

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *Passover and the calendar*.

[Printable/viewable PDF format](#)

# Weekly Readings

## For the Sabbath of April 5, 2008

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 1 Samuel chapter 20, verses 18 through 31.*

**Commentary:** In the story of Saul seeking David's life when the new moon was to be observed, a special meal was eaten both the first and second nights of the month. The new moon was not treated as a holy convocation, but a commemoration more closely aligned with the Passover and the Wave Sheaf Offering. David's presence at the meal was expected, and his absence required a very good excuse. Saul had planned to kill David at the meal, but David was in hiding. And the story is here referenced because it was the practice of early Israel to observe the "new moon" with a commemoration on both the 29<sup>th</sup> and on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month.

It should be noted that on the new moon referenced, the crescent had been observed the first night (1 Sam 20:24); nevertheless, the planned festival meal for the 30<sup>th</sup> was still prepared and eaten. Thus, regardless of which night the new crescent was observed, the festival was kept for two nights.

Question: was the new moon when Saul planned to kill David that of the seventh month? That is a possibility, but there is no indication in Scripture that it was. For if it was, David should not have been sacrificing in the city of Bethlehem (the excuse Jonathan gives), but at the tabernacle. So it can be assumed that this new moon was one of the eleven or twelve to occur during the calendar year.

\*

A lunar month is approximately 29½ days long, and a month begins with the first observed sighting of the new crescent, not with the dark of the moon, which was not referenced by Israel prior to the nation's Babylonian captivity. Thus the new moon of the following month will be seen on either the

29<sup>th</sup> day or on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the previous month, with early Israel making the observation of the crescent from the temple at Jerusalem after it was completed and for as long the priesthood was present in Jerusalem.

A solar year is 12.4 lunar months long (a lunar year is 354.37 days long); so to keep spring months in the spring of the year an extra month has to be occasionally inserted into the calendar. Since Passover is a spring festival and should always occur in the spring, not while it is still winter or in the fall, early Israel adopted the practice of inserting a month between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> months: this month is a winter month and is *Adar I* or *Adar Alef*. On these years, the regular month of *Adar* becomes *Adar II* or *Adar Beit*. Thus, the year always ends on the month of *Adar*, a prophetically significant point because of when the rebuilt temple was completed (Ezra 6:15).

The completion of the embarrassingly modest temple under Zerubbabel after Nebuchadnezzar razed the first temple in 586 BCE—completion after 70 years (516 BCE) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of *Adar*, seven weeks before the last high day of Unleavened Bread—is part of the poorly explicated seventy week prophecy given to Daniel; so for “Christians” who are unfamiliar with the sacred calendar, an event that occurs in *Adar* occurs on the last month of the year regardless of whether the year has twelve or thirteen months.

After the Maccabean revolt, Judea was a difficult area for an occupying power to rule: the Hasmoneans’ defeat of the Seleucid emperor convinced this family dynasty that God was with them even though neither the Ark of the Covenant [the promise and presence of God] or the Urim and Thummim [the judgment of God] was present in the temple. Rome’s rule over the land was interrupted between 40–37 BCE by the return of a Hasmonean king supported by Parthia, and Jewish patriots rebelled in 66 CE, then twice more before Emperor Hadrian expelled Jews from Judea and did what he could to outlaw observance of the oracles of God in 135 CE.

With the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, setting a calendar by direct observation of the new crescent at Jerusalem was no longer possible, and establishing a calendar underwent a period of confusion somewhat analogous to the confusion presently seen among the splintered churches of God. But in the 4<sup>th</sup>-Century CE, Hillel II improved a calendar based on calculations, and he apparently began the practices of making predictable set-asides. This is the calendar still used by Rabbinical Judaism and the calendar that was used by the former Worldwide Church of God (WCG). It is also used by the major splinters of the former WCG.

The supporting reasons for the former WCG’s use of Hillel II’s calculated calendar all point back to a people scattered worldwide, for a worldwide work needs a unified set of dates on which holy day observances occur.

