

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 scrolls written within and without.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of April 25, 2009

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 Revelation chapter 8.

Commentary: Too many disciples are too concerned about what happens when the seventh seal is opened ... what then happens won't matter if today's disciple doesn't cover him or herself by taking the Passover sacraments of bread and wine on the night that Jesus was betrayed; for the uncovered disciple will either be bodily slain or spiritually slain as the firstborn of men and beasts in Egypt were slain when the death angel Passover over all the land.

A man doesn't marry his body; he is already "one" with his body as the glorified Jesus is "one" with the Body of Christ. Thus, in order for there to be a Wedding Supper (Feast) as promised in Scripture, a separation of disciples from Christ Jesus must occur ... the Apostle Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword" (Rom 8:35). And the answer is, willful sin will separate us from the love of Christ; for as Paul asks elsewhere, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves [bondservants], you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness" (Rom 6:16). And *Christians*, for a very long time, have presented themselves as obedient slaves to sin [lawlessness], thereby making themselves into the seed of the devil (1 John 3:4–10).

What has this to do with the seventh seal, you ask?

Paul spent at least two years with the saints at Corinth; thus, when he learned that these saints were at least passively condoning sin, he wrote to them:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you

are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. (1 Cor 5:1–5)

Paul was called to know the will of God (Acts 22:14), but where is there a model for Paul to command the saints at Corinth to deliver one of their own to Satan for the destruction of the flesh? Does Paul not take too much upon himself as Korah accused Moses of doing?

To understand Scripture, a disciple must be able to transition between dual referents for the words (linguistic icons) composing Scripture without getting trapped by these words. Thus, Israel is both the physically circumcised nation that biologically descended from the patriarch Jacob as well as the circumcised of heart (spiritually circumcised) nation that possesses the spirit or breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ]. In the same manner, the “king of Babylon” is both the man Nebuchadnezzar and the present prince of this world, Satan the devil (Isa 14:4). Thus, in all things, the visible things of this world reveal the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20), with the visible things preceding the invisible spiritual things (1 Cor 15:46). Because of the love Christ Jesus has for His disciples, He chose to make visible to them what human eyes cannot see, with things and beings in this world functioning as shadows of things that cannot be seen.

Disciples today as Israel do not see the invisible spiritual king of Babylon, but as Israel, a disciple delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh equates to God delivering Israel into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for the destruction of the nation.

Jeremiah records,

Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you [the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem] have not obeyed my words, behold, *I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.* Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands. (25:8–14 emphasis added)

Elsewhere, Jeremiah records,

Hear the word of the Lord, all you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall strike them

down before your eyes. Because of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: 'The Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,' because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the Lord." (29:20–23)

Because Paul (again called to know the will of God) discloses that Scripture utilizes dual referents to reveal the will of God, Paul employs the principle contained in the Lord delivering lawless Israel into the hand of the King of Babylon for the destruction of the nation to command the saints at Corinth to deliver the lawless disciple into the hand of Satan for the destruction of the flesh. And it is this principle that is seen prophetically in the Prophet Daniel's vision of the four kings:

He [the little horn] shall speak words against the Most High,
and shall wear out the saints of the Most High,
and shall think to change the times and the law;
and *they shall be given into his hand*
for a time, times, and half a time.

But the court shall sit in judgment,
and his dominion shall be taken away,
to be consumed and destroyed to the end.

And the kingdom and the dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey them. (7:25–27 emphasis added)

Because the referent for the pronoun "they" in *they shall be given into his hand* is vague, both "saints" and "times and the law" are, from this passage alone, likely to be given into the hand of the little horn. Thus, when this passage is coupled with what Zechariah records,

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who stands next to me,"
declares the Lord of hosts.

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered;
I will turn my hand against the little ones.

In the whole land, declares the Lord,
two thirds shall be cut off and perish,
and one third shall be left alive.

And I will put this third into the fire,
and refine them as one refines silver,
and test them as gold is tested.

They will call upon my name,
and I will answer them.

I will say, "They are my people";
and they will say, "The Lord is my God." (13:7–9)

what's seen is that the Father turns His hand against the saints, to deliver the saints into the hand of the little horn, the one who empowers the man of perdition ... Jesus said He

was the shepherd who would be struck (Matt 26:31), and the sheep scattered are His disciples. Thus, the little ones against whom the Lord of Hosts turns His hand, are the saints.

It is the Father who delivers the saints into the hand of the man of perdition for the destruction of the flesh after the model of the Lord delivering Israel into the hand of the human king of Babylon for Israel's destruction—

Do you understand, really understand what is being said? The Father, because of Christendom's lawlessness which is as abhorrent to Him as ancient Israel's lawlessness was in the 6th and 7th Centuries BCE, will deliver Christians—all Christians—into the hand of the man of perdition at the beginning of the seven endtime years of tribulation. Jesus' first disciples were sheep that were scattered. His endtime disciples will be sheep that are scattered. And the third part of humankind will, when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of the Father and His Christ (Rev 11:15) halfway through the endtime years of tribulation, be refined as silver is refined (by smelting) and tested as gold is tested (by being pressed against a touchstone). This third part, none of whom are today *Christians*, will be the people of God and will account for the bulk of the harvest of firstfruits. It will not be the majority of today's lawless and loveless Christians who make it into the kingdom.

A person can deny that the Father would turn His hand against the saints all the person wants; a person can transform the Father into an indulgent grandfather that tolerates all sorts of bad behavior; but denial will not save the person who makes a practice of sinning. Only obedience will save the person—and it is back to *nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ* where we have to go.

