

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 *watchmen*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of June 30 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.

One tenant of the many divisions of the former Worldwide Church of God is that Herbert Armstrong was a watchman after the order of Ezekiel: these splinters accept what Armstrong wrote in Volume One of his autobiography, that in 1943 he realized he was a watchman commissioned by God to warn those nations he identified as the endtime house of Israel (the physical descendants of the lost ten tribes, the northern nation of Samaria) that unless this commonwealth of nations repented of its idolatry and wrongdoing this commonwealth would again be taken captive as ancient Samaria was taken captive by Assyria in 721 BCE. To this end, he prophesied that these nations representing endtime Israel—United States and the British Commonwealth—would never again win a war, but would decline into second or third tier status and eventually into a servant state to a United Europe lead by Germany in conjunction with the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. For forty years, he delivered this message via radio, television, and the printed media. He called upon those nations that he believed were comprised of the physical descendants of the house of Israel to repent as he proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand. And for forty years, he was wrong. After sixty years, he is still wrong: the kingdom of God still has not arrived. Thus, he was, by scriptural definition, a false prophet.

In its heyday, the former Worldwide Church of God (WCG) had approximately 160,000 baptized members attending weekly Sabbath services. Its income was near or above a hundred million dollars each year. It had a college campus in California, another in Texas, a third in England. At the end of his ministry, Armstrong paid himself more than he paid senior “evangelists,” who were, according to what was said from a Boise pulpit in 1981, earning \$324,000 per year. Thus, preaching repentance and proclaiming *the soon coming kingdom of God* was personally profitable—being a watchman was about scaring as much money as possible from as many innocents as possible. While members of the former WCG struggled to make ends meet, the upper ministry struggled with how to spend their income, for these senior men were expected to live as kings here on earth in anticipation of reigning with Christ during the Millennium.

History now rightfully judges Armstrong as a false prophet. Yes, it does. For cause Armstrong was and remains a false prophet, a false teacher of prophecy; however, the

message he delivered, that Israel needs to repent and return to living within the commandments of God, remains the message every watchman coming as a type of Ezekiel is to deliver.

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The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Ezekiel chapters 33.

Commentary: Where Armstrong first went wrong was in his identification of the United States and Britain as endtime Israel. He was physically minded in all his ways and teachings. Thus, since there was no physical nation of Israel when he began his ministry in 1927 (the modern Jewish state did not come into existence until 1947), he had to invent a physical nation or commonwealth of nations that could reasonably be identified as “Israel.” He became acquainted with the philosophy of British Israelism, and borrowing a little from *dispensationalists* and some from Adventists [in particular from the Church of God, 7th day]—ordained as an apostle by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God, 7th day—he set forth as a modern knight errant (a *Don Quixote*) to right the wrongs of this world. A good ad-man with a powerful radio voice, Armstrong took his message of repentance across the nation and around the world. Unfortunately, he muddied the message so much through misidentifying endtime Israel that his soiled preaching seems to have done more harm to infant sons of God than good. Therefore, his legacy is one of cultism and disbelief, rebellion against God, crass materialism and carnal mindedness.

Today, biblical Israel is not a physically circumcised nation. It is not the modern Jewish state identified as Israel. It is not the Commonwealth that allegedly descends from the lost ten tribes. It is, instead, the holy nation of God, the nation that was not before a nation, a chosen race, a royal priesthood that proclaims Christ Jesus (1 Pet 2:9-10); a nation circumcised of heart by the Spirit (Rom 2:29), a circumcision made without hands (Col 2:11); a nation created by putting off the flesh or of making the flesh of no importance. Thus, the endtime nation of Israel is the spiritual continuation of Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven as the only Son of *Theos* and the firstborn Son of *Theon*. The new creature, born of Spirit that is the son of God, is not of this world but is of heaven. The body or flesh in which this new creature is domiciled remains in this world and of this world; hence, flesh and blood cannot enter heaven. Nor can flesh and blood please God. Therefore, endtime Israel is not and cannot be a nation of men, or a commonwealth of nations. Armstrong was without spiritual understanding when he identified the United States and Britain as endtime Israel. He thought as a man, taught as a man, and his work was spiritually burned up after his death for it was a work that started better than it finished.

Ever since the resurrected Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples (John 20:22), Israel has been the Christian Church, either free or in spiritual captivity ... yes, Israel was taken captive by the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4), with this captivity formalized at the Council of Nicea (ca 325 CE) when the still pagan Roman Emperor Constantine determined what sound doctrine would be. And as God gave the ancient physically circumcised nation statutes and rules by which this physical nation could not live (Ezek 20:25-26) that the nation might be horrified by the burning of its firstborns, God gave the Church statutes, rules, and traditions by which it could not live before He sent the Church into Babylonian captivity. He gave these traditions so that the Church might be horrified when it looked into the “perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas 1:25) as if looking into a mirror. And the foremost tradition that causes Israel to burn its firstborn is its

transgression of the Sabbath commandment, for no one can enter into God's rest on the following day (Num 14:40-42; Ps 95:10-11; Heb 3:16-4:11). That is correct: no one can enter God's rest when the promise of entering no longer stands. The good news of salvation will not benefit the "Christian" who is not united in faith with those who hear the voice of Jesus and believe the One who sent Him—and all who hear and keep the commandments and who keep their faith in Jesus (Rev 14:12) will be saved, regardless of whether they remain physically alive when Jesus returns. Thus, to be united in faith with those who hear and believe Jesus requires keeping the Sabbaths of God, just as it requires the *Christian* to love his (or her) neighbor as he (or she) loves oneself.

