

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 *make straight the way*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of April 7, 2007

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

The disobedience to which God consigned every person (Rom 11:32) because of the transgression of the first Adam made every person a bondservant to sin and to the prince of this world. No one fathered by Adam, regardless of the generations removed, has been free to keep the commandments of God; thus, all of humankind, circumcised and uncircumcised, has been under sin and under condemnation, for the righteous requirement of the law mandates that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23) even when this sin is not counted against the sinner where there is no law (Rom 5:13). Yes, even when the sinner is not responsible for his or her transgressions of the law (not responsible because the person has been born a bondservant to the prince of this world), the sinner will die to satisfy the righteous requirement of the law. And it is here where the logic of Christendom must be examined: if the sinner dead in his or her trespasses and in the uncircumcision of the flesh is made alive in Christ Jesus, with Him having forgiven the sinner of all his or her trespasses "by canceling the record of debt that stood against [the sinner] with its legal demands" (Col 2:14), then why did those who were made alive die and are now buried and awaiting resurrection when judgments are to be revealed upon Jesus' return (1 Cor 4:5)?

The "cheap" answer is that the sinner's immortal soul that was "alive" but condemned to the flames of hell where it roasts as meat in a rotisserie, charring but never fully being reduced to ashes, is made "alive" by entering into the presence of God. Death, now, is separation from God, and life is presence with God. But this utterly disagrees with Scripture, which has eternal life or everlasting life being the free gift of God (again, Rom 6:23), and has the Jews who were actually hearing Jesus' spoken words being "the dead" who would pass from death to life without coming under judgment if they heard Jesus' words and believed the one who sent Him (John 5:24). So "the dead" who were to bury the dead were not the immortal souls of Pharisees who were to bury other immortal souls, but living human beings to whom the Father had not yet given life (v. 21). These dead were in the presence of Jesus, the only son of *Theos* (John 3:16) who entered His creation (John 1:3) as the man Jesus (v. 14); yet, even in the presence of Jesus, the dead Pharisees were not made alive, for they did not hear and believe.

The better answer is that the flesh remains consigned to sin and death, what Paul realizes (Rom 7:13-25); however, the new creature, born of Spirit as a son of God [this new creature's father is not the first Adam, but God], is born under no condemnation (Rom 8:1) and is not under the dominion of sin (Rom 6:14), but has been free to keep the commandments by faith—and under the second covenant (Deu 29:1), keeping the commandments is not too hard for the born of Spirit Israelite, nor are these commandments far from this new creature (Deu 30:11). Rather, the laws of God are written on two tablets of flesh, the heart and mind, of those who have been born of Spirit and who have cleansed their hearts by faith.

The new creature that is born of Spirit is not a regenerated immortal soul, but “a new creature” that did not previously exist until the Father drew the person from this world (John 6:44) and raised this spiritually dead person (again, John 5:21) by giving this person a second life, domiciled in the same tent of flesh as had been domiciled the old creature or self. Jesus, now, to whom all judgment has been given (*v.* 22), will or will not as He chooses give life to the tent of flesh by having that which is mortal put on immortality, and that which is perishable put on imperishability. If Jesus denies knowing a person in the person's judgment, this person's tent of flesh will remain mortal and perishable, and will be utterly consumed in the lake of fire. And Jesus has already promised that He will deny knowing all who teach a gospel of lawlessness regardless of the good and mighty works the person has done in His name (Matt 7:21-23).

Now, with this as background, disciples need to visit or revisit the third chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

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The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Romans chapter 3.

Commentary: The Apostle Paul asks one of the most overlooked questions in Christendom: “But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world?” (*vv.* 5-6).

In a human way of thinking, if God were unrighteous when He inflicts His wrath on humankind, God would not be qualified to judge the world, for God would also be a sinner. However, this is not and never will be the case: God is justified in inflicting wrath on sinful humankind. So in a human way of thinking, God's wrath is His righteous judgment, manifest in the death of humankind. But why is God angry with humankind when He has consigned all to disobedience? What does God expect from human beings that He has delivered to the prince of this world? What does He expect from the prince of this world, who holds this position at the pleasure of God? And the human way of thinking becomes irrational, and resorts to easy answers such as *God's ways are not human ways*, or *God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy*, both of which are true but do not reveal the truth.

One thing must be held in mind: God has consigned all of humankind to disobedience so that every transgression of a human being prior to being liberated from sin will be covered by the person being a bondservant to Satan as the physically circumcised nation of Israel in Egypt was physical bondservants to Pharaoh. This does not mean that Satan will pay the death penalty for every transgression. Not at all; for all have died even though no sin was counted against the person. The death of the flesh pays the penalty for the sins of the flesh, just as the death of the “old self” or “old nature” in baptism and being crucified with Christ Jesus pays the penalty for the unbelief and

disobedience of this old nature, which the flesh received from God with human birth by the water of the womb.

