

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 literalist vs metaphorical readings.

Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of May 5, 2012*

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 beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,
the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are [the Son of me, the Beloved]; with you I am well pleased." The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to Him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus

came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:1–14)

1.

Mark's Gospel differs from Matthew's and Luke's in several ways: it seems truncated, an incomplete narrative that has for one reason or another omitted a genealogy for Jesus as well as an accounting of His birth. Plus, in Mark's version of the Passion Account, Jesus doesn't speak until the end. Everyone in the Gospel seems to either mock, abandon, or deny Jesus, including God. And after His resurrection, the angel at the tomb tells the women, "But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you" (Mark 16:7), but the women tell no one (v. 8).

From a literalist perspective, if what Matthew's Gospel records and what Luke's Gospel records are true, what Mark records cannot be true.

Pause before we begin: the angel told the women that the glorified Jesus was going to Galilee, just as Jesus told His disciples He would, but according to John's Gospel, Jesus only spoke to His disciples in figures of speech (John 16:25). He did not speak to them in words to which literal meanings could be assigned; e.g., Jesus told His disciples, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt 16:6). And the disciples responded by saying, "We brought no bread" (v. 7), not immediately realizing that Jesus was referring to the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees (v. 12). Therefore, because the angel speaking to the women made reference to what Jesus told His disciples, endtime disciples should understand that <Galilee> is a metaphor. Likewise, the prophet Isaiah metaphorically used *Galilee*:

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.

In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

but *in the latter time* he has made glorious the way of the sea,

the land beyond the Jordan, *Galilee of the nations*. (Isa 9:1 emphasis added)

Galilee of the Gentiles, the land beyond the Jordan—from the time that Jesus relocated from Nazareth to Capernaum, He began to preach that "the kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt 4:17) ... Mark's Gospel records,

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14–15)

There is no time marker in Mark as to when John was arrested other than he was arrested after Jesus returned from His forty days of temptation in the wilderness, and again we find a truncated biography of Jesus.

But metaphoric narratives are not to be read *literally*—and that is what all of Scripture is, including the Old Testament, for born-of-spirit disciples. Thus, Mark's Gospel should not be read as an inclusive history of Christ Jesus' ministry: it should be read as a metaphorical narrative, in that Mark's Gospel functions for

Matthew's Gospel as John the Baptist functioned for Christ Jesus, with the Hebrew Scriptures functioning for Mark's and Matthew's Gospels as the prophet Isaiah functioned for John the Baptist:

Mark begins not with an accounting of Jesus' birth and/or childhood, but with the simple declaration: Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καθὼς γεγραπται [*Beginning the good news of Jesus Christ just as it was written*] and the Isaiah quotation follows. The remainder of the wording of verses one and two could be problematic. Textual variants exist without the added words: the original manuscript was hand copied numerous times with copies being made of copies before the first surviving manuscript comes to endtime scholars—and since 1880, only thirty New Testament manuscripts dating from the 2nd and/or 3rd Centuries have been discovered, of which only one contains a copy of the Gospel of Mark, whereas three manuscripts contained fragmentary copies of the Gospel of Peter, three of the Gospel of Thomas, two of the Gospel of Mary, plus partial copies of five other unidentified Gospels. So the Gospel of Mark was not widely circulated before its inclusion in the 4th-Century New Testament canon. Nevertheless, between the canonization of Mark's Gospel and the advent of the printing press and movable type, enough variations exist between surviving manuscripts of Mark that the exact wording of the original [the autograph] cannot be ascertained beyond doubt, with the earliest manuscripts ending the Gospel with Mark 16:8 (the two women told no one that Jesus had arisen).

To prove that Mark's Gospel functions for Matthew's Gospel [with Luke acknowledging that he has borrowed and reassembled existing witnesses — see Luke 1:1–4] as John the Baptist functioned for Christ Jesus is beyond the scope of one Sabbath reading and perhaps beyond the scope of many books, but a few analogies will be mentioned as this reading begins to focus *Philadelphians'* attention on the relationship of one ministry to another.

