

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 *typology of Zephaniah*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of August 23, 2008

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 Zephaniah, chapters 1 through 3.

Commentary: Although the chiasmic structure [i.e., repetition in the inverse order of initial presentation] of Zephaniah has been long noticed by critics, the endtime application of what Zephaniah prophesied has not been fully appreciated even though the dual application of his prophecy has been a part of endtime prophetic discourse.

Zephaniah dates the giving of his prophecy to "the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah" (1:1), and he gives his lineage: he was of the royal house, and not of the Levitical priesthood. But the word of knowledge that Zephaniah received was and was not for his day, for what Zephaniah records has the day of the Lord near (1:7), not 2600 years in the future; thus, the primary referent for the passage is endtime Israel.

But if the only referent for Zephaniah's prophecy would be some 2600 years in the future, Zephaniah would not be recognized as a prophet. Moses wrote that "when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord [YHWH] has not spoken; the prophet has spoken presumptuously" (Deut 18:22). So if Zephaniah's prophetic words had not pertained to what would happen in his near future and had not come true, Israel would have had no reason to fear him or respect him: his words would not have been recorded and valued.

Therefore, a book such as Zephaniah that dates its prophetic utterance to when "the day of the Lord is near" (1:7) will necessarily demand dual referents [two fulfillments] for the utterance, with one referent to occur near enough in time to when the words were spoken that the words were respected or feared as words from the Lord. The second or additional fulfillment[s] will pertain to a second Israel at or near the end of the age. And it is this second fulfillment for a second or spiritually circumcised Israel that is important to Christians.

Whereas rabbinical Judaism takes prophecies such as Zephaniah's, deduces the obvious conclusion that these prophecies have been fulfilled, then studies these prophecies to see

what lessons can be drawn about how to treat neighbor and God, the Qumran community of Dead Sea Scrolls infamy employed a differing reading strategy, one based upon the Teacher of Righteousness telling the community how the prophecies should be read and understood ... today, Philadelphians with Christ Jesus as their teacher of righteousness identify the day of the Lord as that period or day when the kingdom of this world is given to one like a Son of Man (Dan 7:9–14). The day of the Lord is a specific period or day that begins halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation, begins when the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of the Father and His Christ (Rev 11:15). It did not begin when natural Israel was delivered into the hand of the human king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, because of Israel's lawlessness and disobedience; it will not begin when spiritually circumcised Israel is delivered into the hand of the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4) for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved when judgments are revealed. Rather, it begins when Satan is cast from heaven (Rev 12:7–10) and when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28), thereby causing all of humankind to be born of spirit as sons of God that have only to endure to the end to be saved (Matt 24:13). It begins when all human beings are called by God, "My people" (Rev 18:4), and told to leave spiritual Babylon lest they take part in her sins, lest they share in her plagues.

God will deliver Israel, natural and spiritual, into the hand of the lawless one who comes by the workings of Satan (2 Thess 2:3–7) as the Apostle Paul commanded the saints at Corinth to deliver the man who was with his father's wife into the hand of Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor 5:5). The lawlessness of Israel, natural and spiritual, will cause the Lord to "utterly sweep away everything / from the face of the earth" (Zeph 1:2), man and beast, birds of the heavens and fish of the sea (v. 3) ... and it is here where spiritual understanding must be employed: in Hebraic poetry, the natural is presented first, then the spiritual in dual presentations of the same thought, with these dual presentations forming one thought-couplet, and with thought-couplets grouped together to have one couplet representing the "natural presentation" of an idea and another couplet representing the spiritual presentation of the same idea in an expanded couplet made up of two primary couplets. These expanded couplets can then be placed together to form doubly expanded couplets in whatever pattern the poet chooses to use to layer meaning upon meaning.

