

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 grace, faith and works.

[Printable/viewable PDF format to display Greek or Hebrew characters](#)

## Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of December 21, 2013*

*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.*

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For I [Paul] would have you know, brothers [saints in Galatia], that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before

those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. (Gal 1:11–2:10)

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In his not-so-gentle rebuke of the holy ones in Galatia, the Apostle Paul begins by crafting an Aristotelian argument for why his way, his understanding of Christ Jesus is the only way to understand Jesus. In his umbrella argument, he presents his strongest argument first, with the strongest point of his strongest argument made first. Every point after this *strongest of the strongest* is a weaker point either in his strongest argument or in succeeding arguments, each weaker than the preceding argument. The text can be graphed as a series of inverted pyramids decreasing in size. And Paul's strongest point is his claim that his gospel is *not man's gospel: he didn't receive what he preaches from any man. He wasn't taught the gospel he teaches, but he received this gospel through a revelation of Christ Jesus.*

No stronger claim can be made in any argument—

How is anyone to argue with direct revelation? Either the revelation occurred as Paul said, and Paul received what he claims as his gospel directly from Christ Jesus, or the revelation didn't occur. There are no other possibilities. Either Paul lies or Paul doesn't lie about a revelation having been given to him. There is, there can be no *Paul's mistaken about this point or that point, or Paul didn't understand what was revealed to him; Paul got his own revelation wrong*—and Paul didn't write to previously uncircumcised Gentile converts in Galatia in bastardized Hebrew. He didn't insert the Hebrew <'Ayin> character in Jesus' name for these converts could neither hear nor utter that character. Rather, he wrote in fully alphabetized Greek, and he spelled Jesus' name as these Gentile

converts would have heard the name <'Jesus>, with aspiration on the initial vowel thereby producing a sound similar to a Spanish "J" as in <Hey-seus>.

That's almost enough said about those Sabbatarian Christians who have succumbed to the Sacred Names Heresy ... because these heretics have twice converted, initially to keeping the Commandments then a second time to witchcraft (placing importance on human utterance), they will not again convert and will instead perish physically in the Affliction (the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years of tribulation), then spiritually in the lake of fire. However, their offspring that will have grown to physical maturity hearing Jesus' name uttered in bastardized Hebrew will not have converted to the Sacred Names Heresy and will, therefore, be able to move from placing importance on the physical [physical utterance] to placing importance on the spiritual, the word of Him that Jesus left with His disciples. Thus, it is for the sake of the offspring of heretics that I address the witchcraft of seemingly magical human utterance; i.e., of placing spiritual importance on the sound that the heretic's mouth makes when uttering the name of Christ Jesus.

As poisonous snake-handling Christians use the added long ending of Mark's Gospel to justify what they do, Sacred Name heretics use Acts, particularly Acts 4:10–12, to justify what they do. And while handling venomous snakes can physically kill a Christian, placing spiritual importance on physical utterance will spiritually kill a Christian before the Christian is ever born of spirit; hence, the Sacred Names heresy produces spiritual abortions ... it is good and proper for a Christian to be concerned about physical abortions, but it is of much greater importance that a Christian *fights* against spiritual abortions that will morph into spiritual infanticide following the Second Passover liberation of Israel.

The strongest aspect of Paul's rebuke of saints in Galatia who had succumbed to the argument of the Circumcision Faction [the Circumcision Party actually had Scripture on its side] and had begun to outwardly circumcise themselves, is that Paul's gospel didn't come from Moses or from teachers of Moses but from revelation arriving directly from Christ Jesus. And again, how does one argue with revelation that either did or didn't occur? A person cannot go to Moses to argue against a revelation coming from Christ Jesus without becoming as Jews were when they confronted Christ:

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (John 5:39–47)

*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life*—Moses doesn't offer to Israel eternal life, but rather long life in peace and safety—

And you [the children of Israel] shall again obey the voice of [YHWH] and keep all His commandments that I [Moses] command you today. [YHWH] your *God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground.* For [YHWH] will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, when you obey the voice of [YHWH] your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. [compare *vv.* 11–14 with Rom 10:6–8] It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of [YHWH] your God that I command you today, by loving [YHWH] your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live and multiply, and [YHWH] your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. *Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving [YHWH] your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that [YHWH] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.* (Deut 30:8–20 emphasis added)

