

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 *leaving Babylon*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of November 1, 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 Daniel chapter 4.

Commentary: The Creator-of-all-that-is sets the basest of human beings over the kingdom of men—this doesn't bode well for whomever is elected the next President of the United States this coming week.

Americans tend to hold their President in high esteem although there are significant exceptions with President George W. Bush vying with a few others for that distinction. Generally a person who ideologically supports the opposing party thinks less of a President than do those of the party that elected the President. So for Republicans, Carter and Clinton were weak or corrupt individuals, especially in the case of Clinton with his legacy of a semen-stained blue dress. It is easy to see how God set a base individual over the nation.

Nevertheless, many Christians will vote this coming Tuesday for the person who best represents their values, with many of these votes going to the McCain/Palin ticket because of the sanctity of life issue. It is hard to argue that Sarah Palin doesn't value life when she knowingly gave birth to a Down's syndrome infant. It is equally hard to argue that Mrs. McCain doesn't value life when she brought to the United States and adopted two infant girls having special medical needs that could not be met where the infants were born. Both McCain and Palin have demonstrated personal beliefs that any Christian would find admirable.

But there is a larger issue, and not one that many Christians want to address: should Christians participate in the governance of the nations of this world? Should Christians vote when the Lord will set over the nation whomever He chooses, with this choice being the lowest of humankind?

Two seemingly conflicting schema are at work: first, the spiritual king of Babylon remains in power and continues to rule over humankind wherever human beings are found. The second is that no authority exists in this world except those that come from God—and this includes the prince of this world ruling over the children of men.

Contrary to popular Evangelical Christendom's pet dogma, Christians will not escape the seven endtime years of tribulation by being bodily raptured to heaven. Rather, they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit and thus liberated from indwelling sin and death. Then they will be delivered into the hand of the man of perdition (Dan 7:25; Zech 13:7–8) for the destruction of the flesh, an MO God used when He sent Israel into captivity and the basis for what Paul wrote when commanding the saints at Corinth to deliver to Satan the man who was with his father's wife ... if the prince of this world rules over men because the Lord has delivered humankind into his hand for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit might be saved when judgments are revealed—this delivery occurred because of Adam's transgression—then all authority, both in this world and in the heavenly realm, is from the Most High. No one will receive authority to rule unless the Lord permits it; for it was the Most High who consigned humankind to disobedience (Rom 11:32) so that He could have mercy on all, and it is the Most High who places over nations the rulers the nations deserve as an extension of mercy.

Who is the present prince of this world? It is not Christ Jesus, who receives the kingdom of this world halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation. It is, instead, the Adversary. So the governments of this world are of the Adversary, one reason why political promises are not kept regardless of who is elected.

Jesus said, before Calvary, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). But the ruler of this world has not yet been cast from heaven. He won't be cast from heaven until after the second woe, 1260 days into the last seven endtime years of tribulation. Not until the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal has sounded and the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of the Father and His Christ (Rev 11:15–19; Dan 7:9–14) will the present prince of this world be cast out. So answer the question: today, whose kingdom is this world with all of its varying forms of governance if not the Adversary's?

Satan doesn't reign over men as other men do, but by controlling the landscape of human thoughts. He reigns today as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). He has no need to reign over men through a U.N.-type assembly. Those Christians who fear secret human societies or Zionist imperialism or any form of one world governance are without spiritual understanding: these Christians prepare to resist organizations of men while failing to realize that even their thoughts of resistance come from the Adversary. They are, unfortunately, living puppets unable to see the puppeteer who manipulates their fears and anxieties; so they arm themselves, store survival supplies, and say silly things about what they will do when society fails. If they ever had any spiritual understanding, they lost it so long ago that it is no longer remembered.

Because the Adversary reigns over the landscape from which the thoughts of men spring forth as weeds or wheat, the Adversary reigns today over all men wherever they dwell. Therefore, if a person votes for one candidate or another, the person participates in the governing process of this world. The person has made a judgment about the qualifications of the candidate to serve as his or her representative, and has voted in the affirmative for the candidate. Not voting for another candidate is, in reality, a negative vote against the other candidate; thus, not showing up to vote on Election Day is, unfortunately, a vote

against all of those running for office. So even by not voting, a Christian cannot avoid participating in the governance of a nation-state within the single kingdom of spiritual Babylon, the kingdom that will be given to the Son of Man halfway through seven years of tribulation. The presence of the Christian within the nation-state is a subtle endorsement of the nation-state, the reason why immigration issues ultimately come down to people voting with their feet. A person “votes” for those ruling a nation by continuing to live in that nation.