It is in Zephaniah 1:3 where the chiasmic [reversed] presentation of the order of creation on the fifth and sixth days conveys prophetic knowledge otherwise concealed by the metaphorical nature of the language used in the Genesis chapter 1 creation account. The natural presentation of the idea that God will sweep away everything (this natural presentation occurring in Zephaniah 1:2) is followed by the spiritual presentation of the idea that God will sweep away what He has created; so the thought-couplet of "I will sweep away man and beast; / I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea" (v. 3) forms one thought-couplet occupying the "spiritual" position of an expanded couplet encompassing verses 2 & 3. And in this "spiritual couplet," the natural position is occupied by, I will sweep away man and beast, with the spiritual position occupied by, I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea.

The chiasmic nature of this thought-couplet should and usually does point readers to the fifth and sixth days of the Genesis one creation account, but it isn't men and beasts, fish and fowls that are created on the sixth and fifth days, respectively. Rather, once the Holy Spirit

is seen in Genesis 1:2, the creation account becomes the abstract for a spiritual creation that presently sees born-of-spirit disciples as the early barley harvest of Judean hillsides, with Christ Jesus as the First of this harvest of firstfruits. The Genesis chapter one creation account is not about the physical creation of the universe and physical life on this world. The Genesis one creation account begins, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1). What part of the heavens is not, here in verse 1, created? What part of the earth is not created? The first Adam was made on “the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” (Gen 2:4); so if Genesis is to be believed, Adam was not created after plants, fish and fowl, beasts, but before they was any green herb or small plants (v. 5). Adam was created in the darkness of day one. He was created in the “filling” of the earth on day one, and the light of day one is the coming of Jesus of Nazareth (2 Cor 4:6). Calvary now ends day one. Therefore, the division of the waters of the third day and the dry land bringing forth vegetation on this day is metaphorical language for the bringing back to life the Church that dies when the second day ends (the reason God does not call the second day is good) and that will be resurrected to glory as the greater light that rules the day after the third day (i.e., on the fourth day). The lesser light that rules the darkness will be the priesthood of the third temple.

The reading of the Genesis chapter one creation account as the record of the physical creation of the universe will hinder or prevent disciples grasping the significance Zephaniah’s prophecy: the thought-couplet, I will sweep away man and beast; / I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, is placed in Zephaniah’s prophecy when the day of the Lord is near, not after Christ has returned and humankind is living in the day of the Lord. Thus, understanding that the fish and fowl of the fifth day of the Genesis one creation account represent human beings born of spirit and empowered by or filled with the Holy Spirit during Christ’s millennial reign, and understanding the Israel will be born of spirit and empowered by or fully filled with the Holy Spirit when the seven endtime years of tribulation begin, with all of humanity to be so empowered halfway through these seven endtime years, Israel becomes like the fish and fowl of Genesis’ fifth day once the Tribulation begins, as will the third part of humankind (Zech 13:9) be like these fish and fowl during the last 1260 days of the seven endtime years.

A thought-couplet represents two presentations of the same thought so analogies and correspondences occur between the presentations:

- In Zephaniah 1:3, “man” is the physical correspondent to spiritual “birds of heaven.”
- “Beast” is the physical correspondent to spiritual “fish of the sea.”

Nowhere in Scripture is it said that beasts enter heaven. Man will or will not, when judgments are revealed, enter heaven, but beasts are sacrificed, not glorified.

If both the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea represent humankind born of spirit and born filled with the Holy Spirit so that neither sin nor death dwells in the fleshy members of humankind, then these human beings are separated in a manner analogous to how disciples are today separated while still in the womb of a spiritual Rebecca (Rom

9:10–11). Those human beings that correspond to the birds of the air also correspond to the patriarch Jacob before he was humanly born, while those human beings that correspond to the fish of the sea also correspond to Esau before he was born. Jacob, now, corresponds to “man,” and hairy Esau corresponds to “beast,” even though no sin is attributed to either. But “in order that God’s purpose of election continue, not because of works but because of his call” (v. 11), Rebecca was told that the older shall serve the younger; for it is written that God loved Jacob but hated Esau (vv 12–13).

