

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 infallible texts versus narrative accounts.

Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of April 2, 2011*

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.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. / And while staying with them he [Jesus] ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This

Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:1–11 emphasis added)

Then he [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But *stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*” (Luke 24:44–49 emphasis added)

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, *he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.* See, I have told you.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, *Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”* ... Now *the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.* (Matt 28:1–10, 16 emphasis added)

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, *tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.*” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16:1–8 emphasis added)

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

Now *Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.* So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but

believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:19–29 emphasis added)

Jerusalem or Galilee? Ten or eleven? ... On the day when Jesus appeared before the Most High God as the reality of the Wave Sheaf Offering, did Jesus meet with His disciples in Jerusalem as Luke and John record, or did Jesus meet with His disciples in Galilee as Matthew and Mark (in the oldest versions of his gospel) record? And when Jesus met with His disciples, were eleven there, meaning that Thomas would have been there, or were there only ten disciples present? Plus, how many women went to the tomb, one, two, or three?

There are significant discrepancies between Matthew chapter 28 and Luke’s and John’s recording of the same events: it seems—and judging from the textuality of the text—that Matthew chapter 28 is a spurious addition, or at best the product of tampering, with borrowings from the earliest versions of Mark’s gospel boldly entering Matthew’s Gospel, going where the apostles did not go until they received power from on high on the day of Pentecost following Calvary.

If, however, Matthew’s accord of what happened post-Resurrection differs from Luke’s and John’s, can it be trusted elsewhere? There is no literal agreement between these gospels; so Scripture is certainly not infallible even when read figuratively.

But is the problem a compression of time for narrative reasons? Have words been put into the angel’s mouth and into Jesus’ mouth by someone other than Mark and Matthew so that their gospels would not conclude abruptly? So did Matthew and Mark put words into the angel’s mouth that were not said? Did Luke or John put words into Jesus’ mouth that He did not say? Were memories less than perfect? Certainly Luke’s construction of speech, regardless of who is speaking, has similar grammatical constructions as his construction of narrative, strongly suggesting that the speech he records was not directly heard but was relayed to him and reconstruction by his pen to convey the essence of what was said; for Luke wasn’t present when the angel Gabriel spoke to Zechariah (Luke 1:8–23). Luke would not even know of this conversation if Elizabeth had not revealed the conversation to Mary, the mother of Jesus, from whom Luke received most if not all of the earlier chapters of his gospel.

Historians today, two centuries after the fact, repeat the story of Sacajawea¹, the Lemhi Shoshone woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their Journey of Discovery (ca. 1804–1805), serving as the translator for Lewis and Clark,

¹ The <j> spelling of Sacajawea/Sacagawea rather than the <g> spelling is the preferred spelling by the Lemhi peoples, her people, and reflects the fact that she was forcibly taken by the Hidatsa, who did not have the softer <tz/j> sound in their language and had to substitute the hard <g/k> pronunciation for the softer sound. Hence, through the substitution of a single letter, an entire narrative can be conveyed, one of capture and enslavement.

translating their words to the Native peoples the explorers encountered between North Dakota and the Pacific. But what grade school and even high school text books record is a compression of what actually occurred, and represents the truth but is not true: in 1800 CE, when about twelve years old, Sacajawea and several other girls were taken captive when a group of Hidatsa overran her people's camp in Idaho. She was taken to a Hidatsa village in North Dakota, where at about thirteen, she was taken as a wife by Toussaint Charbonneau, a Quebec trapper, living in the village. Sacajawea spoke several Native American languages, but no European languages. Charbonneau spoke one of the Native languages that Sacajawea spoke, plus French; he did not speak English.

When Lewis and Clark were putting together the Corp of Discovery, they hired François Labiche [*Frenchy*] and Pierre Cruzatte in the Illinois Territory. Both were experienced boatmen and frontier traders and spoke several lower Missouri Native languages. Labiche also was conversant in English. Thus, Labiche became the funnel through which Lewis and Clark spoke to Charbonneau, who then spoke to Sacajawea in the Hidatsa language, who then spoke to her people—her brother—in Shoshone.

Lewis wrote in his 04 November 1804 entry in his journal, “[A] French man by Name Chabonah, who speaks the Big Belly language visit us, he wished to hire and informed us his 2 squars [squaws] were Snake Indians, we engage him to go on with us and take one his wives to interpret the Snake language.”

