

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 *spiritual procreation*.

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## Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of July 8, 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.

*The person conducting the service should read or assign to be read Romans chapters 2, 3, 9, 10 & 11.*

**Commentary:** Five chapters is a heady amount of reading to do to open services, but makes up for last week when there was less reading.

The Apostle Paul was born a Hebrew of the tribe of Benjamin, and like most disciples are, he was concerned for his kinsmen, who had a long-standing zeal for God but who were short on faith. And under the second covenant (Deu 29:1) mediated by Moses, a covenant made with uncircumcised Israelites (Jos 5:2-7), an additional covenant to the Sinai covenant, a covenant made on the plains of Moab just before Israel was to cross into God's rest (Ps 95:10-11 — compare with Num chap 14)—under this second covenant if after blessings and the cursing come upon Israel and if in that far land where Israel has been exiled because of the cursing, Israel turns to the Lord and begins walk in His ways and keeps His commandments and statutes, the Lord will bring Israel back to Judea and will give to Israel circumcised hearts. This second covenant as mediated by Moses promises to make an uncircumcised people inward Israelites (Rom 2:28-29), with circumcision a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. This second covenant is the law that the Apostle Paul references that would have lead to righteousness if pursued by faith (Rom 9:31-32). This is the law that Moses says is not too difficult for these uncircumcised Israelites to keep (Deu 30:11). This is that law that Paul identifies as "righteousness based upon faith" (Rom 10:6 — compare Rom 10:6-8 with Deu 30:11-14); this is the Apostle's "law of faith" (Rom 3:27), through which God "will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith" (Rom 3:30). Therefore, when Paul asks, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith?" (v. 31), he properly answers, "On the contrary, we uphold the law" (same verse).

The second covenant made with uncircumcised Israelites is the book of Deuteronomy. Again, it is covenant made on the plains of Moab that is in addition to the covenant at Horeb [also called Sinai]. And it is in this second covenant where the Lord sets before uncircumcised Israelites good and life,

evil and death (Deu 30:15), and tells these uncircumcised Israelites that this day they are to choose life (vv. 19-20). The Lord places heaven and earth as witnesses to this second covenant that will not be abolished at Calvary, for it had not yet been implemented. The nation of Israel received the promised blessings, and received the promised cursing, but the nation never turned towards the Lord when in a far land, choosing by faith to “obey the commandments of the Lord...by loving the Lord...by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules” (v. 16). A few Israelites when in Babylon kept the commandments, but the nation didn't. And the northern nation never ceased the sin of Jeroboam, which caused this entire house to sin and to disappear into the flotsam of history.

When Solomon sinned because of his foreign wives, the Lord wrestled the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:7-8), but unlike David who kept the Lord's commandments and followed the Lord with all his heart, doing only what was right in the Lord's eyes [the Lord's testimony through Ahijah, the prophet], Jeroboam did evil above all who were before him in that he made for himself other gods and metal images, provoking the Lord to anger (v. 9). And here is the goodness of the Lord revealed: David did wrong in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, one of his mighty men, and David paid for this wrong in public humiliation (2 Sam 7-14). But when it came time for the Lord to tell David's story to others, David's faith—not his flesh—did only what was right in the Lord's eyes. The Lord told the story that David wrote by David's faith in the Lord.

Likewise, when the Lord recounts to the patriarch Isaac the story of His promises to Abraham, the Lord tells Isaac that “Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen 26:5), whereas in the manner of Abimelech, king of Gerar, Abraham brought an innocent man near to death because of Abraham's fear that is a lack of faith (Gen chap 20). The Lord identifies Abraham as a prophet, but when in Gerar, Abraham was a flawed prophet. Nevertheless, when the Lord recounts the deeds of Abraham's life, the weakness of Abraham's flesh is not held against him. Rather, the strength of his faith in leaving home and kinsman to wander in the geographical representation of God's rest is what defines Abraham.

Jeroboam provoked the Lord, a jealous God, to anger because he set up the works of men's hands as the gods Israel was to worship—once Israel started down this slippery slope, Israel borrowed the idolatrous worship of its pagan neighbors, and caused its children to pass through the fire, a polite expression for burning firstborn infants alive. Ahaz, the king of Judah when the northern nation of Israel was taken captive, burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the Canaanites (2 Kings 16:1-4 — compare with Ezek 20:25-26).

