

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary are offered as openings into dialogue about the subject or concept. And the concept behind the readings for this Sabbath is *sighing and crying about the abominations committed within Israel*.

## **Sabbath Readings**

### **For November 17, 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*

Regularly, *The Philadelphia Church* has requests from fellowships and ministries for affiliation. Most of those who request affiliation, however, cannot envision an association of truly autonomous fellowships, but believe that in some way *Philadelphia* must have an organizational structure patterned after the Roman Church, with a headquarters administration that is the equivalent of the Vatican (or Pasadena for the former Worldwide Church of God). This is just not the case. There is no central structure that, if figuratively slain, will end *Philadelphia's* existence; there is no worldly head that can be replaced or removed. Fellowships of *Philadelphia* are only linked through shared beliefs; thus, they are only linked ideologically, or in the heavenly realm. And once an idea is in circulation, it cannot be recalled. It can only be proved true or false.

*The Philadelphia Church — Port Austin* puts up the Sabbath readings because someone or some fellowship needs to fulfill this task. Someone needs to weekly prime the pump, so to speak, to keep the water following. And someone needs to set the example of what it means to sigh and cry about the abominations committed within the sanctuary of the spiritual house of God by those who identify themselves as Sabbatarian Christians. Someone needs to work as John the Baptist worked *to make straight the way of the Lord*.

The description of *Philadelphia* in the letters to the seven named churches is that of a fellowship with little strength, but with an open door set before it—having kept Jesus' word and having not denied His name (Rev 3:8) ... what does it mean to not deny His name? Does a person deny Christ when the person presents his or her members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness? Yes, the person does. When the person who was once a slave of sin/disobedience (Rom 11:32; Rom 6:17) is set free from bondage to sin, then returns to sin as a dog returns to its vomit, the person voluntarily remakes him or herself into a bondservant to sin: this person denies Christ! And by denying Christ, this person will be denied when his or her judgment is revealed.

The fellowship or ministry that will be affiliated with *Philadelphia* is the one who teaches disciples to keep Jesus' word about patient endurance (Rev 3:10 — cf. Matt 24:13-14; 10:21-23) and does not deny Christ, with these two attributes being summarized in, "[W]ho keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17)—the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10).

To keep Jesus' word about patient endurance is to proclaim to the world as a witness to all nations that *all who endure to the end shall be saved*, for the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Father and the Son halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation. Therefore, to keep Jesus' word about patient endurance requires possessing the spirit of prophecy.

And again, to deny Christ is to return to sin once a person has been liberated from disobedience. Thus, failure to keep the commandments is a denial of Christ.

So the remnant of the offspring of woman whom Satan goes after when he is cast to earth is *Philadelphia*, but the promise of Christ is that He will keep *Philadelphia* "from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth" (Rev 3:10). Satan can go after *Philadelphia*, and he might capture a few, but he cannot prevail against *Philadelphia*. He cannot even win a battle—and the reason why he cannot win is in *Philadelphia* not denying Christ but being willing to resist evil and to sigh and cry about the abominations committed within spiritually circumcised Israel.

After two millennia of "Christianity" teaching that Jesus came to forgive sins, most of those who identify themselves as disciples of Christ have gotten sloppy about what it means to be a person of faith, a person of integrity, a person in a covenant relationship with God—or so it would seem by what is taught about Christ and about sin both within and without the splintered churches of God. John the Baptist came preaching repentance as he made straight the ways of the Lord; the endtime Elijah will restore all things through teaching repentance. For obedience to God is the only appropriate covering for sin: Grace is the covering of Christ Jesus' righteousness or obedience that a disciple who presents his or her members to God as instruments for righteousness puts on daily. The disciple who presents him or herself to sin is a bondservant of sin: this disciple gives Jesus' victory over sin back to the Adversary. This person has returned to being under the dominion of sin and the Law, and is not under Grace. Only the person who is obedient to the Law is under Grace, which covers those failures to obey that the disciple hates within him or herself (Rom 7:15) ... if a disciple does not hate sin, even when he or she commits it, the disciple is a bastard and is not a son of God; a son of *light*.

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*The person conducting services should read or assign to be read Ezekiel chapter 18; followed by Revelation chapter 21, verses 5 through 8; and chapter 22, verses 12 through 15.*

**Commentary:** The angel tells John, "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (Rev 22:11) ... being holy is a state of existence that is the antithesis of being filthy. Likewise, the righteous is the antithesis of the evildoer. So between the righteous and the evildoer a schism exists: on one side of this schism is the living, the person who does *right*. On the other side is the dead, the person who does evil.

It isn't human beings who have not yet come under judgment that are the filthy or the holy; rather, both the filthy and the holy identify themselves as *Christians* and as *disciples of Christ*. But Jesus said that many are called to be disciples; yet few are chosen to be glorified (Matt 22:14).

