

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 where/who is Israel?

Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of August 20, 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.

You [the children of Israel] shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. And consider today (since I [Moses] am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), *consider the discipline of the Lord your God*, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land, and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea flow over them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord has destroyed them to this day, and what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place, and what he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel. For your eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord that he did.

You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, and that you may live long in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring, a land flowing with milk

and honey. For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But *the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.*

And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you.

You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth. For if you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the Lord your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea. No one shall be able to stand against you. The Lord your God will lay the fear of you and the

dread of you on all the land that you shall tread, as he promised you.

See, I [Moses] *am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.* And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not beyond the Jordan, west of the road, toward the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh? For you are to cross over the Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you. And when you possess it and live in it, you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the rules that I am setting before you today. (Deut 11:1–32 emphasis added)

The problem that Christendom has had in understanding a simple passage such as Deuteronomy chapter 11 is identification of Israel and the children of Israel; for it seems reasonable to believe that the physically circumcised descendants of the patriarch Israel would have carried the linguistic identifier *Israel* with them when these descendants went into captivity, first the northern kingdom of Samaria, then the southern kingdom of Judah, but that isn't the case ... when Moses delivered the blessings and cursing set forth in the Book of Deuteronomy [the Second Law], none of the men numbered in the census of the second year (see Num 1:2) except for himself remained alive—and he would not cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land although he had already entered into God's rest (Ex 33:14) by having entered into the Lord's presence. Yet when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, a land that the *eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year*, the land came to represent entering into God's rest. The land to which the Lord had sent the patriarch Abraham itself represented *prevailing with God*; the land itself represented *Israel*. The occupants of the land didn't matter as long as these occupants obeyed the commandments of the Lord; for the land, especially the city of Jerusalem, physically represented the spiritually lifeless shadow and copy of the Body and future Bride of Christ.

The physically circumcised descendants of the patriarch Israel existed as a nation before the Exodus, with *Israel* being the name given to the patriarch Jacob when he wrestled with God and with men and prevailed (Gen 32:28). But once

the Law was given, prevailing with God came to mean obeying the commandments of the Lord, the commandments and statutes and rules Moses set before the children of Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy. For death reigned over all of humankind from Adam to Moses (Rom 5:14), not from Adam to Christ Jesus: death reigned over Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and the patriarch Israel and his children. But once the Law was given and death was made alive and identifiable—the commandments that are good (Rom 7:10–13) outwardly identify inner righteousness, thereby unmasking *evil*, revealing that *evil* is simple unbelief of the Lord and an *evildoer* is any person who has heard with ears or read with eyes or has come to know in his or her heart the commandments of the Lord and will not keep them—sin slew the nation of Israel that left physical slavery in Egypt. While Moses was atop the mountain and with the Lord, the people of Israel demanded that Aaron make for them *elohim* to go before them for they didn't know what had happened to Moses (Ex 32:1). In doing so, the people of Israel in Egypt and at Sinai form the shadow and copy of greater Christendom now [comparable to Israel in Egypt] and immediately after the Second Passover liberation of Israel, which is the nation fully composed of the spiritually living inner selves of Christians who have received a second breath of life, the breath of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ].

To prevail with God is, today, to walk as the man Jesus the Nazarene walked; for this man Jesus that came from heaven as the only Son of the Logos [ὁ Λόγος] who was God [θεὸς] and who was with the God [τὸν θεόν] in the beginning (*cf.* John 1:1; 3:16 in Greek) forms the visible shadow and copy of the living inner self when the formerly dead inner self of a person is made alive by becoming a son of the Father through receipt of the divine breath of the Father [again, πνεῦμα θεοῦ]. If the Christian—once born of God through receipt of this second breath of life—will not walk as the man Jesus walked, the inner self of the person will be as the children of Israel were in the Promised Land: the inner self will be cursed with a curse and will be driven from the land representing the promise of eternal life; i.e., of entering into God's rest.