Esau valued his birthright so little that he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew; so it is after his birth that Esau reveals why he was hated in the womb before he had done either good or evil. And this analogy pertains to disciples today: lawless Christendom, now covered by the mantle of Christ’s righteousness so that no sin is imputed to this people, values its birthright so little that when it is liberated from indwelling sin and death it will not strive to walk uprightly before God even though it will be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But Jacob, loved by God when still in the womb, was born deceitful and had to wrestle with God and prevail before he was renamed Israel. So now returning to Zephaniah’s prophecy, both a spiritual Jacob and a spiritual Esau [man and beast; the birds of the air and the fish of the sea] will be swept away, the stumbling blocks [i.e., idols or rubble] with the wicked so that the Lord will “cut off mankind / from the face of the earth” (1:3). Neither a spiritual Jacob nor a spiritual Esau will escape being swept away: all sons of promise (both Jacob and Esau are sons of promise) will be delivered into the hand of the lawless one, the man of perdition (Dan 7:25), for all have been lawless, deceitful, idolaters, bowing down and swearing to the Lord then swearing allegiance to the prince of this world; i.e., to a spiritual Milcom (Zeph 1:5). And because of the duplicity of spiritual Israel, both the early barley harvest and the latter wheat harvest will be sold by Sin, the third horseman of the Apocalypse. The price Death, the fourth horseman, will pay for a disciple: one transgression of the Law.

One transgression of the Law, the breaking of one commandment, a one-time breaking of the Sabbath commandment—that’s all it will take to send a disciple into the lake of fire once Israel has been liberated from indwelling sin and death. But the person who has been practicing walking uprightly before God will be, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, able to so walk before God. This person is of the oil and wine Sin is not to harm (Rev 6:6).

Zephaniah commands Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, now a spiritual city with theological rather than geographical coordinates, to be silent before the Lord God (1:7). Indeed, the inhabitants or would-be inhabitants of heavenly Jerusalem need to remain silent; they need to cease uttering what they do not understand, proclaiming what they have not heard, alarming disciples with the things of this world, making Jesus’ words of no importance. ... Among the Dead Sea scrolls is one called the peshar of Habakkuk, in which a theory of interpretation [exegesis] is advanced that provides a historical basis for the typological exegesis of the Apostle Paul and that of The Philadelphia Church: as mentioned earlier, the Qumran writers argued that Scripture is written at two levels, a surface level and a deeper level, with the Teacher of Righteousness making known all of the mysteries of the prophets. This means that the prophets themselves did not fully understand the words of the Lord [YHWH] that they were commanded to record. The prophets were conduits

through which the Lord spoke not to just the physical descendants of the patriarch Israel but to later generations, and in particular, to the generation that lives at the end of the age. For those at Qumran, the later generations were upon them. They were the sons of light upon whom the end of the age had come (cf. 1 Cor 10:11), the sons of light who were to battle the sons of darkness in an ultimate dual of good versus evil.

Jesus invokes the imagery of disciples as “sons of light” (John 12:36) when He makes Himself the light of this world that will soon be taken away, but the battle Jesus’ disciples must fight isn’t fought with weapons forged from the dust of this earth. It is fought with obedience to the laws of God, obedience by faith, obedience that will have disciples living and walking as Jesus walked, for the Teacher of Righteousness is, for disciples, Christ Jesus, not another human being. For disciples, for Philadelphia, the Qumran community forms a type of the separation of genuine endtime disciples from false; i.e., disciples taught by false prophets, false teachers, men and women delivering smooth words through lying lips.