Salvation comes to the one who, when in a far land, turns to God and by faith begins to show God the person's love for Him by keeping His commandments.

Keeping the commandments is not a work of the hand or of the body, but of exercising the Spirit which cleanses the inside of the cup, thereby making the whole cup clean. Keeping the commandments is the reasonable expectation of all who are of the household of God, upon whom judgment has come. Keeping the commandments is not too difficult for those who have been born of Spirit, for the law is not far from Israel but is written on the heart and placed in the mind of every person who has been circumcised of heart. Therefore, those who contend that keeping the commandments is *legalism* inevitably express their rebellion against God through their continued disobedience, with this disobedience primarily seen by trying to enter into God's rest on the following day, Sunday. But all they truly show is that they remain sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2-3).

Therefore, let it be said with absolute certainty: endtime Israel is the Christian Church, composed only of those disciples whose hearts have been circumcised by Spirit.

- The United States and Britain are not endtime Israel although their populations might have descended from those tribes that were taken into captivity by Assyria.
- The modern state of Israel, now occupying a portion of ancient Judea, is not endtime Israel although these peoples will be adversely affected by endtime events.
- Since the dividing wall of hostility that physical circumcision represented was abolished at Calvary, the flesh of every person is spiritually as the flesh of every other person: no longer is there Jew or Greek, man or woman, free or slave although the flesh remains what it is. The difference is whether a new creature, born of Spirit, now dwells within the tent of flesh. If a new creature does, then this person is inwardly a Jew and part of endtime Israel.
- The person who teaches that there is one dispensation [the dispensation of Grace] for the Church and another dispensation [the dispensation of Law] for natural Israel is a false teacher and a false prophet.
- Likewise, the person who teaches that the English speaking peoples are endtime Israel or that the modern state of Israel is endtime Israel is a false teacher and false prophet.
- Therefore, virtually the entirety of the splintered WCG is falsely taught and falsely led by ministers who still hold the error of Armstrong. Although sincere disciples still linger among the slivers of Armstrong's empire, most who remain will not repent of their rebellion against God, with this rebellion

visibly evident in their endorsement of, and financial support for false teachers.

- The only redeeming work done by the Armstrong slivers is their preaching of repentance as they continue as supposed watchmen, warning the wrong Israel to repent of its lawlessness.

Since Israel is the Christian Church, then those who would be watchmen—those called by God to preach repentance to the lawless Church—must proclaim whatever they have heard to (not principally the world but) those who are already dwelling in God’s rest. Yes, the watchmen are for Israel. They warn Israel to turn from wickedness; they warn those who have spiritually circumcised hearts to turn from their transgressions and their sins; they warn those who are already keeping the commandments that if they trust in their righteousness that has come by faith and if they then do injustice, their righteousness will not be remembered and they will die the second death.

Righteousness comes by faith that produces belief; thus, the person who turns from righteousness has lost his or her faith and no longer believes God. And many of those who once fellowshiped in the former WCG are in this category.

As a follow up to last Sabbath’s reading: those who are of the synagogue of Satan say they have been born of Spirit, but they lie. They have made no journey of faith. They have not cleansed their hearts so that they can be spiritually circumcised. Rather, they follow in the traditions of their ancestors, perpetuating the captivity of the past. They hold onto *that olde tyme religion* of two or twelve centuries ago, with this *olde tyme religion* never being of God but of the prince of this world. Thus, they will not repent of worshiping demons even after the sixth trumpet plague (Rev 9:20) ... they are not endtime Israel; they are not part of the Christian Church even though they claim they are. They are truly liars.

So the watchmen who follow in the footsteps of Ezekiel (and some will, for Ezekiel forms the shadow and type of the one or ones who will come after him) are not sent to the United States or Britain, nor even to the greater Christian Church. They are sent by God to warn those spiritually circumcised Israelites who shelter themselves in the United Church of God, or in the Living Church of God, or in any one of the splinters and slivers vying for preeminence among the elderly and dying disciples that have for thirty or more years covered their iniquity with the Passover blood of the Lamb of God. [Those Sabbatarian disciples who do not take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed cover their sinfulness with their own blood, which will be required of them once the seven endtime years of tribulation begin. They are as Esau was in the womb of Rebekah, who was “one” with Isaac.]

God asks of Israel, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 33:11) ... why will you die, Israel, when you have invested years in trying to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6)? Why did some of you rush out to *Red Lobster* to gorge yourself on shellfish when a little man, a pipsqueak of a scholar, said that disciples did not have to be holy as God was holy (1 Pet 1:14-16) but that all disciples were holy because God was holy.