If the voluntary presence of a Christian within a nation-state is a subtle endorsement of the state, and if ultimately the Christian must reside somewhere within the single kingdom of the prince of this world, should the Christian not attempt to make wherever he or she chooses to live more “Christ-like” in its governance? Should the Christian not participate in politics ... why not get involved and make this world a better place considering that until Satan is cast to earth every Christian has to live under Satan’s governance? Why not become actively involved and defeat by whatever legal means those who advocate anti-Christian values? Why not protest abortion clinics? Why not get involved in turning out the vote on Tuesday, November 4th? Why not send money to one political candidate or another? Why not seek office? After all, the Christian’s heart is set on God and the things of God, which includes the Ten Commandments on courthouse walls and in schools.

If the Lord will give the kingdom of men whomever He wills, a disciple voting for one candidate or another can do no harm, can it?

Actually, it can: it’s easy for the Adversary to entangle Christians in the affairs of this world—he doesn’t even have to work hard at ensnaring genuine disciples. All the Adversary has to do is permit participation in the governance of a nation-state. The lure of voting is almost irresistible. The Christian will inevitably do whatever is necessary to cause this Christian to become engaged in the things of this world, thereby taking his or her focus off God and causing the person to fall backwards, be broken, and slain ... the “natural” inclination of human beings is the pursuit of liberation and freedom, but this natural inclination comes from the Adversary, not from God. Those radio talk show hosts who speak eloquently about the natural yearnings of human beings for democracy speak about the “nature” of the Adversary, who has deceived the whole world (Rev 12:9). In the temptation account (Gen chap 3), Christians can see and understand how the anointed cherub in whom iniquity was found deceived and pulled down from heaven a third of the stars [angels]: he did so by reminding them that they had good minds and were well able to determine good and evil for themselves. He introduced to them the concept of free will and being able to decide for themselves who should rule over them. And as long as these angels agreed with the Father, no rebellion was detected or detectable. No rebellion was outwardly manifested even though inwardly rebellion occurred when an angel judged the Father by deciding for itself what was good or evil.

To avoid repeating the rebellion of the angels, disciples are not to determine for themselves what is right or wrong, but are to accept God’s determination. They are not to judge God, not to challenge God’s authority, not to rebel against the one whom God has elevated. Although every disciple is holy (1 Pet 2:9), not every disciple has been elevated by God to do a job for Him as He elevated Moses and Aaron, then later Peter and Paul.

By voting, a disciple tells God that the disciple doesn't trust God to deliver the kingdom of men to whomever He chooses. Voting for anyone is a no-confidence vote for God. It is analogous to ancient Israel telling Samuel that the nation wanted a king to rule over them like other nations had kings.

How can a Christian deliver anyone to power if the Lord has not selected the person? Can a Christian, by voting for this candidate or for that one, override the Lord's choice? Or does the Christian by voting openly worship the prince of this world ... NO! you say; you don't worship Satan when you vote. But ask yourself, does the Father and the Son need your help doing their job of appointing rulers who are a terror to bad conduct? What help can you offer to the Father and the Son by voting? Do you not make yourself a judge of the Father and the Son, saying to them by voting that you don't trust them to put the right person in place to do the job the Father and the Son has for the person to do within the kingdom of the Adversary?

If the Father needed your help, He would ask for it. Actually, He would tell you what to do as He told the prophets of old what to speak.

So the person who actively participates in the governance of this world serves Satan as an agent, a minister, a judge, an elder, a wise man or woman. This person worships a Christ the person doesn't know, a Christ that is really the Adversary. And no one will be able to tell this person that what he or she does to make the Adversary's governance of this world more Christ-like is futile, wasted effort that takes the person away from God.

For the genuine disciple, not voting means the disciple doesn't have a desire to participate with Satan in the governance of his world even when as much is at stake as there is in the upcoming presidential election.

In the wilderness, Israel often wanted to return to Egypt, with these wanting-to-returns being rebellion against God (Num chap 14, et al). Voting today is also rebellion against God; yet voting will affect your money, your nation, your future. Voting is your say in what happens to you ... but is it? If the candidate you support loses, how valuable was your voice? Was your voice not silenced by someone who did not have your interests in mind? Then, what happens if your candidate wins and you are promised a tax reduction but end up having your taxes raised? Was your voice heard? Did your vote affect anything?

There is a naïve assumption that within a nation every voice counts, but this assumption is at odds with historical observations and at odds with Scripture: Korah, a son of Levi, and 250 chiefs of the congregation assembled together against Moses and Aaron and said, "You [Moses] have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord [YHWH] is among them" (Num 16:3). This is the clearest advocacy of democracy found within Scripture. Every Israelite was, indeed, holy, and the Lord was with Israel. Every voice should have counted; so what did Korah say that was wrong or undemocratic? Where is the fault in what he said?

