

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 *to prepare the way to God*.

## **Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of April 14, 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 person conducting the services should read or assign to be read John chapter 4.*

**Commentary:** Why did Jesus leave Judea when He learned that the Pharisees heard that He was making and baptizing more disciples than John, His cousin? Jesus was not in a competition with John to make disciples; He understood that John's ministry was one of preparing the way for Him, or making straight the way to God. And into what were Jesus' disciples baptizing? They had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Jesus hadn't died so they were not baptizing disciples into Jesus, or in the name of Jesus. Were they not, then, baptizing disciples unto repentance as John was doing?

If John's ministry had ended and ceased to be when Jesus' ministry began, then Jesus would not have left Judea when Pharisees heard that Jesus was making more disciples than John. Rather, the inverse appears true: making straight the way to God did not end with the coming of Jesus' earthly ministry. The way to God was not made straight with the beginning of Jesus' ministry, as evidenced by Jesus speaking throughout His earthly ministry in figures of speech (*cf.* John 16:25; Matt 13:34-35) ... if a person speaks in a figure of speech, the linguistic icons [the sound of the word or the appearance of the word] remain familiar to the audience, but the meaning or linguistic object assigned to the icon differs from common usage. The word uttered or written does not mean what it would seem to mean; therefore, the words Jesus spoke did not make straight the way to God. Rather, they concealed the things of God from those to whom these things were not given. Jesus' words were not the "plain truth," but the means to keep sealed knowledge of God from those whom the Father had not given to Jesus to keep. Thus, it remained the work of John's ministry, even as it declined in significance, to prepare the way to God, or to prepare the means for seeking God—and this way is through repentance, baptism, and the death of the former lawless self.

John came baptizing in water for repentance, but Jesus would come to baptize with Spirit and with fire (Matt 3:11), two baptisms separated by the revealing of judgment of first disciples, then the world.

John addressed the issue of Jesus' disciples baptizing additional disciples: "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ... The one who has the

bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:27, 29-30).

The friend of the bridegroom is a guest at the wedding supper. The friend is neither the *Bride*, nor the *Bridegroom*. And this friend is the one who teaches repentance as John preached repentance and baptized with water.

Again, guests at the wedding supper are not the Bride. But there is no spiritual category for those who are neither the Bridegroom, to whom all judgment has been given, nor the Bride, who will have her judgment revealed upon Jesus' return (1 Cor 4:5). The friend of the Bridegroom—the friend who made straight the way to God—rejoices greatly in the Bridegroom's voice, with this joy being complete in the ministry of the Bridegroom, a ministry that brings the Bride to the wedding supper. Therefore, when judgments are revealed, the "friends" of the Bridegroom who came as guests to the wedding supper become part of the Bride when their judgments are revealed, if these judgments have those who did a great work in Jesus' name also has these friends teaching disciples to keep the commandments of God and to live by every word that has come from God's mouth (Matt 4:4). The guest who did a great work in Jesus' name but who was a teacher of lawlessness will be denied when judgments are revealed (Matt 7:21-23). This denied guest did not know either the Father or the Son, and was not known by either.

The guests to the wedding supper are those friends of Jesus who have been called to make straight the way to God as John the Baptist was called to preach repentance and to baptize with water. If these guests preached repentance from lawlessness, they will become an honored part of the Bride as they are called forth and recognized in the revealing of their judgments. They become the Elect, the chosen, with one of them given authority over the household of God (Zech 3:7). This one and his friends "are men who are a sign," with this sign being "the Branch" (v. 8), Christ Jesus, the *stone* with seven eyes [facets] (compare v. 9 with Matt 16:18 & Rev 5:6). The men are of Christ Jesus.

Of all who are "friends" of the Bridegroom none are greater than John the Baptist (Matt 11:11), but the least member of the Bride will be greater than John, for the Bride has more honor than the greatest of the guests at a wedding supper. However, the promise of inheriting eternal life [meaning that they did not have eternal life while they lived physically] has been given to the prophets of old and to a few others. The angel told the prophet Daniel, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation [Israel] till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And **many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth** shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:1-2 emphasis added). The prophets of old do not "sleep" under the altar (Rev 6:9-11), but in the dust of the earth. And those whose names are written in the book of life shall receive life and honor, and shall no longer be guests and friends but sons of God, counted among the many brothers (Rom 8:29) of Jesus. However, those who were called to be prophets and to make straight the way to God, but who taught Israel to transgress the commandments of God, shall be resurrected to shame and contempt; for not all of Israel shall awaken from the dust at the end of seven years of tribulation, a time like none other. Those who were not "invited" to the wedding supper shall continue to sleep in the dust until the great White Throne Judgment.

