

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 Hanukkah.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of December 27, 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 services should read or assigned to be read John chapter 10, verses 22 through 42.

Commentary: Jesus kept the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, an eight day festival of lights that too many modern Jews use as a substitution for Christmas. Although not mentioned in the Torah (the writings of Moses) and thus not considered an essential observance for Sabbatarian Christians, Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the second temple following the Maccabean defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. It begins on the 25th day of the month Kislev, and occurs from late November to late December on the Gregorian calendar, depending upon when the sacred year begins. Allegedly, the festival celebrates *the miracle of the container of oil*, when only enough oil for a single day was found uncontaminated in the temple, but miraculously, the oil burned for eight days, enough time to press, prepare, and consecrate fresh oil.

The Apostle John writes in his gospel that in “him [the Logos—ὁ λόγος] was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ... The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (1:4–5, 9–11).

For a spiritual period equivalent in length to an eight day festival—Passover—one container of “oil” will light the world for long enough that additional oil can be pressed, prepared, and consecrated. Sin or darkness (the wages of sin is death, or darkness; hence sin serves as the representation of darkness) cannot overcome the light; cannot harm the oil and the wine (Rev 6:6), the processed fruits of entering into God's rest. When Sin makes merchandize of the harvest of firstfruits (the barley harvest) and the later main crop wheat harvest, buying and selling human beings as if they were cereal grains, those disciples who are already processed as was the one found container of oil, sealed by the high priest (that

high priest being Christ Jesus), will be the light of the world until additional disciples can be prepared and consecrated.

Christians today are like the containers of oil prepared and sealed by the high priest before the forces of Antiochus Epiphanes IV polluted the temple and defiled the oil except for one container: *Philadelphia*, the fellowship that patiently keeps/kept Jesus' words about endurance. Those defiled containers of oil are the disciples constituting the great falling away (2 Thess 2:3) ... disciples are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16). Christ is the temple rebuilt in three days (John 2:19). Disciples are the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), and as the body of a lamb is also the lamb, disciples as the Body of Christ are also Christ. They are the light of this world, which wallows in darkness, blindness, and dumbness. Disciples are the temple built from living stones that will be dedicated when Jesus returns to give life to those sons of God whom He will, with this second giving of spiritual life being glorification (i.e., the mortal flesh putting on immortality). And disciples today are embarrassed when even considering keeping a festival as “Jewish” as Hanukkah.

So as a celebration of light, Hanukkah represents a differing scenario to Sabbatarian Christians than it does to rabbinical Judaism. It is this differing scenario, embedded in Jesus' words that He spoke at the time of the Feast of Dedication, that is central to this Sabbath reading. Therefore, Christians should not look to the traditions of Judaism for how to observe the Feast of Dedication—the temple has not yet been dedicated although it will be shortly, with proportionally as many spiritual sheep [livestock] slaughtered at its dedication as were slaughtered at the dedication of the first temple (2 Chron 7:5), the shadow and copy of the dedication of the second temple, which, throughout the exilic period, was without the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God ... the presence of God did not return to the Second Temple until Christ Jesus cleansed it—and then, Israel did not recognize its God.

At the time of the Feast of Dedication, Jesus was walking in the colonnade of Solomon, or Solomon's Porch on the east side of the temple. This area of the temple is mentioned in Acts 3:11 and in 5:12. Apparently this area became the regular meeting place for the first apostles, and for no wonder. Typologically, Solomon's reign forms the visible, earthly shadow and copy of Jesus' invisible, millennial reign.

Those Sabbatarians who look for the Messiah to reign over humankind as other men have reigned over men are without spiritual understanding. Daniel's visions reveal that the Messiah will reign over the earth from the inter-dimensional realm as the present king of Babylon (Isa 14:4), the prince of this world, reigns today over all of humankind, regardless of where the person dwells. The Adversary reigns over men through controlling thoughts and attitudes, or better, the mental typography from which thoughts spring forth as weeds or wheat. The Adversary is the prince of the power of the air; Christ Jesus will replace him as the prince of the power of the air when the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man. Today, all of humankind remains consigned or concluded to disobedience (Rom 11:32). No person is without indwelling sin and death. All have sinned; all will die physically for their sins. All are in need of liberation. And Israel will be liberated from indwelling sin and death at the

second Passover when the lives of human beings are again given as ransom for the liberation of the flesh from death. Then, following liberation, spiritually circumcised Israel will fully receive the mind of Christ, as will the remaining third part of humankind (Zech 13:9) when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28) halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation.

