

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 a house divided cannot stand.

Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of July 23, 2011*

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.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you,"

And "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve."

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. (Matt 4:1–11 emphasis added)

Note the sequential order of the narrative: Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the spirit to be tempted by the devil — the temptations didn't begin after Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, but the fasting was part of the Adversary's temptation. Hence, Jesus' forty day period of fasting substantially differed from when Moses twice fasted for forty days and when Elijah fasted for forty days, with Moses being in the presence of the Lord for the two periods when he went without food or drink for forty days, a feat that is not physically possible [going forty days without water] unless the person is being sustained by the Lord. So what's seen is that Jesus as the Lord made flesh (*cf.* John 3:16; 1:1–3, 14 — read the verses in Greek) was able to sustain His own life, all the while being tempted/tested by the Adversary with the last three tests being recorded by Matthew.

When the Adversary offered Jesus *all of the kingdoms of the world and their glory* (i.e., all that was in these kingdoms, hence all that the world had to offer), the Adversary as the prince of this world had it within his authority and dominion to make this offer ... what has since changed? Jesus has qualified to replace Satan as the prince of this world, the prince of the power of the air, but the glorified Jesus has not yet received these kingdoms. Dominion over the kingdoms/nations of this world is still retained by the Adversary, who remains free to offer the things of this world to whomever pleases him—

In this world, it is the Adversary who bestows or withholds blessings and the wealth of this world.

The writer of Hebrews says,

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. *Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* / And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that

apart from us they should not be made perfect. (11:32–40 emphasis added)

Paul says of himself,

For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (1 Cor 4:9–13 emphasis added)

Scripture holds that the holy ones [the saints] are reviled, persecuted, slandered, poorly dressed [*they went about in skins of sheep and goats*], destitute, homeless [*wandering about in deserts and mountains, sheltering in dens and caves*], yet the world is not worthy of these holy ones whom the world regards as scum--and something is seriously wrong with how greater Christendom perceives spirituality and the blessings of God.

Abraham was, throughout his life, a sojourner, having no land of his own except the field with the cave that he purchased as a burying place for Sarah ... the world belongs to the spiritually dead; i.e., to those who are of the Adversary. And the world will continue to belong to the Adversary until the kingdom of this world—one kingdom—is taken from the four kings and the little horn and given to the Son of Man halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation (*cf.* Dan 7:9–14; Rev 11:15–18).

So who bestows blessings on the holy ones in this present era?

Consider the following:

Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to Him, and He healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” Knowing their thoughts, He said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And *if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.* But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matt 12:22–28 emphasis added)

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Now He was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of

demons,” while others, to test Him, kept seeking from Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And *if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.* But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Luke 11:14–20 emphasis added)

Pharisees that denied Jesus and denied that Jesus had come from God and as such were hostile to God and in rebellion against God were apparently able to cast out demons, not via the spirit of God but by the means they ascribed to Jesus; i.e., via Beelzebul [the Adversary].

The Adversary’s house will not stand for it is divided and has been divided from its conception as evidenced by the bi-color humanoid image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision (see Dan 2). But for our purposes today, it is what Jesus said about the sons of the Pharisees casting out demons by an authority not of the Father or the Son that is of most interest ...

Jesus also said, “Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, *and cast out demons in your name,* and do many mighty works in your name?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness”” (Matt 7:21–23 emphasis added)

When judgments are revealed many false Christians will have cast out demons, just as the sons of Pharisees apparently cast out demons—

Is bestowing a blessing on a person more or less difficult than casting out a demon? It is less difficult, is it not? Hence, if the servants of the Adversary can cast out demons either though using the name of Christ or though being associated with Herod’s temple, then should these same servants not be able to bestow blessings on the holy ones in the name of Christ or through association with the temple? And when a holy one receives such a blessing, will the holy one not believe that the blessing came from God? Of course, he or she will believe that God has *answered* a prayer and given to the person the glory or some of the glory of the kingdoms of this world.

How is a holy one—a saint—to know whether a blessing has come from God or from the Adversary?

Look at the mistake that Job made:

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the Lord and said, “*From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.*” And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and

upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”

So *Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.* And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. ***Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?***” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:1–10 emphasis added)

As an aside, it is the Adversary and those who are of the Adversary that go *to and fro on the earth*, going here and going there, ever busy with someone else’s affairs and not remaining at home, working with his or her own hands to provide as much of what is needed to support the person as the person possibly can.

The Lord did no evil to Job. It was the Adversary that first struck Job’s physical possessions then his children and finally, his body. It wasn’t the Lord, who, yes, permitted the Adversary to strike Job, but who did no striking of any sort. Yet, Job unwittingly blames God for taking from him those things he had received, including good health.

Was it the Lord who had given to Job seven sons and three daughters, many sheep, camels, yokes of oxen, donkeys and servants? Job says it was when he says, *Shall we not receive good from God* — and Job is typical of most Christians, who when receiving *good* ascribes having received that *good* to God. And the so-called friends of Job are also typical of most Christians in that when evil befalls someone else, they ascribed that evil to God and to the person having some sort of hidden sin; hence a spiritual moron such as David Pack of the Restored Church of God claimed that hurricane Katrina striking New Orleans was evidence of God punishing the city for its wicked ways, and this is simply not the case.

A house divided will not stand: if God intervened in the Adversary’s administration of this world, the Adversary’s governance of this world would fail, and fail because of God’s intervention, not because of the Adversary’s lawless ways. God would defeat the entire purpose of setting up the demonstration in which each of us presently live, a demonstration showing that sons of God cannot rule themselves apart from God, that self-governance under democratic principles is doomed to failure from its conception. Therefore, God has conscientiously kept His hands off the affairs of men [and women] and has resisted interfering in the governance of this world except as has been necessary to ensure that the Adversary gets his full allotment of time to try and make self-governance whether by king or by mob work. It is the Adversary who rules the

kingdoms of this world and their glory; i.e., all that is in them, their grandeur, their power, their wealth. It is the Adversary that bestows blessings upon the peoples of this world, including blessings on spiritually dead Christians in greater Christendom.

How can the Adversary spiritually kill a human son of God? If the Adversary persecutes the person who has been called by God and given a second breath of life, the divine breath of God, the holy one will turn towards God and cling to God, holding fast to righteousness and ensuring that he or she will enter the kingdom of the heavens. However, if the Adversary gives to the son of God what he offered to Jesus—rule over kingdoms and the glory of kingdoms—and if the son of God accepts these *blessings*, then the Adversary has condemned the son of God to the lake of fire; for the son of God will begin to serve the Adversary through being concerned about the things of this world.

The Christian who desires the finer things of life desires those things that presently belong to the Adversary. Inevitably, this Christian will—while giving God credit for having received the glory of this world—transform him or herself into a child of the Adversary. And the Father and the Son will have to take those finer things of life away from the son of God, or take from the son of God indwelling eternal life ... it is the son of God for whom a work has been reserved that will have the finer things of life taken from him or her. This son of God should humbly thank God that he or she no longer has and no longer desires to acquire the finer things of life, but rather, is content to labor with his or her hands, not going to and fro as a busybody, not parading on a stage puffed up with self-importance, teaching those things which he or she does not truly understand.

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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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