Pesher as a theory of interpretation openly and actively refutes theories of modern scholarship that have prophetic books such as Daniel written when Israel was being oppressed by the Seleucids (ca 180 BCE) or Revelation written about the Roman Emperor Domitian (dod 96 CE); for *pesher* as a theory of interpretation argues that an unknowable (to the scribe) meaning resides under the surface meaning of the “text” ... the text in context will have dual referents with the latter referent pertaining to the sons of light at the end of the age. There is, however, a flaw in assuming that the prophet who received the message from the Lord did not understand the message and was only a conduit conveying the message to endtime sons of light. Again, the structure of Hebraic poetry has a physical or natural presentation of any idea followed by a spiritual or heavenly presentation of the same idea, thereby structurally incorporating the darkness-to-light metaphor within the presentation of the prophecy when inscribed as poetry. Unless the Lord gives to the prophet exact words that cannot be expressed by the prophet in his own words, the prophet needs to understand the prophecy in order to create the poetic movement from hand to heart, or from outside to inside. If the Lord gave to the prophet exact words then the prophet is indeed only a conduit for knowledge to reach an endtime generation of Israel, but if the prophet “crafts” the knowledge received into thought-couplets forming a matrix of thought-couplets so that the dual referents are concealed within the context as two (or more) sub-texts, then the prophet understood the prophecy as Daniel says that “he understood the word and had understanding of the vision” (Dan 10:1) even if the prophet believed that the last days were soon to occur.

In theories of modern scholarship, Daniel’s visions are not Daniel’s visions at all, but were written by a person living during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes IV; for these prophetic visions too accurately parallel the historical account of intrigues and warring between the Ptolemy and Seleucid kingdoms for these visions to precede actual events, an assumption that discloses academic biases ... if a prophecy must be vague and open to many interpretations to be accepted as a legitimate prophecy by biblical scholars, then the book of Daniel has no prophetic value to endtime disciples for the writer of this book is assumed to be describing ongoing events immediately prior to the Maccabean victory over the Syrian-Greek king of the North. This has become the problematic position of modern scholarship.

But if Daniel himself recorded his visions, and if those visions were sealed by a surface fulfillment—akin to a surface meaning that everyone can grasp—then the prophecies have a second fulfillment that equates to a “deeper meaning,” and it is this meaning that Jesus referenced in His Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:15). Thus, the pesher of Daniel, if one were written, will be awareness of and inscription of this second prophetic fulfillment prior to when it occurs, with this inscription of this second prophetic fulfillment creating the “unsealing” of these previously sealed and secret visions.

Everyone understands that Daniel’s long vision (chaps 10–12) has an easily recognized fulfillment of exceptional accuracy, but only the Elect (disciples holding the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy) are able to understand the unsealed prophecies forming this shadow of accuracy, for the unsealing of Daniel’s visions is the solution to these visions. The surface reading or meaning of Daniel’s vision is not the solution, but merely represents the shadow that sealed the visions, with this shadow being the histories of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires in their struggle to control Jerusalem and the geographical lands of Judea.

Rome is not a party involved in the struggle between the Greek-Egyptian and Greek-Syrian Empires when Antiochus Epiphanes IV loses control of Jerusalem to the Maccabees. As such Rome is not mentioned by Daniel and has no place in Daniel’s visions. Every biblical teacher who inserts Rome or the Roman Church into the visions of Daniel is false, the teacher’s sincerity notwithstanding, for the surface reading of the vision recorded in Daniel chapters 10 through 12 begins with the human kings of Persia, extends to include Alexander’s conquests, death, and division of his empire (11:4), then extends to the emerging of the Ptolemy dynasty and the Seleucid dynasty (11:5). The vision would seem to end immediately before the physical sons of light (the Maccabees) complete their defeat of the armies of Antiochus Epiphanes IV.

The king of the North was, in the shadow that sealed the prophecy, the Seleucid king, but in the solution the king of the North is the demon representing death, called Death, the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse, the fourth beast of Daniel chapter 7. An unnamed (but determinable) Pharaoh was king when Moses led Israel out of Egypt, but in the solution the king of the South is a Pharaoh and not even a Ptolemaic king but is the four-winged leopard (Dan 7:6) that represents Sin, the third horsemen that makes merchandise of the early barley harvest and latter wheat harvest but cannot harm the oil and the wine (again, Rev 6:5–6). Sin and Death are conjoined in the Apostle Paul’s “Law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2), but in Daniel 11:5, Death separates from Sin, with this separation coming following a second Passover liberation of Israel that was foreshadowed in type by Israel’s exodus from Egypt under Moses. This second liberation of Israel and exodus from Sin will be under a “a prophet like” Moses (Deut 18:15), with Jesus being this prophet ... Jesus said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words” (John 5:46–47), thereby establishing the juxtaposition of reading Moses’ writings being like hearing Jesus’ words. Jesus elsewhere stated, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). It is those to whom Jesus gives eternal life who follow Jesus, walking as He walked (1 John 2:6), imitating Paul as he followed Christ (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 3:17).

