

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 *deconstruction not destruction*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of September 13, 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.

There is a tendency for Christians, when encountering the term deconstruction, to think in terms of the destruction of Scripture. This tendency comes from a lack of understanding: when God confused the languages at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1–9), God separated signifier [the uttered word] from signified [the object the word described]. Men did not. God did!

The bricks used to build the tower remained unchanged. What changed was the utterance used to “name” those bricks, and the utterance used to describe mortaring those bricks into place. Suddenly, one family could not understand another family. Communication ceased. Sounds were made, but not understood except by family members. Collective work became impossible. There were not suddenly many types of bricks, but many utterances used for the same bricks as had been used all along. Thus, whereas usually deconstruction gives many meanings [i.e., bricks] for the same utterance, the inverse of this happened at Babel: many words were attached to one meaning. And unless a person found him or herself using the same word for the one meaning as another person used, division occurred that was not easily bridged.

Deconstruction describes forced separation of signifier from signified ... for a literal reading of a text to possess validity, signifier and signified must necessarily be tightly bound together, a condition God ended at Babel. Hence, no literal reading of Scripture has ever been valid or really even possible since Babel. In blunt language, God has already negated and declared invalid every literal reading of Scripture; so the person who advocates literal readings opposes God.

Jesus told His disciples, “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father” (John 16:25). Matthew writes, “All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable” (13:34). Parables are a special form of metaphor. So Jesus spoke to neither the crowds nor to His disciples except in figures of speech—why should disciples attempt to assign literal meanings to this figurative language that demands being deconstructed?

When multiple meanings can be assigned to words, the text becomes decentered. The

stability of the text is challenged. The text cannot be said to mean this or to mean that. Unity dissolves into a play of signifiers that dance away from signifieds. The focus of the text becomes the language used, not what the language describes. Everything is figurative, or figures of speech dressed in textuality. And it is here where we need to resume after last week.

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The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Daniel chapter 2.

Commentary: Daniel tells the king, “You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold” (Dan 2:37–38) ... but is what Daniel said true from a literal perspective? It isn’t, is it? Nebuchadnezzar ruled over no one in China or in Chile, Canada, or even in Carthage. Nebuchadnezzar did not rule over lions or hyenas, vultures or eagles in any literal sense. Thus, what Daniel tells the king cannot be taken literally, but must be deconstructed, with multiple meanings arising from the decentered text.

The center around which the Torah revolves is the relationship between the Lord [YHWH] and the patriarch Abraham and his descendants, but the Apostle Paul notes that “not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring” (Rom 9:7). It isn’t biology that makes a person Abraham’s seed but faith, for Abraham’s seed is not many but one (Gal 3:16). This one is Christ Jesus, so unless a person is one with Christ (John 17:20–23) the person is not Abraham’s seed, thereby removing literalness from being Abraham’s seed.

If Abraham’s seed are not his biological descendants, then the center around which Scripture revolves has not held. Scripture ceases to be a structurally unified text, but becomes many texts, each with a differing center. No longer is the marriage covenant made at Sinai the center—and the center is not yet the marriage of Christ and His Bride. Presently, the center floats, and will continue to float for no man marries his body. Hence, the Body of Christ must separate from its Head before disciples, presently the Body, become the Bride. This separation will have the center a moving target until at least midway through the Tribulation.

If what Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar cannot be taken literally even when Daniel tells the king that he is the head of gold, then ancient Babylon is not the intended referent for the kingdom of gold ... Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world or from this world (John 18:36); yet it’s His kingdom that “shall break in pieces all these kingdoms [gold, silver, bronze, iron, and iron mixed with unfired clay] and bring them to an end” (Dan 2:44).

If Jesus’ kingdom brings to an end and replaces the metal kingdoms, then these metal kingdoms are like Christ’s kingdom: they are also not of this world or from this world. Nebuchadnezzar was certainly of this world. His kingdom was from this world. Jesus’ kingdom will not be like Nebuchadnezzar’s or Darius’ or Alexander’s kingdoms. At best, the kingdoms of men can only be, collectively, shadows or types of Jesus’ kingdom; for His

kingdom does not uproot and replace these human kingdoms. Other human kingdoms replaced the earthly shadows of these metal kingdoms; these shadows are no more.

In order to assign literalness to what Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, the iron legs must represent the Roman Empire, which cannot be for the division of the kingdoms occurs in its bronze portion, not in its iron portion. The Roman Empire was not divided when it overran the tired and militarily exhausted Syrian-Greek Empire and later the Egyptian-Greek Empire ...

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian [Achaemenid] Empire and died shortly afterward in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II; he died leaving no adult heir and an only partially Hellenized empire (perhaps the Persians changed Alexander more than Alexander changed the Persians). The empire was placed under a regent, Perdiccas, in 323 BCE. Territory was divided between Alexander's generals at the Partition of Babylon—the Babylonian Empire continued on, only now under Greek satraps. And this is an important point to remember: Tattenai, governor of the Babylonian province "Beyond the River," in his letter to Darius the king identifies Cyrus as king of Babylon (Ezra 5:13), not as king of Persia. Medes and Persians were ruling the Babylonian Empire. Later, Alexander for a very short while, then his generals as satraps ruled the Babylonian Empire, its head or first king being Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean. But Rome never ruled the Babylonian Empire, but ruled the Roman Empire. Hence, the head of Rome was never Nebuchadnezzar—and the Empire was the post-Republican expansion of Rome that began with the unified rule of Rome under Augustus Caesar.

