

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 *answering questions when asked*.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of May 10, 2008

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

The person who has truly been born of Spirit following repentance will, by faith, keep the precepts of the law (Rom 2:26), which will cause the person to keep the weekly Sabbath. And keeping the Sabbath “forces” upon a person a visible separation from the person’s surrounding world; for the person becomes unavailable to assist in events sponsored by the local water trails (as an example), for the focus of these events occurs on the Sabbath. The person can no longer take advantage of one day tent sales, such as the machinery supplier Grizzly holds three times a year. The person will not work overtime on Saturday. Nor will the person shop for groceries after church services. Nor will the person attend Friday night high school football games, or Saturday afternoon college games. Keeping the Sabbath will cause a person to cease being a participating cog in an on-going medley of disobedience. Hence, nothing else produces the worldly hostility Sabbatarian disciples grow to accept as does non-participation in the things of this world on the Sabbath.

Usually, those Christians who choose to separate themselves from this world do so through outwardly visible means, such as not voting or standing for politic office, not going to war, not seeking the pleasures of this world, not pursuing the wealth of this world. Often their women wear caps and distinctively plain dress, such as today’s Amish disciples do. Sometimes they will join with others in “separatist” colonies or communities. They seek to show that though they remain “in this world,” they are not “of this world” (John 17:15-16). They claim Jesus’ prayer to keep them “from the evil one.” Yet despite their physical separation from this world—a separation made in the flesh—they do not inwardly or spiritually separate themselves from this world. Rather, they remain in spiritual rebellion to Christ Jesus, about whom the Apostle John wrote, “And by this we know that we have come to know him [Jesus], if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love

of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 John 2:3-6).

A person cannot walk as Jesus walked and fail to keep the Sabbath.

The Mennonite who seeks to separate him or herself from the carnality of this world continues in rebellion towards God through the day on which the disciple attempts to enter into God’s rest.

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The person conducting the services should read or assign to be read Matthew chapter 12, verses 1 through 14; followed by Mark chapter 2, verse 23 through to chapter 3, verse 6; and Luke chapter 6, verses 1 through 11.

Commentary: Jesus makes the unambiguous statement that He is Lord of the Sabbath ... if Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath—and He is—then how can a disciple fail to keep the Sabbath and still profess that Jesus is Lord?

How can a disciple profess that Jesus is the disciple’s Lord and Master, and then worship Jesus on the day following the Sabbath when Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath?

There are two verses that everyone who is of *Philadelphia* should never forget: Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15. Both verses are part of the Sabbath commandment as included in the *Decalogue*, and as repeated forty years later.

- Ex 20:11 — For in six days the Lord [YHWH] made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord [YHWH] blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- Deut 5:15 — You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord [YHWH] your God [Elohim] commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Note the difference: in the third month of the year that God took Israel “by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Heb 8:9), *Yahspoke* from atop Mount Sinai, and was seen by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel (Ex 24:9-11). But each of these men, Moses and Aaron included, would rebel against God in some manner, with Moses’ rebellion coming from striking the rock instead of speaking to it. Yet the writer of Hebrews records, “Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later” (3:5). Moses faithfully did the task for which he was called, and this task was to testify in inscription [to write the Torah] to the

things that Jesus would speak (John 5:46-47). The Torah exists, now, as the written shadow of the words that Jesus spoke—and if a person hears Jesus' words and believes the one who sent Him, the person does not come under judgment but passes from death to life (v. 24).

The changed reason for keeping the Sabbath between the third month of the first year and the eleventh month of the fortieth year is fully incorporated in Moses' testimony about the things that Jesus would speak; for Jesus did not come to celebrate disciples entering into God's rest on the seventh day, but to set free the captives; i.e., to set free those in bondage to sin and death as ancient Israel was set free from physical bondage to Pharaoh. And setting free those over whom sin had dominion means that the liberated disciple can now keep the commandments whereas the disciple could not before.

Forty years after Sinai, the men counted in the census of the second year (Num 1:1-2) except for Joshua, Caleb, and Moses, were dead—and Moses would die before Israel crossed into the Promised Land. So those who were commanded to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt were either children in Egypt, or the uncircumcised children born in the wilderness of Sin/Zin. For the children born in the wilderness to remember that they were slaves in Egypt poses an interesting juxtaposition: how were they slaves? If not by the same logic that had the Levitical priesthood paying tithes to Melchizedek through the patriarch Abraham (Heb 7:4-5). So the historical record—especially the record recorded in Scripture—serves as personal memory of that which occurred before a person's physical birth. And as personal memory is "selective," recalling significant events and forgetting other events, Scripture is selective, recording the shadows of spiritual events and omitting events that are not shadows of what happens in the heavenly realm.