Historians know that Sacajawea, whom Clark called *Janey* and for whom Clark had a fondness, didn't translate Lewis and Clark's words into the languages of the Native peoples of the Missouri: Labiche did. What Sacajawea did was open the linguistic and cultural door to the Lemhi Shoshone, the door that had to be opened for the Corp of Discovery to cross the Bitterroot Mountains and descend into the Columbia River [Snake River] drainages. Her role was central to the success of the Journey, and cannot be underestimated. But interpretation was much more complicated than text books record; for in seeking to obtain horses, Lewis would speak to Labiche, who would then speak to Charbonneau, who then spoke to Sacajawea, who then spoke to her brother, who wasn't about to turn his lost sister down.

Now, returning to the post-Resurrection gospel accounts: there is a principle of storytelling that non-storytellers have probably never considered. Stories build tension within themselves as events unfold. Scripture is no exception ... the reason that so many history books put their readers to sleep originates in historians traditionally being poor storytellers, including details that hinder the development of tension within the historical narrative. Good historians intuitively relay events that build tension with occasional releases when lives end or wars are won. Hence, Sacajawea interprets for Lewis and Clark. That is the story of significance, but a poorly told story. For most historians, Charbonneau is a detail that doesn't aid in the development of the Corp of Discovery narrative. Yet, Clark nearly beat Charbonneau to death for abandoning Sacajawea and the baby in a flash flood. Clark rescued mother and child (and lost his sextant while doing so), and had to be restrained to keep him from truly beating Charbonneau

to death for Charbonneau's cowardice in saving himself and leaving his wife and child to drown. And without this flash flood account, much is lost in understanding European-Native relationships; for Sacajawea's brother would not have abandoned her as evidenced by the deal he made to supply the Corp of Discovery with horses. Clark wouldn't abandon her. But a woman won while gambling [the most plausible story for how Charbonneau acquired Sacajawea as one of two wives] wasn't worth Charbonneau risking his life to save.

The authority that comes with a man being the head of his wife requires that the man place his life in jeopardy to save his wife in a manner analogous to Christ Jesus dying for the Church. Anything less is not of Christ. And Clark's action in rescuing Sacajawea and the infant child—regardless of reason—would be the reasonable manifestation of Christian morality. What Clark did afterwards discloses that the rescue wasn't by Christ Jesus.

The tension that builds in a narrative will culminate in the climax of the story. Afterwards, all of the tension dissipates. The story is over. The audience can go home. However, too abrupt of an ending *feels* unsatisfactory; so storytellers add a little more to the story to *finish* the narrative. If much is added, the *much* doesn't work. The words will not be memorable, but will be dull and flat. So how would Matthew and Mark fit the disciples going fishing into the resurrection narrative? Going to Galilee to fish doesn't seem related to the Resurrection account ...

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and

took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. *This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.* (John 21:1–14 emphasis added)

Again a problem emerges: if Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), then appeared to the assembled disciples that same day (Luke 24:36; John 20:19), then appeared to the assembled disciples eight days later (John 20:26) — when Jesus appeared to seven of the disciples in Galilee (John 21:1), that appearance would have been for the fourth time, not the third time. Apparently, John dismisses Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus—and Luke has all eleven disciples together (as does Matthew — 28:16 — and Mark — 16:14) when Jesus appears to them in Jerusalem.

The gospel accords are not identical, but they can be reconciled if endtime disciples are willing to accept the possibility that the first disciples didn't get everything set down on paper exactly as the events happened, meaning that the texts are not infallible, merely inspired.

No one wrote in your Bible while you were asleep: the discrepancies in the post-Resurrection accounts have been in Scripture for centuries ... Sacajawea was Lewis and Clark's translator: that particular historical detail can be found in most text books used in American middle and high schools.

The problem at the core of the post-Resurrection gospel accounts is that lawless Christendom transformed the Bible into an idol centuries ago so that Scripture is not studied—deconstructed—as other texts are. Rather, Christians bow before the Bible, somehow believing that a printed book is the very Word of God, not realizing that no canonical text existed as late as the beginning of the 5th-Century CE.