In the solution, Sin vies with Death as the Ptolemaic kingdom vied with the Seleucid kingdom: what is now seen in the movement between from Daniel 11:3 into verse 4 is the second Passover liberation of Israel, with the mighty king of Greece of verse 3 being broken suddenly because he is first, the great horn between the eyes of the federation known as the “king of Greece”; broken because as the firstborn of the present kingdom that rules over the earth (Dan 2:39) this spiritual convert or child of the Adversary cannot cover himself with the blood of the Lamb of God. Cannot and will not for he is a demon. This great horn will be broken suddenly as Alexander the Great was broken suddenly in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon (Alexander was a month away from his 33rd birthday). The Nebuchadnezzar II in whose palace this first king of Greece will be broken is not a human king dwelling in an earthly palace, but the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4), the old dragon, Satan himself.

The visions of Daniel continue past when the abomination that desolates is set up in the temple (Dan 11:31; Matt 25:15), for this cross-shaped demon will slay a fourth part of humankind before he is taken and dealt a death wound halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation, then lives again when the Adversary makes an image of him and makes the image speak (Rev chap 13).

There are many “Christians” who argue for the surface reading of Daniel’s visions being the reading of importance. These many Christians are led by many prophets saying, Jesus is the Christ, but prophets who are false and who lead many astray, for reading only the surface makes Daniel’s long vision anti-prophetic, revealing nothing about “what is to happen to your [Daniel’s] people in the latter days” (Dan 10:14).

Understand! if the long vision recorded in Daniel chapter 11 is about events that have happened as is usually taught within Christendom, then disciples have no foreknowledge about the warring that will occur between Unitarians and Trinitarians during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation; for this long vision of Daniel, sealed and kept secret by the warring between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires, is about the warring that occurs in the heavenly realm between the four-headed, four-winged leopard and “Death,” one of the leopard’s princes stronger than the leopard, with both of these kings or beasts having been underlings to the first or great king of the king of Greece, a federation within Satan’s hierarchy called Babylon.

Once the Tribulation begins, the many false prophets will call the second Passover liberation of Israel the Sixth Trumpet Plague, but the Elect, hearing the words of Christ, will understand that the visions of Daniel were sealed and kept secret by their shadow; i.e., the surface fulfillment of these visions. The Elect will understand that the kings of the North and of the South are demons, under-kings within the coalition of the spiritual king of Greece before the great king or horn of this coalition is broken suddenly at the second Passover. Only after this first king is suddenly broken because he is “first” will these lesser kings emerge from the federation as the third and fourth beasts of Daniel chapter 7. And the Elect will know that the seven endtime years of tribulation have only started and are not halfway (or more) over.

Modern scholarship, based on the democracy of salvation or the democracy of deception,

will vigorously resist all manifestations of “election” or even the existence of an Elect, for the concept of election is inherently undemocratic: election precludes the validity of scholarship as the determiner of text and textual understanding. With election comes initiation into an otherwise closed community that possesses knowledge that those outside the community cannot possess, knowledge not obtainable through diligent study or in-depth scholarship. Thus, if this “knowledge” cannot be obtained through diligent study but only by revelation, then inquiry and those things which pertain to scholarship are devalued. When understanding Scripture comes through being drawn by the Father and called by the Teacher of Righteousness and no amount of study will cause the person to be drawn by the Father (John 6:44; 65), the rift between scholarship and revelation widens to where neither side speaks to the other. Yet study is required to grow in grace and knowledge, so the type of study found within the Elect has these believers applying the keys of knowledge given by the Teacher of Righteousness. The Elect will now “self-educate” itself, a practice that gives rise to beliefs that would be comical [e.g., the Sacred Names heresy, with its Missing In Action movement] if these beliefs were not to cost so many disciples their chance to be pillars in the temple of God.

