

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 mental landscapes*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of August 25, 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 now read or assign to be read Matthew chapters 24, verses 1 through 31.

Commentary: During this past week, a blogger contacted one of the websites loosely associated with *The Philadelphia Church* and wanted a link placed to his site so that war could be avoided between the United States, Israel, and Iran. His belief is that the modern nation of Israel is the endtime Israel of Bible prophecies—and his belief is shared by most of visible Christendom, with the primary exception being the splintered Churches of God which hold that the United States, Britain, and Britain's former Commonwealth nations are endtime Israel. The only problem, however, with both of these identifications of endtime Israel is Scripture itself. The Apostle Paul said that a Jew was someone with a circumcised heart (*cf.* Rom 2:26-29; Col 2:11-12; Deut 30:1-2, 6): endtime Israel is a nation that was not formerly a nation (1 Pet 2:9-10) of those individuals who have circumcised hearts. It is not a physical nation as its high priest [Christ Jesus] is not a physically living human being but a life-giving spirit (1 Co 15:15). And endtime prophecies about Israel are not about any physical nation, but about a spiritual nation. Endtime Israel is an assembly of invisible new creatures [the Apostle Paul's *new man*], each born of Spirit, each domiciled in a visible tent of flesh, with these tents of every color, every descent, every social status, with either indoor or outdoor plumbing. Endtime Israel is not the nation that has descended from the patriarch Jacob, a descendant of the first Adam, but the nation that began with Christ Jesus, the last Adam, and descends through those individuals who are living stones (1 Pet 2:4-5) standing on the foundation Paul laid (1 Co 3:10-11), with those who are of *Philadelphia* being the pillars ... a pillar does not stand on a structure built atop a foundation, but on the foundation itself.

When Jesus' first disciples pointed out the magnificence of Herod's temple two days before Calvary—when Jesus' mind was on what He knew He had to suffer—He told them, “You see all these [the buildings of the temple], do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (Matt 24:2) ... yet the Wailing Wall is *one stone upon another*.

Since the Wailing Wall remains as part of Herod's temple, how should Jesus' words be taken? Obviously, the temple was destroyed and most of the stones were cast down when Roman soldiers sacked Jerusalem in 70 CE, then sacked again in 135 CE. But Jesus did not say that most of the stones would be cast down, or that Jerusalem would be sacked. So Jesus' words must be taken figuratively (John 16:25). About this, most everyone agrees. But this agreement is also the source of where problems enter, for Jesus is the stone that was rejected by the builders (*cf.* 1 Pet 2:4-8; Rom 9:33) and disciples are the temple of God (1 Co 3:16-17; 2 Co 6:16-18). The stones that were to be thrown down are not the physical stones that were laid atop one another to create Herod's temple, but the spiritual stones that were Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees.

- If Jesus is the stone that was rejected and if disciples are living stones, then the stones to be cast down were the religious leaders of the second temple.
- When false witnesses testified against Jesus, they could only agree that Jesus said, *I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands* (Mark 14:58).

Certainly Jesus did not destroy Herod's temple. Roman soldiers did. But Jesus did, three days after Calvary, build another temple when He breathed on ten of His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). So understanding Jesus' Olivet prophecy begins with understanding that Jesus doesn't reference the physical temple made of stones shaped by human hands when He said that not one stone should remain atop another.

Approximately forty minutes later (after a walk of two miles), the disciples came to Jesus and asked one question of two parts that could be broken into three things:

1. When will the temple be cast down;
2. What will be the sign of Jesus' coming [the Second Advent];
3. What will be the sign of the close of the age?

Jesus answered His disciples' question. He didn't answer a question that they didn't ask, such as what will be the course of history between Calvary and the end of the age?