Paul's *righteous based on faith* (Rom 10:6) comes from the children of Israel, when in a far land, displaced from the Promised Land, turning to the God of Abraham and returning to Him via keeping the Commandments and loving their God with heart and mind. Then He would do the following: He would bring the children of Israel and their children back to the land that He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He would circumcise the hearts of these now-faithful children of Israel (Deut 30:6); and He would restore their fortunes, their prosperity, their progeny, and He would give to them long life.

But if the children of Israel, when sent into captivity in a far land, would not return to the Lord with heart and mind, then the God of Abraham would destroy Israel—the unconditional promises made to Abraham become conditional when made to the children of Israel ... the unconditional promise made to King David became conditional when made to Solomon, David's seed. Thus, an observation can be made: unconditional grace as promised to the Elect in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century becomes conditional grace in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, with the conditions being those imposed upon the children of Israel under the Moab covenant, which had its mediator changed from Moses to Christ Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century.

Hunters know that when a wildlife species is initially introduced into an area in which the species is not native, the population of the species skyrockets then crashes a few generations of the species later, only to recover and stabilize at a sustainable level. The introduction of "Christians under grace" in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century functioned spiritually as introduction of Chinese ring neck pheasants in the United States functioned physically in the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century. The number of *Christians under grace* seemed to explode mid 1<sup>st</sup>-Century, then diminished until the Body of Christ died at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century as the physical body of Christ died, with the gates of Hades not able to prevail over either for as the Father resurrected the body of the man Jesus, the Father has reintroduced *Christians under* (now conditional) *grace* to the world, with the number of these Christians to increase until the Second Passover liberation of Israel occurs.

Returning to Paul's strongest claim: to support his claim that he received his gospel directly from Christ Jesus via revelation, he used the fact that he had once persecuted the saints. Something caused him to go from persecutor to advocate, with this something being the revelation he received from Christ Jesus. The author of the Sophist novel known as the Book of Acts places the *something that happened* as having occurred on the road to Damascus, but this novelist is an unreliable historian and theologian. Perhaps Paul was physically blind as he had been spiritually blind when persecuting the saints, but what is spiritual is constructed in *Hebrew style* narration, which will have the physical preceding the spiritual: Paul wasn't physically blinded on the road to Damascus before being spiritually blind. Rather, he was spiritually blind before receiving a revelation that caused him to spiritually "see."

With God, small differences matter; for unbelief is revealed through small differences, not great differences ... it is really a small thing to keep the day-after-the-Sabbath as the Sabbath; for humanly speaking, what is the difference between Sunday and the Sabbath? The person rests from his or her labors and turns the person's attention to God on whichever day the person keeps. Yet this small thing discloses a person's unbelief of God; the person's disrespect of God; the person's mocking of God through the person telling God which day the person will keep holy rather than permitting God to tell the person which day to keep holy. The person who keeps the day-after-the-Sabbath as his or her Sabbath elevates him or herself to being the equal of God, which is the significance of observing the day upon which Jesus was resurrected as the person's Sabbath day. The person who keeps the day-after-the-Sabbath as his or her Sabbath signifies to

God that the person is the equal of Christ Jesus and therefore able to enter in the Most High's presence on the same day as the glorified Son of Man entered—and that has taken a small thing and blown it up, making it into a matter of salvation.

So Paul uses his early and rapid advancement in Judaism followed by a turning away from Judaism as a *proof* that he received a revelation from Christ Jesus, thereby supporting his strongest point of his strongest claim that he has “Christianity” right whereas the Circumcision Faction, again having Scripture on their side, has “Christianity” wrong; for outward circumcision places importance on the flesh, on what is physical, and not on the inner self—the soul [*psuche*]*—*that receives spiritual birth through the indwelling of Christ Jesus, with the breath of God [*pneuma Theou*] being in the breath of Christ [*pneuma Christou*] and thereby giving life not to the already living flesh but to the dead soul.

