

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary are more extensive for this week and next than will be usual; for the following will most likely be new and unfamiliar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *the sign of Jonah*.

## Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of March 4, 2006

*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.*

It is an evil person who asks for a sign from God; it is a faithless person who demands that God prove Himself on any matter. Yet, within Christianity, disciples routinely ask for signs. Some of these requests come from the person being carnally minded, such as a disciple asking whether he or she should marry a particular person—if Jesus would only give one sign concerning the Son of Man, why would Jesus give faithless disciples signs about physical matters? Or about the affairs of fickle hearts that are deceitful and desperately sick (Jer 17:9)? Such signs, if any are given, are not of faith, but of the natural mind of a son of disobedience. Such signs are of the prince of disobedience. And acting upon such a sign will inevitably cause the disciple to be condemned, for the men of Nineveh—who were neither physically nor spiritually circumcised—repented upon hearing the preaching of Jonah. They asked for no sign from this man who came to them as the spokesman or *logos* of their god, Dagon, the great fish.

*The first passages read should be Matthew chapter 12, verses 15 though 42, and Luke chapter 11, verses 29 through 32.*

**Commentary:** Jesus proclaimed justice to the Gentiles, chief of whom were the men of Nineveh during Jonah's generation; for these men of Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, would soon systematically destroy and take captive the northern house of Israel, while threatening the southern house of Judah...the timeframe for when the men of Nineveh repented is, most likely, shortly after the prophet Elisha's ministry. Assyria would replace Syria as the most serious external threat to the northern kingdom's sovereignty (the continued idolatry of Jeroboam was the most serious internal threat).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus was the entirety of the Son of Man, the future world ruling hierarchy described in human terms, this hierarchy to grow from the single kernel of wheat planted at Calvary (John 12:24), with the seed head of the stem grown from that one kernel becoming Jesus' initial disciples. Today, the Twelve kernels planted in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE have grown into ripe fields on the Judean hillsides of God's rest. Today, the glorified Jesus is the uncovered Head of the Son of Man, with His many disciples being the Son of Man's grace-covered body. The Son of Man's body will be completely *revealed* when disciples' judgments are revealed upon Jesus' return (1 Cor 4:5). But before this revealing, the still physically living body will be *revealed* (Luke 17:30) when disciples are liberated from bondage to the law of sin and death that still dwells in their flesh (Rom 7:25).

The Apostle Paul didn't understand why the law of sin and death should still dwell in his members (Rom 7:15) when his mind was liberated from sin and death (Rom 8:2). Mentally, he was free from sin; yet, his flesh did what he hated. So he was, even though mentally free, still in bondage to sin—and obviously, his flesh was still in bondage to death, for Paul is not now walking the earth, regardless of what a few would-be teachers of Israel contend.

Resurrection liberates from death, but so does being changed in the twinkling of an eye.

Today, death is inside of every person: if a person doesn't die from an outside cause such as by an accident or by being murdered by another, the person will expire when "natural causes" shut down bodily functions. A person's allotted lifespan is around 120 years, Moses' age, with historically, most people dying before 70 years old. The aging process is built into human genetics. But this auto-suicidal aspect of human genetics wasn't always set where it is today. Antediluvian life approached 1,000 years. And post-Advent life expectancies will return to those of the antediluvian age, for God is not a respecter of persons, requiring that some sons overcome Satan while others never know or experience the power of Satan's deceptions.

Satan is kept alive in the pit for the first 1,000 years of Christ Jesus' reign as Lord of lords and King of kings, before he is turned loosed for a short while (Rev 20:7). When loosed, he will again deceive human beings, who, for their rebellion, will be consumed by fire. And fire will come out from Satan's belly and will utterly consume him (Ezek 28:18-19) before the great White Throne Judgment (when all human beings not previously born of Spirit are resurrected) begins.

The person entering the 1,000 years alive will have experienced Satan's deception before the Adversary is bound in the bottomless pit, but the person born a year into the 1,000 years will not experience Satan's wiles unless the person lives until Satan is loosed for another three and a half years—once cast into time (Rev 12:9-10), Satan doesn't get to leave; he will die as does all other life confined within time. Thus, liberation from bondage to the law of sin and death will have a person living physically until slain by outside means or changed, replacing perishable with imperishable. So arguments that ascribe to the flesh presently existing liberation from sin and death are errant, and not well conceived.