The disciples' question specifically referenced what Jesus had said about the buildings of the temple, with their apparent assumption being that the temple would be cast down at the end of the age. And because His disciples assumed that the temple built of physical stones would be cast down at the end of the age, Jesus begins His discourse with a warning about leading astray:

- Jesus said, Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ· A literal translation would be, *See to it not someone you deceive.*

So what in virtually every English translation is some form of "Beware that no one leads you astray," which has the object capable of being led astray being the disciples, a literal translation will have Jesus warning His disciples about leading someone astray ... who might be the person who could have led His disciples astray? Satan. Who else? Certainly not the high priest or the Roman governor would lead His disciples astray. So it makes no sense for Jesus to warn His disciples about them being led astray, but it makes good sense for Jesus to warn His disciples about them leading others astray for He knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray Him (John 6:64). From the beginning, Jesus had with Him those who did not believe.

When Jesus breathed on the ten and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (again, John 20:22), Jesus established another synagogue and began another sect of Judaism: the sect of the Nazarenes [i.e., the sect consisting of those Israelites who would be identified

as Christians]. And those early teachers of this sect were the disciples whom Jesus had warned, *See to it that you don't deceive anyone.*

- How could one of the ten (or eleven when Thomas is counted) deceive others?

Christendom is today divided between those disciples who believe Jesus and those disciples who do not ... why profess to be a disciple of someone whom you do not believe? Why identify yourself as a Christian if you will not walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6) and imitate Paul (Phil 3:17) as he walked as Jesus walked?

Every *Christian* who will not identify himself or herself as part of a sect of observant Judaism stands before God as a rebel, a vessel of wrath endured for a season but destined for destruction. This *Christian* has been led astray by someone. If not by one of the first disciples, then by someone between the mid 1st-Century and the present age, with most of these “someones” tracing their theological roots back to those bishops who attended the Council of Nicea (ca 325 CE), where God formally delivered spiritually circumcised Israel to the spiritual king of Babylon for the same reasons that He sent physically circumcised Israel into Babylonian captivity almost ten centuries earlier.

- A person deceives in the name of Christ by placing importance on the flesh.

The Apostle Paul fought a long running battle with the Circumcision Faction, those leading Jewish converts to Christendom who contended that a convert must first be physically circumcised before he could be spiritually circumcised. These leading men had Scripture on their side, especially Exodus 12:48-49 and Ezekiel 44:9. But they had wrongly divided the word of God. An era exists between natural Israel's exodus from Egypt under Moses and the nation of Israel in the Millennium under the glorified David. This era that these leading men did not recognize began with Jesus breathing on His disciples and continues until the Second Passover liberation of Israel from indwelling sin and death.

To say that Israel has already been liberated from indwelling sin and death is to speak ignorantly, for all of humankind born prior to, say, 1870 have died. Most men and women born prior to 1900 have died. They have died from so-called natural causes if not from accidents or at the hands of another—and these natural causes come from indwelling sin and death, which the Apostle Paul recognized (Rom 7:21-25), but couldn't explain.

- Paul did not understand why sin and death continued to dwell in his fleshly members when *he* [the new creature that constituted personhood within his mind] had been set free from sin and death.

What Paul apparently did not realize is of those things that formed the example (1 Co 10:6, 11) of ancient Israel leaving Egypt representing Jesus' disciples leaving sin, what hasn't happened is the death of firstborns not covered by the blood of a paschal lamb. Liberation from bondage followed the death angel slaying uncovered firstborns, and did not precede the slaughter of firstborns.

Certainly Christendom widely recognizes that Christ Jesus was the paschal Lamb of God; that He was sacrificed at Calvary on the Preparation Day for the first High Day of Unleavened Bread; that His death is the typological reality of Passover lambs sacrificed in Egypt in the days of Moses. What seems to have been forgotten, though, is that Pharaoh would not release Israel from bondage until after the firstborns of Egypt were

slain. Nor will Satan release the fleshly tents of disciples from bondage to sin and death until after uncovered firstborns are again slain.

