

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 irrefutable revelation.

## Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of November 8, 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 Galatians chapters 1 and 2.*

**Commentary:** An average disciple tends to read Paul's epistle to the Galatians without realizing that the epistle's first two chapters form a classic Aristotelian argument, which can be grafted or presented visually as a series of inverted triangles, with the strongest point or declaration of each "point" presented first, and with the strongest "point" presented first. Each following "point" will be rhetorically weaker, or of less importance. Truly, the first aspect of Paul's presentation is his strong declaration within his strongest point, and his first declaration is "that the gospel [good news] that was preached by me [Paul] is not man's gospel" (Gal 1:11). To show this, a structured outline will be used and added-to:

- I. Not man's gospel.
  - A. Not received from another man but by revelation of Jesus Christ.
    - 1. Paul persecuted the Church and was not seeking to believe or be a Believer.
      - a. Paul was extremely zealous for the traditions of Judaism.
    - 2. Jesus was divinely revealed to Paul.
      - a. Paul did not consult with anyone.
      - b. Paul did not immediately go up to Jerusalem.
      - c. Paul went away into Arabia.
    - 3. Revelation was given to Paul so that he might preach to the Gentiles.

There is no way to refute a revelation: either the revelation happened or it didn't happen. It will be known whether Paul was extremely jealous for the traditions of Judaism. Luke provides evidence of this in Acts 7:58, and in Acts 8:1. And it will be known whether Paul was on his way to Damascus when something happened to him. It will be known whether Paul, afterwards, went away into Arabia. But the contents of Paul's vision cannot be known except through Paul revealing those contents. Thus, if Paul says this or that was said in the vision, there is no one able to refute what Paul claims. Therefore, knowledge coming via a vision or revelation is the ultimate irrefutable argument. Only the truthfulness of the person who received the revelation can be attacked: the person who cannot be believed in other matters probably cannot be believed about having received a vision or revelation.

The above requires the disciple to act upon faith: the disciple must believe that Paul received a vision of Jesus Christ. *If Paul didn't, then he is a liar* and not someone who can be believed; but if he did, then he must be believed if disciples are to be one with Christ Jesus. And there is no easily made

test to determine whether Paul should be believed, especially considering that his intent was to kill disciples [there is such a test, but not one spiritual infants can pass]. Apparently some endtime disciples believe that Paul, in his epistles, continues his attempt to kill Christendom by stealing the movement from Jesus' "genuine apostles."

Continuing Paul's argument:

### I. Not man's gospel.

#### A. Not received from another man but by revelation of Jesus Christ.

##### 1. Paul persecuted the Church and was not seeking to believe or be a Believer.

a. Paul was extremely zealous for the traditions of Judaism.

##### 2. Jesus was divinely revealed to Paul.

a. Paul did not consult with anyone.

b. Paul did not immediately go up to Jerusalem.

c. Paul went away into Arabia.

##### 3. Revelation was given to Paul so that he might preach to the Gentiles.

#### B. Those at Jerusalem added nothing to Paul's gospel.

##### 1. After three years Paul visited Peter at Jerusalem, and saw James there.

a. Neither Peter nor James added anything to Paul's gospel.

b. Preach in Syria and Cilicia via revelation.

c. Paul was still unknown to other converts.

d. Others had only heard of him.

##### 2. After fourteen years Paul again went to Jerusalem.

a. Paul took Barnabas and Titus with him.

i. Though a Greek, Titus was not required to be circumcised.

b. Paul preached privately to the Church leaders.

i. By implication, no fault was found with what Paul preached.

ii. By implication, Titus' uncircumcision was not an issue.

c. Circumcision has become an issue because of later false teachers.

Paul's introduction of Titus' uncircumcision coming so closely to his rebuking of the Galatians for accepting a contrary gospel (Gal 1:9) will make that contrary gospel the Galatians had accepted a message about disciples needing to be physically circumcised—and this is certainly the subject when Paul writes, "But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. *I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!* (Gal 5:11–12 emphasis added).

*Emasculate* or mutilate themselves: how would they do this if not by hacking off their own penises?

The *offense of the cross* is that Gentiles can become "Israel," the chosen nation of God; can become the holy people who were not before a people (1 Pet 2:9–10) without being physically circumcised, but by only being circumcised of heart once these hearts have been cleansed by faith. Whereas outward circumcision had divided Israel from *the nations* [Gentiles] through the law of commandments and ordinances so that the Gentiles—"called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands" (Eph 2:11)—were separated from Christ and the commonwealth of Israel, and were "strangers to covenants of promise" (v. 12). This "dividing wall of hostility" (v. 14) was abolished by *the offense of the cross*, which brings those who were far off near to God, but causes they who were near to reject Paul and actually want to kill him as they wanted to kill Jesus. Whereas Israel (the Sadducees and Pharisees), employing the Romans, succeeded in killing

Jesus, Israel combined with the Romans themselves succeeded in killing Paul. Both Jesus and Paul were, from the perspective of Israel, troublemakers that had to die.