The revelation that Paul received was all along imbedded in Hebraic poetics: the physical precedes and reveals the spiritual (*cf.* Rom 1:20; 1 Cor 15:46). Thus, birth of the human person that is physical precedes and reveals the birth of the spiritual son of God, with this spiritual son receiving life through receipt of the breath of God in a vessel that also came from heaven and is thereby able to contain the *bright fire* that is the glory of God.

But Greeks were not used to *Hebrew style* narratives—and as the author of Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts demonstrates, Greek thought was incapable of comprehending chiral narration. Although Greeks worshiped a pantheon of deities and had human persons receiving immortality (as was offered to Odysseus by the nymph Calypso), Greek philosophers who became Christian converts adopted the teachings of Judaism concerning the God of Abraham, thus never realizing what King David knew at least late in his life when he composed Psalms 146, 148, and 149, separating *Yah* from *YHWH*, with *Yah* in the physical portion of the thought-couplet and *YHWH* in the spiritual portion. ... It was *Yah* who created the physical heavens and physical earth and the first Adam; it is the reconfigured Tetragrammaton *YHWH* that creates the new heavens and new earth and the Bride of Christ, with the relationship within the Tetragrammaton going from a side-by-side relationship (as in marriage) to that of the vertical, Father/Son relationship, thereby creating an opening in heaven for glorified saints in a side-by-side relationship with the Son.

Paul's argument continues through chapters one and two of Galatians, with his next most important point being that when, fourteen years after initially visiting Jerusalem, he took Titus with him to Jerusalem, none of the first disciples demanded that Titus be circumcised before having fellowship with him. Paul supports this absence of need to be outwardly circumcised by his interchange with Peter at Antioch, where Peter was teaching Gentile converts to live as Judeans without being circumcised.

Paul's weakest point, by Paul's own reckoning, is what Sunday-observing Christians believe is his strongest: the coming of grace, with a person justified by faith not by works of the Law. And the reason for this being Paul's weakest point is that faith/belief [*pisteos*] will have the convert keeping the commandments not

out of legal necessity, but out of love for God, Father and Son. Only the reason for keeping the Law—a small thing—changes. The Law is still being kept; for under the New Covenant, the Law is written on hearts and placed in minds where the Law rules the person's inner self, thereby giving to the inner self the opportunity to grow strong as it *wars* against the lawlessness that remains in the flesh.

The argument that Paul crafts in his epistle to the Galatians is a subject to which I will return from time to time, but for now I want to address what most of greater Christendom knows: eternal life cannot be received through eyes or ears, or by diligently searching Scripture. A spiritual Israelite will go blind from having read much without understanding. Likewise, by attentively listening to sermon-after-sermon, a spiritual Israelite will become dull of hearing, unable to hear the voice of Jesus, not able to distinguish between the droning on of Scripture being read from the pulpit and the *Parakletos'* instructions. But Sabbatarian Christians tend to believe that salvation can be found in keeping the Commandments for God is a *legalist* ... indeed, He is—and so is Christ Jesus. But neither are legalists in the sense that Christians use the linguistic icon; for look at what Jesus said,

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:24–29).

Whoever “hears” the word [*o logos*] of Jesus—the word He left with His disciples (John 12:48)—has eternal life without coming into judgment, having passed directly from death to life ... hearing the word of Jesus equates to having done good as far as the resurrection is concerned. Not hearing, or not believing the word of Him that Jesus left with His disciples puts the person into judgment and equates to having done evil. Pause for a moment and go back over the preceding: doing good is nothing more than believing (becoming the living personification of) the word of Him that Jesus left with His disciples, whereas doing evil is unbelief, analogous to the unbelief that prevented the nation of Israel that left Egypt from entering the Promised Land (*cf.* Heb 3:16–4:12; Ps 95:10–11; Num chap 14). Thus, Israel's rebellion against the Lord in the wilderness of Paran was *Israel doing evil* when *good lay close at hand*.