If a Catholic can no more be a part of the Elect than a Pharisee could be a part of the Qumran community—the Elect will keep the commandments but a Catholic Christian by name-definition does not—then rabbinical Judaism can begin to comprehend what it truly means to be of the Christian Elect; for the “Christianity” practiced by Christ Jesus and taught by Paul of Tarsus stands opposed to Catholicism, with what the world recognizes as Christianity being a “surface” that conceals the belief paradigms of the Elect from public inspection in a way similar to how the warring of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires forms the “surface” that sealed and kept secret Daniel’s vision until the time of the end. The Elect is spiritually as far from Catholicism as the Qumran community was geographically distant from Herod’s temple. Thus, the recovery of actual physical texts found near Qumran forms the shadow and copy of the recovery of spiritual interpretation through analogy/typology, the exegesis strategy of 1st-Century disciples. Pesherism assigns more importance to the Qumran community than Christians have previously assigned to this desert community.

Rabbinical Judaism descends from Pharisaical thought as Catholicism descends from what Paul calls the mystery of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:7) and from what John identifies as the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9; 3:9). Catholicism appropriates the name and apparatus of Christendom without teaching disciples to live and walk as Jesus lived and walked; hence, Catholicism is anti-Christian. In a manner strikingly similar to how the Pharisees appropriated the authority of Judaism while being unwilling to keep the intent of the Law of Moses, which would have Israel being a nation circumcised of heart (Deut 30:1–6; Jer 9:25–6; Ezek 44:6, 9) and not merely circumcised in the flesh—a nation that loved its neighbors—Catholicism would have disciples ignore the laws of God, transgress the Sabbaths of God, bow before idols, and revere men not God. The lack of love for neighbor that prevented Pharisees from keeping the Law of Moses forms the mirror image of the lack of love for God that now prevents Catholicism in its various manifestations from keeping the Laws of God.

Pharisees were not the ultimate law-keepers, for Jesus said none kept the Law of Moses (John 7:19). They were hypocrites and thus the ultimate law breakers in that they had the

law but did not have love for their neighbors, what the law describes. Likewise, Catholics are hypocrites, having the love of Christ but not loving Christ enough to walk as He did: He died for them, but they will not die for Him. They will not even keep the Sabbath for the “Sabbath” is too Jewish for them; yet they pretend to worship the Son of God who walked on this earth as an Observant Jew ... rather than serve God, they serve the Adversary as faithful servants.

Halfway around the world, in the deserts of the American West, sits the antithesis to Catholicism: along the eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake, an inland sea as dead as the Dead Sea, the ideological body of the king of the North grows stronger daily. Prepared for famine, prepared to leverage food into discipleship, prepared for world evangelism, prepared to contend with Catholicism for the hearts and minds of Christendom, Latter Day Saints are prepared because of what was revealed to its Joseph more than a century ago. Most importantly, these Latter Day Saints, who too often are not saints at all, are prepared to receive the false prophet (the first beast of Daniel chapter 7; the first horseman of the Apocalypse) coming claiming to be the angel Joseph, formerly the man Joseph Smith, as the Book of Mormon claims the angel Moroni, the guardian of the golden plates, was formerly the prophet-warrior Moroni, a human being and the last to write in the golden plates.

Does the theological hierarchy of the Latter Day Saints know that the false prophet, a demon made to stand as a man and given the mind of a man, will come to the Latter Day Saints’ office of “prophet” to cause this fastest growing Christian sect to contend in this world with Catholicism, even to militarily enforcing its understanding of salvation onto an Israel circumcised of heart and liberated from indwelling sin and death? This false prophet will bring Islam to Christ either by fire from heaven or by fire from rifle muzzles. The handcarts pulled and pushed across the Mormon Trail will be likened to Israel’s exodus from Egypt, and Brigham Young will be likened to Joshua. But the Elect has been given this knowledge of the false prophet coming to the Latter Day Saints’ office of prophet so that the Elect will not trade salvation for a figurative bowl of lentils. And the rhetoric of the Elect resembles that of the Qumran community, a reality for which no apologies need to be given.