Death reigned from Adam to Moses because Moses was the first to enter into God's rest (Ex 33:14). Moses was the first to see the glory of the Lord:

And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And He said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," He said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." (Ex 33:17–23)

Moses saw with his eyes the glory of the Lord, albeit only the backside of the Lord—to look upon the face of the glory of the Lord with one’s eyes requires the person to be a living entity possessing indwelling glory and not a fleshly human being. Hence, in seeing the glory of the Lord, Moses brought an end to the reign of death over all of humankind.

Returning to who inherits the name *Israel*: the natural sons of Israel inherited their father’s name but not really—

After this, Joseph was told, “Behold, your father is ill.” So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And it was told to Jacob, “Your son Joseph has come to you.” Then Israel summoned his strength and sat up in bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.’ And *now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.* And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. As for me, when I came from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, “Who are these?” Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” And he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.” Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also.” Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn). And he blessed Joseph and said,

The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this
day,
the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys;
and *in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my
fathers Abraham and Isaac;*

and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

(Gen 48:1–16 emphasis added)

The patriarch Israel adopted Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, as his own sons, thereby placing his name [*Israel*] as well as Abraham's and Isaac's name on these two youths, young enough to sit on their father's Joseph's knees. Whatever sons Joseph would father afterwards would be his, which also applied to Joseph's brother and half-brothers: those sons that Joseph would father after Ephraim and Manasseh would carry on the name of *Joseph* as the sons of Reuben and of Simeon would carry on the names of *Reuben* and *Simeon*. Only Ephraim and Manasseh would technically carry on the name of *Israel*; however, this has not been the practice or tradition of the tribes of Israel in Egypt or since. The linguistic identifier *Israel* has not been used with that degree of precision.

Historians have found that the descendants of the northern kingdom of Samaria [the House of Israel] used the identifier *Isaac* or *Sac* to identify themselves, not *Israel*, throughout the ages, which was probably a practice that originated prior to Assyria taking the northern kingdom into captivity and relocating the portion of the kingdom that had not fled east or west prior to captivity from out of the Lord's sight (see 2 Kings 17:22–23).

Although the northern House of Israel included the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh, the kingdom took its name from its capital city, Samaria, and its identification from its ancestor the patriarch Isaac, thus leaving the identifier *Israel* to the southern kingdom of the House of Judah—

Note what's recorded:

And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities. And *at the beginning of their dwelling there, they did not fear the Lord. Therefore the Lord sent lions among them, which killed some of them.* So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land. Therefore he has sent lions among them, and behold, they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there, and let him go and dwell there and teach them the law of the god of the land." So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the Lord. [Question: why was the House of Israel removed from the land? Answer: because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord and had feared other gods and had walked in the customs of the nations the Lord drove out from before them — vv. 7–8 — so bringing back an idolatrous priest to teach the imported peoples the sins by which Israel sinned wasn't helpful.]

But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. *They also feared the Lord and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. So **they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.***

To this day they do according to the former manner. *They do not fear the Lord, and they do not follow the statutes or the rules or the law or the commandment that the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. **The Lord made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, but you shall fear the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. And the statutes and the rules and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to do. You shall not fear other gods, and you shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you. You shall not fear other gods, but you shall fear the Lord your God, and he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.” However, they would not listen, but they did according to their former manner.***

So these nations feared the Lord and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day. (2 Kings 17:24–41 emphasis and double emphasis added)

With whom did the Lord make a covenant when He brought the fathers of Israel out from Egypt? Was it not with the men who had been slaves to Pharaoh? It wasn't with men of Babylon or Cuth. Yet in the above translation, there is confusion for even though the Lord made a covenant with the men of Israel in Egypt on the day He brought them out from Egypt, then again at Sinai, then a second covenant with the men of Israel *and* with Moses at Sinai, then a covenant with the children of Israel on the plains of Moab, the context of the above passage will have the Lord making a covenant with the transplanted peoples the Assyrian king brought into the land to replace the House of Israel, with these people whom Pharisees regard as spiritual dogs being the ancestors of the Samaritans that believed Jesus (John chap 4) and the ancestors of the people to whom Philip

proclaimed Christ (Acts chap 8), a realization that flies in the face of what Pharisees and rabbinical Judaism and the former Worldwide Church of God taught and what rabbinical Judaism still teaches. The Lord gave to these transplanted peoples the same opportunity to worship Him in spirit and truth that He had given to the tribes of Israel.