When Jeroboam sent his wife to inquire of the Lord concerning their son, the prophet Ahijah said the child should die and should be buried, the only one that belonged to Jeroboam who would be buried, for in the child “there is found something pleasing to the Lord, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam” (1 Kings 14:13). Thus, the Lord, in finding something pleasing in a corrupt household, took

in death the person who was pleasing to Him, thereby sealing the person from contamination through further association or maturation in the corrupt household...this is not human logic, and is difficult for humans to accept. God will kill what He wants to protect. The grave, now, is a place of spiritual safety and not an end. For God resurrecting a person from death is no more difficult than creating a new life.

Returning to where we started: God will allow martyrdom and the slaughter of disciples, who by dying in faith, are sealed from being corrupted by a defiled Christian Church. The corruption will remain within the Church here in this world, but righteousness will be sealed in the grave throughout the first half of the seven endtime years of tribulation. The disciple who seeks to save his or her physical life will lose the person's spiritual life, while the disciple who is willing to lose physical life will save the person's spiritual life. By faith, a disciple will either keep the commandments through the seven endtime years, or the person will, for lack of faith, keep the traditions of men, thereby attempting to enter God's rest on the following day.

A logical leap, martyrs sealed in death from the corrupt Church? If so, then only a small one—God will use the faith of the uncircumcised Israelite to cause a circumcised Israelite to be jealous, as God turns the tables on the nation that provoked Him to anger. Jesus used the faith of sinful circumcised Israelites (tax collectors and the like) to make so-called righteous Israelites (the Pharisees) jealous during His earthly ministry—this does not mean that faith allows a person to remain in sin; the sinner is to sin no more, to defraud no more, to repay four times what the swindler has stolen. It does mean, though, that the person for whom much has been forgiven should now excel in well doing that the person maintains his or her righteousness. And in excelling in well doing, the forgiven sinner's faith will cause this person to keep the commandments and the ways of God with great joy and delight. For the forgiven Israelite or for the naturally uncircumcised Israelite, entering into God's rest, a euphemistic expression for keeping the Sabbaths of God, should be weekly and annual celebrations that cause jealousy in the natural Israelite who has grown up keeping the commandments.

Will eating a juicy pork chop make an Observant Jew jealous? It won't, will it? Then will doing your shopping on Saturday make this Jew jealous? You know better. Then what about parading in Easter finery—will a Sunday morning sunrise service make this Jew jealous? You know it won't. So what will make any Jew jealous? How about attending Church services on the Sabbath? Will you, a Gentile, cause a Jew to be jealous if you do no work from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown? Will you, a Gentile, cause a Jew to be jealous if you keep Passover week, eating no leavened bread from the 15<sup>th</sup> of the first month through the 22<sup>nd</sup>? Will you cause jealousy by keeping Sukkoth for eight days, staying in the temporary tent of flesh in which the born anew son of God regularly dwells, this tent symbolized by booths built on Jerusalem rooftops. What is it that you, a Gentile, can do by faith that will cause jealousy if not beginning to live as a Judean without first being physically circumcised?

Concerning judgment and the Law, the Apostle Paul writes that circumcision is of value to the Israelite who obeys the Law, but if this Israelite breaks the Law, circumcision becomes uncircumcision (Rom

2:25)...how is that possible? Did the foreskin grow back? Of course not. Obeying the Law is what is of value, not a pared away foreskin. Thus, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the Law, his uncircumcision will be regarded as circumcision (v. 26), and by his faith—displayed through keeping the precepts of the Law when under no social pressure to do so—the physically uncircumcised man will condemn the Israelite who has the Commandments given from atop Sinai, but who breaks the law (v. 27). “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outward, nor is circumcision outward and physical” (v. 28).