The human-like image Nebuchadnezzar sees is of one man, not many men. The kingdom that shall arise after Nebuchadnezzar is not another man, but the silver arms and chest. Likewise the kingdom that comes after the silver arms and chest is not another man, but the bronze belly and thighs. The fourth metal kingdom is not another man but the already divided legs that extend downward from the bronze thighs. One humanoid image, one image of a man from head to toes—and Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the head, but the prophet Isaiah had already identified the Adversary as the king of Babylon (14:4), with this Adversary not a human being but the fallen day star Lucifer.

Deconstruction breaks the hard link Daniel establishes when he tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the head of gold, for what Daniel tells the king cannot be literally true but must be figurative language. The lacunae necessary to deconstruct the hard link Daniel establishes opens with realization that Nebuchadnezzar did not rule beyond his borders, nor did he rule birds and beasts. However, Lucifer as the spiritual prince of this world does rule the children of men [Adam] wherever they dwell through all of humankind being consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32). Even the natures of the great predators will be changed (Isa 11:6–9) when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh; so yes, the present prince of this world rules over the beasts as he rules over the children of men. And if the fallen Lucifer is the king of Babylon, then "Babylon" is the kingdom of this world, the kingdom that will become the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15) halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation. The Son of Man will rule over this kingdom of the world, not receive power or authority from this kingdom.

The bronze belly separates to form the two bronze thighs when Greek satraps (Alexander's generals, the Diadochi), beginning with Ptolemy, satrap of Egypt, challenge Perdiccas: Ptolemy's revolt results in a new partition of the Babylonian Empire, now ruled by Greeks as it had previously been ruled by Persians. This partition [the Partition of Triparadisus, 320 BCE] gave Seleucus, former Commander-in-Chief under Perdiccas whom he helped assassinate, Babylonia. Eight years later, Seleucus rules over not just Babylonia but over the entire eastern portion of Alexander's empire, the Babylonian Empire. In 312 BCE, in Babylon, he establishes the Seleucid Empire. But his empire is only a portion, one leg, of Alexander's expansion of the Babylonian Empire.

Appian, in *The Syrian Wars* [Horace White's translation], writes,

[§55] In this way Seleucus became king of Babylonia. He also acquired the kingdom of Media, slaying with his own hand in battle Nicanor whom Antigonos had left as satrap of that country. He afterward waged many wars with Macedonians and barbarians. The two principal ones were with Macedonians, the second with Lysimachus, king of Thrace, the first with Antigonos at Ipsus in Phrygia, where Antigonos commanded in person and fought in person although he was above eighty years of age.

Antigonos was killed in battle, and then all the kings who had been in league with Seleucus against him divided his territory among themselves. At this division all Syria from the Euphrates to the sea, also inland Phrygia, fell to the lot of Seleucus. Always lying in wait for the neighboring nations, strong in arms and persuasive in council, he acquired Mesopotamia, Armenia, 'Seleucid' Cappadocia, Persis, Parthia, Bactria, Arabia, Tapouria, Sogdia, Arachosia, Hyrcania, and other adjacent peoples that had been subdued by Alexander, as far as the river Indus, so that the boundaries of his empire were the most extensive in Asia after that of Alexander. The whole region from Phrygia to the Indus was subject to Seleucus. He crossed the Indus and waged war with Sandrocottus, king of the Indians, who dwelt on the banks of that stream, until they came to an understanding with each other and contracted a marriage relationship. Some of these exploits were performed before the death of Antigonos and some afterward.

Meanwhile, the Ptolemaic Empire, the other leg of Alexander's expansion of the Babylonian Empire, begins in 305 BCE when Ptolemy I Soter declared himself Pharaoh of Egypt ... following Alexander's death, Perdiccas ruled as regent for Alexander's half-brother Arrhidaeus, who became Philip III of Macedon, and as regent for Alexander's infant son, Alexander IV of Macedon. As regent, Perdiccas appointed Ptolemy as satrap to rule over Egypt in the name of the joint kings Philip III and Alexander IV, but Ptolemy rebelled and defeated Perdiccas when he invaded Egypt in 321 BCE. In the wars of Diadochi [the wars of the generals], Ptolemy gained control of areas near Egypt, thereby establishing a dynasty that would rule through Cleopatra.

Two legs, both Greek, both Babylonian, neither Roman—these are the “literal” iron legs of the humanoid image Nebuchadnezzar sees in vision, but these are not the legs of the

reigning hierarchy of which the fallen Lucifer is head. Those legs are two demonic kings, metonymically Sin and Death, kings of the South and of the North respectfully, the third and fourth beasts of Daniel chapter 7, the third and fourth horsemen of Revelation chapter 6.