The logic for Israel worldwide keeping the Sabbath on the same solar day is inherent in the concept of one God, one creation, one holy people. There are not many gods, nor are there many Sabbaths. There is one of each. And a person doesn't think about how much intervention humankind has in when the Sabbath occurs; for the weekly calendar cycle has not been broken since manna was given, beginning on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the second month ... Israel set out from Elim on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the second month (Ex 16:1), and the whole congregation grumbled against Moses and Aaron, with the Lord most likely not responding to this grumbling until the tent was set up that evening, now the 16<sup>th</sup>. The Lord told Moses He would send meat at twilight, and bread the following morning. Although linguistically, the quail could have been sent at twilight between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup>, the context strongly suggests that the quail was sent the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup>, and manna came the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>—and typologically, this fits with God sealing Noah in the Ark on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the second month. Noah's Ark is a type of the Ark of the Covenant, which was a type of disciples, born of spirit as sons of God. Jesus said He was the reality of the bread that came down from heaven (John chap 6). Thus, the sending of manna and receipt of the spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9) are analogous events, and deliverance via Noah's Ark and deliverance via the promise of salvation are analogous events. It holds then that where ambiguity exists between whether manna came on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> or on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> of the second month, God sealing the Ark on the 17<sup>th</sup> day supports manna coming on the 17<sup>th</sup> day, but does not preclude manna having come on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Likewise, the sealing or empowerment of disciples at the beginning of the seven endtime years of tribulation will most likely occur on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the second month, for Jesus said that as it was in the time of Noah so will it be when the Son of Man is revealed. All of the events associated with the second Passover, which includes the giving of manna and the sealing of Noah's Ark as well as the sacrifice of the paschal lamb for Israelites either defiled at the first Passover or on a long journey—all of these events occur between the 14<sup>th</sup> day and the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the second month. Whether all of these events occur on one or two or three days will become self-evident when they happen.

A calendar needs to be set so that Israel knows when to take the Passover sacraments, and the calendar must reflect the needs of the theology.

The concept of every Jew worldwide observing the Sabbath on the same day has inherent logic: the Sabbath, under the Sinai covenant, was a memorial to the creation of the earth (Ex 20:11), and God did not rest on many days, but on the seventh day. But a problem exists when Judaism circumnavigates the world, a problem inherent within observing the Sabbath as an Israelite journeys east and another journeys west from Jerusalem. If the one who journeys east goes far enough, the Israelite will meet the one who has been journeying west—and they will not be keeping the Sabbath on the same day. The Israelite who journeyed west will keep the Sabbath a day later than the other even though both Israelites have faithfully kept the Sabbath every seventh day; hence, the need for an International Dateline, an arbitrary line that begins or ends the solar day. It just won't do to have one synagogue in Panama keeping the Sabbath a day later than another synagogue in Costa Rica, just

because of the direction the ten male Jews necessary to form a synagogue took to arrive in Central America. Logic dictates that both Central American synagogues keep the same day as the Sabbath. Therefore, mutually respected authorities must make decisions that address illogical situations, and eliminate ambiguities. Moses never anticipated how far Israelites would be dispersed before God set His hand to gather a people to Him. Moses never asked the Lord what to do about a spring festival that occurs in the fall of the year, or what to do when the Sabbath drifts with the setting of the sun.

Another example to consider when thinking about problems inherent with observation of the weekly Sabbath with or without an International Dateline: if a Sabbath-keeper in Nome, Alaska, were to, on Friday evening, fly west to visit a cousin across the Bering Strait a hundred miles away [a real world possibility], the person could miss keeping the Sabbath for by the time the plane landed, the dark portion of the first day of the week would be beginning in Siberia. Would this Sabbath-keeper now not keep the Sabbath for a week, going thirteen days without entering into God's rest? Thus, while an International Dateline solves one problem it will create another, the reason why authority has been invested in disciples, the reality of the Urim and Thummim, to bind or loose in this world when these disciples are clothed with power from on high.

To set a calendar requires mutually respected authority. In the first temple, the judgment of God concerning matters was determined by the Urim and Thummim, which were missing from the second temple. Thus, Judaism formed the Sanhedrin to judge matters, and the traditions that developed from the precedents the Sanhedrin established—the oral Torah as inscribed in the Mishnah—remain as the mutually accepted authority that governs Judaism, with great antiquity now ascribed to the oral Torah.

But the traditions of Judaism imbed lawlessness within the practices of Sabbatarian disciples through causing what seems reasonable to overwrite what God says. Plus, disciples are today the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16), and the power Jesus gave to disciples to forgive sin or to withhold forgiveness (John 20:23) is the power of the Urim and Thummim; so Sabbatarian disciples have no need to follow the tradition of Judaism.

