has been given the mind of a human being. A son of God thinks like God because he has been given the mind of God, the mind of Christ. Until a person has truly been born of Spirit, an expression virtually meaningless because of errant overuse, a person’s thoughts are those of a human being: they are set on the things of the flesh which includes, for every human being, a need to worship a deity. The nature that God assigned to every human being includes the need to worship a deity, with this “need” being fulfilled through worship of nature, of other human beings, of demons, of gods constructed entirely from within human imagination.

Here is where a problem enters Christendom: a person feeling a need to be “religious,” or feeling a need to acknowledge that a sovereign god rules over the person does not indicate that the person has been born of Spirit. A person can satisfy this need to worship a deity as Buddhists or Hindi have, and certainly not be born of Spirit. A person can satisfy this need to worship as Native Americans have, as Druids have, or as most Christians have without ever being born of Spirit. The “need to worship” comes from the human nature God has assigned to human beings, not from having been born of Spirit. This need is a necessary part of human nature so that a person will seek God, but it has nothing to do with whether a person has actually been born of Spirit. So a better understanding of what the Apostle Paul wrote concerning the mind set of the flesh, and the mind set on Spirit must be brought to every discussion of gender identity

before *Christianity* can properly address the subject of homosexuality and transgender sexuality.

Paul wrote, “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot” (Rom 8:7) ... every Christian can use this one verse as a test of whether he or she has been born of Spirit, or if the person’s mind is still set on the flesh: what is your relationship to the law? Do you keep it by faith to the best of your ability? Or do you use some variant of the argument that since Jesus fulfilled the law, you do not have to keep it; Jesus did that for you?

The person whose mind is set of the flesh—the person who has not been born of Spirit—will not keep the laws of God; will not keep the commandments, especially the Sabbath commandment. The person is passively or actively hostile to God, and most of Christendom is passively hostile to God. The number of “Christians” who have been born of Spirit is exceedingly small although most of the lawless Christian Church will claim to have been born of Spirit whereas its lawlessness is *prima facie* evidence against it being born of Spirit. In fact, most of Sabbatarian Christianity has not been born of Spirit even though this division of Christendom consists entirely of law-keepers who profess that Jesus is Lord, but most of Sabbatarian Christianity has no love, not even for one another. And without love, keeping the commandments is only an activity of the hand and body, not of the heart and mind where these laws have been written on spiritually circumcised tablets of flesh that were cleansed by faith of those born by Spirit.

(As an aside, the former Worldwide Church of God, a sect of Sabbatarian Christendom, insisted that disciples were not born of Spirit, which for its disciples mostly proved true after the administration of this sect passed to the next generation.)

Concerning the person who has truly been born of Spirit, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is renewed day by day ... we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:16, 18). In this case, the outer nature that is wasting away is the human body activated by its human nature. And what’s seen are two natures, one waning (the outer, human nature) and one waxing (the inner, godly nature), co-existing within the flesh of every disciple who has been born of Spirit. The old man or self or nature has been crucified with Christ Jesus. Thus, this old nature is dying, hopefully at a rate faster than the flesh; for crucifixion does not kill instantly, but kills slowly through loss of breath (and through shock). The new creature is growing and coming to maturity through being renewed daily. Therefore, conflict exists within this tent of flesh, conflict in which the new creature must overcome and figuratively break the legs of the old creature.

Gender identity is an aspect of the human nature that activates the flesh, and has activated the flesh since birth, since before puberty and the maturing of hormonally produced sexual desires. Thus, gender identity has been at work in the flesh of every human being since the infant’s first conscious thoughts in the womb of its mother. And considerable damage can be done to this identity before puberty, when the young person’s hormones cause the person to consciously act-out his or her gender identity.

Because the tent of flesh has either indoor or outdoor plumbing, a certain socially appropriate gender role is assigned to the young person, which in most cases this role agrees with the gender identity of the person’s nature. However, in a certain percentage of cases the gender identity of the person does not agree with the plumbing of the tent of

flesh. Why disagreement exists is another subject. It is enough to pick up the thread of the preceding paragraph and to say that in many cases, this disagreement is introduced through parenting practices. But in all cases, gender identity is an attribute of a mind set on the flesh—gender is about the flesh.

The mind set on the things of the flesh is set on sex and sexuality. The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; thus, a person should not expect to find the gay community keeping the commandments of God. A person would not expect to find a gay Christian keeping the commandments. But this is not to say that a gay person does not seek a relationship with God. On the contrary, the mind that is set on the flesh is still compelled to worship a deity, whether this deity is “mother earth” or the effeminate Christ of the Medieval Christian Church. Therefore, more and more openly gay disciples will surface in Christian fellowships that emphasize fuzzy concepts of love and deemphasize keeping the commandments.