What can be declared with certainty is that Mark's beginning citation from Isaiah links John the Baptist with Christ Jesus in an unbreakable way that typifies how the endtime two witnesses are linked to Christ Jesus:

Then I [John] was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. (Rev 11:1–4)

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And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me [the prophet Zechariah], like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" ... Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the

lampstand?" And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?" He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth." (Zech 4:1-4, 11-14)

Again, Mark's Gospel seems linked to Matthew's Gospel in a manner similar to how John the Baptist's ministry preceded Jesus' ministry but was also hard-linked to Jesus' ministry, with John the Baptist's ministry ending with arrest and prolonged imprisonment before he lost his head. Jesus' ministry ended with arrest and crucifixion. ... In Matthew's telling of the transfiguration—with Matthew not being an eyewitness, but one who repeats the testimony of another—Peter, James, and John ask Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come, and he will restore all things?" (Matt 17:10)

Jesus answered,

Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands. (Matt 17:11-12)

Jesus likens the fate of John the Baptist to His own fate. Plus, **Jesus has the last Elijah being a prophet still to come as well as having already come**, thus making John the Baptist's ministry a shadow and copy of a later, an endtime ministry. And it is in this understanding that what Luke records the angel Gabriel telling Zechariah must be examined in relationship to what the prophet Malachi declared:

For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ... Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And *he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.* (Mal 4:1, 5-6 emphasis added)

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Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and *he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.* (Luke 1:13-17 emphasis added)

In Hebraic thought-couplets, the first presentation of an idea or concept is physical whereas the second presentation of the same idea is spiritual, a reality that will be familiar to regular readers of these Sabbath Readings ... the same principle applies to the Old Testament in relationship to the New Testament, as

well as to events and prophecies in the Old and New Testaments, with what is visible and physical preceding and revealing what is invisible and spiritual (cf. Rom 1:20; 1 Cor 15:46). Thus to see in Scripture the angel Gabriel, a man [used metaphorically] that cannot be routinely seen, is to see what precedes and reveals an invisible thing of God—

Permit me to state a reality: scholars practicing historical criticism hate what has just been done and actually flee from melding one Gospel into another Gospel to form a unified text that is in reality none of the Gospels, but is a new Gospel, one that exists as a hypertext and not in any manuscript form. They make their livings keeping each of the Gospels a separate text that is examined (studied) within its own right. Therefore, when they find a different *Jesus* presented in Luke than the *Jesus* presented in, say, Mark, they absolutely do not try to reconcile the different constructs, but more carefully examine Luke's *Jesus* to see what Luke is attempting to convey to his audience, and then carefully examine Mark's *Jesus* to see what Mark was trying to convey to his audience/community. Then they will compare Mark's perceived audience—without apparently realizing what Walter Ong observed decades ago, that a writer's audience is always a fiction—with Luke's perceived audience as they attempt to understand the dynamics of the “Christian community” in the 1st-Century, when the only writings to come forth is the New Testament itself.

When Jesus relocates the Law from outside the Israelite to inside the Israelite (Matt 5:21–22, 27–28 also Heb 8:8–12; Jer 31:31–34) in a manner analogous to moving from Bethlehem of Judea, the ancestral home of Jesus' earthly parents, to Nazareth in the Galilee, Jesus replaced outward circumcision with circumcision of the heart as the defining characteristic of *Israel* as the firstborn son of God. And it is this move, anticipated by the prophet Isaiah, that lies concealed in the sometimes-difficult-to-reconcile geographic references imbedded in the Synoptic Gospels ... salvation comes first to the Jew, represented by Jerusalem, then to the Gentile, represented by Galilee and by Samaritans, who were considered *half-Jews*, not legitimate Jews, by 1st-Century Pharisees and Sadducees—and it is in understanding Samaritans and in particular the woman at the well (John chap 4) where endtime disciples have stumbled: the imbedded movement of Israel is from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Judah to Galilee, from the former southern kingdom of Judah with its temple of timber and stone to the former northern kingdom of Israel without an earthly temple, for the temple of God is now the Body of Christ.

Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts authored by the same person, together, represent the movement from the earthly, physical body of Christ Jesus to the spiritual Body of Christ (from 1 Cor 12:27) that is the Christian Church, the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16), with the same things happening to Jesus in Luke's Gospel as happen to disciples in Acts, which is why Acts is cut off seemingly mid-sentence for the end wasn't to be revealed before it is time; i.e., before the end is written, or rewritten by endtime disciples. But the hard-link between Luke's Gospel and Acts is the subject of a future Reading.