The above is a concept that will cause some to stumble: the angel tells Daniel that “many” of those who are of Israel will be resurrected from death upon Jesus’ return, but the angel says nothing about those natural Israelites who are not of the “many.” And of the “many,” some will receive life and some will go into the lake of fire; so this resurrection is not of just those who will receive life. It is of those who are invited guests—and not all of Israel was invited to the wedding supper of the Bridegroom. Not all of Israel was called to make straight the way to God. Not all of Israel was friends of the Bridegroom.

Therefore, the person who sees a separation between the guests to the wedding supper and the Bride sees those who have been called to make straight the way to God and those who are born filled with the Holy Spirit during the endtime years of tribulation. The guests who have kept the commandments and who have taught others to do likewise (Matt 5:19) will be called great in the kingdom of heaven; they become the honored chosen when the Bridegroom comes and the doors are closed. And many are called to be disciples, but few will be chosen. Too many will be teachers of lawlessness, or will have attached themselves to teachers of lawlessness, with the most visible evidence of their lawlessness being the day upon which they attempt to enter into God’s rest.

The many teachers of lawlessness use the language of Scripture to excuse their transgressions. They will say that so & so is filled with the Holy Spirit, or that so & so has been baptized by the Holy Spirit, as if being filled with or baptized by the Holy spirit were a little thing ... receiving the Holy Spirit is not being “baptized” with the Holy Spirit [Πνευμα Ἅγιον]. To be baptized with the Holy Spirit, a person must be immersed or submersed in the Holy Spirit as was visibly seen when the Holy Spirit sounded like rushing wind and was seen with human eyes as tongues of fire (Acts chap 2).

What happened in Acts chapters two, ten, and nineteen were the three times when the Holy Spirit was visibly seen in a physical form to create the shadow and copy of when endtime disciples would be invisibly and spiritually baptized in the Holy Spirit. Remember, in all things pertaining to Scripture, the visible reveals the invisible (Rom 1:20), and the physical precedes the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46). And the reality of the endtime baptism of Israel with the Holy Spirit will occur at the second Passover liberation of Israel from indwelling sin and death. In the interplay of shadows that produces a heavenly holographic image from the recorded lives of historical figures, the visibly seen and perceived events of Acts chapter two form a portion of the image of the second Passover liberation of spiritually circumcised Israel from the law of sin and death that has resided in the flesh of every disciple since Jesus breathed on the ten (John 20:22).

The friend of the bridegroom is the one[s] who makes straight the way to God so that Israel as the Bride is ready to be baptized with Spirit when the seven endtime years of tribulation begin. Again, this friend is a guest at the wedding supper. However, this guest is, or these guests are also the Bride if he or they remain faithful and endure to the end; for no human being can enter heaven when Christ Jesus returns unless this person is part of the Bride.

Again, how can guests to the Wedding Supper also be the Bride?

The nature of figurative language dictates that the “meaning” or linguistic object assigned to how Jesus uses “guests” in a parable about coming to God differs from the meaning that would usually be assigned to the icon. All of humankind will be baptized

with Spirit when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28), and of all humankind, all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13). Those who take upon themselves the mark of the beast [χξς'] will perish. Therefore, a new situation will exist when the seven endtime years begin as it did when the world was baptized with water in the days of Noah. Those who are born of water and born of Spirit will, if they are to enter the kingdom of heaven, also be baptized by water and baptized by Spirit. Baptism by water is unto the death of the old self that reigned over the flesh; baptism by Spirit is unto liberation of the flesh from sin and death.

Now, keeping in mind what Jesus told the Samaritan woman, the wedding parable needs read.