Spiritually circumcised Israel dwelling in fleshly tents with sin and death residing in the flesh is directly analogous to physically circumcised Israelites dwelling in houses belonging to Pharaoh in Egypt. The new creature or new nature, born of Spirit and as such born free, receives a cleansed heart at birth, so this new creature is under no condemnation (Rom 8:1-2) — but the flesh is not this new creature. Rather, the father of the flesh remains the first Adam, not the last Adam. Thus, the flesh continues to be consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), and a war will now develop between the law of sin and death that resides in the flesh and the law of God that now resides in the mind: this is the war which Paul experiences and about which he writes.

Among those disciples who practiced typological exegesis prior to the Protestant Reformation, the assumption was that the death of firstborns was the death of the old self through the sacrament of baptism; that baptism satisfied the typology of firstborns not covered by the blood of the Lamb of God dying prior to liberation from bondage. The assumption was that following baptism the immortal soul of a Christian would leave its *house* and go to heaven upon death. The *house* would remain in sin; in this world, the spiritual equivalent of geographical Egypt. But the spiritual *Israelite* would be with God in heaven.

The above has a large hole in its logic, which sounds good as long a disciple doesn't think critically about what's being taught: upon His return, Jesus brings with Him the judgments of the saints (1 Co 4:5) so until He returns, the judgment of any saint cannot be known, for the Father has given all judgment to Jesus so that Jesus can give life to whom He will (John 5:21-22). Therefore, no *Israelite* can leave his *house* until morning, with this morning being when Jesus returns as the Messiah [the fourth day of the creation week]. But since fleshly bodies return to the death of the earth, the new creature born of Spirit that had dwelt in a tent of flesh “sleeps” under the altar of God until the fullness of those who will die as he has died has been reached (Rev 6:9-11), with physical sleep being analogous to death.

Prior to being born of Spirit, no human being has any life in the heavenly realm. Eternal life is the gift of God (Rom 6:23), not the gift of human parents. So the person who dies physically prior to being born of Spirit “sleeps” in the dust of the earth, awaiting resurrection in the great White Throne Judgment. This person had only the shallow breath [*psuche*] that came from the first Adam. But the disciple who has been born of Spirit has received life—a second breath [*pneuma*—that came from heaven and shall return to heaven to sleep under the altar until its judgment is revealed (this new creature is neither male nor female, but a son of God as angels are “sons”).

Baptism is for the death of the old self, not for the death of the flesh which still must be liberated from indwelling sin and death. Human personhood or human nature is a received nature: it is the *software* that animates the flesh, where sin and death continue to reside. Thus, in computer terms, the flesh is the equivalent of the hardware and both the old human nature and the new nature are software programs that make the hardware work. The new nature must *overwrite* the old nature. If it doesn't, then the old nature will infect the new nature with the virus of disobedience, and the new nature will perish in the second death. So baptism is for the death of the old nature—it is analogous to overwriting *Word 97* with *Word 2003*. But neither software program will prevent a

hard drive bearing from failing, thereby ending the functioning of the computer. A new nature will not prevent a heart from failing, thereby causing the death of the flesh.

The flesh dies because of its decay that comes from its bondage to sin. Without sin dwelling in the flesh, a person would live longer than did Methuselah (Gen 5:27). To make this real for doubters, when Israel is liberated from indwelling sin and death, an Israelite can still die but not from so-called natural causes for this Israelite will no longer be under the curse of Adam. This Israelite can be martyred. He can die from accidental mishaps, or he can live until he is changed in the twinkling of an eye at Christ Jesus' return. Likewise, the Israelite born in the Millennium will be born liberated from indwelling sin and death for Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit: what today seems "normal" will be turned upside-down. Instead of humankind being in bondage to Satan, the present prince of this world, Satan will be bound while the saints rule this world. And the person born in the Millennium will live until Satan is released for a short while. Then those human beings who take sin into themselves will die forever while those who do not will be changed [glorified] in the twinkling of an eye.