- Christ's millennial reign over humankind is the spiritual reality foreshadowed by Solomon's earthly reign over Israel.
- The gathering of building materials and building of the spiritual Second Temple is/was foreshadowed by the gathering of materials and building of the Solomon's Temple.
- Thus, the temple built by order of Cyrus and rebuilt in three days when Jesus was resurrected to glory serves as a shadow of each disciple's birth by water (with life received from the first Adam) and birth by spirit (with life received from God) after the pattern of righteousness established by Jesus Christ.

Christians tend to have "knee-jerk reactions" to unfamiliar doctrines: a response reaction Evangelical Christians and some Sabbatarian disciples will have to the declaration that Christians are in need of liberation from indwelling sin and death will be their insistence that they are free from sin. They will insist that their ransom price was paid at Calvary ... if sin no longer dwells in their fleshly members, why will the tent of flesh in which they dwell die? It will die! Each of them knows that it will die. But death is the wages of sin. Without sin, there would be no death. So if these reactionary disciples know that they will die and insist that they are without sin, what is the cause of their deaths? Old age is not a cause of death, for who among them has reached even the age of Terah, Abraham's father? Rather, lawlessness is the cause of every death, either the person's lawlessness or someone else's lawlessness. Even Jesus' death at Calvary came from lawlessness; i.e., from Jesus taking onto Himself the sins of Israel, with Israel to become the single family of this earth.

Every death is a result of sin; every death results from humankind being consigned to sin because of the transgression of the first Adam. Paul writes, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom 5:12). Without sin, the transgression of the law (or lawlessness – 1 John 3:4), human beings would not physically die, a statement at odds with natural observation. But this will be the case during the reign of the Messiah, when all of humankind has been liberated from indwelling sin and death and filled with (or empowered by) the Holy Spirit. As the world was baptized by water into death in the days of Noah, the world will be baptized by spirit into life halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation—the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28) in a manner foreshadowed by the first apostles, the great synagogue of Christ, hearing the room in which they were keeping Pentecost filled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind.

The Holy Spirit was heard as the sound of a mighty rushing wind. The cloven tongues of fire seen on that day of Pentecost following Calvary represented the disciples being baptized in fire, which will not harm the person whose mortal flesh has put on immortality. John the Baptist said that Christ Jesus would

baptize with spirit and with fire (Matt 3:11), and what was heard and observed on that day of Pentecost was the shadow and type of Israel being baptized in spirit (the sound of the mighty rushing wind that filled the house, with both “wind” and “spirit” in Greek represented by the word πνεῦμα)—the Holy Spirit was audibly heard or manifested as it was seen in Genesis 1:2, and in Matt 3:16—and Israel being baptized in fire (the tongues of fire that did not harm the disciples) that is akin to the burning bush Moses saw (Ex 3:2).

If the returned Jesus does not give life to a disciple (John 5:21), thereby causing the mortal flesh to put on immortality, then the disciple will utterly perish in the lake of fire when baptized in flames ... the dimensions are separated by non-oxidizing fire. To enter heaven, a person must pass through the fire or be baptized by fire (Isa 43:2b). The spiritual “life” received from the Father dwells today in a tent of flesh, which must still put on immortality, given to the flesh when the Son gives life to whom He will when judgments are revealed. And it is this distinction between the flesh and the spirit that has been confused by the last Eve (i.e., the Church) believing that people are humanly born with immortal souls. People possessing immortal souls is a lie of the Adversary, a lie akin to the serpent telling the first Eve that she would not die (Gen 3:4). And this lie prevents most of Christendom from understanding it is birth of the new creature born of spirit prior to demonstrated obedience that was made possible by Christ’s death at Calvary. Jesus’ death cancelled the record of debt with its legal demands that stood against the old creature or old nature. It didn’t liberate the flesh from indwelling sin and death, something that the Apostle Paul said he didn’t understand (Rom 7:15–25). Rather, it introduced in each disciple individually and in disciples collectively the analogy that Paul’s mind and body was a representation of Christ, with the law of God in Paul’s mind (Paul’s mind representing the Head of Christ, the glorified Jesus) hating the things that his body (Paul’s body representing all disciples collectively as the Body of Christ) did. The very things that Paul despised his body did, while his body didn’t do the things that his mind wanted to do. And Paul’s conclusion was that a different and contrary law dwelt in his fleshly members than dwelt in his mind—and so it is with disciples that still have indwelling sin and death in their fleshly members and are still in need of a second Passover liberation from physical bondage to sin and death.