In an actual example of the problem of Judaism's imbedded lawlessness, for decades Sabbatarian disciples within church of God's Alaskan fellowships kept the Sabbath from sundown to sundown as scripturally commanded; yet Sabbatarian disciples within the church of God's European fellowships kept the Sabbath as Rabbinical Judaism did in high northern latitudes, from 6:00 pm (or 5:30 p.m.) to 6:00 p.m., a practice whose justification comes solely from convenience. Eventually, the church of God compromised with Scripture and adopted for Alaska the European practice of Rabbinical Judaism of beginning the Sabbath at a fixed hour. There was no scriptural command to do so, but the administrative headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God in Pasadena, no one there being Alaskan, resolved to fix what wasn't broken, thereby breaking the faith of previously faithful congregations ... the difficulties associated with beginning the Sabbath at 2:30 pm Friday afternoons caused disciples to mentally separate themselves from the world around them. Faith was alive and

well; for telling an employer that the person would be stopping work and leaving for the week by 2:30 Friday afternoon required the person to actively exercise the faith within the person, and assuaging the guilt that came from working after it was dark on Friday afternoon allowed most of the Sabbatarian disciples to begin observing Sunday within a decade.

Rabbinical Judaism has no authority to establish the practices of the churches of God. In fact, it is to the churches of God's shame that Rabbinical Judaism does not look to the sect of the Nazarenes [Christendom] for examples of how to observe the oracles of God. And the practices of Christendom have been truly shameful: John Chrysostom, in the autumn of 387 CE, preached in Antioch a sermon against observing the Sabbaths of God, and in this sermon he acknowledged that if the feasts of God are the true high Sabbaths, the holidays of 4<sup>th</sup>-Century Christendom were lies. Well, Chrysostom was correct: the holidays of the Roman Church are lies. Established solely by the authority of men, the holidays of, particularly, Christmas and Easter are imitations of the Sabbaths of God with Easter being an especially offensive holiday for it hinders and/or actually prevents disciples from taking the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed.

The inherent inaccuracy of rabbinical Judaism's calculated calendar is apparent in the practice of observing Passover on two consecutive nights, and Feast of Trumpets [*Rosh Hashanah*] on two consecutive days ... since the destruction of the second temple, normative Jewish law has *Rosh Hashanah* observed on the first two days of the seventh month [*Tishrei*], with these two days said to be *Yoma Arichtah* or one long day.

When the church of God began regularly observing the high Sabbaths of God, the problem Emperor Constantine noted at the Council of Nicea became immediately apparent: Jesus was not crucified twice. As the Passover Lamb of God, He was crucified once. The sacraments are to be taken on the night that He was betrayed (1 Cor 11:23), not the following night, the dark portion of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib. And having congregations observing, say, the Feast of Trumpets [*Rosh Hashanah*] on two different days in the northern hemisphere, and then observing the Feast on two differing days approximately six months later in the southern hemisphere was not the way to run a worldwide work from a single headquarters located in North America. So the church of God reasoned with itself and concluded that it would be better for Observant Christians in New Zealand to keep the Passover on one date in the autumn of the year, and Trumpets on one date in the spring of the year even though Rabbinical Judaism keeps the Passover on two nights just in case the calculated calendar is wrong.

Something went wrong with the church of God as something went wrong within Judaism. And what went wrong was the concept of a centralized work, a single administrative headquarters, the insertion of men between the disciple and Christ Jesus.

*The reader should now read 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 7 through 15.*

**Commentary:** If Paul believed that he robbed other churches by accepting support from these other churches when he was teaching the saints at Corinth, then Paul believed that moneys collected locally should be spent locally. And the principle of local autonomy is imbedded within the practice of spending moneys collected in the locality in which they were collected.

The practice of the teachers of Israel not asking, even when in need, for tithes or donations—this is the Apostle Paul's test to determine genuine ministers of God—will also promote local autonomy, for the minister or teacher will have to have at least part-time employment in order to provide for himself and his family. It is difficult to travel from congregation to congregation on one's own funds. And certainly the type of wealth that the Roman Church has accumulated is not possible if the minister or teacher keeps his hands in his own pockets.