The goal of academic criticism isn't belief of God, but understanding the dynamics of the beginning of a religious movement that has been largely responsible for the development of the endtime industrial world. Thus, what I'm about to write is outside of the scope of academia.

In the words of Gabriel—in what Gabriel told Zechariah—endtime disciples can see the movement from physical to spiritual that typifies Holy Writ when Scripture is holistically examined. Malachi's prophecy concerning the Elijah-to-come has attributes that function as a Hebraic thought-couplet:

he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children [physical/physical]
and the hearts of children to their fathers, [physical/physical]
lest I come and strike the land [spiritual/physical]
with a decree of utter destruction [spiritual/physical]

But when Gabriel presents the same concept, Gabriel transforms the couplet:

he [John] *will go before him* [the Lord] [spiritual/physical]
in the spirit and power of Elijah, [spiritual/spiritual]
to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, [spiritual/physical]
and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, [spiritual/spiritual]
to make ready for the Lord [spiritual/physical]
a people prepared [spiritual/spiritual]

Gabriel takes what is physical in Malachi—the *hearts of children to their fathers*—and turns the prophecy into a spiritual decree—and *the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*—that John the Baptist **did not** fulfill: despite John coming preaching repentance, John did not turn the *disobedient* to the *wisdom of the just*. Not even Jesus did this during His earthly ministry. This turning of the lawless to the wisdom of the just remains to be accomplished by an endtime Elijah. Therefore, what Gabriel did was to show how Malachi's prophecies—and I will argue, every Old Testament prophecy—is to be considered, with there being a physical fulfillment of the prophecy, and an endtime (or several later) fulfillments.

Now returning to an introduced concept: academics practicing historical criticism are careful not to produce an unwritten hypertext that stands apart from and above the inscribed words on the page of manuscripts that put food on their tables. They do not need to believe God, or even believe that a God exists in order to practice their craft. In fact, it might be that belief would get in their way and hinder them from carefully going about their craft of filtering fragments of history from the sands of Egypt and the Near and Middle East. The work they have done serves endtime disciples as the visible shadow and copy of an endtime spiritual work: they are as Adam was to the last Adam, as outward circumcision is to circumcision of the heart. In a way, they are as the sons of Eli were to the prophet Samuel—and they will spiritually receive fates similar to the physical fate of the sons of Eli.

2.

Approximately seven centuries before John, the prophet Isaiah prepared the way for both John the Baptist and for Christ Jesus; thus, Isaiah was to the conjoined ministries of John and Jesus as John the Revelator was/is for the two endtime

witnesses, who are a type of Moses and Aaron—in his Gospel, Matthew links Jesus to Moses, and links the Sermon on the Mount to the giving of the commandments at Sinai, but Mark does not make this link. And the question needs asked, Why? The easiest reason to accept is that Mark wasn't aware that the two witnesses would come at the end of the age, for Mark believed that the *Kingdom of God is at hand* (Mark 1:15). And if the Kingdom is at hand, there will not be a future ministry beyond that of Christ Jesus.

John the Baptist believed that the One coming after him that would be “mightier than I [John], the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie” will baptize “you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:7–8) ... if the One coming after John baptizes with the very breath of God—baptizes in breath holy [ΕΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ἉΓΙΩ]—then the Kingdom of God would be, for John, at hand with the coming of Him who baptizes with spirit [ΠΝΕΥΜΑ]. And if the Kingdom is at hand, then there would be no gap between his ministry and the kingdom of God. He would not have anticipated that two millennia would pass between the death of the Body of Christ at the end of the 1st-Century and the return of Jesus in the 21st-Century: for John the Baptist, the Kingdom would have come in the 1st-Century so his imprisonment and beheading would have been a severe trial of faith for him. Likewise, the kingdom not coming in the 1st-Century would have been a testing of faith for John Mark, the presumed author of Mark's Gospel.