The covenants of promise were not abolished at Calvary. If they had been, then the uncircumcised could not be brought near to these covenants. And if the covenants were not abolished, then the terms of these covenants were not abolished, a subject to which we will return.

Continuing outlining Paul's argument:

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2. Jesus was divinely revealed to Paul.
  - a. Paul did not consult with anyone.
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3. Revelation was given to Paul so that he might preach to the Gentiles.

#### B. Those at Jerusalem added nothing to Paul's gospel.

1. After three years Paul visited Peter at Jerusalem, and saw James there.
  - a. Neither Peter nor James added anything to Paul's gospel.
  - b. Paul preached in Syria and Cilicia via revelation.
  - c. Paul was still unknown to other converts.
  - d. Others had only heard of him.
2. After fourteen years Paul again went to Jerusalem.
  - a. Paul took Barnabas and Titus with him.
    - i. Though a Greek, Titus was not required to be circumcised.
  - b. Paul preached privately to the Church leaders.
    - i. By implication, no fault was found with what Paul preached.
    - ii. By implication, Titus' uncircumcision was not an issue.
  - c. Circumcision has become an issue because of later false teachers.

#### C. The gospel to the uncircumcised was entrusted to Paul.

1. Paul to go to the Gentiles while Peter to go to the circumcised.
  - a. James, Peter, and John recognized Paul as an equal.
    - i. Jerusalem's only admonishment was that Paul remember the poor.
    - ii. It had been Paul's intention to remember the poor.
2. At Antioch, Paul rebukes Peter.
  - a. Peter taught Gentile converts to live like Jews or Judaize.
    - i. Peter did not teach these converts to become outwardly circumcised.
  - b. But when influential Jewish converts came from Jerusalem, Peter separated himself from uncircumcised Gentile converts.
    - i. Although teaching converts that the flesh wasn't important, Peter placed importance on the flesh because of those from Jerusalem.
  - c. Peter's behavior was contrary to what he taught.

Peter might well have believed that keeping the peace was of utmost importance, and surely there would have been no peace in Antioch if an uncircumcised Gentile, convert or otherwise, attempted to eat with a circumcised Jew who was still an infant in Christ. But if this was Peter's reason for

separating himself from the Gentile converts he taught, his example was a wrong one—and Paul told him so.

If an endtime disciple ever wonders what Peter or Paul taught converts, the disciple can know by reading Galatians 2:14 in its original Greek wording: “Εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῇς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις Ἰουδαῖζειν — If you a Jew being as a Gentile and not as a Jew live, how the Gentiles do you compel to live as Jews.”

Peter taught Gentile converts to live as Jews or to be Judaizers. Yes, Peter taught Gentile converts to live as Jews—and Paul did not criticize Peter for what he taught, but for separating himself from the converts he taught when certain men came from Jerusalem. A Jew, living as an observant Jew, would not eat with an uncircumcised person. Peter, by eating with uncircumcised Gentile converts, was not living as a Jew but as a Gentile even though he would have been keeping the Sabbath and high days. Paul’s reference to Peter not living as a Jew but teaching Gentile converts to live as Jews makes no sense if Peter wasn’t also living as Jew except for eating with uncircumcised converts. And again, the issue which Paul addresses is not grace versus law, but the importance, or better, lack of importance of physical circumcision.

If Peter taught Gentile converts to live as Jews, and if Paul taught Gentile converts that circumcision was now a matter of the heart and not of the flesh (Rom 2:15–29; Col 2:11; Jer 9:25–26; Deut 30:6), then endtime teachers of Israel should also be teaching disciples to live as Jews, and that hearts are circumcised following journeys of faith of sufficient length to cleanse them.

Now, continuing with the outline of Paul’s argument:

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  - a. Neither Peter nor James added anything to Paul’s gospel.
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1. Paul to go to the Gentiles while Peter to go to the circumcised.
  - a. James, Peter, and John recognized Paul as an equal.

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    - a. Peter taught Gentile converts to live like Jews or Judaize.
      - i. Peter did not teach these converts to become outwardly circumcised.
    - b. But when influential Jewish converts came from Jerusalem, Peter separated himself from uncircumcised Gentile converts.
      - i. Although teaching converts that the flesh wasn't important, Peter placed importance on the flesh because of those from Jerusalem.
    - c. Peter's behavior was contrary to what he taught.
- D. A person is justified by faith.
  - 1. Jews and Gentiles believe in Jesus in order to be justified by faith.
    - a. No one is justified by works of the law.
  - 2. But if justified by faith, disciples are not to be sinners.
    - a. Christ is not a servant of sin.
      - i. Even if a person repents from sin, the person remains a transgressor.
      - ii. The law requires the death of the person (old self + fleshly body).
    - b. If a disciple is crucified with Christ, the old self no longer lives.
      - i. After being crucified with Christ, Christ lives in the disciple.
      - ii. The life lived in the flesh is lived in faith in the Son of God.
        - This life is not the flesh.
        - Jesus gave Himself for this new life.
    - c. Grace can be nullified.
      - i. Righteousness cannot come through the law.
      - ii. Paul did not nullify the grace of God.

