

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 *worshiping in truth and spirit*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of April 21, 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.

The person conducting the services should read or assign to be read Deuteronomy chapter 23, verses 1 through 8; followed by Matthew chapter 1, verses 1 through 6, and Acts chapter 8, verses 26 through 40.

Commentary: The controlling principle for biblical exegesis is that the visible things of this world reveal the invisible things of God with the physical preceding the spiritual. Physical circumcision—the clipping of foreskins—revealed and preceded spiritual circumcision. Whereas physical circumcision was performed on the eighth day of a Hebrew infant's life and accomplished by the hands of the priest, spiritual circumcision is performed on the heart cleansed by faith and accomplished by the Holy Spirit writing the laws of God on tablets of flesh. Whereas birth by water [of the womb] necessarily preceded physical circumcision, birth by Spirit necessarily precedes spiritual circumcision. And whereas a eunuch shall not enter the physical assembly of the Lord, the new creature born of Spirit is neither male nor female (Gal 3:28) and cannot be made a eunuch except through the willful cutting away of this new creature's relationship with God, who has given this new creature life as a son of God (Rom 8:29) through the earnest of the Spirit.

Whereas no one born of a forbidden physical union may enter the assembly of the Lord, no one not drawn from this world by the Father and hence born of Spirit can become a spiritually circumcised Israelite. It is not enough to want to be "a Christian"; it is not enough to sit on a pew and listen to homilies; it is not enough to give large donations to a ministry, or to build a church, or to conduct a prison ministry while serving jail-time for fraud. There is no substitute for being born of Spirit. Everyone else is of a forbidden union between humankind and the demons whom these human beings will not cease worshiping even after a third of remaining humanity is slain in the sixth Trumpet plague (Rev 9:20).

The way to God is not through a many-spoked wheel that allows Muslims and Hindi and Buddhists and Catholics and Jews an equal opportunity for salvation at this time. These named belief paradigms are of this world, where the physical creation [Heb: *owlam*] actually conceals Christ Jesus (Eccl 3:11 with Rev 22:13). Those who seek God

through these belief paradigms can be sincere and upright human beings, but until the Father gives them the earnest of His Spirit, they are not numbered among the firstfruits but are of forbidden unions. They will receive mercy later, either between now and the end of their physical lives, or in the great White Throne Judgment where the person who by nature did the things that the law requires shows that the work of the law was written on his or her heart (Rom 2:14-15). This person's conflicting thoughts will accuse or even excuse the person in his or her judgment.

A person is not condemned to an ever-burning hell if God the Father chooses not to draw the person from this world during the person's lifetime ... those belief paradigms that assign all who have never known Christ to the flames of hell are of Satan, the father of all murderers and all lies. God assigned all of humankind to disobedience so that He could have mercy on all (Rom 11:32). However, He does not say when He shall exercise that mercy; when He exercises mercy remains His prerogative. If He chooses to exercise mercy toward a person in this era, He draws this person from the world, gives this person to Christ Jesus, and gives the judgment of this person to Christ. Jesus will now determine whether this person, born of Spirit and made alive by the Father, shall put on immortality on the day when judgments are revealed (1 Cor 4:5), not made. The judgment of the firstfruits is determined while the person lives, for judgment is now on the household of God (1 Pet 4:17). And it is here where *no Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord*.

Judgment is not on those who have not been born of Spirit. Their judgment awaits their second birth whether in the general resurrection after the thousand-year-long reign of Christ Jesus or sometime before they die physically. Therefore, let it be said dogmatically: the person who does not today know Christ has been consigned to sin and to being a bondservant of the prince of this world, and this person's status as bondservant shifts the responsibility for this person's lawlessness onto the prince of this world so that no sin is presently counted against this person (Rom 5:13). When this person is born a second time, the record of debt that stood against this person with its legal demand for the death of the person will have been satisfied by either the death of the person, or by Christ Jesus dying at Calvary. Either way, the record of debt is covered by death. Now the person can be likened to one of the two lawbreakers crucified with Christ. Both had been raised up after death; for they were "officially" or "legally" dead when they were crucified—they would not come down from the stake alive. And the twice-born lawbreaker who mocks Christ will die a second death in the lake of fire.