If the women who went to the tomb and found it empty on the day after the Sabbath but told no one (Mark 16:8) truly *told no one*, how could the cult of the Nazarenes have ever gotten started? No one would know that Jesus had risen from the grave. So a problem exists that is actually larger than is apparent: if the women told no one that Jesus had risen, no one could come to Jesus for again, no one would know. So in a way, Mark's Gospel anticipates John's Gospel—

What almost all Christian converts didn't understand in the 1st-Century was that no one could come to Christ Jesus unless the Father drew the person from this world (John 6:44) ... again, the scholar or critic who objects to the formation of another Gospel, a hypertext holding the premise that all four Gospels are to function as a single poetic thought-couplet functions to produce a hypertext that is by its very nature ephemeral (i.e., non physical and constructed only in the mind of the reader), will never resolve the *Synoptic Problem*. So if no one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws the person, it would have done the women no good to tell anyone that Jesus had risen. Those whom the Father drew from this world would know that Jesus had risen, but others would not—others would not and could not believe, could not escape being sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3) consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), their minds set on the fleshly, physical things of this world (Rom 8:5–8).

The truncated ending of Mark's Gospel conveys the reality that the way to Christ Jesus is closed to Jew and Gentile unless the Father reveals privileged knowledge to the person, knowledge that doesn't come via the testimony of many but from the Father, Himself. ... The 1st-Century person who came to Christ Jesus, professing that He, Jesus, is the Lord, and believing that the Father raised Jesus

from death, and who assumed that with baptism the person would receive the holy spirit and thus would be saved presumed much. If this person had read Paul's treatise to the holy ones at Rome, or Matthew's Gospel or John's Gospel, the person would know that there is more to salvation than the utterance of words.

First what does Paul reveal in his treatise to the Romans:

He [the Lord] will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. *For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law*, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.* 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, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:6–16 emphasis added)

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For Christ is the end [ΤΕΛΟΣ] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. [ΔΕ — And] the righteousness based on faith [the Moab covenant] says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim) [see Deut 30:11–14]; because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* (Rom 10:4–13 emphasis added)

The *end of the Law* is the conclusion (as in arriving at a goal) of what the Law sought to accomplish: Christ is *the result* of the righteousness that the Law sought to bring to the firstborn son of God. Hence, when a person fully imitates Christ Jesus, walking in this world as Jesus walked, the person arrives at the righteousness of Christ Jesus. The person shows by how he or she walks in this world—i.e., walking as an observant Jew—that in the person the Law has brought the person to perfection ... concerning righteousness, Paul wrote,

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that *Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness* did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. (Rom 9:30–32 emphasis added)

The Law that Israel had that would have lead to righteousness was the Moab covenant ... the person who will be saved, Jew or Greek, no distinction, will live by the Moab covenant that has the Jew when in a far land returning to the Lord by faith, loving the Lord with heart and mind, doing all that the Lord commands in the Book of Deuteronomy, keeping the commandments not because the person has to but because the person wants to. It is this person—this Israelite—who by professing that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father will raise him or her from death that shall be saved. It doesn't matter whether the person first professes that Jesus is Lord then begins to keep the commandments, loving God with heart and mind, or whether the person first begins to keep the commandments when far from God and then professes that Jesus is Lord—either way, the person will stand, regardless of whether Jew or Greek, on the same theological spot or place [ΤΟΠΙΟΝ] as the other; for God shows no partiality. There is not one salvation for Jews [the Law] and another salvation for Gentiles [Grace] as truly ignorant brethren within lawless Christendom hold; for again, God shows no partiality. It is the doer of the Law who shall be justified (Rom 2:13). It isn't the works of the Law that count for anything; it is, rather, the person's decision to keep the Law when there is no imperative to do so other than love for God.

The academic or critic who finds that there is a conflict between what Paul teaches about keeping the Law, the commandments, including the Sabbath commandment, and what Matthew's Gospel teaches is an extremely poor reader of Holy Writ or deliberately dishonest—and no academic will admit that he or she is a poor reader of Scripture.

And what does Matthew say about keeping the Law? What does Jesus say:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works* and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment." But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;

whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, “You fool!” will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (Matt 5:14–30)

For Jesus, for Matthew, the Law moves from outside the person—from being written on two tablets of stone—to being inside the person, written on the heart and the mind under the New Covenant. But the evidence that most Christians are not under the New Covenant is their lawlessness: if a person had the Law written on his or her heart, the person could NOT help but keep the commandments, what John writes,

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.* You know that He appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. *No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.* Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil,* for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.* By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. (1 John 3:1–12 emphasis added)

The Christian in the 1st-Century as well as in the 21st-Century who made/makes a practice of sinning—attempts to enter into God's rest on the day

after the Sabbath is a practice of sinning—is not born of God, but is of Cain who was of the evil one, the Adversary.