Does the theological hierarchy of the Latter Day Saints appreciate how successful their strategy to leverage food into discipleship will be? Perhaps they might. Perhaps more than any other group but the Elect, those who are of the Latter Day Saints’ Counsel know that they will physically prevail against Catholicism and her erring daughters once the Tribulation begins. What they don’t know is that they will be slain to the person by Christ when He returns. What they don’t know is that the two witnesses will bring famine upon those who have traded salvation for a bowl of porridge. The food that has been stored, that is in the world’s distribution systems, and that will be grown for the second, third, and fourth years of the Tribulation will not satisfy the hunger of the lawless.

While scholars at major universities talk about “a hermeneutics of suspicion” and “the language of empire” when discussing the text within the context of Scripture, it is really Paul’s “purpose of election” (Rom 9:11) that these scholars cannot abide, for this purpose of election is antidemocratic. It is opposed to the ideals of the king of Greece, and it refutes the principle central to democracy (i.e., the equality of every person). If the Elect are not

chosen on the basis of doing good or evil, but as a matter of call, then no amount of doing good will place a person within the Elect. But here is where scholars err: election does not automatically equate to glorification, but to being called in this era. Election equates to when salvation through being born of spirit is extended to the person, and salvation is never a matter of works but always a matter of call and faith. What remains to be determined is whether the person who has been given salvation through receiving a second birth [i.e., being raised from the dead] has the faith to walk uprightly before the Father. Without this faith, the person will be resurrected to condemnation.

Circumcision is the ratifying sign of the covenant that had Abraham being blameless and walking uprightly before God (Gen 17:1–2). A person is Abraham's seed if the person is blameless (covered by the garment of Christ's righteousness) and walks uprightly as a biped before God, with walking uprightly coming as a matter of faith that causes the physically circumcised or uncircumcised person to keep the law and thereby have the person's physical circumcision or uncircumcision counted as circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:26–29; Deut 30:1–2, 6).

Discussion of election and of the Elect is the epitome of the language of empire found throughout Scripture, for this language of empire says that the Lord will do good and He will cause harm to human beings, not on the basis of whether the person humanly does good or evil but on the basis of whether the person has been called to be of the firstfruits, with judgment now only being upon the household of God (1 Pet 4:17). Again, once the seven endtime years of tribulation begin, Sin will make merchandise of both the firstfruits and the latter main crop wheat harvest. It is only the oil and the wine, the already processed fruits of the Promised Land that Sin cannot harm—and this is knowledge disclosing that the firstfruits include many human beings who are not today in covenant with God; i.e., they are not today processed fruits of Judean hillsides. Sin will buy and sell these firstfruits, delivering them to Death, the price for their physical lives being no more than a single transgression of the law for which repentance was sought. Sin is transgression of the commandments: the four-headed demon representing sin represents transgression of the laws of God, with all of humankind consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32) for dominion over humankind is given to this beast (Dan 7:6) as dominion over Israel was given to Pharaoh when Israel was bondservants in Egypt.

Joseph was sold into slavery, and was never again a free man even though he was second to Pharaoh in Egypt, with Pharaoh not representing God but the prince of this world and his reigning hierarchy of demons that together form the humanoid image King Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision. As the Son of Man is one entity, spiritual Babylon is one entity. As disciples form the Body of Christ, with "Christ" representing the Son of Man, and with disciples being one with Christ Jesus thereby making "Christ" a single entity consisting of many single entities, rebelling demons form the body of the present prince of this world, the humanoid image Nebuchadnezzar saw and about which Daniel said that the king was the head of gold, the surface reading of the vision and not the solution of the vision. The solution has Satan as the spiritual king of Babylon, the head of a reigning hierarchy and the present prince of this world.