Until first Israel then all of humankind is liberated from indwelling sin and death through empowerment by the Holy Spirit [being filled with the Spirit] during the seven endtime years, Israel remains in bondage to indwelling sin and death—and Grace remains necessary because of this indwelling lawlessness. A spiritually circumcised new creature dwelling in a fleshy body is analogous to the physically circumcised Israelite born into a house in Egypt. Thus, where spiritually circumcised Israel [i.e., the Church] stands in the course of Passover events is after the Passover Lamb has been sacrificed [Calvary] and before the death angel passes over Israel and slays all firstborns of this world (firstborns not covered by the blood of the Passover Lamb). This horrific slaughter of firstborns will begin the seven endtime years of tribulation.

Spiritually circumcised Israel presently lives through the long night of waiting and watching—the night that ancient Israel was not to leave their houses, with (again) the houses of ancient Israel equating to the tents of flesh in which born of Spirit sons of God presently dwell.

Now returning to Matthew chapter 24 — verse 9 begins the seven endtime years of tribulation. Everything that occurs after verse 9 occurs during the Tribulation, with verse 15 marking 1290 days before all things are restored (*cf.* Dan 12:11 & 11:31; 2 Thess 2:4; Matt 24:15). Thus, the events described in verses 9-14 occur during the first half of the Tribulation, as do the events described in Revelation chapters 4 through 11, and as do events described in Daniel chapter 7.

Therefore, what Jesus tells His first disciples in His Olivet discourse will have verses 5 through 8 answering His disciples' question concerning casting down the stones forming the temple as well as what will be the sign of His coming prior to the period of tribulation. And the primary sign will be many coming in His name, saying that He is the Christ, and leading many astray.

Has there ever been a time when as many have come in Jesus' name as in this present era? No. Not even close. And what do these many teach? Do they teach disciples to walk as Jesus walked, an observant Jew? Do they teach disciples to imitate Paul, who said in his defense "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense" (Acts 25:8)? No, they do not. Rather, they teach that because Jesus kept the Law, disciples do not have to keep the law. Well, Paul kept the law decades after Calvary. He kept the high Sabbaths as well as preaching on

the weekly Sabbath. So did Peter (Gal 2:14 – read this in Greek). Thus, those who teach that disciples only have to believe on Jesus teach a cheap grace and a false salvation. And they have deceived the many; for Jesus, Himself, asked how Israelites could believe His words if they did not believe the writings of Moses, who wrote of Jesus (John 5:46-47). The answer is, they can't! They couldn't in the 1st-Century, nor can they in the 21st-Century.

In His Olivet discourse, Jesus said that wars and rumors of wars are not signs of the end of the age. He said that those things which can be physically observed such as kingdom arising against kingdom, famines, earthquakes or other unmentioned other natural disasters are only the beginning the birth pains of Israel bringing to life the endtime harvest of the sons of God. Hence, it is false prophets and false teachers who point to physical events as fulfillments of endtime prophecies concerning Israel, a spiritual nation affected by those events that happen spiritually [or in the heavenly realm].

The would-be teacher of Israel who seeks to prevent a war between Israel and Iran seeks a good thing, but to say that Bible prophecy reveals such a war is to speak presumptuously.

Endtime prophecies are not about human kings or presidents; they are not about physical nations. Rather, they are about ideologies, about the mental state of human beings, about who rules these mental states or landscapes. They are about the Church and about what happens when those who are born of Spirit are empowered by the Holy Spirit as the Body becomes the Bride. They are about eliminating those who teach falsely or presumptuously. They are about the fall of spiritual Babylon and the rise of the Son of Man, Head and Body. And they are about the sacrifice of the Body during the first half of the Tribulation.

Anyone who would cause a little one to look to physical nations to fulfill Bible prophecies is a false prophet. No exceptions exist.

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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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