If a person has not been free to keep the commandments of God, how can God in righteousness inflict His wrath upon the person, the question to which Paul returns in his analogy of the potter making vessels of honor and vessels of wrath from the same lump? And the answer goes back to Paul writing, “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts” (Rom 2:14-15) ... the work of the law is to produce righteousness by faith, with this faith causing the person to rebel against the ways of this world and its prince, and to show love for God and neighbor. There is no law against love. Rather, the law defines love in earthly or physical terms.

So what purpose exists for God’s wrath, which is a display of His righteousness? And here disciples must cease thinking in a human way.

How can God judge this world if He allows the affairs of this world to run their course without intervening by inflicting His wrath as His testimony against lawlessness? He must both threaten destruction for sin, and must execute that destruction regardless of whether He has consigned all to sin. Otherwise, He condones sin, and even encourages sin by not intervening. But because He has consigned all to sin, He must also pay the death penalty for having consigned all to sin. Yes, God requires of Himself the death penalty with the execution of this death penalty only occurring in this physical realm where the transgressions of all whom He has consigned to sin have occurred.

The Creator of all that physically is—the *Logos* who was *Theos*, and who was with *Theon* from the beginning (John 1:1-2)—is the one who was seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders (Ex 24:9-11), and is the one who as His only Son physically died at Calvary as the propitiation for sin in this world. His death at Calvary is the reality of the goat sacrificed on the altar on *Yom Kipporim*; His bearing the sins of Israel whom He covers with His mantle of righteousness is the reality of the *Azazel* goat, which has the sins of Israel read over its head before being lead into a far wilderness by the hand of a fit man ... a teaching of silliness has entered into Sabbatarian Christianity. To digress for a moment: questions of food and drink, and regard for a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath are shadows of things to come, the reality of which is Christ Jesus (Col 2:16-17). This is true. But some spiritual infants have begun to teach that to keep a festival day is analogous to looking at a picture of Jesus when Jesus is knocking at the door. In Scripture, disciples actually see Jesus knocking at a door (Rev 3:20), and the time setting is the Lord’s day (Rev 1:10), that period when the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man (*cf.* Rev 11:15-18; Dan 7:9-14). So the time setting remains futuristic. But the logic that has a picture of Jesus being the shadow of, say, the futuristic second Passover liberation of Israel [the event that begins the seven endtime years of tribulation], or of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh [Joel 2:28 – this occurs when the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man halfway through the seven endtime years], or of the Resurrection of Firstfruits [at the end of the seven endtime years, and portrayed by the last High Day of Unleavened Bread], or of the great White Throne Judgment [the Last Great Day, which occurs after the thousand year long reign of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords] is a logic of willful disobedience and unbelief. The spiritual infant who utters such nonsense merely does not want to go up to heavenly Jerusalem where the Apostle Paul laid the foundation for the house of God.

This infant would rather stay home and suckle milk from the epistles of Paul as if these epistles were the many teats of Artemis of Ephesus. This person is not spiritually minded, and should be avoided.

The righteousness of God requires that God inflict His wrath on this world, not exactly a message that will endear disciples to those teachers of Israel who make such statements.

If, however, God does not inflict His wrath on this world has not God concealed from the world the criteria for condemnation? Yes, He gave His commandments to Moses, whom secular apologists explained away through much evidence and lack of evidence. Yes, He made a covenant with Israel, abolished now two millennia ago. So how can God judge the world if He does not first send someone to make straight the way to Him? How can God judge the world if He doesn't reveal Himself to the world before executing judgment on the world?

All people of the Book hold that God has revealed Himself through literary texts, but since meaning must be assigned to words, and since someone must select which texts will be preserved (canonized) and which ones are spurious, does not God commit judgment of this world to human beings if He only reveals Himself through literary texts? How can a person be certain that Isaiah saw a vision, or that Paul saw a vision, or that John saw a vision, or that Mohamed saw visions, or the Joseph Smith saw visions, or that Ellen G. White saw visions, or that Loma Armstrong saw a vision? Do all of these visions agree? They don't, do they? So whose visions are genuine? Most people of the Book will acknowledge that the prophet Isaiah's are, but is this merely because they are older than, say, Joseph Smith's or Ellen G. White's? Observant Judaism will not, today, admit that the Apostle Paul's visions are genuine; nor will Judaism or Christendom admit that Mohamed's visions are genuine; nor will those disciples made by Herbert Armstrong admit that visions seen by either Joseph Smith or Ellen G. White are genuine. The people of the Book are about as unified in belief as the stone conglomerate is in crystalline structure. And this should not be.

