

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 *the synagogue of Satan*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of June 23, 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 Book of Revelation introduces an identifying phrase about which Christendom speculates without agreement: “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2:9; 3:9).

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The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

Commentary: The first defining characteristic of the *synagogue of Satan*” is that they say they are Jews, but are not. They lie when they say they are Jews. And the second defining characteristic is that they are of Satan, meaning they remain sons of disobedience, following the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2).

Disciples were sons of disobedience (Eph 2:3)—God consigned all of humanity to disobedience so that He could have mercy on all (Rom 11:32)—but ceased being sons of disobedience when they received the Holy Spirit, and “the law of the Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2). Therefore, it can be said with certainty that those who are of the synagogue of Satan do not have the Holy Spirit and have not been born of Spirit.

But how does a person know if he or she has been born of Spirit?

Human nature is a “received” nature as evidenced by what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar—.

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The person reading should now read Daniel chapter 4.

Commentary: Nebuchadnezzar says that at the end of the seven years, his reason returned to him ... he did not think as a man for these seven years. If he had, his reason would have been continuously present with him, and he would not have willingly eaten grass and slept in the fields, wet by dew. Literally, his human nature was taken from him in an instant, and he was given the nature of a beast (of an ox).

If one's human nature can be taken from a person, and if the person receives the nature of an animal in lieu of his or her human nature, then that which makes a person “human” is not the product of biology, but a non-physical essence that God has assigned to human beings as He has assigned the nature of a cat to all felines and the nature of a cow to bovines.

Human beings share almost the same DNA chain with the great apes, but there is a qualitative difference in behavior that exceeds the biological or genetic differences. In other words, biology alone cannot account for why the great apes do not build firearms, or even bows and arrows, and shoot back at poachers. Allegedly, millions of years of history have caused human beings to develop their small biological diversity into cities and skyscrapers and footsteps on the moon while their close kin remain roaming in small troupes through the forests of this world.

What human beings do not share with the great apes is the same received nature. And it is this received nature that separates humankind from the so-called beasts of this world; it is this received nature that Greek philosophers observed and identified as an immortal soul that lives beyond death.

A person's received nature is not a production of the flesh although it is affected by appetites of the belly and loins. Hormonally produced thoughts [such as expressed in the country music song, "The Girls All Get Prettier at Closing Time"] will often produce conflicting agendas within the mind, as will a gender identity that disagrees with the biology of the person's body. Thus, while hormone produced thoughts are easily identified as "base instincts," an additional level of thoughts that seemingly are of a higher nature come from a person's received nature and can also be properly labeled as base instincts. And included in these "instincts" is the need to worship a deity. Yes, part of every human being's received nature is the need to worship God, or some power higher than himself or herself—and the need to believe that a person's life doesn't end with the death of the flesh.

Where all of this leads is to the question, what does it mean to be born of Spirit or born again? A person's received nature seeks a "religious" experience of a quality or magnitude that equates to receiving a second birth. In other words, humankind has been given the software programming necessary for receipt of a second birth, with this second birth to occur for most of humanity following death and resurrection back to life. But for the firstfruits, this second birth occurs prior to death. This person is one of the few who are drawn from this world in this era that began at Calvary and will end when the Messiah comes.

Those individuals who have not been born from above do not know whether they have been or not when they "experience" a manifestation of any kind that is religious or spiritual in nature; thus, the only basis for determining whether a spiritual experience was being drawn and called by the Father and the Son is that expressed by the Apostle Paul.

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The person reading should now read Romans chapter 8, verses 1 through 17.

Commentary: The importance to a Christian of being "led by the Spirit of God" (v. 14) cannot be overstated. Without the Spirit of God a person has no part of Christ; the person is dead because of the deeds of the body; the person will not go to heaven upon death. Thus, Christendom claims possession of the Holy Spirit regardless of whether it has been born of Spirit or not; for without the Holy Spirit Christendom has no validity as a belief paradigm.

But if a person claims to have the Spirit of God dwelling within the person when this person doesn't know even what it means to have received the Spirit of adoption, then the person is a liar ... another person who also has not been born of Spirit will not quickly recognize the person as a liar [unless the person is in a differing denomination], but God

knows His own. He knows who lies about being born of Spirit. So a person needs to be careful about making this claim unless the person is absolutely certain he or she has received birth from above—and a person can know if he or she is being led by the Spirit of God through the simple test: Paul wrote, “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot” (Rom 8:7).

There is the only means by which a person can be sure that he or she is being led by the Spirit of God: if the person submits to the law of God, keeping the commandments by faith to the best of the person’s ability, then this person has separated himself or herself from the world and is being led by the Holy Spirit.

One of the commandments is the Sabbath commandment ... the person who will not enter into God’s rest on the Sabbath but who attempts to enter on the following day is hostile to God and proves that he or she cannot keep God’s law. Yes, the person who worships on Sunday instead of on the Sabbath does so either from ignorance or from rebellion against God. Ignorance can be addressed. Rebellion will, if continued into the Tribulation, send the person into the lake of fire. For now, rebellion comes from not being born of Spirit and by being a son of disobedience who merely claims to be a Christian.

Remember, every person who has been born of Spirit was at one time a son of disobedience. So the person who has been born of Spirit has no claim for glory, or even for feeling a tingle of superiority. It might be that those who have received the Spirit of God in this era were the spiritual dregs of society, the person who on his or her own could not reach high enough to overcome “self.”

However, back to self-identified Christians who do not submit to God’s law and are not led by the Spirit of God ... how do they know that they are not being led by the Spirit of God? The truth is, they cannot know that they constitute the synagogue of Satan until after they cease their rebellion, turn to God, and begin to keep His commandments and to walk in His ways (1 John 2:3-6).