Scripture as personal memory? As pre-birth memory? If keeping the Sabbath for the children of Israel born in the wilderness serves as remembrance of when Israel was a slave in Egypt, then keeping the Sabbath by disciples will also serve as remembrance of when these disciples were children of disobedience, separated from the covenants of promise by the things of this world, including circumcision of the flesh. Keeping the Sabbath will now serve as memory for the sons and daughters of disciples of when these sons and daughters were children of disobedience, enslaved by lawlessness and desire for the things of this world, the glitter and glamour of clothing and jewelry, fast cars and money to spend ... unfortunately, the child of a Sabbatarian disciple will, most often, not realize that he or she must also undertake a journey of faith analogous to Abraham's physical journey of faith before he or she cleanses his or her heart so that it can be circumcised by spirit according to the will of God—and this child's parents will now hinder their son's or daughter's journey of faith by attempting to keep the son or daughter in the household of faith where the parents stopped their journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. This means simply that every young person who grew up in a Sabbatarian household must move past the beliefs of the household and closer to God and walking as Jesus walked. For this young person, keeping the Sabbath will then serve as pre-birth memory, recalling for the child that the generation that left Egypt did not enter into God's rest because of

unbelief that became disobedience in the wilderness of Paran, where Ishmael the natural son of Abraham dwelt. For the child, the generation that left Egypt but did not enter into God's rest is the generation filling pews in the household of faith of the child's parents, especially when the parents have not journeyed beyond the beliefs of grandparents or great grandparents as is the case within the Adventist Church and within the assorted Churches of God.

When Israel leaves Egypt, death had reigned over humanity since Adam (Rom 5:14), but Israel was offered life on the plains of Moab if—and this is a huge “if”—when Israel had been dispersed into far lands, Israel would turn to God and begin to love God with heart and mind, keeping His commandments and all that is written in the book of Deuteronomy. Turning to God when in a far land, though, requires exercising faith in God, faith that was absent when God sent Israel into captivity, dispersing the nation to whichever far lands.

The Sabbatarian—natural Israel or disciple—who leaves obedience and reenters the world as an active participant in the world will seemingly prosper financially and often feels as if he or she prospers spiritually. After all, it is tiresome bucking the world and its prince; it wearies the flesh to be in constant rebellion against the lawlessness of this world. It would be so much easier to just go along, get along, give up, go back into disobedience, returning to attending church services on Sunday morning. Every lawless fellowship will welcome the person back into their fold of disobedience.

But death reigned from Adam to Moses, not until Christ Jesus. It is Moses' testimony, inscribed in Scripture, that bears witness to Christ's words ... Jesus did not deliver a message contrary to what Moses taught. Those who teach such nonsense do so because they are in rebellion to God, worshiping and serving instead the prince of this world, who appears as an angel of light as his servants appear as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14-15). Faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice is not a dead faith that allows sons of disobedience to continue in sin; rather, faith in Christ dictates, even demands, that the believer live and walk as Jesus lived and walked—and Jesus lived as an Observant Jew, but not as a Pharisee or a Sadducee or any other sect of Israel attempting to purify its relationship with God. Jesus lived as Moses prescribed. And being without sin, Jesus had no need for the ordinances that pertained to animal sacrifices added to the law because of the sinfulness of Israel.

Death reigned in two forms over ancient Israel, the first form in the embodiment of the Pharaoh and in the second form through the weakness of the flesh. If the Pharaoh did not have an Israelite killed for whatever reason he chose, then old age [the weakness of the flesh] would kill the Israelite. So liberation from Egypt and the Pharaoh was also liberation from death by the first cause, with this visible liberation forming the shadow and copy of liberation from the weakness of the flesh.

On the day (actually, two months later) God took Israel by the hand to lead that nation out of Egypt, the reason given to that nation for keeping the Sabbath was remembrance of the physical creation and the giving of life through the creation process, which has God resting on the 7th day, not on the

8th day. This is an easily understood and taught reason for Sabbath observance. This is the usual reason Sabbath-observing Christians give to others for keeping the Sabbath instead of Sunday. And this is the wrong reason for Christians to keep the Sabbath ... so there is no mistake, **Christians are to keep the Sabbath**, but for the reason given by Moses on the plains of Moab.

The focus on the Sabbath is God and entering into His presence, keeping the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart on God. Entering into God's "rest" is entering into the Father's presence as foreshadowed by Moses entering into the presence of *Yah* (Ex 33:14), seeing the backside of this deity which in this shadow's reality will have disciples looking upon the face of this deity, for spiritual shadows are darkened mirror images.