The way of God must be made straight, and the way to God is not through earthly thoughts or deeds. The way to God is not through the sword or the bomb or prophecies about what happens to physical peoples and nations. The way to God is not through the stomach or material wealth or the good works of global television ministries. It is solely through repentance, and by faith turning from the ways of this world to live by the laws of God ... every human being who has drawn the breath of life will be judged by Christ Jesus, but not before God inflicts His wrath on this world so there is a clear delineation of what constitutes godly behavior, the criteria through which judgment will occur.

If the focus of a ministry is on earthly things or on earthly fulfillment of biblical prophecies, the ministry is not of God.

If the focus of a ministry is on what people eat or drink, or on what people wear, or on biological and psychological gender identity, or on whether foreskins have been clipped, the ministry is not of God.

If the focus of the ministry is on the kingdoms of this world, the ministry is of the prince of this world, Satan the devil, who has disguised himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:15).

Now, look at those prophecy pundits who point to the modern nation of Israel's return to Judea and who expect a united Europe to be led by an endtime pope and who see yet another Christian crusade to push Islam from the Holy Land—are these prophecy

pundits not earthly minded, when Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world nor from this world (John 18:36)? And if these prophecy pundits are earthly minded—and they all are—then they are not of God; they are not to be believed.

The problem faced by the Apostle Paul can be seen in the above paragraphs: if the focus of a ministry is not on keeping the commandments by faith, then the next generation of this ministry will use it to teach disciples to practice lawlessness and return to being bondservants of sin. And this also should not be—and this is why God, in His righteousness, must inflict His wrath on this world.

The yardstick of earthly minded legalism will keep disciples focused on commandment keeping, the reasonable expectation of all who are of the household of God. But earthly minded legalism will also cause disciples to return to physical circumcision, a spiritual abomination in this era of cup to cup (Matt 26:27-29) ... a covenant exists “between the cuttings,” that space between when blood is shed and when blood will again be shed. The cup of Christ is the blood of Christ: it is His shed blood for the covenant by which sins are forgiven. And He will not drink of this cup again until His kingdom comes. Thus, the covenant of Grace extends from when Jesus ate the Passover on the Preparation Day to when He will again eat the Passover [i.e., drink from the cup], with the blood of endtime saints representing the blood of His Body. And what should be seen is the movement from physical to spiritual; from wine to the blood of disciples; from the law written on tablets of stone to the law written on tablets of flesh, the hearts and minds of disciples. Physical circumcision of natural Israel becomes spiritual circumcision of the cleansed [by faith] hearts of spiritual Israel. The flesh was under the law written on stone tablets; the desires of the heart and the thoughts of the mind are under the law written on tablets of flesh. The yardstick of legalism measures only the appearance and actions of the flesh; so this yardstick needs to be burned to ashes in the lake of fire, along with all who use it.

Without legalism, however, those disciples who want to be Jews and who say that they are Jews but are not have nothing onto which to hang as they wander this earth, misleading other disciples and misrepresenting God, but taking in millions to publish slick magazines and air television broadcasts on which they offer the mystery of ages, codified in the writings of a racist.

Harsh word? Yes, they are—and they need to be as the way to God is made straight before a born of Spirit nation of Israel.

Harsh words (as strong as those spoken by John the Baptist and as forceful as those spoken by the prophet Elijah) are needed to turn minds set on earthly fulfillments of biblical prophecies back to God before He strikes the earth with utter destruction. Therefore, let it be said: **All who focus on earthly nations and earthly fulfillments of biblical prophecies are of the prince of the world, Satan the devil! No exceptions.** No exceptions are made for Muslim scholars. No exceptions for rabbinical scholars, nor any for Christian theologians and apologists—the person who looks at shadows and declares that these shadows fulfill biblical prophecies is spiritually blind, and teaches as an instrument of the prince of this world, who would like nothing better than to devour all sons of God.

Returning for a moment to those who compare the festivals of God to a picture of Jesus: the Genesis one creation account [the so-called “P” account] is the abstract for the plan of God; and in this abstract, the resurrection of firstfruits occurs on the fourth day, not on the seventh. The entire fall High Day season occurs after the resurrection of

firstfruits. So the festivals of God, shadows of Christ and of His intervention in human affairs, will not be fulfilled with Jesus' return [the Second Advent], but will only be moving into a higher theological/taxonomical hierarchal order, the Millennium reign of Christ Jesus. The plan of God will not be complete until the new Jerusalem arrives. Thus, the shadows of the festival days will not be fulfilled by their spiritual realities until Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire.