Paul taught converts that the sinner who is not under the Law (that is, a person of the nations) shall perish without the Law for it is the doer of the Law who shall be justified before God. Matthew taught the same, as did John. So too did Luke and Mark, Peter and James. There simply is no way around the reality that the person who will be saved will, by faith (by belief of God), keep the commandments, dwelling in a mental landscape that is figuratively represented by *Galilee*.

3.

In Matthew's biography, John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He is really *the one who is to come, or should we look for another* (Matt 11:3) ... Jesus wasn't doing what John expected the Messiah to do. Likewise, the end of the age didn't come in the 1st-Century as the author of Mark's Gospel anticipated. The disappointment of John the Baptist in how Jesus was conducting Himself forms a reasonable representation of the disappointment that would have developed in a 1st-Century Christian community that had only Mark's Gospel—and most early Christian communities, if they had any written texts, would have been lucky to have one biography (and that is what the Gospels are). They certainly wouldn't have had John's Gospel before it was written in the last decade of the century, and they probably wouldn't have had Luke's account which most likely wasn't written until after the destruction of Jerusalem; until after Paul's fate in Rome was determined. Thus, 1st-Century Christian communities are analogous to John's disciples that Paul encountered in Ephesus (Acts chap 19): these 1st-Century communities really didn't know much about what Jesus taught. For the most part, they were not born of spirit; they had no spiritual understanding. And their ignorance of spiritual matters invited their theological destruction.

For John the Baptist, the One on whom he sees the breath of God descend and land in the bodily form of a dove is the Messiah: the Kingdom is at hand. Thus, Mark and Mark's Gospel apparently unknowingly functions in the plan of God—the timetable of God—as Mark has John the Baptist function in his Gospel ... Mark's Gospel is as much a part of Matthew's Gospel as John the Baptist was a part of Jesus' ministry.

As spokesman for Moses, Aaron was a part of Moses: he was Moses' mouth as the Christian Church is the Body of Christ. Aaron was the spokesperson for Moses in a manner analogous to how Jesus spoke only the Father's words during His earthly ministry (see John 12:49; 17:8). Likewise, John the Baptist spoke words he was to deliver in preparing the way for Christ Jesus. And as Aaron was reared a slave whereas Moses was reared in Pharaoh's house as a son, John the Baptist was the greatest of men born of woman whereas Jesus will be the greatest of those who are born of *the God* as firstborn sons, thereby establishing an analogy that holds throughout all four Gospels: what is physical and of darkness—what is of women—precedes and reveals what is spiritual and of light; i.e., what is of *the God*.

As the man Jesus was born of a woman, Mary, but was of God the Creator—was the unique Son of the Creator—the man Jesus entered His creation as the life and light of men, but did not become the Son of *the God*, who is distinct from the Creator (the revelation that Jesus came to make to those whom the Father, *the God*, had given to Him) until He received a second breath of life, the breath of *the God* ... then, at that moment, Jesus was **born**, as opposed to adopted, of *the God* as *the God's* son and born of *the God* as the First of many firstborn sons of *the God*.

God the Father gave a second breath of life to the man Jesus, who received His first breath of life from His Father, God the Creator, when the man Jesus received the breath of *the God* in the bodily form of a dove that lit and remained with Him ... there is no mistake here—and yes, the possibility for confusion is great.

Before Jesus could give *life* to men even though He entered the world as the light and life of all human persons, He had to be born of *the God*—not God the Creator for He was already the Creator's unique Son, but of the unknowable God, the God of dead ones, God the Father ... the message imbedded in Mark's Gospel is that not even Jesus' disciples knew that *the God* was not the God that Abraham, that Isaac, that Jacob, that living ones worshiped (see Matt 22:32). No one knew. And no one could know until the spirit (the breath of God in the breath of Christ) was given.