The wars of the Diadochi create the literal division of the humanoid image, but these wars are spiritually fought during the first 220 days of the seven endtime years of tribulation. Presently a war like that fought between the Greeks and the Persians is being fought for control of the single kingdom of this world, with the fallout of that spiritual war being felt worldwide as the old status quo is being overturned.

The fallout of the ongoing spiritual war doesn't produce clean battle lines and uniformed adversaries, but is a battle of ideas and values, with Greek values to ultimately prevail. Five, six, seven years ago, France fronted for the status quo, the demonic kings of Persia. France's resistance to American intervention in Iraq came as much from the unexplainable fallout of this spiritual war as from French double dealing with Saddam Hussein. Likewise, Russian support for Iran, a very "real" world occurrence, comes as much from the unexplainable fallout of spiritual warfare as from the need for a fundamentalist Islamic ally.

When warfare is fought between ideologies and values, all forms of top-down governance, of socialism are on one side, the side of the former status quo. On the other side is the Greek value of individualism, what kept Greeks separated in small city-states for so long, what brings to the world democracy and democratic ideals. If analysis of Alexander's battle with Darius on the Persian plains at Gaugumela is overlaid the present world political scene, especially the American presidential election campaign, a disciple can see how the present precarious state of democracy will be turned around to become an absolute rout of the status quo ... the ideals and values of the person who is authentic, genuine, who values individualism and governance by the people and for the people will prevail over neo-Persian elitism. Even Russia supporting break-away Georgian states is, in some ways, an elevation of democratic rule as the long trend toward one world governance is reversed.

Evidence that Greece's democratic ideals are prevailing everywhere is all around us: the Internet is the greatest leveler of power that has ever existed. A blogger in a college dorm room has nearly the same authority as a national news agency, which themselves blog. One U.S. presidential candidate has garnered hundreds of millions via Internet contributions. Scam artists in central Africa send e-messages to potential victims half a world away. Electronics have shrunk distance, transforming the world into one community and nations into family members. But the one world governance feared by "conspiracy theorists" will not be an aggressive form of the United Nations, but a common mindset that elevates individualism and holds both national entities and mega-corporations responsible for their actions. Chinese parents want to know why apartments and schools collapsed in an earthquake; what should they feed their babies when infant formula is tainted with melamine. They are no longer politically invisible. And a Syrian official speaks of democracy being a human right.

The conspiracy theorist who fears the U.N. and any number of secret societies has already succumbed to the broadcast of the spiritual king of Greece. This person is not free to

extricate him or herself from Babylon, but must remain its serf. All this person can do is change sides—and this person won't do that.

Before the battle of Gaugamela began, Darius made flat ground even flatter by plowing and leveling the terrain—he had picked terrain favorable to his scythe-wheeled chariots. Ancient texts give the size of Darius' army as a million men, perhaps an exaggeration although ancient historians were as able to count accurately as they were able to exaggerate. So on October 1, 331 BCE, the showdown came.

Alexander saw Darius' advantage, so he ordered his cavalry to swing to the right. The Persians moved to block Alexander and soon found themselves on rocky terrain. Seeing the thinned line, Alexander led the charge that broke through the Persian rear, and the rout was on.

But the Greeks suffered greatly. The army of 35,000 Greeks was really no match for hundreds of thousands of Persians, with some of these Persian troops being mercenary Greeks. In the center, the Persians broke through the Greeks and plundered the supplies, but when Alexander returned from pursuing the fleeing Persian cavalry, fortune returned to the Greeks ... it was Alexander's move to the right that led to his victory. It will be the spiritual king of Greece's ideological move to the right that will give to him the hard-fought victory over the spiritual kings of Persia.

Can the present American presidential election be seen as a battle in this spiritual war? Perhaps. A swing to the ideological right will secure the victory, but not without the kings of Persia standing on the verge of defeating Greek values and ideals.

Because too few Christians are even casually familiar with Alexander's win at Gaugamela, they get caught up in fighting the battle here on earth when the only fight that truly matters is the spiritual war. They make themselves into tin soldiers moved here and moved there, which allows the rest of us to see how the battle is progressing ... we already know the outcome. We know who wins and how he wins. The only thing we don't know is when he wins; for shortly after he wins will come the second Passover liberation of Israel.

The gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron and the miry [unfired] clay are all present when the stone cut without hands crushes the toes, thereby crushing all of the metals and the entirety of the spiritual kingdom of Babylon ... the "Babylon" of the Book of Revelation is not a kingdom of this earth and from this earth, but is a kingdom of heaven that the Son of Man receives halfway through the Tribulation. The metals represent demonic kings as the clay represents human beings not yet glorified (or fired). Fired or vitrified clay will whet away iron. It is harder than iron, bronze, silver, or gold. It will outlast these metals. But miry or soft clay can be washed away with high pressure water. It is in the firing of the clay that strength is produced, and the Tribulation is the preparatory process that precedes the firing or glorification of the saints.

Nebuchadnezzar saw in vision Satan's hierarchy that will be toppled halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation.

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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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