- A person mocks Christ Jesus when the person, over whom sin has no dominion (Rom 6:14), will not walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6) but chooses to return to being the obedient slave of sin.
- Sin is lawlessness, the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).

The second covenant, given on the plains of Moab (Deut 29:1), mediated by Moses, ratified by a song (Deut chap 32), is not the earthly copy of a spiritual covenant—earthly copies are ratified by the shedding of blood (Heb 9:22-23)—but the spiritual covenant itself, the covenant that promises circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6) upon the act of faith that has Israel, when in a far land and bondservants to alien princes and kings, turning to God to obey His voice in all that He commanded Israel (*vv.* 30:1-2) on the day when God set life or death before Israel (*vv.* 15-20). This is the covenant to which better promises were added when the glorified Christ Jesus became its mediator [better

promises are not added to an abolished covenant, nor does an abolished covenant have its mediator changed].

Of all Israel that stood before Moses on the plains of Moab, how many were Ammonites or Moabites?

Gathered before Moses in a land that was not the promised inheritance were those Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manassites to whom were given the lands of Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan. These tribes of Israel were to live as Israelites on the plains of Moab and in the lands of Midian, not as Moabites or Ammonites. A disciple today, living in this world that belongs to an alien prince, Satan the devil, is to live as an Israelite, not as a person of *the nations*. Moses said, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law” (Deut 29:29). And what has been revealed is that no Moabite will enter the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom belongs exclusively to those who are of Israel, spiritually circumcised, and found doing the works of God when Christ comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.

On the plains of Moab, God set before Israel life and death, and instructed Israel to choose life ... so how is it that a person will live? How does a person choose life?

Jesus said that “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” (John 5:24). So the person who hears and believes also chooses life ... hearing and believing are acts of faith made when the person is in a far land, that of spiritual Babylon, the kingdom of this world. Hearing and believing are not passive inactions made with hands and bodies, but the aggressive act of not loving “the world or the things in the world” (1 John 2:15); for “all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possession—is not from the Father but from the world” (v. 16). Hearing Jesus and believing the Father will cause the person to separate from the world. And though this desire to separate can be physically manifested as in entering into a “Christian commune” or a separated society, the spiritual manifestation will have the person returning to keeping the precepts of the law, especially the Sabbath commandment, with keeping the precepts forming the outward manifestation of love for God and for neighbor.

God would defeat His purpose to procreate if He ordered a person to accept life rather than death, or if He in any way prevented a person from choosing death when the choice of life or death is offered to the person on his or her day of salvation. It is not a person’s good works according to the law or good works according to the expectations of humanity that produce spiritual righteousness; rather, it is the person’s faith that will cause this person to mentally separate from the world, thereby leaving behind its desires and pleasures and benefits. A profession of faith without acts manifesting this faith is dead rhetoric. And love is the acceptable manifestation of faith, but “love” is not a feel-good emotion. Instead, love is—in circular logic—keeping the precepts of the law by faith. Love is hearing the word of Jesus and believing that word, which came from the Father.

When the person who has separated from the world stands on the plains of Moab, with the choice of life and death before the person—with the choice of life requiring *keeping God’s commandments and statutes that are written in Deuteronomy with all one’s heart and mind* (Deut 30:10)—the person has the choice of becoming an Israelite or a Moabite. The person will either live as an Israelite and will mentally cross the River

Jordan even while physically remaining in the land of Moab as was the case with the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manassites; or the person will live as a Moabite, a person of *the nations*, a Gentile. Every person has this choice on his or her day of salvation ... the inner new self that “chooses” life will cross the Jordan and to live as a spiritual Judean, or the inner new life will succumb to the flesh and “choose” to remain in this world, with its accepted forms of “Christianity” or Judaism or Islam. Yes, the “Christianity” that is on public display every Sunday is a belief paradigm of this world. The Judaism that is on display every Sabbath rejects both the words of Jesus and all knowledge of the Father. Islam hears with its ears but not its heart the words of Jesus while rejecting all knowledge of the Father. But it is only the person who hears and believes both Jesus and the Father that passes from death to life.