What was wrong with wanting to return to Egypt, a devastated nation that could be easily overpowered by Israel? The Egyptian army was at the bottom of the Sea of Reeds. The

Pharaoh was dead. The firstborns of the nation were dead. What was left except the land, the fields, the canals, and the monuments? Returning would be easy, and Israel wouldn't be a slave people. But how long would it have been before the sons of Israel married the daughters of Egypt and had their hearts turned towards the gods of the Egyptians? Israel did not quit worshipping the idols of the Egyptians in Egypt (Ezek 20:7–8), nor in the wilderness. It would not have been long before these Israelites would have been more Egyptian than the Egyptians, for Old Testament geography equates to spiritual mindsets. As long as Israel remained in Egypt, the nation was separated from God and unable to enter into His presence. Only when the nation left Egypt and crossed the Jordan did the nation enter into God's rest.

Korah was afraid of Moses but not of God. Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, told Moses that he had brought them into the wilderness to kill the elders of the nation off so that he [Moses] could make himself a prince over Israel (Num 16:13). Moses' authority was being challenged. Korah and his friends viewed Moses as a murderer, guilty of seeking his own gain at the cost of Israelite lives. Korah's democratic declaration was intended to strip Moses of his authority; the foremost use of democracy today is to strip the reigning government of power without resorting to bloodshed. And when the ballot box fails, for whatever reason including fraud, to remove a party from power, the resulting schism within the nation makes it virtually ungovernable for ultimately, democracy is mob-rule.

Only when a Christian quits participating in the governance of this world does the Christian leave spiritual Babylon. To vote is to participate in the governance of spiritual Babylon. Thus, to vote requires that the Christian remain in spiritual Babylon and remain far from heavenly Jerusalem.

For Christians, Babylon is not an ancient earthly city; it is, instead, the mental landscape that represents the single kingdom of this world and the collective kingdoms ruled by disobedience. The king of Babylon (Isa 14:4) isn't the long dead Nebuchadnezzar, but the Adversary. And for the Christian to leave Babylon, this Christian must cease participating in the governance of a nation-state for there is no way nor anywhere a Christian can go to geographically leave Babylon. A Christian leaves Babylon by leaving disobedience and by ceasing to be an active participant with the Adversary.

To vote causes the Christian to say to God what Korah told Moses: voting asserts that every American is equal and has an equal right to speak, and no person has a right to exalt him or herself above the assembly of the nation—and God killed Korah for this democratic spirit. Why? The answer is concealed within the concept of democracy itself, for what was Eve's sin other than determining for herself good and evil? Was it not determining for herself right and wrong? It was, wasn't it? Indeed, it is determining right and wrong through reasoning that ultimately condemns a son of God to the lake of fire. It is exercising free will when obedience is the expectation of God. It is free will that condemns a disciple—and this is extremely hard for most Christians to accept, for they want God to be a human being as they are. They can relate to the human Jesus but not to a glorified Jesus who will deny salvation to those Christian ministers who, regardless of their mighty works done in Jesus' name, teach disciples to be lawless. These Christian ministers and their parishioners don't want to be told what to do. They want to determine for themselves what they should do.

They want free will. And democracy is their expression of social self-determination.

When Israel was taken captive, with first the house of Israel taken by Assyria into the North Country then with the house of Judah taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, God ended Israel's sovereignty. When the remnant of Israel returned by command of Cyrus, king of Persia, they did not return as a free people but as an enslaved people, with the king of Babylon/Persia covering the remnant's transgressions as Pharaoh had covered the nation's transgressions in Egypt. For neither the Ark of the Covenant nor the Urim and Thummin were returned to Jerusalem—God's presence did not return once it left (Ezek chap 10). The high priest could not make atonement for himself, or for his house, or for Israel, or for the temple on Yom Kipporim without the Ark being in the Holy of Holies. But the absence of the Ark did not stop the high priest from enacting an elaborate ruse on Yom Kipporim. And a similar sort of deception occurs today when Christian Churches are used to get out the vote by either major political party: no Christian's vote will effect whom God wants to place over the nation-state. Ask Albert Gore about what happened in 2000, or ask Richard Nixon about what happened in 1960, or ask Andrew Jackson about what happened in 1824. Or ask Abraham Lincoln about what happened in 1860 when he wasn't even on the ballot in many states.

On Tuesday, without the help of genuine disciples, God will deliver the Presidency of the United States to whom He wants in office for the next four years. He needs no help to do this although a great many Christians will participate in the process because they don't trust Him to get it right.

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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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