The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law through the things that have been created; thus, there is no excuse for not keeping the principles of the law. The Law and the Prophets [i.e., the Old Testament] bear witness to this righteousness of God, which comes to Israel by hearing the words of Jesus and believing the one who sent Jesus (*cf.* John 5:24; Rom 4:22). All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God (*cf.* 1 John 1:7-9; Rom 4:23). Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). All have transgressed the law because all have been consigned to disobedience by God so that He could have mercy on all (Rom 11:32). Until the new self is born of Spirit—born with no condemnation, hence liberated from disobedience—all of humankind was unable to keep the law. Therefore, since the righteousness requirement of the law (Rom 8:1-4) must be fulfilled through death, and since God consigned [concluded] all to sin, God canceled the record of debt that stood against every human being with its legal demands (Col 2:13-14) through the shed blood of Christ Jesus (Rom 4:25) which is to be received by faith, with this faith now causing disciples to keep the precepts of the law, thereby causing uncircumcision of hearts to be counted as circumcision (Rom 2:26-29). And it is this latter connection that has been missed by those who are earthly-minded.

Note the above: *since the righteousness requirement of the law must be fulfilled through death, and since God concluded all to sin, God canceled the record of debt that stood against every human being with its legal demands through the shed blood of Christ Jesus.* God canceled the record of debt through the forgiveness of sin, with this forgiveness requiring the death of humankind's Creator, a high price paid out of love. The structure of human creation, as revealed in Scripture, does not allow for God in His righteousness not canceling the record of debt through the death of the one who consigned humankind to sin. Now, considering the price God has paid so that He did not have to kill the first Adam for eating forbidden fruit [i.e., determining for himself right and wrong], which disciple will go forth to willfully commit sin?

Who among all of those born of Spirit will sin willfully? Who will, knowing the commandments and having ready access to these ten living words, break a commandment for convenience sake? The answer is, most of Christendom, for one of those commandments requires that Israelites remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Will God forgive willful sin? He will not! For He did not cause this disciple to willfully sin—no disciple when born of Spirit is consigned to sin by God even though sin and death continues to dwell in the flesh of every disciple. Disciples are to flee sin, to resist sin, to make war with sin, and to overcome sin. When born from above, disciples are not to present themselves as willing servants to sin. Even though disciples are not under the law but under grace (Rom 6:15), disciples do not have permission to sin so that grace may abound (*v.* 1). Disciples are to “walk in newness of life” (*v.* 4) and they are to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). The disciple who says that he or she knows Jesus yet does not keep the commandments He uttered as the *Logos* from atop Mount Sinai is a liar! This disciple is not confused about what God expects from a Christian, but is an actual liar (*v.* 4) for though this person claims to *Know the Lord*, the person has no

knowledge of Christ Jesus. This is correct. The person does not know God even if he or she is absolutely convinced otherwise. The god this person worships and calls Lord is a demon who the person will not quit worshipping even after the death of a third part of humankind (Rev 9:20). Therefore, a straightforward statement can be made: the disciple who willfully sins is a hypocrite and will never enter the kingdom of God (Matt 5:20).

The disciple who knows to keep the Sabbath, but who does not because of inconvenience, or because of the image keeping the Sabbath would present professionally, or because he or she likes to fellowship with a lawless congregation—this disciple is a hypocrite who will not enter the kingdom of heaven unless he or she immediately repents. To continue in hypocrisy will cause this disciple's conscience to be seared by his or her lawlessness, and this disciple will never repent.

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The reader should now read Colossians chapter 1, verse 15, through verse 29.

Commentary: Christ Jesus created all things, visible and invisible, including thrones or dominions ... these dominions are principally the visible earthly kingdoms of this world, but they also include sin's dominion over all who remain consigned to sin—over all who are not now part of the harvest of firstfruits. Christ did this. Yes, He did it; He delivered Adam and Eve to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. He delivered the physically circumcised nation of Israel to the king of Babylon for the destruction of the flesh. The Apostle Paul commanded the saints at Corinth to deliver the man who was with his father's wife to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit might be saved when judgments are revealed (1 Cor 5:5). Christ Jesus has consistently delivered those who transgress His commands to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, and He will again deliver those who transgress the law to Satan by sending a great delusion over them so that they cannot repent (2 Thess 2:11-12).

Christ Jesus will deliver you to Satan if you do not turn from your lawlessness, repent, and by faith begin to keep the commandments to the best of your ability. And everyone has the ability to put God first in all things, including in those things that you presently do on the Sabbath. You are a liar if you say otherwise.

God delivered all of humankind to Satan (concluded all to disobedience) so that He could have mercy on all, with this mercy coming in the forgiveness of sin at the cost of Jesus' shed blood. He did not abolish the law, or the righteous requirements of the law. Rather, He canceled the record of debt that stood against each one of us with its legal demand for our life. Christ Jesus died so that we would not perish with the death of our flesh. So exercising the faith necessary to keep the commandments is really a rather small thing that is asked of each of us who has been purchased by the blood of Christ.

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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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