Disciples' minds have been liberated by "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2), but if the *law of life* did not prevail against the *law of sin*—if the mind did not prevail over the body; if the laws of God written on the heart and placed in the mind of a disciple through receipt of the Holy Spirit did not overcome the disobedience of the flesh (i.e., the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and pride in possessions – 1 John 2:16)—then the disciple will have, by his or her actions, spoken against the Holy Spirit. The disciple will be counted among the *many* who are called, but not among the *few* who are chosen (Matt 22:14). The disciple will be as the men of Jerusalem were, having the laws of God near and the Messenger within the city, but being unwilling to keep the laws (John 7:19) and being unable to hear either the words of the Father or to recognize the Messenger. Truly, the disciple will be like the physically circumcised nation that will be condemned by the men of Nineveh.

*The reader should now read the book of Jonah.*

**Commentary:** The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights...every Bible student knows this story, which

Jesus uses as a copy and shadow of the Son of Man. This story can, therefore, be read allegorically, with a virtual one-to-one correspondence between the physical events that happen to peoples who are not circumcised, and to events that happen to the physically circumcised, then following the three days and three nights, spiritually circumcised nation of Israel. For of necessity—because of its long term lawlessness that caused the *Logos* to divorce the nation He had married at Sinai—the natural nation of Israel cast Jesus overboard as the sailors did Jonah: either all of the natural nation had to die, or the *Logos* had to die before the Lord was free to marry another (Rom 7:1-4) upon His return.

Following the three days and three nights, about which no ambiguity exists—in Hebrew, *day* is the hot portion of a 24-hour period, and *night* is the turning or twisting away [from the light or heat] portion of the same 24-hour period—Jonah goes to Gentiles [*the nations*] rather than to his own nation, which also was evil. Jonah was proclaiming justice to Gentiles, who heard and repented for a season, then returned to their wicked ways. Jesus proclaimed justice to Gentiles, who heard His voice and repented for a season, then returned to their wicked ways.

Nineveh's repentance lasted less than 150 years; the Church's repentance lasted about the same length of time, as seen by when the sacraments were taken.

*The reader should now read John chapter 19 first, then chapter 12.*

**Commentary:** The *Lord's Day* is not the first day of the week; however, it is not the seventh day either as some Sabbatarian fellowships teach their disciples. It begins the fourth day of the seven day spiritual creation week, as Jesus' resurrection was on the fourth day of Unleavened Bread in the year 31 CE...Jesus died as the Passover Lamb of God, a Lamb appropriate to the size of the household of God. He died between the evenings as the Pharisees then reckoned when paschal lambs were to be killed. He died on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, the Preparation Day (John 19:31), and He was placed in the tomb before dark, before the 15<sup>th</sup> day (the High Sabbath) began.

Again, Jesus said that the only sign He would give of who He was would be the sign of Jonah (Matt 12:39-40). There is no ambiguity in the book of Jonah: the man who fled God was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish before being spewed out of that fish to come to the men of Nineveh. And if Jesus was not in the grave for three days and three nights, He doesn't qualify as the Son of Man as He established the basis for condemning the generation that would kill Him.

But Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights:

Jesus entered Jerusalem on a not-before-riden colt of an ass in the manner that the high priest would enter with the selected Passover lamb: Jesus entered on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the first month, the day when the Passover lamb was to be selected (Exod 12:3).

Counting backwards from the Passover, the 15<sup>th</sup>, disciples find that six days earlier, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was (John 12:1). One day before the Passover would be the Preparation Day, the 14<sup>th</sup>. Two days, the 13<sup>th</sup>. Three days, the 12<sup>th</sup>. Four days, the 11<sup>th</sup>. Five days, the 10<sup>th</sup>. Six days, the 9<sup>th</sup>. Thus, "the next day" (John 12:12) after Jesus came to Bethany, Jesus entered Jerusalem as High Priest, **and** as Passover Lamb. This entrance was on the Sabbath, the reason for the crowds being there to await the High Priest's coming with the paschal lamb. To fulfill prophecy, Jesus preempts the celebration that would have been accorded the High Priest on this particular year.