Even though Jesus came to reveal the God that Israel never knew and could not know—the dead know nothing (Eccl 9:5)—only the living can know their God, a piece of self-evident logic. Therefore, the physically living as when Noah lived, as when Abraham lived, as when David lived can know their Creator, the deity that spoke to Adam in the Garden, that created Eve from the living flesh of Adam, that set in motion the biological reproduction process through which physically living sons and daughters of Adam and Eve bring forth generation after generation, with life coming from preexisting life, the primary *evidence* cited for the existence of God the Creator ...

Yet the mud—the base elements of this earth—from which Adam was created had no life when these elements were sculpted into a human corpse and *Elohim* [singular in usage] breathed the breath of life into the man of mud's nostrils (Gen 2:7). Adam did not come from preexisting life as we understand life, but from non-physical life. And here is where wisdom is required:

The Logos [Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ] who was God [ΘΕΟΣ] and who was with [ΠΡΟΣ] the God [ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ] in primacy (John 1:1) entered His creation as His unique Son, the man Jesus the Nazarene, to reveal to His disciples ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ that Israel never knew. Now consider the ending of the earliest versions of Mark's Gospel:

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day [after the Sabbath], when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right

side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and *they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid*. (Mark 16:1–8 emphasis added)

Where is *Galilee* ... the question has already been addressed so it isn't as silly as it seems: of course everyone knows where Galilee is located and was located in the 1st-Century, but again, is the *Galilee* of which the angel [young man] spoke an earthly place? If Paul compares earthly Jerusalem to Mount Sinai and Hagar (Gal 4:24) and heavenly Jerusalem to the mother of disciples born of God (v. 26), would not *Galilee* also be a heavenly location, which would have caused the women not to say anything to anybody because they were afraid? So why should a disciple think of *Galilee* being an earthly location as Jerusalem is an earthly location. Remember, Jesus told the woman of Samaria,

Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:21–24)

Neither the mountain in Samaria nor in Jerusalem—both earthly places, with the Galilee being part of Samaria—is where Christ's disciples are to worship the Father. Neither represent the covenant under which disciples worship the Father ... Israel (Judaism) worshiped what it knew, the God of the living, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the place of this worship being earthly Jerusalem, but God the Father cannot be worshiped from an earthly location, for the temple of the Father is not a lifeless house of stone and timber but the Christian Church, the living Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:27; 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16). Therefore there is no valid reason for a truly born-from-above disciple to think of *Galilee* as being any more of an earthly location than is *Jerusalem*: both *Galilee* and *Jerusalem* represent worshiping God the Father in spirit [*Galilee*] and in truth [*Jerusalem*].

When Jesus is resurrected from death by the Father, Jesus precedes His disciples to *Galilee* as those holy ones in Galatia to whom Paul wrote were of *Jerusalem* (i.e., of Isaac)—

There is a principle for understanding the vision of John that needs considered in relationship to *Galilee* being a covenant: the visible description of how things appear in Revelation chapters 4 through 22 are how these things **function**. In the vision, *appearance is function*. The glorified Christ (Rev 1:12–16) doesn't appear as a Lamb (Rev 5:6, 12–13): He functions as the Lamb of God as the angels to the seven churches function as seven eyes (also Rev 5:6) and the seven churches function as seven horns. Again, throughout the vision that is not sealed except by the seals of the scroll not being removed until the vision

occurs at the end of the age, those things described are how the thing functions in the heavenly realm in a manner similar to earthly Jerusalem forming a shadow and copy of heavenly Jerusalem, and earthly Galilee forming a shadow and copy of heavenly Galilee—things are not what they seem to be; thus, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled as Jesus cited the prophet:

You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.
For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them. (Matt 13:14–15)

Whereas a *literalist*—a person who reads metaphorical text as if it were mimetic text—will always assign a geographical location to the city of Jerusalem or to the region known as the Galilee, the *literalist* hears but doesn't understand, and sees but doesn't perceive, and has need for national health insurance for the literalist will not be healed by Christ Jesus. Rather, the *literalist* will perish when his or her heart stops beating. No law has been written on the *literalist's* heart, nor has the *literalist's* heart been circumcised. However, the *literalist's* heart may have received a pig's heart valve to repair a no-longer-functioning valve so that the *literalist* can endure for another few days before perishing.

*

This Reading will be continued. The subject is truly large.

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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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