*Many are called but few are chosen*—this should frighten those whose minds are set on the things of the flesh, but because their minds are set on the things of the flesh, those who should be frightened believe that "they are okay with God."... The *many* are

too busy with the affairs of this world to bother sighing and crying about the evil done by *Christians*; too busy “eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building” (Luke 17:28) to resist those disciples *who love and practice falsehood* (Rev 22:15). After all, **can’t disciples all get along!?**

No, they cannot all get along: righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness, nor does the holy have any fellowship with the filthy.

To the saints at Corinth, the Apostle Paul wrote, “For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Co 11:18-19).

The factions of yesterday have developed into endtime denominations, leaving the factions of today to stew in a caldron of discord as supporters of this ministry and supporters of that ministry—like negatively and positively charged radicals in a chemical solution—gravitate toward this pole or that pole, with the most active radicals clinging to each other and weaker radicals left to hold hands as the broth simmers, bubbling and spluttering as it thickens.

The most active disciples and organizations are, however, the most reluctant to vigorously preach repentance, for in doing so they will alienate someone whose money they need to continue the organization’s outreach programs for which the organization is known. They are the most reluctant to exclude from their fellowships disciples who practice sexual immorality; thus, within their assemblies their divorce rates are identical with that of the surrounding world, as is the number cohabiting rather than dwelling together as man and wife. They look, from God’s perspective, like the world, and from God’s perspective, they are the world.

Some will ask if it is not presumptuous to pronounce what God’s perspective is on those who seek him through praise music and political activism rather than through obedience: No, it is not presumptuous; for God gives His views on sin in Ezekiel chapter 18.

The focus of chapter 18 is Israel, which was a physically circumcised nation but is now a spiritually circumcised nation; the focus is not the world. In the Millennium, Israel will be both physically and spiritually circumcised (Ezek 44:9), but until Christ rules as King of king and Lord of lords—until He rules as the Messiah—He rules over a kingdom not of this world. He rules over an Israel that is not a nation of this world, but a nation defined by spiritual circumcision; i.e., circumcision of the heart after it has been cleansed by faith. And cleansing of hearts by faith requires that the person mentally dwelling in a far land undertake a journey of faith equivalent in distance to the physical journey of faith the patriarch Abraham undertook from Ur of the Chaldeas to Canaan (Rom 4:11-12). The Psalmist identified the Promised Land of Canaan as God’s rest (Ps 95:10-11), which the generation that left Egypt could not enter because of unbelief (Num 14:11-12, 22) while the writer of Hebrews links God’s rest with both Christ’s millennial reign as well as the weekly Sabbath, a type of entering into the rest of God (Heb 3:16-4:11). So a journey of faith of sufficient length to cleanse the heart requires that the person begins to keep the commandments of God while professing that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father raised Jesus from the dead.

The person who claims to be a “Christian,” yet who will not keep the Sabbaths [plural] of God, presumes to be what is not in evidence: the person presumes to know God, but evidence of the person knowing God is lacking, for sin is the transgression of

the Law (1 John 3:4), and violation of the Law in one point causes the person to be a sinner (Jas 2:10). Therefore, the person who attempts to enter God's rest on the following day is, merely from observing Sunday rather than the Sabbath, a sinner who has spiritually lifted his or her eyes up to idols (Ezek 18:6).

What does God say about the man who is righteous, the man or woman who does right? He does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to idols, pagan practices that were, when Ezekiel wrote, then devastating Israel—and practices that were antecedents for modern Christendom's Sunday observance and praying through saints, especially Mary.

The person who does right does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a menstruating woman. So what do "Christians" do today if not exchange spouses in an ongoing defiling of wives through no fault divorce and single parent families condemned to poverty?

Ancient Israel could not bring about the promised Seed [the Christ] for centuries because of the nation's continual defilement through its sin offerings, the blood of which was equivalent to the menstrual flow of a woman—God simply would not have relations with Israel because He would not defile Himself by going near Israel when the blood of sin offerings was flowing. But a Christian husband will, nevertheless, have relations with his wife during the days of her impurity, for to abstain is to keep an "Old Testament" taboo that no longer applies. Abstaining is part of the Law of Moses that Christians are no longer under, or so too many reason, not understanding that today, the hated son in the womb of Grace is the son who will not condemn those things which God has condemned.

When the sons and daughters of today's "Christians" journey by faith into obedience, God will not hold their parents' lawlessness against them. They will be responsible only for their own lawlessness—and the person who, having grown up in a Sunday fellowship, journeys by faith into Sabbath observance will effectively sever his or her relationship with father or mother. Yes, Jesus will have set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother (Matt 10:35) as He promised; for if human family bonds are stronger than the bonds a person has with God, the disciple's spiritual parent, then the person is not worthy of Christ.

Jesus did not come to bring peace to this earth, but a sword (Matt 10:34) that severs the flesh, separating the disciple from the desires of the flesh, including from a man's desire for his wife during her time of menstruation.

