

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 *shepherds and sheep*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of July 7, 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 person conducting the service should read or assign to be read John chapter 10.

Commentary: A few points to note before beginning: (1) all who came before Jesus were hirelings, or servants. (2) The good shepherd sacrifices himself for the sheep. (3) The good shepherd has more than one fold of sheep, but these folds will be brought together to be one flock with one shepherd. (4) The good shepherd knows his sheep and they hear his voice; the sheep do not follow other voices.

What can be extrapolated from Jesus' discourse on Him being the good shepherd is that He has one Body, but many churches within that one Body that must be brought together to function as one church; that these many churches all hear His voice and do not follow other voices; that the Levitical priesthood was a hireling that did not own the flock and would not lay down its life for the flock. What also can be extrapolated is that the sheep transcend the period when they are herded by hirelings and continue together under Christ Jesus: Israel goes from being a physically circumcised nation to being a spiritually circumcised nation. And with the understanding that late 1st-Century Israel consisted of both the "uncircumcised" who have been brought near to God by faith and the "circumcised" who have been brought back to God by faith, and that endtime Israel consists of self-identified Christians who have truly been born of Spirit and who have cleansed their hearts through a journey of faith that will have these disciples keeping the commandments of God (all of them to the best of the disciples' abilities), the one who would today tend the flock of God will himself [or herself] be a sheep and not a shepherd. Therefore, the one who tends the flock of God needs to return to the many prophecies about Israel being sheep.

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The person reading should now read Ezekiel chapter 34.

Commentary: The Levitical priesthood left Israel scattered all over the face of the earth (v. 6), with none searching for them. Although what Ezekiel writes against the shepherds of Israel (vv. 1-10) can be applied to false ministers within the greater Christian Church, the statement that "I [YHWH Elohim] will rescue my sheep ... [that] I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out" (vv. 10-11) dates the preceding

verses against the shepherds of Israel to the period before *Theos* came as His Son, His only Son (John 3:16), and comes again as the Messiah (Ezek 34:12-16). Thus, the extended period between the 1st-Century CE and the 21st-Century reaches backwards to apply spiritually what Ezekiel has written against the physical shepherds of Israel and reaches forward to individually apply what God will do collectively going from the Tribulation into the Millennium.

Today, salvation is individual. The Holy Spirit has not been poured out on all flesh—the natures of the great predators have not been changed (Isa 11:6-9) as they will be when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh—and disciples can know with certainty that the Holy Spirit was not poured out on all flesh when the first disciples were “filled” or “empowered” by Spirit (Acts chap 2) for when everyone has been born of Spirit [what it means to have received the Holy Spirit], everyone will “Know God” (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11).

The above needs developed: when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh no one will have to teach another to *Know the Lord*; for all of humankind will be of the single nation promised to the patriarch Abraham. If the laws of God are written on hearts and minds, then every person will be under these inner commandments and will know the will of God and have the mind of Christ. No longer will anyone be a son of disobedience for the prince of this world [i.e., the prince of disobedience] will have been cast from heaven and will be bound in a bottomless pit. Therefore, since the *many* of this world (the vast majority of humankind) need today to be taught to *Know the Lord*, the justification for the multitude of worldwide ministries, whereas under the new covenant none will need to be taught to *Know the Lord*, the new covenant has not been implemented except on an individual basis with the very few who keep the commandments of God by faith. And the only reliable test of whether the person has been truly born of Spirit is whether the person is hostile to God, not submitting to God’s law and absolutely unable to submit (Rom 8:7).

A person who inwardly remains a son of disobedience has not been born of Spirit. Sin retains dominion over this person, who might well want to please God but who will not (again, indeed cannot because sin still has dominion over this person) submit to God’s law. This person will, of necessity, break the law of God—and the person who breaks one commandment has broken the law (Jas 2:10). Inevitably, the commandment the person regards as least will be broken. Usually this is the Sabbath commandment, but not always. It can be any commandment, but the commandment against coveting runs second to breaking the Sabbath commandment, with the other commandments vying for the distinction of being considered least by those who are of the synagogue of Satan, that collective of disciples who claim to have been born of Spirit but who lie, for they have not been so born.