Paul here leaves unanswered the question about how can a disciple nullify grace, but he answers this question in Romans 6:12–16 ... if a disciple allows sin to reign in the disciple's mortal body, the disciple returns to being the bondservant of sin, an act that removes the person from being under grace; for when under grace, sin has no dominion over the disciple. When a person gives sin dominion over him or herself, the person willingly returns to being the bondservant of sin, with sin being the transgression of the law, or lawlessness (1 John 3:4).

If a person insists that point “D” is the summation of Paul's argument, the person makes a point, but the person doesn't understand the argument Paul makes. In his rhetorical progression of thought, Paul presents his strongest point first, this being that his gospel comes via a direct revelation from Christ Jesus. His next strongest point is that the leading first apostles heard him preach his gospel and added nothing to what he taught. This third strongest point is that he was commissioned to go to the Gentiles. His fourth strongest point is that a person is justified by faith ... while endtime Christians would hold that Paul's fourth point is most important, Paul did not consider the point his strongest argument; for birth by spirit should have been understood by James, Peter, and John—and certainly was understood by Peter, the evidence being what Peter taught Gentile converts. It was also understood by John, who records Jesus' exchange with Nicodemus on the subject. But if the Galatians understood this point, they would not be outwardly circumcising one another. So while this is an important “Christian” concept, it is not a rhetorically strong point.

The latter prophets of Israel who did not go directly to the kings but who spoke in public spaces lacked having any authority except that of the eloquence of their words ... Paul had no authority by which he could command these Galatians to knock of their silliness; Paul had no more authority

within the Christian Church than the latter prophets had in ancient Israel. It is only by the eloquence of his rhetoric that he commanded respect, and this “eloquence” wasn’t enough to prevent all in Asia from abandoning Paul (2 Tim 1:15). It wasn’t enough to keep the Galatians from succumbing to false teachers. And it isn’t enough today to cause endtime disciples to live as Jews or spiritual Judeans.

What Paul attempted to explain to Greek converts and what Nicodemus could not understand when Jesus asked how he could be a teacher of Israel and not understand an earthly example about coming from heaven is that the “person” born of water is not born of baptism but born by the womb of a woman who has descended from the first Adam and Eve. This “person” is not crucified with Jesus (Rom 6:6); rather, it is the old self or old nature that is received from God that is crucified like Jesus was. It is this old self or nature that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from him in an instant (Dan chap 4). It is what makes a person “human” as opposed to a beast. But it is not the flesh, or the fleshly body of a person; it is not what can be outwardly circumcised. And without understanding that the disciple is not the flesh, which can never please God (Rom 8:8), but is the new nature or new man that has come down from heaven in the form of spiritual life received through the receipt of the divine breath of God in a manner foreshadowed or typified by this divine breath of the Father [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] descending upon the man Jesus, alighting in the form of a dove, and remaining on Jesus (Matt 3:16), the person who would serve Jesus and would be taught by Jesus will inevitably end up serving Satan, who has deceived the whole world (Rev 12:9), with no exception given for “Christianity.”

A person born of the first Adam and the first Eve (regardless of however many generations removed) has no spiritual life, no immortal soul; for the first Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of God before either could eat of the Tree of Life. This person is spiritually dead regardless of how alive the tent of flesh seems. And this person will remain dead until the Father raises this person from the dead (John 5:21).

The dead who are to bury the dead (Matt 8:22) isn’t corpses burying other corpses, but living men and women burying other human beings whose breath of life has recently left them for whatever reason. These living human beings have, though, no life in the heavenly realm; the only life they have animates the flesh. They are spiritually dead even though they physically live.

What receiving the Holy Spirit [πνεῦμα ἅγιον] is all about is receiving a second life, a second breath of life, an additional life that is of heaven and that has come down from heaven when the Father drew the person from this world (John 6:44, 65). God's focus is not the flesh, but the acts and actions of these new creatures that cannot be outwardly circumcised, and that cannot be under any outer law. Natural Israel failed to grasp that individually and collectively it was a nation that could hate one another or lust after another but as long as neither the desire to murder or thought of adultery were acted upon, there was no outward transgression of the Law [i.e., commandments]. The ancient Israelite whose gaze disrobed a woman but whose hands kept his robes clenched tightly closed was inwardly guilty of adultery but outwardly innocent; thus, Jesus said that none of Israel kept the Law (John 7:19). From the perspective of God, what the hands and the body do isn't all that important. It's the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart that justify or condemn a person.