The amount of knowledge and understanding the Church will recover between now and the end of the seven endtime years of tribulation is comparable to the amount of geographical territory ancient Israel recovered between Samuel and Solomon: *Philadelphia* is in an intellectual position analogous to Israel under Samuel when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the house of Abinadab (1 Sam 7:1), and *Philadelphia* is far ahead of its fellow churches in growing in grace and knowledge.

Of the many understandings that Sabbatarian Christians have lacked is the importance of Solomon’s Porch, and Jesus teaching from Solomon’s Porch: when a remnant of Israel returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple, the age of the prophets was coming to an end. The recorded prophets of this period were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The words of no prophet after these three were canonized, for natural Israel’s role as the shadow of the Church was complete (the

remaining shadow of the Church required the “shadow” be born of spirit, for the reality casting the “shadow” would be empowered by the Holy Spirit). But the era of the rabbis or sages had not yet begun; so for about two generations, Israel was ruled by the *Great Assembly* [הַגְּדוּלָה הַגְּדוּלָה] or *Anshei Kneset HaGedolah* [אַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָה], with the men of this *Great Assembly* known as the *Great Synagogue*, with the saying going, *The Prophets transmitted the Torah to the men of the Great Synagogue, and the men of Great Synagogue gave the Torah to the sages.*

The Great Synagogue is actually a shadow cast by the early Church with the 120 gathered together to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15) being a reality of this Great Assembly, which established observance of the festival of Purim and the validity of books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. The apostles meeting together in the ten day period between when Jesus last ascended into heaven and when that day of Pentecost came included the same men who would establish the validity of the Gospels, Paul’s epistles, and the epistles of James, Jude, Peter, and John, who wrote after the other first disciples were dead. These first apostles did for the Church (the assembly of Christ) what the Great Assembly did for the remnant that returned from Babylon: the Great Assembly introduced the triple classification of the oral law, dividing the Mishnah into the three branches of midrash, halakot, and haggadot (a claim disputed by the 4th-Century scholar R. Jonah); the men of the Great Assembly completed the Old Testament canon and introduced the so-called “scientific treatment of tradition.” They introduced certain fixed prayers. And while these men of the Great Assembly are mentioned in Nehemiah chapters 9 through 12, Scripture doesn’t call that much attention to them, for their acts are but shadows of the Acts of the Apostles, the one-dimensional spiritual reality that represents the shadow of what will happen to the empowered Church following the second Passover liberation of Israel.

All of the above comes back to Solomon’s Porch: the reigns of the three kings [Saul, David, and Solomon] over united Israel were shadows and copies of three endtime periods. The second Passover liberation of Israel will be followed 220 days later by the great falling away (2 Thess 2:3), a falling away from God or rebellion against God foreshadowed by Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness of Paran (Num chap 14) and by Israel’s rebellion under Samuel (1 Sam chap 8). King Saul is a type of the man of perdition, the lawless one who has about him an evil spirit. This man of perdition will be a human being possessed by Satan (2 Thess 2:9), and he will declare himself god before he is toppled halfway through the seven endtime years. His end comes when Babylon falls, and the kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man (cf. Dan 7:9–14; Rev 11:15–18). There will remain, however, another 1260 days of tribulation, but the man of perdition will be no more; for Satan himself will be cast from heaven (Rev 12:7–10) and will come claiming to be the messiah. So the antichrist under whom no person can buy and sell without possessing the mark of the beast is not the man of perdition, but Satan when he is cast to earth and given the mind of a man.

Therefore, during the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years, spiritually circumcised Israel will be ruled as ancient Israel was ruled under first Samuel, then Saul. Christianity’s boundaries will be greatly expanded, but there will be continual war within and without Christendom as the man of perdition,

supported by the false prophet (the first horseman of the Apocalypse) sets about conquering the “isms” of this world, converting by the sword Muslims and Buddhists and other non-Christians to Christianity and making war on Trinitarians until Unitarians prevail ... Trinitarians will recognize the man of perdition as false because he is an Arian, but they will not see themselves as being equally false. And these first 1260 days of the Tribulation will be the bloodiest period humankind has ever seen to this point. Approximately two-thirds of the world’s population will perish in three and a half years. So many people will die that if these days were not cut short, “no human being would be saved alive” (Matt 24:22). But Satan will be cast from heaven; spiritual Babylon will fall; and the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of the Father and His Christ.