Traditionally, the focus of Sabbath observance has been "resting" from physical labors, with this teaching taken to ridiculousness by the remnant of Israel that returned from Babylonian captivity—the remnant that returned from Babylon intended to never again profane the Sabbath as had their ancestors (Ezek chap 20), but this remnant focused on physically resting, not upon entering into God's presence. Thus, this remnant missed the reason the Sabbath commandment was given; for Judea represented God's rest (Ps 95:10-11) because the eyes of God were always on this land. Today, the eyes of God are on disciples not separated from God by sin ... every disciple covered by grace has entered into God's rest, but Paul does not declare that every disciple is under grace. Rather, grace covers those disciple who are no longer under the dominion of sin or lawlessness (Rom 6:14), and Jesus has set the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart free from bondage to sin. Therefore, the liberated former son of disobedience can keep the commandments, all of them, not nine or fewer of them. So when a liberated disciple—one absolutely free to keep the Sabbath—presents the disciple's members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, the disciple has returned to being an obedient servant of sin, a slave of the Adversary, a rebel against God in the same way that the nation that left Egypt rebelled against God in the wilderness of Paran and attempted to enter into God's rest on the following day (Num chap 14).

For every disciple there is a short while between being liberated from disobedience and either entering into God's rest through Sabbath observance or rebelling against God—not a long while, not generations, but a period equivalent to when the Moab covenant (Deut 29:1) was given and Israel was told to choose life or death, and when Israel actually crossed the Jordan and entered into the Promised Land. In the shadow, this was about seventy days, with Israel crossing the Jordan in the 10th of Abib as the selected paschal lamb of God. Thirty of these seventy days were spent mourning Moses' death. And of the short while every disciple has between being liberated from disobedience and entering into Sabbath observance will be a period spent figuratively mourning Moses' death, a realization manifest in many forms with the most common manifestation as an over-zealous physical focus on legalism, even attaching importance on how the name of God should be uttered.

When the focus of the thoughts of the mind and desires of the heart are on God on the Sabbath, the hand and body will involuntarily “rest” from the labors that are of the flesh for the support and maintenance of the flesh. Thus, neither the hand nor the body will do mundane work—and the Sabbath will not be a burden, a twenty-four hour ordeal of not knowing what to do with idle hands. Yes, when the hand and the body are ruled by the desires of the heart and the thoughts of the mind, and when the desires of the heart and thoughts of the mind are fully on God on the Sabbath, then no external law is needed to prevent the hand and the body from doing mundane work on the Sabbath. Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath reigns on the Sabbath through the disciple’s thoughts being fully on Christ Jesus on the Sabbath. Thus, the inside of the cup has been made clean, and the outside reflects this inner cleanliness. So the genuine disciple will not perform mundane work, or weekly shopping, or take advantage of special one-day-only sales on the Sabbath. All of these things pertain to the flesh and are for the prosperity of the flesh. Instead, the genuine disciple will be fully focused on Jesus and the things of God and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit throughout the Sabbath. Worrying about what must be done physically only distracts from fully focusing on Christ Jesus, and these distractions make something other than Christ Jesus the person’s lord on the Sabbath.

To answer what is usually the first question asked of a Sabbatarian disciple, “Why not worship on Sunday,” the disciple needs to remove the focus that the question places on Sunday and place the focus on Jesus being the Lord of the Sabbath, and the disciple’s personal Lord ... if Jesus is truly the disciple’s personal Lord, then the disciple will desire to walk as Jesus walked, and the world was no friend of Jesus. Nor will the world be a friend of the disciple.

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The reader should now read John chapter 15, verses 1 through 25.

Commentary: If the world loves you, you have cause for concern!

The “world” is not a catchall term for an indefinable reality that cannot be easily identified; rather, the *world* is the culture and economy of disobedience in which every disciple lives. It includes the “Christian” church that worships on Sunday as well as the grocery store open on the Sabbath and closed on Sunday, the U-Pick orchard or berry field not open for Sunday sales, the soft pornography of a CSI: Las Vegas episode, the History Channel’s special on the Ten Commandments, the high school textbook that logically presents biological evolution, the court system that condones same sex marriages, the political candidate that promises he will not negotiate with terrorists as well as the candidate that promises he will participate in unconditional dialogues with world leaders—everything a disciple sees or encounters, nearly every person and certainly every civil institution the disciple sees and encounters constitutes the *world* consigned to disobedience so that God can have mercy upon all.

A disciple cannot, in this era, escape from the world into some religious commune of saints. The world is right there in that commune, in its organizational structure, in its beliefs and practices, in its relationships between its leaders and its laity. A disciple can only escape this world on the Sabbath by physically entering into God's presence through fully focusing thoughts and desires on God. On every other day, mundane work must be done to satisfy the needs of the flesh—and while thoughts can be on God, thoughts also have to be on what the hands and body are doing to keep from losing hands or body parts.