If the 10<sup>th</sup> was the Sabbath, then the 14<sup>th</sup> would have been Wednesday, the 15<sup>th</sup> Thursday.

If the 10<sup>th</sup> were Palm Sunday, as Catholic tradition teaches, then the 15<sup>th</sup> would be Friday, thereby producing back-to-back Sabbath days [one the High Sabbath, one the weekly Sabbath], a situation making the post-death purchase of spices by the women impossible, and Luke's account (23:53-56) inaccurate. These spices were purchased on Friday, the business day between the Sabbaths.

Jesus was cut off midweek, halfway through seven years of ministry (Dan 9:27). He was also cut off mid-calendar week, on Wednesday. Therefore, one day and one night in the heart of the earth would begin with Wednesday evening and extend through Thursday evening (the 15<sup>th</sup>). The second day and night would end Friday evening. The third day and night would end Saturday evening. So three days and three nights begin with Joseph and Nicodemus placing the body of Jesus in the garden tomb, and conclude with the closing of the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread. There are now twelve hours for which there is no accounting, for Jesus was gone from the tomb before daylight Sunday morning (John 20:1). When Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, it was still dark. The stone over the entrance to the tomb was rolled away, and Jesus had already risen.

Those three and a half days [the three days and three nights, plus the unaccounted for twelve hours] of that week of Unleavened Bread are analogous to the first three and a half years of the seven endtime years of tribulation. The day of the Lord begins midweek, begins when the kingdom of the world [singular: one kingdom] becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15), begins when Jesus resumes his personal ministry of disciples (Rev 14:1-5).

The teaching of a three and a half year long Tribulation reveals a lack of spiritual understanding; for the saints will be delivered into the hand of the little horn for a time, times and half a time [three and a half years] (Dan 7:25) prior to when the four kings are taken (*vv.* 9-12), with the fourth king being dwelt a mortal wound and **the lives of the other three extended for a season** [a fruiting season is two years long] **and a time**. These three kings or beasts, along with the mortally wounded head of the fourth beast make up the first beast of Revelation chapter 13—and this spiritual king of Greece receives usurped power from the old dragon for another forty-two months (*v.* 5) for Christ comes as the Messiah. These forty-two months or three and a half years resume the suspended seventy-weeks count that sees one long spiritual night begin at Calvary and continue through until the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:13-14).

On one particular day halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation, Jesus will on earth fight as on a day of battle (Zech 14:3). He will split the Mount of Olives, the stone cut without human hands (Dan 2:34, 45), that will swallow the armies of the man of perdition (Rev 12:16 & Dan 9:26) as the Sea of Reeds swallowed Pharaoh's armies (Exod 15:12 & Zech 14:4-5), thereby breaking spiritual Babylon when Michael casts Satan from heaven (Rev 12:7-10). The spiritual hierarchy of Babylon will be taken, with the fourth king, Death, being dealt a mortal wound when the two witnesses are publicly resurrected (Rev 11:11-12). The fourth king or beast will have his cross-shaped body given over to be burned. And the Holy Breath [*Pneuma 'Agion*] will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) — and all of this will occur on day 1260, when everything written in Revelation has very recently occurred, or is *soon* to occur. None of this, though, could be understood until all of the events described in Revelation would *soon* occur, for John used *the Lord's Day* as a literary trope to preclude understanding an unsealed vision by

any disciple earlier than the time of the end. And to further ensure that this vision would not be understood before its time, the descriptions of entities in the vision are how those entities function in the plan of God; thus, visual attributes correspond to invisible functions, for the glorified Jesus doesn't look like a lamb, but functions as the sacrificed paschal Lamb of God. Spirits (the messengers to the seven churches) do not look like eyes (Rev 5:6), but function as eyes.

The subject of Jesus being the Passover Lamb of God, and of when to observe the sacrament will be continued as meat in preached in due season.

*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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