

The Philadelphia Church

And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matt 4:19)"

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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 *many are called - few are chosen*.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of December 29, 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.

In the parable of the wedding feast (Matt 22:1-14), Jesus said that many are called, but few are chosen (v. 14). Of the many Christians that have been born of Spirit—being born of Spirit means the person has been drawn by the Father (John 6:44, 65) and raised from the dead or non-living (John 5:21) through receiving the Holy Spirit—only a few will be chosen to enter the kingdom of heaven. And it is this reality that has never been adequately addressed by modern Christendom.

From victorious football players to survivors of house fires, many give thanks and praise to the Most High God, *the Man upstairs*. Many attempt to order their lives in such a way as to be pleasing to *the Man upstairs*. Many say that there is nothing more important than God and family. Many believe that they will go to heaven where loved ones who have preceded them in death await their arrival. Many believe the oddest things about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who inspired the prophet Isaiah to write,

Behold the Lord [YHWH] will empty the earth and make it desolate,
and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. ...

The earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered;

for he has spoken this word.

The earth mourns and withers;

the world languishes and withers;

the highest people of the earth languish.

The earth lies defiled

under its inhabitants;

for they have transgressed the laws,

violated the statutes,

broken the everlasting covenant.

Therefore a curse devours the earth,

and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;

therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched,

and few men are left. (Isa 24:1, 3-6)

No person has to believe God, or even believe the prophet Isaiah. Every person is free to believe whatever he or she chooses, including that the defiled person will go to heaven where he or she can continue in the person's practice of ungodliness and unrighteousness. After all, the prophet Isaiah continued, "But I say, 'I waste away, / I waste away. Woe is me! / For the traitors have betrayed, / with betrayal the traitors have betrayed'" (24:16). Yes, traitors preaching that all who profess Christ with their mouths will go to heaven have betrayed the many Christians who, if not betrayed, might have repented of their unrighteousness and might have turned from their lawlessness and might have believed God and might have been numbered among the few who chose to be one with Christ, and who would be numbered among the chosen when their day of salvation lay before them. Oh, many walk down that figurative sawdust trail to give their hearts to the Lord, but they are betrayed from the beginning, for how can they call on the name of the Lord in whom they have never believed (Rom 10:13-14)? The Apostle Paul asks, "And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they have been sent?" (vv. 14-15). The traitors who preach a lawless gospel have not been sent by Christ, but come as "false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Co 11:13-15).

Is the above plain enough that everyone can understand? When Christ returns, the earth will be left with few inhabitants as the earth was left with few inhabitants in the days of Noah. Christ Jesus' millennial reign will begin with few inhabitants on the earth. Of the earth's burgeoning population, at or near seven billion, nearly a third of which profess to be Christian in some form, few will be chosen to enter the kingdom of heaven ... how many are *a few*? Is *a few* a remnant? A remnant of Israel returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Or is a few less than a remnant? It is more than *none*, so some will enter into the kingdom of heaven. The promise of resurrection will be realized by these few. But the many who casually give thanks to *the Man upstairs* when they score a touchdown, or when they learn that they will again be a grandfather or grandmother have been betrayed by traitors, ministers who serve Satan and not God. For it is not the many who proclaim that only a remnant of today's Christendom will enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not the many who neglect to preach that most Christians will perish in their lawlessness during the Tribulation or because of their lawlessness when Christ Jesus returns.

Christ Jesus is not today a baby wrapped in swaddling cloth in a manger. The traitors place before Christendom the wrong image of Christ. The prophet Isaiah writes elsewhere,

For behold, the Lord will come in fire,
and his chariots like the whirlwind,

to render his anger in fury,

and his rebuke with flames of fire.