To repeat what should be a familiar concept: there is a real second covenant (Deut chaps 29-32), one that promises spiritual circumcision; one that places before every Israelite [spiritual as well as physical] life and death; one that requires the person when far from God to return by faith to God, loving Him with all of the person's heart and mind, while observing His commandments; one that has had better promises added and its mediator changed—better promises cannot be added to a covenant that has been abolished, nor will an abolished covenant receive another mediator. An abolished covenant is, literally, abolished! It has ended. It no longer exists. It only "was." And the marriage covenant made at Horeb or Sinai that made the physically circumcised nation of Israel the holy nation of God was abolished. This covenant is no more, and has not been in effect since Calvary.

Death reigned from Adam to Moses (again, Rom 5:14), not until Christ Jesus came as the only Son of *Theos*. Death reigned until the promise of spiritual circumcision [i.e., circumcision of the heart] was offered to Israel (Deut 30:6) upon demonstrated obedience by faith, not by cultural practice or social obligation. Death reigned with Moses as the witness against Israel until Israel as a captive people in a far land (vv. 1-2) returned to God by faith, an event that first occurred when the *Logos* entered His creation as the man Jesus of Nazareth and lived without sin, not as a son of the first Adam but as the only Son of *Theos*, and the firstborn Son of *Theon*. Yes, Jesus was the only Son of *Theos* (John 3:16). Once He divested Himself of His divinity to enter His creation—an act that required Him to have absolute faith in *Theon* (from John 1:1-2) returning to Him the glory He had before the world existed (John 17:5)—He separated Himself from the heavenly realm and from "life," and entered the darkness of the creation as the light of this world.

For all of the physical beauty of the cosmos, the creation is in spiritual darkness. Its "physicalness" separates it from the supra-dimensional heavenly realm. Thus, in having a disciple separate himself or herself from this world, God and Christ ask only of the disciple what *Theon* asked of *Theos* when *Theos* left the heavenly realm to enter His creation as the man Jesus. This separation is required, but it is also voluntary, which is not an oxymoronic statement but the reality of applied faith and manifested belief.

No, a person does not have to separate him or herself from this world. The person can remain as he or she was. But the person who professes that Jesus is Lord must walk as Jesus walked or the person is an unprofitable servant, one who is unwilling to leave this world and begin to live as a spiritual

Judean. This unprofitable servant can remain as he or she is. Hopefully, this person will live a good life and will be a model citizen and will contribute to the public welfare of this world. Hopefully, this person will be and do everything that civil authorities expect from a God-fearing person. But this person will not enter heaven! This person is not willing to place God before the things of this world.

Unless a person, voluntarily and by faith, separates him or herself from this world and begins to live as a spiritual Judean, the person will not be part of the early harvest of firstfruits. This person might well receive life in the general resurrection, the great White Throne Judgment, but this person could have been one of the firstfruits, so within the plan of salvation there is a “catch” that bites: the person who remains of this world will remain in this world, suffering death because of the weakness of the flesh [“weakness” as if being unable to permanently sustain itself in the darkness of a decaying world], whereas the person who spurns this world even though remaining in it and who by faith chooses to live and walk as Jesus lived and walked will physically die but will spiritually live. The person who chooses to walk as Jesus walked also chooses to be rejected by this world as Jesus was rejected. And therein lurks the concealed answer to why disciples are to keep the Sabbath: Christendom (i.e., the visible Church) today functions for disciples as the Pharisees and Sadducees functioned for Christ Jesus. It wasn’t Rome that rejected Jesus even though Roman soldiers crucified Jesus on a Roman cross; for Jesus did not come to Caesar but to the people who professed to be of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Today, the last Elijah—the Elijah who restores all things—does not come to the U.N. or to its Secretary General but to those who profess to be of Christ. And Christendom will reject this last Elijah, the glorified Christ Jesus, just as the scribes and Pharisees rejected the man Jesus. So following the Pharisees wholesale rejection of Jesus as the Christ, the “good news” of Jesus being the Messiah was then preached to Gentiles. Likewise, following Christendom’s rejection of the last Elijah’s restoration of all things, the “good news” that *all who endure to the end shall be saved* (Matt 24:13-14) will be proclaimed to all the world as a witness to all nations. And this “good news” that all who endure shall be saved is now being proclaimed to all nations—the degree to which this gospel will be proclaimed as a witness is a manner for the last Elijah to determine.

The better promises added to the second covenant will have all who keep the precepts of the law, by faith, having their outer circumcision or uncircumcision counted as inner circumcision, by the Spirit, not by the letter of the law (Rom 2:26-29); the better promises added are not for physical life and prosperity, but for spiritual life and treasure in heaven.

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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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