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*The reader should now read Luke chapter 14, verses 7 through 24; followed by Matthew chapter 22, verses 1 through 14.*

**Commentary:** The realization that many are called as disciples, but few will be chosen must remain in the forefront of every disciple's mind. The many are the intended guests, those who were invited by the king to the wedding of his son. The many are not the world, or citizens of alien lands. Rather, the many are those whose citizenship is of the domain of the king.

Just as human infants have no say in whether they are conceived by their parents and born of the water of the womb disciples in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century had no say in whether God drew them from this world and gave them the earnest of His Spirit, thereby causing them to be born of Spirit. Jesus prays specifically addressing His first disciples: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:1-3). The first disciples were drawn from this world by the Father (John 6:44, 65) and given to Christ Jesus so that He could give everlasting life to whom He would (John 5:21). All judgment has been given to Jesus (v. 5:22). Being raised from the dead and made spiritually alive by the Father does not pertain to one's worth, or depend upon one's righteousness. Being raised from the dead is independent of the judgment a disciple takes upon him or herself. Being raised from the dead relates to being given to Jesus, whose kingdom is not of, nor from this world (John 18:36). Until a person is raised from the dead, Jesus cannot give eternal life to the flesh, over which He has authority. Therefore, let it be unequivocally stated: the prerequisite for Jesus giving eternal life to the flesh is the Father making the person alive through raising the person from the dead by giving the person His Spirit. And this is what it means to be born of Spirit: *the Father has raised the person from the dead by giving to the person the earnest of His divine Breath [Πνευμα Αγιον].*

It isn't Jesus' prerogative to judge the dead, or to give eternal life to the dead. Jesus judges the living, those whom the Father has made alive through raising them from the dead by giving them the Holy Spirit. Eternal life, now, comes from Jesus causing those whom the Father has raised to know the Father; therefore, as a human infant is born of water without knowing his or her biological father (the one who made the infant alive through the fertilization of an ovum), after that day of Pentecost following Calvary disciples in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century were made spiritually alive without previous knowledge of the Father. But the first disciples, the twelve specifically named, came to know the

Father before being born of Spirit. Ten of these twelve received the Holy Spirit on the same day that Jesus was resurrected from death (John 20:22).

The Father drew the twelve from the world and gave them to Jesus before they received the Holy Spirit, and Jesus kept them safe (except for the son of destruction – John 17:12) while He was with them. They were drawn to learn, to observe, and to record. Whatever they wanted of the Father, Jesus asked the Father for them. Yet they baptized others, and they were making more disciples for Jesus than were being made by John—all before they were born of Spirit. And these twelve, before they received the Holy Spirit, form the lively shadow and copy of the Christian Church today, before the restoration of all things.

Shadows exist in one less dimension than does the reality that makes the shadow. A three-dimensional object casts a two-dimensional shadow. Likewise, a living human being without the Spirit of God will form the spiritually lifeless shadow [this living person has no life in the supra-dimensional heavenly realm] of a person who has been born of Spirit and has “real” life in the heavenly realm through possessing the earnest of the Holy Spirit. But possessing the earnest of the Spirit, like receiving earnest money (which is real money given to show the good faith of the other), does not equate to possessing the full measure of the Holy Spirit as in being “filled” with the Holy Spirit so that one’s shadow heals the infirm. So, moving up one level in a taxonomical spiritual hierarchy, a person who has been born of Spirit can form the living shadow of a person who has been empowered by, or filled with the Holy Spirit and hence liberated from indwelling sin and death. In others words, the acts of the disciples following Pentecost forms the lively shadow of the acts of liberated and baptized-with-Spirit disciples in the first half of the seven endtime years of tribulation.

Today, too many people speak casually about being “filled with the Holy Spirit” when they have no understanding of what this expression represents scripturally ... being “filled” with the divine Breath of God means, literally, that there remains no additional room inside the person for sin and death. The person who is filled with the Holy Spirit has been liberated from indwelling sin and death, and is no longer under Grace, but has been “revealed” as the Body of the Son of Man (Luke 17:30). The person filled with the Holy Spirit commits blasphemy against the Holy Spirit if or when this person transgresses the commandments of God, and this blasphemy will not be forgiven (what it means to no longer be under Grace). And no Israelite will be “filled” with the Holy Spirit until the second Passover occurs, when the lives of men are again given as ransom as they were given in Egypt for the ransom of natural Israel from physical bondage to Pharaoh (Isa 43:3-4).