The above is important: when *Israel* is the geographical Promised Land, the land that *the eyes of the Lord* [Israel's] *God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year*, the occupants of the land form the shadow and copy of the living inner selves of Christians. Who these occupants ethnically are is not of importance; for the living inner self of a Christian, regardless of the ethnicity of the flesh, will be a son of God. What is of importance is the willingness of the inner self to mentally walk as the man Jesus the Nazarene walked.

The concept that ruled 6th/7th/8th Century BCE thought was that each area of land had its own particular god, with the Lord being the God of Jerusalem; for Cyrus says,

The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—*he is the God who is in Jerusalem*. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:2–4 emphasis added)

The God of heaven is the God who is in Jerusalem, but does the God of heaven live in only one location? Cyrus' thought is defined by deities reigning over a certain territory, such as Jerusalem. Although he uses the appropriate modifier of *YHWH* being the God of heaven, he nevertheless assigns the Lord to a specific geographical location within his kingdom in a similar manner to how the Assyrian king believed that to free the transplanted peoples from lion attacks, he needed to placate the God of Samaria by bringing back a priest taken into captivity to teach the immigrants how to worship the Lord according to the idolatrous practices of the House of Israel, which adopted the paganism of the Canaanite peoples they dispossessed ... generation after generation, people after people were governed by the concept that deities reigned over specific geographic locations, with the stronger of deities expanding his turf in a manner analogous to how human kings expanded their realms by fighting and defeating neighboring peoples. And it seems that the Lord somewhat supported this concept by making a covenant with the peoples that the king of Assyria brought into the land of the House of Israel after dispossessing these ten tribes.

The linguistic identifier *Israel* goes from one physical man returning to Canaan—the patriarch Jacob who prevailed with God and man—to one people returning to the same geographical land. The identifier *Israel* then goes from one spiritual man, Jesus the Nazarene, obeying the Law and keeping the

commandments, the statutes and rules recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, to one spiritual people obeying the commandments of the Lord, hearing and believing the words of Jesus. In-between the period when the identifier *Israel* pertained to a people returning to a Promised Land to receive that land and when the man Jesus the Nazarene was humanly born, the land itself held the identifier *Israel*, not the dispossessed peoples who identified themselves as the sons of Isaac or the sons of Abraham ...

Although the refugees of the House of Judah that returned to the *Land Beyond the River* from Babylon in 539 BCE claimed the name *Israel* for themselves, with the Lord seemingly supporting this claim in Ezekiel 12:9, 19, 22–28, with the word of the Lord coming to the son of Adam *concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel* (v. 19); for Jerusalem is only in the land of *Israel* if *Israel* as an identifier represents a geographical location, not a people.

If *Israel* represents a geographical location, then the concept of a deity having regional supremacy begins to make more sense than otherwise. Maybe we have utterly lacked a wisdom that ancient heathens and idolatrous Israel possessed to some small degree: if *Israel* represents the Promised Land, then again, whatever peoples occupy this Promised Land constitute *Israel*. And this, now, forms the basis for the Church of God, the Body of Christ, to be identified as *Israel*; for once the spirit [πνεῦμα ἄγιον] was given, the Promised Land becomes a mental landscape in which the people of God keep the commandments of the Lord—

Returning to Deuteronomy 11, the *eyes of the Lord your God are always upon [the Promised Land], from the beginning of the year to the end of the year ...* once the spirit is given, are the eyes of the Lord on a specific geographical land, or on a specific people possessing a specific mindset that causes these people to believe and obey the Lord? The eyes of the Lord are on the latter, correct? And that is correct.