Augustine, in *On Christian Doctrine* (translated by D. W. Robertson, Jr. for Liberal Arts Press, 1958), wrote,

In the matter of canonical Scriptures he [the expert investigator of Holy Scriptures] should follow the authority of the greater number of catholic Churches, among which are those which have deserved to have apostolic seats and to receive epistles. He will observe this rule concerning canonical Scriptures, that he will prefer those accepted by all catholic Churches to those which some do not accept; among those which are not accepted by all, he should prefer those which are accepted by the largest number of important Churches to those held by a few minor Churches of less authority. If he discovers that some are maintained by the larger number of Churches, others by the Churches of weightiest authority, although this condition is not likely, he should hold them to be of equal value. (Bk 2. section 8, par 12)

From Augustine's 396 CE writings, two things are apparent: there is no centralized authority in the Christian Church [no pope], and there is not unanimous agreement on what constitutes Holy Writ. The Gospels were held by

local churches and were subject to *improvement* so that they would better support the dogmas of the catholic [universal] Churches.

When there is no canonical text, how much mischief can a scribe cause by attempting to improve upon the words, say, Matthew wrote? Can words be literally placed in Jesus' mouth, words that He did not say? Do you remember exactly what you said yesterday? How about four years ago? You remember the conversation; you remember what it was about; you might even have notes taken during the conversation. But do you remember your exact words? Do you remember the other person's exact words? Or will you, referring to your notes, place your speech, your cadence, your syntax into the other person's mouth as you *accurately* convey what the other person said?

Matthew chapter 28 is not a firsthand account to post-Resurrection events, but relies upon Mark's gospel. Luke may or may not have been a firsthand witness to the Resurrection, but he certainly was not one of the ten first disciples to whom Jesus appeared about a day after He was returned to life. Hence, Luke was not a firsthand witness to the things that John records in chapter 20 of his gospel. While Matthew would have been a firsthand witness, the last chapter of his gospel has been made to agree with Mark's gospel, with Mark not being present when Jesus appeared to the assembled first disciples. Therefore, it was left to John near the end of the 1st-Century to set matters straight: it is John's gospel that becomes the arbiter of post-Resurrection events.

If a disciple is troubled by the discrepancies between the gospel accounts of what happened after Calvary, the disciple will be far more troubled by post Second Passover proclamations made by the ten traitorous Christian theologians that function as the ten spies (from Num chap 14) that returned from the Promised Land with negative reports.

How can Christians believe contradictory gospels? If a gospel account is wrong on one point, can it be trusted on other points? And here is where faith enters the deconstruction of Scripture ...

Does any gospel account claim to be the authoritative Word of God?

Luke writes,

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1–4 emphasis added)

Two are not "many" ... John's gospel is decades in the future, and only Matthew's and Mark's gospel have the possibility of predating Luke's gospel. So what happened to these *many narratives* that were compiled by others? Apparently they were not accepted as authoritative by the majority of the catholic Churches, meaning that spiritually dead men in the decades and centuries after

the Crucifixion and Resurrection determined which narratives were in and which were out.

Going to Galilee and going fishing are references to the same going to Galilee, but it wasn't Jesus who told Peter to go fishing: Peter told Peter to go fishing. It was time to get back to work, and Peter was a fisherman. James and John were fishermen. It would have been reasonable to return to fishing. After all, groceries cost money. And Jesus was no longer there. Judas Iscariot kept the moneybag and he was gone. So it was reasonable for the disciples that were from Galilee to return to Galilee and return to their previous vocations—and because seven of them did go fishing when they were to stay in Jerusalem, Jesus had to *reel* them back in and return them to Jerusalem. And years later, the editor[s] of Matthew's and Mark's gospels shortened the above and simply had Jesus telling the disciples to go to Galilee. The one[s] doing the editing didn't understand the significance of Peter going fishing.

Does this mean that the gospels are not to be believed? NO! But they are to be treated as texts, as narrative accounts, as accounts similar to what will be produced by endtime disciples who write about what happens after the Second Passover liberation of Israel. Not all accounts will be of equal worth. And three hundred years into the Millennium, edits will have been made on the various surviving accounts so that some aspects of the narrative are emphasized and some things are minimized.

It is John who reaches across time and languages as the brother and partner to us now. It is *Philadelphia* that reaches backward to take the baton from John.

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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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