The word of the Lord [YHWH] which Ezekiel delivered continues: the person who is righteous "does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge" (18:7) ... there has recently been a case in the Port Austin area when one man who claims to be the brother of another acknowledged in writing that he owed the other \$85,140.00. These moneys represented the other's life savings, but the one man would not pay the other what he acknowledged that he owed. He sought someone's help to mediate between the two of them so that he would not have to do what Zacchaeus did, offer to repay fourfold what he had taken (Luke 19:8). As a result, the matter ended up before a civil judge, who compelled the one to repay about half of what the man had publicly acknowledged owing the other.

Was justice served? No! But the man who acknowledged owing the other \$85,140 was not seeking to do right or to be righteous before God; rather, he was seeking relief from having to repay what he had wrongfully taken—and as both the Apostle Paul and

John named those who had left the faith while still claiming to be of the faith, the one who acknowledged owing the other shall be named: Norman Scott Edwards. This is a person who has refused to repent of his wrongdoing. He is the antithesis of Zacchaeus. And as the names of Phygelus and Hermogenes and Diotrephes are recorded for future generations to remember, let now Edwards' name be so recorded.

The angel told John to *let the evildoer still do evil ... and the righteous still do right*. In this world, disciples are sojourners who do not possess good things, but rather experience trials and hardships, including losing life savings. Through Ezekiel the Lord tells Israel what it means to be righteous—and it means committing no robbery (18:7), for thievery whether with a knife or gun or by deceit is the same before God.

The righteous person gives bread to the hungry and covers the nakedness of another. He [or she] does not lend at interest (does not breed money as if money were livestock), nor take a profit from another's misfortunes—and just about all of Christendom has now been excluded from being called righteous.

The righteous person does not withhold his hand from injustice, but executes true justice between one person and another (Ezek 18:8) ... the Apostle Paul asked the saints at Corinth, "And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases" (1 Co 6:2). The answer is, yes, Sabbatarian disciples are incapable of trying trivial matters for no authority exists within Christendom to enforce a decision. The one at Port Austin who can be likened to Phygelus and Hermogenes and Diotrephes eats and fellowships with other Sabbatarian disciples who are not troubled by what he has done—and this is the case with many of the leading men in the splintered churches of God.

The damage that has been done to disciples by those who are like Phygelus and Hermogenes and Diotrephes is enormous: the spiritual carcasses of former baptized disciples litter the decade of the 1990s. And the dying is not yet complete.

The righteous person walks in God's statutes and keeps His rules by acting faithfully (Ezek 18:9). This is the person who shall surely live. This person will not experience the second death, but will enter into heaven. And this person lives by a much higher standard than does either visible Christendom, or Sabbatarian disciples who are not troubled by one who publicly acknowledged owing another \$85,140 settling this debt to another whom he calls a brother for half that amount in civil court.

Those Sabbatarian disciples who are not troubled by behavior far below the standard that Zacchaeus established are not today counted among the righteous regardless of what they believe about themselves. Although the angel tells John to *let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy*, the time setting for what the angels says is when repentance by evildoers is no longer possible because of the great delusion that has been sent by God over them (2 Thess 2:11-12). Repentance is still now possible. Thus, the disciple who turns from doing evil and begins to do what is right will be accepted by God, for what matters is how the disciple ends life.

But the promise of entering into God's rest does stay open forever: even though Israel repented of its disbelief and tried to enter into the Promised Land on the following day, it could not (Num 14:40-41). The promise of enter no longer stood. And the same applies to disciples. The one who knows to keep the Sabbath but does not will find that on a particular day he or she will not be able to enter into God's rest, but will perish in the lake of fire. Likewise, the one who keeps the Sabbath but does not sigh and cry about wrongdoing within the household of God will be cast into that same lake of

fire. For it is not a “big” thing to sigh and cry about wrongdoing from a distance, or even from up close—it is a small thing, an outward vocalization of what the law of God in the mind of the disciple tells the disciple is right. It is much easier to sigh and cry than to compel the disciple’s tent of flesh to do right on every occasion.

God has not set before spiritually circumcised Israel an impossible standard of do’s and don’t-do’s that compel disciples to produce literal perfection. Rather, God has placed disciples in situations where the disciple recognizes right and wrong, and then must sigh and cry against the abominations committed within spiritually circumcised Israel. Through Moses and the Prophets, Israel has what it means to be righteous spelled out in great detail. It is now up to disciples to apply in their own lives what it is to do right, and at this task, disciples will sometimes fail, the reason Grace is necessary. But disciples should never fail to lament the unrighteousness they see displayed in themselves and in the household of God when those who commit unrighteousness refuse to repent. Their failure to condemn themselves will leave Christ to condemn them when judgments are revealed. Their failure to condemn the unrepentant sinner will become a failure to condemn unrighteousness within themselves when judgments are revealed.

Schisms with the Body of Christ are necessary to separate genuine from false disciples, with those who are genuinely sighing and crying about the abominations committed within the household of God. Schisms should not be, not should anyone fail to lament sin. Yet even a cursory inspection of the household of God reveals that few today will sigh and cry about the evil committed by those who would be leaders and teachers of Israel. Few will dare to “rock the boat” of *cannot we all just get along*. Few are that brave. But the cowardly will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Rev 21:8).

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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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