The dead that “will hear the voice of the Son of God” (John 5:25) are the same “dead” that Jesus in Matthew's Gospel said, *Permit the dead to bury the dead of themselves* (Matt 8:22); for the physically dead know nothing physically (Eccl 9:5) whereas the spiritually dead—as the chiral image of the physically dead—know nothing spiritually yet are able to bury the dead of themselves.

Physically, death follows life, but spiritually, death precedes life, this difference being that of the thumb of the left hand being the nearest digit [finger] to the body on the left side but in its mirror image, the left thumb appears to be the nearest digit to the body on what appears to be the body's right side.

Physically, the children of Israel were to *obey the voice of the Lord and keep all His commandments*, with Israel instigating the action [being the first actor], and *the Lord would abundantly prosper Israel in all the work of Israel's hand, and in the fruit of Israel's womb and in the fruit of Israel's cattle and in the fruit of Israel's ground*. Obedience preceded prosperity; obedience preceded reward. Israel's obedience determined whether Israel would receive good things from the Lord. No obedience, no good things. Obedience and an abundance of goodness. Thus, in this model, Israel manipulates God. Israel determines what God will do. And as such, God is to Israel as Zeus and Athena, who sprung from Zeus's imagination/forehead, were to the Hellenistic world, with Athena sitting on the rafters while Odysseus and his son slew suitors. In this model, legalistic adherence to commandment-keeping produces legalistic rewards, or rewards that are earned by commandment-keeping.

In high school and for undergraduate degrees at a university, diplomas are earned: if the student does the work—satisfactorily completing a prescribed number of courses—the degree is awarded. But this is not the case with graduate degrees (or at least it didn't used to be) where mastery of the subject becomes the prerequisite for awarding a degree, and where the demeanor of the student becomes quantifiable ... if the student has completed a minimum number of courses on campus, possesses mastery of the subject material, and acts like the student knows what he or she defends in his or her dissertation, the degree is awarded. But if the student has mastery of the subject but cannot defend thesis or dissertation, the degree is not awarded. The student remains *too young* to be called a "master" in his or her field, something my middle daughter experienced when seven of eight parts of her Ph.D. dissertation were accepted but the eighth part rejected because she lacked confidence when defending her work (she telephoned me in tears, told me what had happened, and I told her that the reason she was calling her father was the problem—she did not yet have the arrogance of someone who was ready to be awarded a doctorate ... she defended the eighth part of her dissertation a month later and did fine).

How many scholars have received doctorates in theology because of their arrogance? Most if not all who have the degree. And what does that say about their willingness to continue to learn?

Sabbatarian Christians, especially, search the Scripture because they are certain that in them can be found eternal life whereas the person who, every time he passes-by my parking strip on his way to the city compost pile to dump his grass clipping, pauses long enough to mow my parking strip—the fellow is a Lutheran—actually stands a better chance of entering heaven. For it isn't just my parking strip he voluntarily mows: he mows the lawn of his church as well as the lawn of one or more widows.



(As an aside, I mow by hand, a reel-type push mower that doesn't do a particularly good job. The front of my place looks better when it's mowed with a power mower; thus, the general appearance of Main Street is elevated because of what the fellow does in the minute or so that it takes him to mow fifty feet of parking strip.)

For Pharisees, salvation that could have been found in Moses was not found even because they sought salvation through the works of their hands. If, indeed, they would have pursued the Moab Covenant by faith rather than by hands, they would have found what they sought.

Unconditional grace did not produce righteousness in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century Body of Christ, but instead, justified lawlessness. God doesn't need additional lawlessness: He has plenty in all that the Adversary does. What matters to God is faith that is established through works as Abraham's faith that was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6) was established as a "thing" when tested on Mount Moriah. Our faith, our belief of God that caused us to begin to keep the Sabbath is not yet complete, but must be tested in heavenly Mount Moriah (that is, in heavenly Jerusalem) when spiritual Gentiles overrun the temple throughout the ministry of the two witnesses, who will be as Moses and Aaron were, brothers in the flesh.

Paul laid the foundation for the spiritual temple of God—and he did so through a revelation, an unmasking of how Hebrew poetics has been long constructed. That unmasking has again taken place.

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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](#) ]