For by fire will the Lord [YHWH] enter into judgment,

and by his sword, with all flesh;

and those slain by the Lord shall be many. (Isa 66:15-16)

John the Revelator, in vision on the Lord's day, said,

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God [Logos tou Theou]. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev 19:11-16)

Christ will return to strike down the nations by what has been written in Scripture. The traitors will be exposed, but the slain of the Lord shall be many because *the many* believed the traitors. *The many* believed that *the Man upstairs* gave them success in footballs games held on the Sabbath; whereas it was the traitors, the betrayers who condoned shopping on the Sabbath, or playing football games on the Sabbath, or swindling others in the name of God, or going to war—even a so-called *just war*—in the name of Christ and His kingdom ... the affairs of this world in this age are the affairs of the prince of this world. Christ has not yet returned. Humankind is not yet few. The unrighteous and ungodly still dominate this world. And it is Satan whom that well-intentioned but betrayed athlete salutes when he scores a touchdown on a Saturday afternoon. It is Satan who brings to Christians shopping bonanzas on the Sabbaths preceding Christmas. It is his ministers

who hold midnight masses on the 24th of December; it is his ministers that preach an advent about which they know little and understand nothing.

It has been said of Brigham Young's football team that when they play a game in Las Vegas, they each take the Ten Commandments and a ten dollar bill with them, and bring back both unbroken. Unfortunately, this is simply not true, for they break the Sabbath commandment with most every collegiate game they play. God is not honored by fine receptions or well executed blocks made on the Sabbath, but by having all of the person's thoughts and desires focused on Him. And the students and student-athletes of Brigham Young University—and of every other college and university—are betrayed spiritually by those who teach them to be participating good citizens of this corrupt world.

No time of year better reflects the world's alienation from Christ Jesus than the Christmas season.

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The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Philippians chapters 2, 3, & 4.

Commentary: The traitors are quick to jump on Paul writing, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil 3:7-9). To the betrayers, *not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law*, means not keeping the law; meaning running away from keeping the law as far and as fast as they can. But return for a moment to verse 3 of this chapter: "For we are the real circumcision." What does Paul mean? Is he not using *circumcision* [peritomē] as a euphemistic expression for *Israel*? Disciples are the holy nation of Israel. Actually, Paul identifies disciples in this era as Isaac (Gal 4:28, 31). And in the womb of Isaac [Rebekah's womb is Isaac's] are two sons, yet unborn, both covered by Grace, but one hated and one loved.

Paul wrote to the converts at Rome, "So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ... For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter" (2:26, 28-29).

The circumcision are those who have received circumcised hearts after cleansing these hearts by journeys of faith equivalent in distance to Abraham's physical journey of faith from Ur of the Chaldeans [Babylon] to the land of Canaan [Judea, God's rest – from Ps 95:10-11]. Without a journey of faith, no heart is cleansed; no heart is circumcised. And every generation must make a

journey of faith or that generation will perish in disbelief as the nation counted in the census of the second year (Num chap 1) perished (Num chap 14) in the wilderness of Sin/Zin. The betrayers, however, prevent drawn and called disciples from undertaking journeys of faith, for they teach that disciples are to hold to the faith once delivered (Jude 3), but delivered to the 4th-Century Church [the Roman and Greek Churches], or to the 16th Century Church [Lutherans, the Reformed Church, Hutterites], or to the 17th Century Church [Mennonites and Amish], or to the 18th Century Church [Methodists], or to the 19th Century Church [Adventists and Mormons], or to the 20th Century Church [Armstrongites and JWs]. Yes, those who teach disciples to cling to the teachings of Ellen G. White or Herbert W. Armstrong are betrayers! And all those who teach disciples to break the commandments are betrayers; for what is it that the Apostle Paul teaches? Is it not to imitate him (Phil 3:17), who, “as to righteousness, under the law [was] blameless” (Phil 3:6 – also Acts 25:8)? If a disciple imitates Paul, the disciple will also be blameless and will not count being blameless as a thing not worthy of note.

The trail out of spiritual Babylon and to the spiritual landscape of Judea was blazed in the 16th Century by Andreas Fischer and Oswald Glaidt, but neither arrived in spiritual Jerusalem, the heavenly city to which disciples living within the mental landscape of Judea journey three seasons a year when they keep the High Sabbaths of God. To the consternation of his detractors, Herbert Armstrong was the first widely heard teacher to lead a remnant of a remnant several times removed into observance of the High Sabbaths. Unfortunately, Armstrong never located the foundation of the house of God that the Apostle Paul laid in the 1st-Century although he thought he had. So those who teach disciples not to journey beyond where Armstrong went betray these disciples; they are, again, betrayers of the worse sort, for disciples who should be building on the foundation Paul laid now stand, like dumb stones, overlooking the trail Armstrong took to heavenly Jerusalem. They idolize the man [as do those who proclaim that Ellen G. White was more than a prophetess], thereby causing Sabbatarian disciples to commit blasphemy against Christ. It is no wonder that few human beings will physically enter the Millennium, and few will be chosen by God to be glorified. *The many* will have been destroyed by traitors and betrayers.