This need to be emphasized: the Sabbath keeping disciple who covets the possessions or power of others [the man who builds himself a million dollar home with tithe moneys] or who uses deceit as a business tactic, by his or her acts discloses that he or she has not been truly born of Spirit but is a fraud, a member of the synagogue of Satan. Plus, the collecting of tithes is theologically problematic, for all disciples are spiritual Levites (the royal priesthood of God – 1 Pet 2:9) and Levites did not pay each other tithes. So while Paul writes that a workman is entitled to be supported (1 Cor 9:3-12), he also writes that he took no support from the saints at Corinth to undermine false apostles and deceitful workmen who claimed to work on the same terms as he, Paul,

worked (2 Cor 11:7-15). What Paul did was to establish a test by which disciples can determine whether a minister is genuine or false. The one who teaches is worthy of being supported, but if this one who teaches insists upon being supported, he [or she] is false. The onus of support falls entirely on those who are being taught to supply the needs of the one who teaches. Therefore, the person who collects tithes has no right to these moneys which can only appropriately be used for ministry and not for personal support even in the form of wages paid. And this is biblical understanding that has come to *The Philadelphia Church* since 2003. Disciples are under an obligation to support locally those who teach them, but not to tithe to those who teach. Even the argument that those who teach form the temple of God and under the Levitical priesthood tithes were paid for support of the temple falls into theological quicksand; for the disciples who are asked to tithe are also the temple, and the temple did not pay itself tithes.

Again, under the new covenant, all will *Know the Lord* so there will be no need to teach. The priesthood will again offer sacrifices to God, for Christ Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords will not be the high priest of Israel and will not bear the sins of Israel as the reality of the Azazel goat. Grace ends when the fleshly members of Israel are liberated from indwelling sin and death at the Second Passover.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He said, “I tell you [His disciples] I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt 26:29) ... the cup that was His blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins was drank by Christ once, not many times. When He drinks again, He will not drink His blood. He will not bear the sins of Israel. He will drink under the terms of a new covenant that will see all Israel having circumcised hearts and *knowing the Lord*.

Christ Jesus will have revealed the judgments of His sheep (1 Cor 4:5) when He drinks again of *the fruit of the vine*, a euphemistic expression that can include wine or grape juice but that pertains to Him being the living vine and glorified disciples being His fruit.

The prophet Ezekiel addresses these judgments: the Lord God [*YHWH Elohim*] will judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats (34:17)—

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The person reading should now read Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 through 46.

Commentary: When Christ returns as the Messiah He will, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, separate peoples, but [here is the caveat] only those peoples whom the Father has raised from the dead or have been born of Spirit. That portion of humankind that died before the Holy Spirit was poured out on all flesh halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation, and died without either receiving the promise of inheriting eternal life or having been born of Spirit—that portion which corresponds to the wheat harvest of ancient Judean hillsides—will be resurrected during the great White Throne Judgment. So the Son of Man will gather all nations to Him for the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all flesh for the previous three and a half years; all will be born of Spirit. And those who endured to the end [enduring means not having taken the mark of the beast] shall be saved; shall be numbered among the sheep on His right hand.

The sheep on Christ’s right will have fed the hungry when buying and selling required taking the mark of the beast. They will have, by faith, trusted God to supply what they could not purchase, and then, by faith, they will have given to those who were hungry what they had received from God.