Men cannot command God to give the earnest of His Spirit to anyone; nor can men command other men to hear the words of Jesus and to believe the Father. Men cannot command another to accept life. Not even God can command His sons to accept life. Yes, certainly, He could give life to His sons—and He has. These “sons” are called angels. Their only parent is the Most High, and they were created to serve the Most Holy One. They were not asked whether they wanted to serve, no more than a disciple is asked whether he or she wanted to be born humanly, which foreshadows being born spiritually. They would not have life if they had not been created to serve. Human beings would not have life if they had not been created in the image and likeness of God. But the creation process to be in the image and likeness of God doesn’t stop with the creation of the fleshly creature. Rather, creation stops with the crucifixion of the “old self” in the manner foreshadowed by Jesus, on the cross, saying, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The born of Spirit disciple chooses life when he or she figuratively breaks the legs of the crucified old self. Only then does a person pass from death to life as Jesus passed from death to life.

Once a person chooses life, the person is formed into a vessel for honored usage. The person is like a caught fish: he or she can flop around a bit, can mess this up or that up, but Christ is in the process of doing the sculpting. The person will become a vessel for honored usage. Free will ends on the plains of Moab when the person chooses life and crosses the River Jordan, represented outwardly by Sabbath observance as a Christian.

The journey of faith from Babylon to Jerusalem will not see everyone completing this journey. If a person dies on this journey because the way was far and the trek difficult, the person found making this journey will be counted as having arrived. But the person who stands before Moses on the plains of Moab, and mentally says, *Living like a Jew is not for me*, chooses death when “the promise of entering his rest stands” (Heb 4:1). This person will be formed into a vessel of wrath to be endured for a season (Rom 9:22). It is not the person who remains dead that is sculpted into a vessel prepared for destruction, but the one who has been given life but rejects the second covenant (Deut chaps 29-32).

As men cannot command other men to accept salvation, men cannot command women to become meek and quiet. A man can command women to cover their hair if these women want to fellowship with a certain assembly of disciples, but the person who covered against her will is only outwardly compliant. Only her flesh complies with the command to meekness. And the flesh will not be saved.

For women, the journey of from Babylon to Jerusalem will have the inner son of God, born of Spirit, who has a meek and contrite spirit manifesting this meekness through actions of the flesh, with one of those actions likely being expressed in modest

or even plain dress and the covering of the head. Likewise, for men the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem will have the inner son of God who has a meek and contrite spirit manifesting this meekness—a horse is “meeked” when broken to bit—through rejection of the values of this world which elevates pride in possessions and accomplishments (as the values of this world elevates outward feminine beauty and the adorning of the hair), and pursuing instead the things of God as a servant broken to do the will of God. Therefore, the one who is greatest with God is the one who serves the most, not the one who accumulates the most things or most secular power.

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The reader should now read Numbers chapter 20.

Commentary: Moses was told to speak to the rock, not to strike it. God gives the reason for Moses not being able to enter into the Promised Land as striking the rock, which does not seem like a “big deal” humanly. But following instructions is a big deal with God; for He will not glorify any rebel. He will not create another Satan. And it is on the plains of Moab, when the choice of life and death are placed before the disciple where all who have been born of Spirit are sorted, with the rebels becoming Moabites and the obedient becoming Israelites.

Striking the rock was Moses not upholding the holiness of God in the eyes of Israel (Num 20:12) ... the teacher of Israel who would cause disciples to willfully break the least of the commandments does not uphold the holiness of God, and will be denied in his or her resurrection (Matt 7:21-23). Most likely, this teacher’s disciples will also be denied, for many are called but few will be chosen (Matt 22:14). Few will actually choose life. Most will choose to stay with the Christianity of this world and its prince.

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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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