The language of election requires the suppression of individualism and elevation of the

Head; this language is always antidemocratic.

Modern scholarship assumes the concept of predestination is anti-scriptural and that all discussion of an “elect” runs counter to those democratic passages scholars deem “biblical.” In the hermeneutics of suspicion, scholars utilized inverted ways of discussing Scripture to avoid the language of empire that is based upon a hermeneutics of faith; for Scripture is anti-democratic and anti-family, with the ecclesia— superseding familial relationships and with individual freedom suppressed by obedience to the law of God. Yes, grace set the Christian free, but free to keep the law. Whereas all of humankind was born of water consigned to disobedience, being born of spirit liberates the person from disobedience so that the one who could not before keep the commandments can now keep them in the person’s mind, with the person’s body awaiting liberation at the second Passover. Yes, there will be a second Passover liberation of Israel, with this holy nation of God, circumcised of heart, covered by the blood of the already sacrificed Lamb of God taken in the form of the sacraments on the night when Jesus was betrayed. But once liberated from indwelling sin and death, these disciples will be the sinless Body of the Lamb of God and will also be sacrificed as the Head was.

The reality of a second Passover liberation of Israel lies at the core of Scripture’s language of empire, for this second Passover liberation of Israel will leave all firstborns of this world not covered by the blood of Christ dead, sealed in death, awaiting resurrection in the great White Throne Judgment. In a very short period of time, the firstborn son or daughter not covered by the blood of the Lamb will die suddenly and unexpectedly as the firstborn of Egypt died suddenly so long ago that this reality is ignored by Christians and non-Christians alike ... the two witnesses are clad in mourning garb because they know the fate of those who have fallen away. Philadelphia should be sobered by this knowledge: the number of dead, each a firstborn unredeemed before God, is necessary to get the world’s attention and this number is almost too great to imagine. But get humankind’s attention God will do, even if that means the sudden death of a third of humankind in that first hour of trial that will try every person.

Scripture is the abstract for the harvest of humankind, for “Christians” are a crop grown from a single seed sown when Greek was still written in uncials, without breaks between words, without accents or breathings, without punctuation. This harvest of humankind grows not in the soils of the earth, but in the thoughts of the mind. It grows in times of global prosperity as well as in times of global adversity. It grows in hedgerows and in well-tended gardens. It grows, divides, mutates, and continues to grow and grow and grow, but with only one strain that will be harvested as the firstfruits of the earth. And that strain is the original cultivar: the Christianity of Christ Jesus, an observant Jew whose Father was God.

But Christianity is not today one cultivar, but many F-2+ hybrids that have been infected with the viruses of this world. These variant strains of Christendom engage in world politics and social causes; they produce “Christians” without the structured stiffness to walk uprightly before God. Like corn that has been bio-engineered to be grown for fodder [silage], stalks that grow huge ears of kernels that cannot be saved for seed but turn to mush when harvested, stalks that had their cellulose structure “softened” so as to be more

easily digested by livestock, Christians infected with the viruses of worldliness are structurally soft, unable to walk uprightly before God. They are bent low by their lawlessness, and they will be where the vultures/eagles gather (Luke 17:37).

The variant strains of Christendom growing in the hanging gardens of Babylon do much “good” in this world: they hold clothing and food give-a-ways on the Sabbath, activities hard to condemn, but they will not obey Christ. They will not give their lives to Christ as He gave His for them. They will give money, used clothing, eyeglasses, wheelchairs; they will build homes for the needy; but they will not obey the laws of God. By their works they seek salvation while claiming not to believe in works. They confuse freedom to keep the law with freedom from keeping the law. They are sincere and sincerely wrong. Yet they will receive one more chance to give their lives to Christ before He takes life from them when judgments are revealed.

Therefore to understand Zephaniah, a disciple needs to realize that Zephaniah writes about his own days and about a time like the days of Noah, employing dual referents.

Zephaniah also writes about what is on the other side of Christ’s return, and he also writes about this period while using dual referents, the darkness over which the lesser light rules and the day over which the greater light rules.

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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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