In this pre-tribulation era, physical hunger is not a worldwide problem; famines are localized. But the world is starving spiritually. The hungry are those who need taught the rudimentary precepts of the law. They need more than a global satellite system (GPS) receiver to locate God. They need the way made straight as John the Baptist made straight the way of the Lord; they need another John the Baptist, someone who will condemn the hypocrites and all unrighteousness. They need to feed the lean sheep and push aside the fat sheep (Ezek 34:20). They will be, themselves, sheep, but they must be as rams able to drive from the water the sheep who have muddied the stream and who have trodden down the pasture they could not eat ... cattle ranchers in the Intermountain West go to great trouble to keep elk off their winter haystacks. These ranchers do not begrudge the elk the hay they eat when snow has driven them down from the high country. What these ranchers cannot tolerate is the elk standing in the middle of the hay stack, pissing and defecating on winter feed that now will not be eaten by any animal. And so it has been with the vast majority of evangelists (and especially televangelists) for two millennia: they have polluted the gospel of Christ with borrowed paganism; have soiled the garment of Christ with their greed; have starved the saints; and have taught newly born sons of God to commit spiritual suicide. Yes, Christ will judge between sheep and sheep. He will rescue His flock. He will set David over them as His shepherd, and He will make the sheep dwell securely in a land that has gone to brambles and briars, thorns and thistles.

From the mid point of the Tribulation on, the sheep will be under the new covenant: they will all *Know the Lord*. But right now, those human beings who come to God, regardless of whether they are physically circumcised or uncircumcised, come without having first cleansed their hearts by a spiritual journey of faith equivalent to Abraham's physical journey of faith from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan. They come for any number of reasons—and the fat sheep of long established ministries feed on these lambs, eating from the lambs' purses, shearing the lambs, slaughtering them, reigning over them with manipulated guilt and a plethora of icons, the foremost of which is the image of the beast.

Christ has already revealed how He will judge the fat sheep who trampled the gospel of God and taught [teach] lambs to transgress the commandments: regardless of the great works they have done or do in His name, He will deny knowing them when they appear before Him (Matt 7:21-23). They will be the goats on His left hand, for they obtained their treasure in this world. They used guilt-extorted moneys to build for themselves great houses. They desired to live as kings on this earth, and many of them have. All of them, however, will be condemned for not feeding the sheep good pasture, good hay, first-cut alfalfa, but instead, feeding the sheep straw and sawdust, prophetic understandings that have Rome as the fourth beast, the legs of iron, the king of the North. They had no water to give those who were thirsty for knowledge of God, so they mixed honey with gall and had the lambs drink this swill from the pages of many correspondence lessons and study booklets. They do not teach the lambs to clothe themselves with the mantle of Christ's righteousness. Instead, they lie to the lambs, saying that because Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets the lambs need to neither keep the Law nor believe the Prophets. So the lambs become prey for eagles and coyotes, bears and wolves, televangelists and talk radio. The thoughts of the lambs are turned away from God and turned back to this world and its prince, who then feeds the lambs with conspiracies that have the Tri-Lateralists about to implement one rule government.

The prince of this world uses the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* to poison the lambs as if these *Protocols* were cyanide “coyote-getters,” poisoned pellets left by ranchers and trappers to kill whatever eats their bait. And the bait used by the prince of this world tastes sweet in the mouth: it satisfies the appetites of the belly and loins, but it takes the lambs’ focus off God and off trying to please God, and puts the lambs’ focus on those things that are passing away.

The fat sheep grew fat at the expense of disciples who scrimped to send “headquarters” a few dollars more each month, even if sending these few dollars meant going without food themselves, or leaving utility bills unpaid in hopes that next month would be better ... the abuses are too numerous to be mentioned here. These abuses have been documented, and these abuses have spiritually slain far more lambs than were drawn to Christ by how those few extra dollars were spent. Where is love for the flock expressed in physically fleecing the flock while spiritually starving these same lambs?

Yes, Christ Jesus will judge between sheep and sheep—and every sheep needs to understand that he or she is not the shepherd, but only another member of the scattered flock. Thus, every sheep is his brother’s keeper.

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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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[[Home](#)] [[Sabbath Readings](#)]