To build a work on the foundation that the Apostle Paul laid (1 Cor 3:10-11) requires adherence to the principle of local autonomy. *The Philadelphia Church* is built on this principle. Therefore, calendar issues have not been previously discussed to any great extent, and if it were possible, they would not now be discussed. But because this year rabbinical Judaism's calculated calendar begins the new year before the crescent can be observed anywhere in North America, principles for locally establishing a calendar need to be discussed.

Passover is a spring festival. It is not a fall festival. So Passover needs to occur in a spring month. This means that the Equator will serve as an International Seasonal Dateline. If a congregation is south of the equator, Passover still occur in the spring of the year—and immediately the problems of Kenyan congregations rear up: as in the case of an Alaskan visiting relatives in Siberia will cause a local problem that needs to be addressed locally, Kenyan Sabbatarians in the north of the country will have to locally address the issue with Sabbatarians in the south of the country. As Alaskan disciples should have had the local congregational authority [through autonomy] to reject working at mundane occupations during the dark portion of the seventh day Sabbath [some disciples did reject what Pasadenadirected, thereby causing a further erosion of authority], Kenyan congregations retain full authority to handle their own calendar issues. But the principle is that Passover is a spring festival that should be set for the spring of the year, a radical departure from what now occurs in New Zealand and Australia; for present day Jerusalem is not the city to which disciples look. Heavenly Jerusalem is, and time doesn't exist in heavenly Jerusalem. All time is local.

The principle for setting the calendar should be that the new year will begin with the first observable crescent moon that occurs after the spring equinox. If the first full moon after the equinox is used, the setting of Passover on 14<sup>th</sup> of the first month becomes a problem in years such as 2008 when the full moon occurred within a day or so of the equinox, and weeks before weather patterns indicated that winter was over in the northern hemisphere. These problems were ameliorated by observation of how

developed was the barley harvest when Sabbatarians were mostly confined to Judea and the Sanhedrin could examine the status of local barley fields ... prior to the medieval period, Judaism's tradition held that the first month could not begin until barley was ripe or nearly ripe. But barley is not harvested in Alaska in the spring of the year: it is harvested on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula in August before it is fully ripe. It will be cut for hay or silage, for it will not reliably ripen on the Peninsula; so the disciple who argues for using ripening barley to establish the new year will begin the year just before snow flies and winter sets in.

Hillel II's calculated calendar inserts set-asides for the convenience of Judaism so that *Rosh Hashanah* does not occur on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday—and the beginning of months and the setting of the calendar would not be a problem if an artificial date could be sanctified and made holy by men [and women]. And every possible date is to some extent an artificial date: in the case of the former Worldwide Church of God, Herbert Armstrong, by simply declaring that the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God (Rom 3:2), deferred calendar questions to the authority invested in Rabbinical Judaism, thereby shifting any calendar controversy away from himself, a practice that allowed him to have congregations in the southern hemisphere to theologically stand on their heads to wash feet on the same night that their northern hemisphere brothers washed feet ... again, observation of the Passover in the fall of the year in the southern hemisphere reveals the fundamental fallacy imbedded within the concept of a centralized Church with a single headquarters.

Again, as an International Dateline is necessary to establish when a solar day begins, the Equator serves as an international dateline to establish when the solar seasons begin ... when Jesus, the day of His resurrection, came and stood among ten of His disciples, showing them His hands, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld" (John 20:22-23). Plus, earlier, when Jesus told Peter that "I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:19), the key Jesus gave Peter (the keys to the kingdom of heaven) was understanding that spiritual birth was real birth in the heavenly realm with this second birth coming from receipt of the divine breath of God, thereby making the ability to bind or loose an attribute of having received the Holy Spirit and actual life in the heavenly realm. Therefore, coupling these two passages to John recording that sin is the transgression of the law or lawlessness (1 John 3:4) what's seen is that disciples are not given authority to change the law (that would not forgive sin but would remove the basis for determining what is sin) but to cover transgressions of the law in a way analogous to the Levitical priesthood's sacrifice of bulls and goats. Disciples are not given the authority necessary to sanctify secular holidays. Nor would disciples born of Spirit even attempt to change times and the law. That is the attempted action of the lawless one, the man of perdition (Dan 7:25; 2 Thess 2:3-12).