Korah told Moses, “For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them” (Num 16:3)—Korah made being holy an inherited state, acquired when Israel left Egypt. For Korah, holiness was not imitating God, but being numbered among the congregation. And like Korah, the pipsqueak scholar and the puppet he

manipulated sought and won the approval of the synagogue of Satan by transforming the physical-mindedness of Herbert Armstrong into celebrated rebellion against God through rejection of the laws of God. They taught disciples that all of Christendom was holy before God, that holiness was an inherited state received when a disciple accepted the Lord. For this pipsqueak scholar, disciples were holy because they professed with their mouths that Jesus was Lord ... their mouths professed a lie, for Jesus was not their Lord. If He were, they would have continued to keep the commandments (1 John 2:3-6), for the law is holy and good (Rom 7:12 *et al*).

Satan is a liar, and the father of all liars (John 8:44). Those who are of the synagogue of Satan are liars because they cannot help themselves; they remain sons of disobedience because they will not repent and turn from their lawless ways and begin to (by faith) keep the precepts of the law and so have their uncircumcised hearts spiritually circumcised (Rom 2:26-29). Instead, as rabble they run against genuine disciples, shouting loudly that those who keep the precepts of the law are *legalists*, as if somehow walking as Jesus walked is blasphemy.

Therefore, it isn't to greater Christendom that God sends watchmen, or to the world. It is to disciples who have circumcised hearts, meaning that despite the journey of faith these disciples made—this journey cleansing their hearts so that they can be circumcised by the Spirit of God—these disciples need to be warned to continue in the way of righteousness, and to continue living by faith, imitating God and thus being holy as He is holy. They need to realize that the Lord will judge each disciple according to his or her ways (Ezek 33:20); that the Lord will not bare His sword in vain when He returns; that the slain of the Lord shall be many (Isa 66:16).

The task of watchmen is to warn those who think they stand of their unrighteousness.

The immediate task of the watchmen whom God has called is to warn Israel that a catastrophe is about to occur, a catastrophe that most of Israel fears to admit: the seven endtime years of tribulation will begin with a second Passover recovery of Israel from bondage to sin and death, and this second Passover recovery of Israel will again see the lives of men given as ransom for Israel (Isa 43:4). Firstborns not covered by the blood of Christ will be slain as the firstborns of Egyptians and their beasts were slain so long ago. And if the watchmen of God who would not have the blood of Israel on their own heads do not sound the alarm and warn those who no longer sigh and cry for the abominations of Israel that unless they turn from the lawlessness they have embraced as if they were in the throes of passions for a strange woman, they will die the second death; for this is their day of salvation, this third day of creation when seed bearing trees bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit. God will take no pleasure in their condemnation, but their former righteousness will not cover their present lawlessness. They will spiritually and physically die as suddenly as did Noah's countrymen and Lot's neighbors.

Unfortunately, Armstrong made being a "watchman" a stench in the nostrils of Israel. Armstrong spoiled the thoughts and desires of those "Israelites" who are today committed to lawlessness and injustice. Despite the good he thought he was doing, he greatly damaged the Body of Christ. His physical-mindedness and crass materialism made *being a watchmen* a license to scare two and three generations of disciples into cult-like servitude to his reading of Scripture, a reading that was not of him as much as it was a compilation of doctrines borrowed from spiritual Esau and the synagogue of Satan to which he added observance of the high Sabbaths of God.

Today, there are those disciples who cannot escape Armstrong's legacy. It isn't that they won't, but that they actually cannot: their self-images were "burned out" and replaced by an image of Armstrong's making, this image being that of a disciple who cannot question doctrine for fear of eternal damnation. The person's ability to think is permanently damaged. And this person will tell an outsider observer that he or she is not born of Spirit, but only begotten. Sadly, this has become a self-fulfilling lie. The son of God that was once born within a cleansed heart has been forced into a spiritual fetal position as if he were still a fetus in his mother's womb. He is afraid to grow in grace and knowledge, afraid of the light, afraid to utter anything other than the banalities of those ministers who follow in Armstrong's footsteps. And a sword is coming, not to sever a spiritual umbilical cord, but to slay the cowardly who cannot walk in the light of day.

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The person reading should now read James chapter 5, verses 19 & 20.

Commentary: The task of the shepherds of Israel is to bring back into the light the one who has wandered away; the task of the watchmen is to warn the sheep and the shepherds when wolves or thieves are about to prey upon the sheep. But there was not a watchman to warn Israel that the Adversary slithered into the sheep pen and slew more than are left alive—the carnage is self-evident. Nevertheless, the slain of the Serpent will be few compared to the slain of the Lord if Israel does not heed the warning that a second Passover slaughter of firstborns will occur.

The person who brings a lost sheep back into the fold covers a multitude of his or her own sins, but the watchman who faithfully warns only prevents the blood of Israel from being reckoned to him. Thus, watchmen are not shepherds. They are not pastors *per se*. They are the lonely who dwell in the wilderness; they are the prophets who are not heard until calamity befalls Israel (Ezek 33:33). Only then will Israel know that there was a prophet among them all along.

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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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