The faith delivered to the saints was delivered to Peter, Paul, John, not to Augustine, who was baptized by betrayers and became chief among the betrayers.

Jonathon Edwards wrote and read the sermon titled, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” to a congregation that was more interested in what each other wore to Sunday services than in cleansing hearts. Although Edwards’ understanding of God was imperfect at best, he did grasp the basic concept that *the many* would be condemned to the flames of hell; for *the many* were no longer interested in purity before God. Rather, *the many* sought the acclaim of this world and its prince. They would give praise and glory to *the Man upstairs*, but they would not give to God obedience. For *the many*, obedience was what Paul counted as nothing. After all, Paul wrote, *not*

having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Paul explained elsewhere what is the *righteousness based on faith* when he wrote,

But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or “‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth once confesses and is saved. (Rom 10:6-10)

But in writing about *righteousness based on faith*, Paul quotes from Moses,

For this commandment [the second covenant – Deut 29:1] that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. 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 life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord [YHWH] your God [Elohim] that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live (Deut 30:11-16)

For the Apostle Paul, believing God and confessing that Jesus is Lord equates with choosing life. Likewise, for Paul the *righteousness based on faith*—the righteousness that comes from faith about which he writes to the Romans and to the Philippians—will have the disciple, a spiritually circumcised Israelite, obeying “the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in [Deuteronomy], when [the disciple turns] to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul [nephesh – mind]” (Deut 30:10).

Simply put, the disciple who, by faith, turns to God and expresses his or her love for God by keeping all that is written in the Book of Deuteronomy chooses life through believing with all the person’s heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, with this choosing of life requiring profession that Jesus is Lord through the confession of the mouth when asked why the disciple lives as a physically uncircumcised Judean.

The betrayers will have disciples living as Gentiles, or as physically minded Christians who give God praise and glory for football touchdowns or battlefield victories or parking places close to storefronts when shopping on the Sabbath. The betrayers will teach disciples to be lawless—they will teach that Christians do not attempt to keep the law for Jesus fulfilled the law, and Grace alone is sufficient for salvation. These betrayers will do mighty works in the name of Jesus Christ, and when their judgments are revealed they will cry out, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” (Matt 7:22). Yes, they will certainly do many mighty works in Jesus’ name, but they will be denied when their judgments are revealed (v. 23) for they have been and remain teachers of lawlessness. They are the traitors that the prince of this world has employed as his ministers. The more honest of these betrayers wear their collars backwards for a reason: they speak what they should not; they teach without being sent by God; they murder babes and small children, all sons of God who didn’t know that they shouldn’t believe those who possess the riches of this world in this evil age.

The football team that kneels in prayer before a Sabbath afternoon game seeks to do the will of God, but all who kneel in an end zone or along the sidelines would do better kneeling in Sabbath services where their prayers will be heard by God ... Satan loves a good Sabbath afternoon football game, especially such as was played in Provo, Utah, a few years ago between Brigham Young University and Notre Dame University. The game—actually the third game of a three game series—served as a type of the military action that will be fought between Trinitarians and Arians during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation, with the Arians prevailing in the third year of the conflict.

Near the mid point of the Tribulation, the sixth Trumpet Plague will occur (Rev 9:13-21). A third of then living humankind will be killed. Their death—the second time a third of humankind will have been killed—will still not be enough to stop the traitors and betrayers; for the “rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (vv. 20-21). The football player in a Friday night high school game or in a Saturday afternoon college game—the football player who looked upward to *the Man upstairs* salutes a demon, not God. And it’s past time for someone[s] to preach again about sinners being in the hands of an angry God.

The writer of Hebrew said, “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” (10:26). The traitors and betrayers—their “end will correspond to their deeds” (2 Co 11:15). But the one who makes a journey of faith equivalent to Abraham’s journey of faith shall live. Unfortunately, this person will always be numbered among the few.

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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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