Before all things have been restored, with all things including the resurrection of the Body back to life, the Church is actually the reality of the twelve first Apostles. Thus, when that day of Pentecost occurred (Acts chap 2), the visible empowerment and baptism of the first disciples by the Holy Spirit formed the shadow and copy of the invisible spiritual empowerment and baptism of the Church by the Holy Spirit that will occur at the second Passover liberation of spiritually circumcised Israel from bondage to sin and death, with this indwelling sin and death described by the Apostle Paul (Rom chap 7). So when filled with the Holy Spirit, the new creature or new self that is the disciple of Christ Jesus will be able to rule over the tent of flesh in which this new creation is domiciled. No person who is unable to rule over his or her flesh has been

filled with the Holy Spirit, or liberated from indwelling sin and death. While this person may well be born of Spirit, this person has not been “baptized” by the Holy Spirit.

The sloppily used expressions of being “filled with the Spirit” or “baptized by the Spirit” have given rise to disciples seeking familiar spirits and worshiping demons as they seek after truly “spiritual” experiences in which they feel the presence of a spiritual being. In some of these experiences, the *spiritual presence* will tell the person the type of things Jesus told the Samaritan woman (John 4:16-20), who perceived that Jesus was a prophet and asked why Jerusalem was said to be where people ought to worship God.

Jesus’ said that the hour was coming when God would not be worshiped from a physical location, neither the mountain in Samaria or in Jerusalem, but from the non-physical location of “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). God is a spirit (*v.* 24)—He is not physical, so He needs no physical house or shrine or temple. But because God is a spirit, a person can only worship the Father from the spiritual realm. Earthly temples, whether dedicated to Artemis or to *YHWH*, are physical places comparable to the mountain in Samaria and to Jerusalem. At the temple dedicated to Artemis, Greeks worshiped what they did not know (*v.* 22). In Herod’s temple at Jerusalem, Jews worshiped what they did know, “for salvation is from the Jews” (same verse). But neither in Ephesus nor at Jerusalem did Greeks or Jews worship God in spirit and truth from a physical temple.

Wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name, there He will be; for there is the temple of the Father, constructed from living stones (1 Pet 2:4-5).

Those endtime disciples who, today, look for the Jews to rebuild a physical temple in Jerusalem do not worship God in spirit or in truth, but worship a physical deity analogous to the sticks and stones that physically circumcised Israelites worshiped when they offered their firstborns to the fires of Molech. Those who look for Jews to rebuild a temple at Jerusalem are physically-minded. Although they are probably very sincere, they are sincerely wrong in all they do and in all they teach.

God is a spirit. A person worships God with the thoughts and desires of the new self that is born of Spirit. The person who has not been born of Spirit does not know God and cannot know God and has no eternal or everlasting life abiding within the person. Everlasting life comes from being born of Spirit, of receiving the earnest of the Spirit. Until a person has received the earnest of the Spirit, the person is counted among the dead even if the person is a world-class athlete. The person is one of the dead to whom Jesus left the burial of the dead.

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*The reader should now read 1 John chapter 2.*

**Commentary:** The many who would have disciples worship God from a physical location or through a physical organization are those who would deceive disciples if they could (*v.* 26). But the anointing that is on all who have been born of Spirit actually causes all to have no need for a teacher (*cf.* *v.* 27 with Heb 8:11) ... those disciples who know God have no need for a teacher, but all who say they know God but do not keep His commandments are liars (*v.* 4). It is through keeping the words of God, living by every word that has come from the mouth of God (again, Matt 4:4), that a disciple’s love for God is perfected. Therefore, the person, circumcised or uncircumcised, who will not by faith keep the precepts of the law (Rom 2:26-29) is a spiritual Greek, a Gentile, an alien in the house of God, a person whose citizenship remains in this world.

May the person who will not walk as Jesus walked, who insists on worshipping God from within a physical organization or house, repent deeply before God, and beseech forgiveness from God. This person is in need of baptism unto repentance.

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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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