The sons of God, angelic and those who have been born of Spirit into tents of flesh, have no gender identity. Gender is an attribute of the flesh only. Therefore, the nature of the new creature, born of Spirit, is sexless although the tent of flesh in which this new creature dwells remains with either indoor or outdoor plumbing. Thus, by extension, as the old nature dies and as the new nature waxes stronger and stronger through daily renewal, the mind of the born of Spirit disciple loses interest in sex as it loses interest in all things that pertain to the flesh, whether these things are recreational activities or the possessions of this world. The “American Dream” of ever increasing prosperity becomes absolutely meaningless except as that prosperity allows a work for God to be done.

A person can take a second test to determine whether he or she has been born of Spirit: is your mind set on acquiring things, on having the better things this world has to offer, on vacations, travel to exotic locations, on having more money to spend? If you had a million dollars that was not committed to another project, would you build yourself a house on Malibu Beach as one televangelist did? If you had an extra million, do you need a million dollar house? Or a two million dollar house? And if your answer is yes, your mind is set on the things of the flesh. Yes, it is. There are no objections that you can make to the contrary so you might as well keep quiet: the “prosperity gospel” is a message pandering to the lusts of the flesh.

A person who lives an openly gay life is a person whose mind is set on the flesh. Likewise, the philanderer is a person whose mind is set on the flesh. Neither displays evidence of being born of Spirit.

Because the mind of the person who has truly been born of Spirit is not set on the things of the flesh, the Apostle Paul gave the following instruction:

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The reader should read 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verses 1 through 16.

Commentary: Husbands and wives are not to abstain from sexual relations, but are to give to the other what is due from the marriage bed even though the growing maturation of the new creature causes a diminished interest in the things that pertain to the flesh.

The person whose gender orientation according to his or her human nature is contrary to the biology of the tent of flesh in which this person dwells is under no differing prohibitions on attending services, being baptized into repentance, and receiving the Holy Spirit than is the person whose gender identity agrees with the plumbing of the tent. Both are to abstain from sexual immorality, which means no sexual activity outside of marriage. This might be too difficult for some—it is not now

their day of salvation. But for the person God has drawn from this world, abstaining from sexual immorality is a necessary precursor to cleansing the heart and mind by faith ... abstaining from sexual immorality is a must.

What about the disciple who wants to abstain from sexual immorality, but who slips up?

The old creature in union with the flesh is a formidable adversary, giving to Satan victories he did not win—repentance is about turning from what is wrong and going the other direction. Regardless of the person's gender orientation, a person is always subject to the hormonal desires of the flesh, generated by biological processes and capable of temporarily altering mindsets and thought patterns, the reason why *all of the girls are prettier at closing time*. For the person whose gender identity is out of sync with the plumbing of his or her tent, this is an extremely difficult trial: a slipup will not be forgiven by other human beings within a Christian fellowship although before God, all sexual immorality is equally offensive. Thus, until the old creature, crucified with Christ, dies as Christ did, the disciple must fight doubly or triply hard to overcome homosexual or transsexual desires fueled by hormones seeking sexual release; for once release comes, the disciple will initially loathe his or her behavior. When this loathing stops—as it has for those who have come out of the closet—the mind is seared, and abstaining from sexual immorality will no longer be important. Feeling love and loved will be the higher feelings that overcame the loathing.

Anyone who is sexually active outside of marriage is to be excluded from Christian fellowship, a tough and uncompromising position that comes from realizing that those who have been born of Spirit have no fellowship with those who have not been so born; that the person who has not been born of Spirit still has his or her mind set on the things of the flesh, and is at least passively hostile toward God. Therefore, those individuals who are in gay relationships are to be excluded from Christian fellowship, whereas the person who leaves such a relationship has the same standing before God and the sons of God as the person who was formerly a philanderer or a liar or a thief. Unfortunately, because of the carnality of tents of flesh, it is best if the person who was in a gay relationship limit the spread of that information to only those fully mature in the faith, if even to them.

Before God, all things done in the flesh, good and bad, are as filthy rags to be discarded when filled with blood and the sloughed off promise of life. It is only the faith of an individual, faith that causes this individual to keep the commandments when in a far land (Deu 30:1-2), and belief in God's promises (Gen 15:6) that will be counted to the person as righteousness. There is no sin too bad to be forgiven, and no work of the flesh good enough to save. Therefore, the person who wants to become a disciple but whose gender orientation disagrees with the plumbing of the tent needs to put away all forms of sexual immorality and come to God, realizing that the past is just that, the past. With God, there is only the present.

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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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