What are the precepts of the Law that both the uncircumcised Gentile will keep, and the circumcised Israelite will keep? Are they not to fear God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve Him with all one’s heart and mind, and to keep the commandments and statutes God gave for good (Deu 10:12-13)? Are they not found in the second covenant, that covenant made in addition to the covenant made at Horeb? Of course these precepts are found in the Book of Deuteronomy; for in Deuteronomy, Moses stands as the accuser of all Israel (John 5:45-47 — compare with Deu 31:24-27). In Deuteronomy, spiritual circumcision is promised if Israel, exiled in a far land, will return to God, and obey His voice with heart and mind, keeping His commandments and statutes written in Deuteronomy (Deu 30:1-10). And choice is placed before every Israelite (vv. 15-20), with God telling Israel to choose life.

Obeying the commandments and statutes of God with hands and bodies only does not satisfy the terms of the second covenant as initially mediated by Moses, or now as mediated by Christ Jesus. A Jew or Israelite is one inwardly (Rom 2:29), with circumcision being a matter of the heart, with the laws of God written on fleshy tablets, not on slabs of stone. And on the softness of the heart, circumcision will be made by the divine Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*], not by human hands according to the letter of the Law.

The acceptable faith of a Gentile will cause this person to begin living as a Judean, thereby becoming a cause for jealousy in natural Israelites. No other expression of *faith* is profitable to God. Therefore, the person who professes faith in Christ Jesus, but who will not begin to live as a Judean, has dead faith—and is a liar.

In the Lord’s day, a specific time that remains in the future, a synagogue of Satan, saying they are Jews [Israelites] but lying, will exist (Rev 2:9 & 3:9), and will slander genuine disciples dwelling in tribulation and poverty and distress. This synagogue of Satan won’t identify itself as such, but as the unified Body of Christ. It will not be a Sabbath-observing organization; for it will emerge alive out of the first half of the seven endtime years of tribulation, that period when the lawless one attempts to change times and the law (Dan 7:25). This synagogue will have taken the mark of death onto itself, and it will bow either in jealousy or in fear of disciples who kept Jesus’ words.

As today's fractured Christian Church points fingers at itself, identifying this part of the Body or that part as the synagogue of Satan, the Church misses what Paul said: "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring" (Rom 9:6-7). And to Isaac were two sons born. To spiritual Isaac, two sons, now in the womb of the Church, will be born when the seven endtime years of tribulation begin. One son will be hated even though, today, when this son is to choose life or death, good or evil (again, Deu 30:15-20), this son has no sin imputed to it because it remains under Grace (Rom 9:11-13). This hated son will not, by faith, choose to keep the commandments, but will choose to remain outside of God's rest, outside of Judea, outside of heaven. This firstborn hated son will, regardless of this son's rhetoric, pass himself through the lake of fire.

- Today, the Christian Church has within its womb two sons, one hated, one loved, the first unwilling to keep the commandments, the latter righteous by his faith.
- Today, every Christian has personally chosen life or death, and has been made into a vessel for honored or a vessel for dishonored usage.
- The Christian who has chosen death will not keep the commandments, but will berate his twin brother for his twin's *legalism*.
- The Christian who has chosen death has, after choosing death, been made into a vessel for dishonored usage, a vessel to be broken in the Master Potter's field.
- But the Christian who, by faith, keeps the precepts of the law will make the natural, circumcised Israelite jealous, thereby saving a few because of God's love for their forefathers.

Every disciple has the choice offered to him or her of life or death, good or evil. And once the disciple makes his or her decision, God shapes the person into a vessel appropriate to the disciple's choice. Nothing will separate the disciple who has chosen life from the love of God. It is less clear if the person who has chosen death can repent and turn dishonor into honor. It is easy to say that everyone can repent, but this isn't the testimony of Scripture. Once a person has been made into a vessel for dishonored usage, the person, who might well be a church member in good standing, will not again choose to keep the commandments, as evidenced by how many defiantly break the Sabbath commandment and believe they do God service in doing so.

No Gentile will ever, by his or her defiance of the law, make any Observant Jew jealous. Yet, if the disciple who has been grafted to the root of righteousness does not, by his or her faith, make the natural branches jealous, the wild olive scion, bearing worthless wild fruit, is truly an unprofitable servant.

By nature, scions always bear the fruit of the scion, not of the rootstock. Thus, the wild scion that, contrary to nature, will bear the fruit of righteousness is not of this world.

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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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