When a new Pharaoh that didn't know Joseph began to reign in Egypt, the Pharaoh feared Israel for there were as many or more Israelites as they were Egyptians (Ex 5:5) and he successfully sought to oppress Israel, delivering Israel into hard bondage and afflicting Israel with heavy burdens (Ex chap 1) that the people bore in misery. But what was being done to the people of Israel did not escape notice by the Lord, who would have seemed slow to respond if an endtime disciple would have then been a slave in Egypt. But the Lord called forth a prophet whom He spoke with face to face, the man Moses, a Levite who had never lived as a slave as the man Jesus had never lived in bondage to sin.

The above is the juxtaposition that must be remembered: Israel's bondage to Pharaoh (physical slavery) is analogous to endtime Israel's bondage to indwelling sin and death ... the Apostle Paul didn't understand why, if a person has been set free from sin, that sin continued to dwell in his fleshly members (Rom 7:15–25). He didn't realize that there had to be a second Passover liberation of Israel. And though doubters, deniers, and scoffers will reject out of hand that a second Passover of Israel will occur, denial changes nothing; for out of love for His disciples, Jesus has revealed what will shortly happen. Christ Jesus is absolutely faithful to forewarn His disciples of what will happen. Whether anyone in Israel believes the warning is another story; for how many in Israel, either in Jerusalem or in Babylon, believed the prophet Jeremiah for the 23 years that he warned Israel of what would happen.

Jeremiah records,

To Shemaiah of Nehelam you shall say: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all

the priests, saying, "The Lord has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to have charge in the house of the Lord over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and neck irons. Now why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who is prophesying to you? For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, "Your exile will be long; build houses and live in them, and plant gardens and eat their produce."'"

Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet. Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: "Send to all the exiles, saying, 'Thus says the Lord concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam: Because Shemaiah had prophesied to you when I did not send him, and has made you trust in a lie, therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah of Nehelam and his descendants. He shall not have anyone living among this people, and he shall not see the good that I will do to my people, declares the Lord, for he has spoken rebellion against the Lord.'" (29:24–32)

There were many prophets in Israel, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, prophesying without having been sent by the Lord. Most of these prophets were like Hananiah (Jer chap 28) who espoused things that Israel wanted to hear. Jeremiah was considered, at least by Shemaiah, a madman ... there is cultural myth, based in fact, about a riot occurring in a certain Texas town, and the town requiring help from the Texas Rangers. One Ranger was sent. And when queried about why only one Ranger and where were the others, the famed reply was uttered, *Yuh only have one riot, don't yuh?*

One prophet in Jerusalem was enough to deliver the oracles of the Lord in the last two decades of the 6th-Century BCE. If the Lord would have sent more prophets, they, like Jeremiah, wouldn't have been believed. And so it is today: only one of the seven named churches is needed to deliver the endtime good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13). Only one will keep and relay Jesus' word about patient endurance (Rev 3:10). Only one will warn about the soon coming second Passover. But all of the seven churches are interested in what happens when the seventh seal is removed from the scroll written within and without (Rev 5:1) ... consider for a moment what it means to have a scroll written within and without when dual referents must be assigned to the words of Scripture.

A scroll is not written upon on both sides. It is written upon on one side and then rolled up. But if dual referents are to be assigned to the words of the scroll, and if the visible things of this world reveal the invisible things of God, then the words written without are words read on the page and the words written within are the spiritual (in heaven) realities that cast shadows of the readable words written without.

From the Genesis "P" creation account, disciples of *Philadelphia* know that trees and green grass can be read as people ... remember, a linguistic icon (signifier) can have any linguistic object (signified) assigned to it that the auditor desires, with communication occurring within reading communities that share the same assignment of signifieds to signifiers. In other words, among all those disciples who truly hear the voice of Jesus, the same (or closely similar) meanings will be assigned to words.

Now returning to the plagues in Egypt that made a separation between Israel and Egypt, hail slew the livestock and slaves of Egypt (Ex 9:19, 25 — seventh plague), but there is a problem here: "All the livestock of the Egyptians died" (v. 6) in the fifth

plague, and the firstborn of the livestock would die in the tenth plague (Ex 12:29). So how is a disciple to read what happens when plagues occur?

The last three of the seven trumpet plagues are “woes” (Rev 8:13) that are the subject for a future reading. But the first four trumpet plagues are what is written within the scroll, what is not revealed, what casts as a shadow that which is written without. Thus, a disciple can reasonably expect that a great mountain, burning with fire, an image that suggests a meteor strike (v. 8), actually addresses a heavenly event that has a living creature (a demon) being like a great mountain; for the great star that fell from heaven is even more suggestive of a living creature being cast to earth as war is fought in the inter-dimensional portion of the heavenly realm (i.e., the bottomless pit).

Those disciples who are determined to assign physical referents to the obviously symbolical language of John’s vision will make this assignment, then that assignment, never fully satisfied that they are correct, but absolutely certain that if they persist, they can make sense from a vision that purports to be a revealing, not a shrouding in mystery of things soon to happen, with “soon” being a reference to the Lord’s day or day of the Lord when this vision occurs. If by chance these disciples are inclined to take the Passover sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed, their mental gymnastics might not be entirely in vain: they will at least be alive to enter into the Tribulation so that they can see what is written within the scroll revealed. But if they will not take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed, the firstborn son of God dwelling within their tent of flesh will have perished and they will be counted as livestock, fit only to be slaughtered when judgments are revealed, which is a shame for Jesus loved them enough to make known to them what would happen.

Therefore, first things first: every effort needs to be made to get endtime disciples into covenant with God—get them drinking from the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed. The reading of what is written within the scroll will be known soon enough. And what it written won’t matter to those *Christians* who will be part of the great falling away.

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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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