When moving from the visible, physical world to the invisible, spiritual realm, geographical territory equates to knowledge. Ancient Israel under Samuel began to expand its then-greatly-reduced boundaries as spiritually circumcised Israel in this pre-Tribulation era and in the first 220 days of the Tribulation will expand its knowledge of God—again, as much knowledge remains to be recovered about God and the things of God as there was territory for Israel to recover from the Nile to the Euphrates when Samuel was judge. King Saul expanded the boundaries of Israel far beyond Israel’s boundaries under Samuel. Likewise, the man of perdition will spread knowledge of Christ Jesus far beyond the present limitations of this knowledge, but as Saul killed his thousands, a *David* will kill his tens of thousands. A man who the man of perdition seeks to kill will spread far more knowledge than does the man of perdition with his war machinery.

Knowledge is quantifiable. The amount of knowledge of God is increased when it spreads horizontally through more people knowing of Christ Jesus; the amount of knowledge of God spreads vertically when each person better understands the mysteries of God. Yet in the shadow, little distinction exists between the increase of knowledge horizontally versus vertically; so the increase in Israel’s boundaries under King Saul doesn’t mean that a greater understanding of the mysteries of God occurs, but only that many more people know a little about Christ Jesus.

The man of perdition will be slain by the breath of Christ when dominion is taken from the four beasts of Daniel chapter seven and this dominion is given to the Son of Man. Satan and his angels will be cast from heaven when dominion is taken from these four beasts, and another 1260 days or 42 months of tribulation remain ... as King Saul’s reign over Israel forms the shadow and copy of the man of perdition’s reign over the Church, King David’s reign over Israel forms the shadow and copy of Christ Jesus’ reign over the Church during the last 1260 days of the seven endtime years. Knowledge of God will expand to its greatest extent even though more could have been known (for David’s Israel did not encompass all of the lands between the Nile and the Euphrates), and Satan as the antichrist will be no more to the Church than the Philistines were to David and his mighty men. Battles will certainly have to be fought, but not with the weapons of this world but by patiently enduring in faith. The Church as the great assembly of Christ will have the mind of Christ while Satan will have the mind of a man as King Nebuchadnezzar was given the mind of a beast for seven years (three and a half years at the end of the tribulation and another short while, three and a half

years, after the 1000 years). Saints will not be able to physically defeat Satan in combat, but they can defeat him every time mentally. Thus, they only have to endure to the end to be saved (Matt 24:13), and it is this good news that must be proclaimed to all the world before the end comes.

Therefore, as Saul's earthly reign forms the shadow and copy of the man of perdition's reign over those disciples forming the great falling away [represented in type by Cain], King David's earthly reign forms the shadow and copy of Christ Jesus leading the 144,000 (Rev 14:1–5) and the remnant (Rev 12:17) leading the third part of humankind (Zech 13:9). Solomon's earthly reign now forms the shadow and copy of the glorified Jesus reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords for the 1000 years. So Jesus walking on Solomon's Porch actually links Jesus (and later, His disciples) with His millennial reign—and comprehending this link makes understanding what Jesus tells the Jews who want to stone (John 10:31) Him much easier.

Quoting from Psalm 82:6, Jesus told the Jews who had picked up stones,

Οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένον (not is it having been written) ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ὑμῶν ὅτι (in the law of you,) Ἐγὼ εἶπα (I said), Θεοί ἐστε (Gods you are); εἰ ἐκείνους εἶπεν θεοὺς (if those ones he called gods) πρὸς οὓς ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγένετο (with whom the word of the God was) (καὶ οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι ἡ γραφή) ((and not can be broken the Scripture)) ὃν ὁ πατὴρ ἡγίασεν καὶ ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι Βλασφημεῖς (whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, you say that, He blasphemes), ὅτι εἶπον, Υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ εἰμι; (because I said, Son of the God I am) (John 10:34–36)

Those spiritually circumcised Israelites who are of Jesus' flock hear His words, know Him, and follow Him. They are sons of God even though they can presently die as a man dies, for a man has no spiritual life until he or she has been born of spirit received from the Father [πνεῦμα θεοῦ]. With receipt of the divine breath of the Father, a person has a second breath of life dwelling with the person. Although the flesh of a saint will die in the same way that the flesh of a Gentile will die as long as sin continues to dwell within the fleshly members of the saint, the second life—the life that has come from heaven in the form of the breath of the Father—lives independently of the breath of life received from the first Adam. It is this breath of the first disciples that sleeps under the altar, awaiting the fullness of their fellow servants and brothers to be killed as they were.