The approximately 300 bishops (of 1,800 bishops) who answered Emperor Constantine's call to assemble on the Black Sea resort city of Nicea for an all-expense paid conflagration to resolve schisms

dividing the visible Christian Church were not about to tell the Emperor that neither he nor they had the authority to sanctify feast days or Sabbaths other than the ones given Israel by Moses. So when Constantine, a secular pagan autocrat, stated that it was unworthy of Christians to follow the practice of the Jews, who were Christendom's adversaries; that Christians should have no point in common with Jews, the Emperor as the agent of God separated visible Christendom from God. Yes, Constantine acted as God's servant when he delivered the Church into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon, Satan the devil. As King Nebuchadnezzar had acted as an agent of God when he took Jerusalem captive and led Israel off to Babylon as a slave people, Constantine led the Church into spiritual captivity, slavery from which escape was impossible for the next 1200 years. Even today, conciliar Christendom remains a captive nation, and a nation that does not want to leave sin and servitude to the prince of this world. So we shall leave conciliar Christendom to lick the boots of its master, a murderer from the beginning.

As late as 300 CE, the Eastern Churches at Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia still established a calendar for observing the Christian Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib. They may or may not have coordinated their calendar with Judaism's calculated calendar, but there was no reason to do so: the principle that the first month of the year occurs in the spring of the year was sufficient for a church to locally set the date for taking the Passover sacraments—and it is here where all of the preceding has been going.

Christ Jesus is the Head of the Church, one Church, one Body, not many churches. And if He is the Head, He is not at any geographical location within time and space. Therefore, every fellowship has the same responsibility and authority as every other fellowship to establish a calendar and set the date for Passover observance (which is always on the dark portion of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib) on the Georgian calendar.

*The Philadelphia Church* is one of seven endtime fellowships, not an era or age that has passed. It is not the one true church, but one of seven theological fellowships that together form the Body of Christ. It is the one fellowship, though, that keeps and has kept Jesus' word about patient [endurance](#).

The seven named churches in Revelation that coexisted on that ancient Roman mail route through Asia Minor, each able to receive letters from one another, form the lively representation of seven endtime churches that will also coexist, each able to telephone the other, on the Lord's day or halfway through the seven last years of tribulation. Thus, as the Eastern Churches at Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia established a calendar and apparently shared this calendar, *The Philadelphia Church* has established principles for locally establishing calendars:

1. As the Council of Nicea did not declare Alexandrian or Roman calendar calculations as normative, instead giving to the Bishop of Alexandria the privilege of announcing the annual date of Easter, *The Philadelphia Church* exercises its privilege within the greater construct



of local autonomy to set forth principles for locally establishing a high holy day calendar and to decree that Christians are not under any obligation to follow Judaism's calculated calendar.

2. The new sacred year will begin with the first new moon after the spring equinox, not with the full moon after the equinox, nor with the spring equinox for the opposing hemisphere. The first full moon after the equinox will too often occur before the barley is in the milk, and in the Millennium, sacrifices for Unleavened Bread and for Tabernacles shall be the same (Ezek 45:21-25), suggesting once humankind is liberated from indwelling sin and death that no separation exists between the early harvest and the latter harvest of God.
3. The new moon is the first locally observed crescent, weather permitting, and this "observable" crescent will set shortly after sunset. So if the new moon "sets" before or near sunset, it will not be considered observable even if could be seen throughout the day because of rare atmospheric conditions.
4. Because the new moon is the first locally observed crescent, local autonomy will prevent the occurrence of high Sabbaths universally occurring on fixed dates on the solar calendar [Georgian calendar], meaning that the high Sabbaths should truly be seasonally fixed according to a seasonal dateline as the weekly Sabbath is hourly fixed according to an International Dateline.

The above principles are no way to run a worldwide work, and that is as it should be: locally setting a calendar absolutely defeats any centralization of authority and greatly hinders even regionalized authority. Although an abundance of vain men exist who would stand between a disciple and Christ if allowed, the issues associated with setting a calendar both expose these men and hamper attempts by them to gather power to themselves. Therefore, every Sabbatarian disciple needs to avoid those men who would have them either adopt Judaism's calculated calendar or would have them look to present day Jerusalem when setting a calendar. Every congregation needs to look for itself for the new crescent moon.

\*

The person conducting the Sabbath service should close services with two hymns, or psalms, followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.

\* \* \* \* \*

"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."