A people born of God—a people possessing living inner selves that have received life via the breath of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ]—replaced a land watched constantly by the Lord, with the living inner selves corresponding to the children of Israel and the fleshly bodies of Christians corresponding to the land itself, and to earthly Jerusalem and the temple of God in particular.

The Lord promised to *communicate* with the children of Israel through the giving or withholding of rain in its due season—and so it is with born-of-God Christians ... the Lord *communicates* with the living inner selves that are sons of God through giving or withholding those things that the fleshly body needs to sustain life. Instead of rain in due season falling on a physical land, the Father will permit a son of His to be hungry and thirsty, to be homeless and destitute in the same way the Lord withheld rain from Judea and Samaria prior to sending His prophets to deliver the words of the Lord to the peoples of Israel when Israel became used to drought and famine.

If, for example, the Lord desires that a certain son of His not meddle in the affairs of others, He will cause the person to hear a verbal message about not meddling and will wait for a response. If no response, then at His pleasure He

will begin removing those things that the person believes are essential for life until the person is physically unable to meddle in the affairs of others. If the meddling involves doing unauthorized ministry—as if commonly seen in East Africa—then the means of traveling from, say, Lake Victoria to more southern or southeastern cities will be taken from the person. The would-be minister will find himself struggling to survive. And the same pertains to the industrialized Western world: if a person does unauthorized ministry, for a while the Father and the Son will permit the ministry to continue but continue without producing fruit. Eventually, the Father and Son will—when Their patience wears thin—do whatever is necessary to end the unauthorized ministry. This usually results in the person facing true bankruptcy and always results in the person being hard pressed financially. And the person, in order to continue his or her ministry, will have to ask other men and women for support, thereby fully becoming an agent of the Adversary.

Today, the Father and the Son *communicate* with sons of God through giving or withholding food and shelter, not through adding or subtracting *wants* to those things that are necessary to maintain physical life: the genuinely born-of-God Christian in, say, again East Africa, who faces the threat of real famine will move from one location to another as God wants the Christian to move in order to alleviate the real threat of famine. In the affluent Western world where there is no real threat of famine, God's *communication* with a genuine son is usually through the person's health, not stomach, with cancer being the most frequent health threat confronting Christians. This is not to say that all cancer in Christians comes from God wanting to *move* the Christian, but this is to say that the genuinely born-of-God Christian with health problems needs to consider the possibility that the problems represent *communication* from the Father to His son.

The work of *Philadelphia* is supported by a few individuals, not by many. Thus, when problems befall even one of these individuals, the entirety of the work of *Philadelphia* is affected ... this is how it was in the 1st-Century with the Apostle Paul, and this is how it will be from here on out. Therefore, the Lord's ability to *communicate* with *Philadelphia* is not hindered by the Church possessing great wealth or a great many supporting Christians. Every supporter counts—and when cancer or failing health affects one or two or three or more, all are affected for less work gets done. And less work getting done has been the case this summer as more time has had to be devoted to providing those physical things necessary to engage the world in dialogue in the early 21st-Century.

But less work getting done isn't necessarily negative. Just as Paul's imprisonment in Rome didn't do much to advance the spread of the his gospel but was necessary as the end of an era came upon the Church of God, getting less new work done now might well be necessary as another era ends ... humanly, we believe that getting less done is a sign of failing, of failure, but that assumption should be reexamined: was Paul's ministry a failure because he was martyred at Rome? Or had he done enough? Had Peter done enough when he was martyred?

Had James done enough when he was martyred? Had John done enough when he died from old age? And has *Philadelphia* done enough for a season?

The work of *Philadelphia* will continue until Christ Jesus returns, and will continue as a work of little strength. But as a work of little strength, it should come as no surprise to anyone that some things that ought to be done just aren't going to get done: there is not time, resources, or manpower to do more than is presently being accomplished as a worldwide work goes forth with disproportionate force.

*

*The person conducting the Sabbath service should
close services with two hymns, or psalms,
followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.*

* * * * *

"Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.
reserved."

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