When the saints have been liberated from indwelling sin, death comes exclusively from outside of these saints. If they die physically, they will do so by being martyred. They will no longer die from so-called natural causes.

On Solomon's Porch, Jesus unashfully said that He was the Son of God. Solomon's Porch is both the appropriate place and time for Him to make this assertion; for He was the light of this world (John 12:35–36), and His reign over the world will be the reality foreshadowed of Solomon's reign over Israel.

The Jews that had picked up stones were not of God even though they would have vigorously protested their righteousness; their father was the Adversary, a murderer from the beginning even though not a single angel who followed Satan

has yet lost its life. The wages of lawlessness is death, and a sentence not immediately executed is not a sentence commuted. It is only a death sentence that has not yet been administered.

All of the above brings us to the Feast of Dedication: the defilement of the temple of God (remember, disciples are this temple) occurs during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation, so Sabbatarian disciples will not be looking backwards at a shadow of an event that will soon happen, but forward, past the defilement and to the Second Advent. The question now becomes should disciples celebrate Hanukkah, and if they should, how should they celebrate a festival that Jesus obviously observed?

Jesus' natural birth (birth by water) occurred during the fall feast season. Whether it was on the first day of Sukkot as is certainly a definite possibility or whether it occurred a few days before or after, His conception would have occurred on or during Hanukkah, when the Logos [ὁ λόγος] divested Himself of His divinity and made Himself into the likeness of a servant to be born of Mary. He was life and light entering into the womb of a woman. He was like the one container of undefiled oil found in the temple. So lighting a menorah would not be inappropriate. However, letting a disciple's light shine through good works would be even more appropriate.

The ritual prayers and sequence of candle lighting that Judaism has added to Hanukkah observance is akin to their washing of hands, practices that anticipate spiritual applications but practices that today prevent them from coming to Christ—as much so as Christmas observance hinders Christians from coming to Christ, said with all seriousness.

Feasts are supposed to be feasts. Passover (in its long form) is a period during which Israelites eat bread of affliction (unleavened bread), but this is not the case at Sukkot, which anticipates Christ's millennial reign. Although the Feast of Dedication occurs in the winter, it actually fits spiritually in the period preceding Sukkot; it covers the last high Sabbath of Passover. It addresses that period immediately before when Jesus will again drink the fruit of the vine (Matt 26:29). So what would be appropriate observance of the dedication of the temple by those who are the temple remains to be determined.

Without a command recorded in Scripture about how to observe and even whether to observe Hanukkah, disciples individually and collectively have only the example of what Jesus did on Solomon's Porch: He said that His sheep will hear His voice. So Hanukkah would be a good time to discern whether the disciple is really hearing Jesus' voice. It would be a good time to make sure that the disciple understands how it is that he or she is a son of God, born of spirit. It would be a good time to consider the works of the Father that Jesus did. It would also be a good time to bathe one's household in light so that no darkness remains.

The Philadelphia Church has not long observed Hanukkah, nor even previously observed the festival; so there is no tradition of practices to either refute or adopt ... the practices of rabbinical Judaism are without standing in *The Philadelphia Church* although where these practices do not conflict with the principle of Christ Jesus being the light of this world, they do no harm. Therefore, every person is free to determine for him or herself what the person does or doesn't do.

If a person is to walk as Jesus walked, the person will walk on Solomon's Porch in the Millennium. Then, the glorified person will look backwards at the reality of the Feast of Dedication. Until then, we look forward in anxious anticipation of the day when judgments are revealed if we have walked in light. If we have not, then we need to repent—and if keeping Hanukkah will cause a person to examine his or her walk with Christ in the middle of the darkest period of the year, observing Hanukkah will be a good thing for the person to do.

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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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