Until born of spirit, the “life” that animated the flesh was that of the old creature or nature, consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32) because of the first Adam's sin. This old creature or nature must be crucified, and a new nature or creature must be raised as Jesus was raised from the dead, with this new nature or creature clean from birth and under no condemnation and covered by grace until such time as this new nature or creature either voluntarily chooses to make itself a slave of sin (Rom 6:16), or the tent of flesh in which this new creature dwells is liberated from indwelling sin and death at the second Passover.

Without understanding the above, which is what Paul would have taught the Galatians when he was with them the first time, it is impossible to understand what Paul writes to the Galatians, who after someone came to them began to outwardly circumcise themselves: the issue in Paul's epistle to the Galatians isn't keeping the commandments, but circumcision of the flesh rather than circumcision of the heart alone in this era.

Again, Galatians begins as a classical Aristotelian argument. Each capital letter heading of the outline will form an inverted triangle, and in this piece of rhetorical classicism Paul's rebuke of Peter makes for a stronger argumentative point than what he writes about being justified by faith. If circumcision of the heart was enough "circumcision" for God, then it should be enough for whomever comes from Jerusalem.

Paul's point that biological birth and keeping the law as a social contract does not justify any natural Israelite (Gal 2:15–21), that faith justifies sets up what Paul writes, "But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ [this is the key], we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!" (v. 17). ... *If we be found sinners* [i.e., transgressing the law] *is Christ then a servant of sin?* And the answer every time is, certainly not, for when we are found to be sinners, we will either repent, or we will slip out from under grace and return to being a servant of sin and under the law (again, Rom 6:16). We are under grace when we present ourselves to God as instruments for righteousness (v. 6:13). Then, no sin will be counted against us, and we will not desire to sin. We will hate ourselves when we sin. We will, by faith, strive to keep the commandments—and none of this is adding to Scripture.

Disciples are the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27 *et al*): if the Head (the glorified Jesus) is not a servant of sin, then the Head doesn't desire sin. The glorified Jesus can now be likened to the law of God in Paul's mind (Rom 7:22), with disciples being like Paul's fleshly members in which the law of sin and death continues to dwell (v. 23). The Body should be ruled by the thoughts and desires of the Head, but Paul was unable to rule his own body, doing the very things that he hated. Likewise, the Body of Christ consistently does those things that the glorified Jesus hates; does those things that Jesus bears in the heavenly realm as the reality of the Azazel goat. What Paul writes in Romans chapter seven forms an apt description of Christ, glorified Head and cloaked (by grace) Body.

What Paul wrote in his epistle to the saints at Corinth was spiritual milk (1 Cor 3:1–3), not solid food. Of the Hebrew converts, those who should have been teachers were still in need of milk (Heb 5:12–14). And what Paul writes to the Galatians is fit food for spiritual infants: Paul attempts to address the Galatians as educated people when he begins his epistle to them as a classical Aristotelian argument, but after writing about being crucified with Christ, he apparently realizes that his argument, regardless of how well crafted, will fall on deaf ears. He perceives that what should be enough for them isn't, and he begins to figuratively throw the kitchen sink and everything that is in it at these Galatians who had begun to mutilate their flesh by outwardly circumcising themselves.

Those many Christians who use Galatians to justify their lawlessness utterly fail to understand what Paul writes about the disciple being neither male nor female (Gal 3:28). Baptism doesn't erase biological gender or the circumcision made with hands, for both are of the flesh; baptism doesn't transform flesh into spirit. Rather, baptism is for the death of the old man or creature or nature; i.e., what King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from him for seven years (Dan chap 4). The resurrection about which Paul writes in Roman 6:5, is not the resurrection of the flesh from the grave, but the receipt of a new nature or new self through being born of spirit. It then remains for the Son to give life to whom He will when judgments are revealed at His coming ... both the Father and the Son must give life to a human being before this person can cross dimensions. The Father raises the dead and gives life through His divine breath when He draws a person from this world: the new creature or new self that has been born of spirit as a son of God now dwells in a mortal tent of flesh that either will or won't

put on immortality when the Son, to whom all judgment has been given, gives life to whom He will (John 5:21). No human being is born with an immortal soul. Eternal life only comes as a gift from God through Jesus Christ (Rom 6:23). To believe otherwise is to believe the old serpent's lie told to the last Eve as it was told to the first Eve (Gen 3:4). And as long as human beings believe that they are born with immortal souls, they cannot comprehend what spiritual birth really means.

If a person is unable to comprehend what spiritual birth means, the person will never be able to understand the revelation Paul received, a revelation that really is not hard to understand.

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