So the situation exists (and is very apparent to those few who have been born of Spirit) that within Christendom there is scarcely a person who has been born of Spirit and is being led by the Spirit of God. Rebellion against God is rampant. And the Body of Christ is dead from loss of breath [i.e., the Holy Spirit – *Pneuma 'Agion*].

What’s to be done?

Before Jesus’ earthly ministry began, His cousin John the Baptist said of himself that he was “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,” as the prophet Isaiah said” (John 1:23). John the Baptist’s ministry was one of preaching repentance, of returning the hearts of natural Israelites to God, of pointing the way to God. And the ministry of John the Baptist was a type of the ministry of the last Elijah, who is the glorified Christ Jesus, not another human being. It is Christ Jesus who will turn the hearts of the sons of God to the Father and turn the Father’s heart back to His sons (Mal 4:6), and while it would be easy to argue the hearts of the sons of God that must be turned to the Father are the hearts of lawless Christendom, that is not the case for lawless Christendom has not been born of Spirit and are not yet sons of God. Rather, lawless Christians are sons of their father, Satan the devil. The hearts that this last Elijah will turn toward the Father are those of Sabbatarian Christendom, which is today a house divided against itself.

Therefore, it remains for another like John the Baptist to be a voice crying out in the wilderness, *Make straight the way of the Lord*. It remains for another to preach

repentance, to preach that all who would come to God must while in a far land begin to obey His voice in all that He commanded the circumcised and uncircumcised children of the nation of Israel on the plains of Moab. It was then when the Lord set life or death before the mixed nation, with the command to choose life (Deu 30:19), loving God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him.

Under the terms of the second covenant, the covenant to which better promises were added when its mediator became Christ Jesus, if a person will call upon God and will begin to obey His voice (which means keeping the commandments and more), then God will bring this person into His rest and will circumcise the heart of this person, a euphemistic expression for receiving the Holy Spirit. This person will no longer be a son of disobedience for this person will have begun obeying God. This person will leave the synagogue of Satan [if this person has previously identified himself or herself as a Christian] and will become part of the household of God, where this person will live as a spiritual Israelite.

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The person reading should now read Romans chapter 2, verses 12 through 29.

Commentary: Paul says the person who sinned without the law will also perish without the law, but when Gentiles [the nations] do by nature what the law requires, they are a law unto themselves and show that they have the law written on their hearts. Thus, being without the law—that is, never having heard the commandments of God—is not an excuse for or justification of wrongdoing. Rather, all who would live will keep the law.

But the nations who do not know God will not enter into His rest (represented by Sabbath observance) when the Messiah comes. Instead, their resurrection will come in the great White Throne Judgment which follows the thousand year long reign of Christ Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus, the nations are not part of the firstfruits, represented by the early barley harvest in ancient Judea; they are part of the main crop wheat harvest ... two harvests, not two kingdoms.

In this era that began mid-Passover-week when Jesus was resurrected, a “Jew” is not one who has been outwardly circumcised, but one who has a circumcised heart. The person who says he is a Jew but lies is the person who says he or she has a circumcised heart when the person has not cleansed his or her heart by undertaking a journey of faith that is spiritually equivalent to the geographical journey of the patriarch Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeas to the Promised Land.

The person who is outwardly circumcised and says he is a Jew is not one spiritually, but this person also does not lie, for he is a Jew physically. Thus, when the only circumcision that matters is of the heart, physical Jews are outside the parameters of the discussion: Christians or disciples of Christ Jesus are being referenced, and Christians who say they are circumcised (that is, have circumcised hearts) but who have not been born of Spirit lie to this world, to themselves, and to God, who knows the truth. Thus, it isn't the natural Jew who claims his biological ancestry that lies when he says he or she is a Jew, but it is the Christian who lies when he or she claims to be spiritually circumcised yet refuses to obey God's law.

The physically uncircumcised person—whether of the nations or female—who keeps the precepts of the law will have his or her uncircumcision counted as circumcision (Rom 2:26); therefore, this person is a Jew before God. But the physically uncircumcised person who refuses to keep the precepts of the law even though this

person has the law in his or her hands whenever he or she reads the Bible is not a spiritual Jew, but is a liar if he or she claims to be one. Hence, the linguistic identifier /*Christian*/ has become virtually useless ... when those who claim to be disciples of Christ Jesus refuse to obey God's law yet call themselves "Christians," then another linguistic icon phrase needs to be used by disciples who do obey to differentiate themselves from the rebels. This phrase was supplied to them at the close of the 1st-Century CE, and this phrase is, *the synagogue of Satan*.

Every self-identified Christian who does not submit, by faith, to God's law and who refuses to keep what the person deems the least of the commandments is of the synagogue of Satan and remains a son of disobedience. Every one of these individuals needs to, by faith, turn to God with his or her mind and heart and begin to obey the law of God, but most won't until the second half of the seven endtime years of tribulation. For many of them it will then be too late: they will have already committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. So it isn't from hostility to lawless Christendom that the message of repentance is preached to them, but from love. Unless a person is born of Spirit, the person is not of the household of God. And all who are of *Philadelphia* were at one time a son of disobedience. All have struggled in separating himself or herself from this world; all have paid a high physical price. But unless a person loves God enough to mentally leave this world, the person will not be born of Spirit prior to when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation.

If a person keeps Sunday as his or her day of worship when the person knows that the Sabbath of God is the preceding day, the person is of the synagogue of Satan and is as the rebels were in the wilderness of Paran when the nation that left Egypt rebelled against God (Num chap 14).

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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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