

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 *faith*.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of July 22, 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 Numbers chapters 13 & 14.

Commentary: Why would Moses send out spies with instructions to see whether the land to which the Lord was leading Israel was a good land, and whether its inhabitants were strong or weak, whether its cities were camps or strongholds? Why not trust that the Lord would not bring Israel to any land but a good land, and that Israel could easily prevail over the cities and peoples inhabiting the land? Why do what the Lord spoke to Moses (Num 13:1-2) unless the Lord was testing the nation He delivered from bondage, a nation that heretofore had not believed that the Lord could do more than their eyes saw?

God does not tempt, but He does test—and He sometimes watches the affairs of men without intervening in these affairs.

Signs do not produce faith. Almost the opposite happens. When a nation sees signs or seeks signs, the nation desires physical evidence to support a course of action. Likewise, the person who seeks a sign for, say, whether he or she should marry the other is without faith, without wisdom, and is actually hostile to God. The person is physically-minded, and able to believe only what is manifest in this world. The person is a rebel, someone who will when the chips are down turn against God and against His disciples, placing before God the person's own affairs and petty interests. Therefore, few signs are given to the Church—and the one sign Jesus gave is rejected by most professing Christians; for very few disciples believe that Jesus was actually three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The nation that left Egypt is analogous to *the old creature crucified with Christ*, this *old creature* consigned to disobedience so that God might have mercy on all (Rom 11:32). It is the *old creature* that is baptized into Christ's death as Israel was baptized when this circumcised nation passed through the Sea of Reeds (1 Co 10:2)...the *old creature* is only able to see what the physical eyes see—it is this *old creature* that seeks signs, and is a servant of disobedience even when liberated from slavery. Thus, disciples can see their *old natures*, their *old creatures* in action when

they react to the contrary reports of the spies, ten urging the flesh to return to sin, one silent, one (Caleb) urging Israel to enter into God's rest while the promise still stood (Heb 4:1). And the story of Israel in the wilderness of Paran when the spies returned functions in a similar manner to the parable that Nathan told King David: in hearing about the unbelief of the spies, disciples who refuse to enter into God's rest when He commands convict themselves of unbelief, sentencing themselves to death, for no Israelite can enter God's rest on the following day, the 8th-day.

Many arguments can be made for why disciples are not *under the law of Moses*, but the second covenant (Deu 29:1) is made with the uncircumcised nation born into the tents of the nation condemned to death for its unbelief.

- The circumcised nation that left Egypt is analogous to the spiritual *old creature*.
- The fabric or skin tents in which this circumcised nation dwelt for forty years are analogous to the fleshly bodies of disciples.
- The physically uncircumcised sons born to the circumcised nation in the skin tents during those forty years are analogous to the *new creature* born of Spirit in the fleshly tent of the *old man*.
- The second covenant is made with these uncircumcised sons on the plains of Moab.
- The terms of this second covenant require of these uncircumcised sons an act of faith (Deu 30:1-2) before this second covenant is fully implemented.
- Thus, uncircumcision becomes circumcision when these sons of the nation that left Egypt cross the Jordan and enter into God's rest (Jos 5:2-7).

The Apostle Paul asks if "a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?" (Rom 2:26). By faith, the person who is physically circumcised or uncircumcised must become spiritually circumcised, which is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter (v. 29). This person will then become the reality foreshadowed by the sons of the nation that left Egypt, and this person will keep the precepts of the law, all of them, not six, or eight, or nine, but all ten, including the Sabbath commandment. This person will voluntarily live as a Judean, not of physical necessity, but by desire. And no other expression of faith is acceptable to God other than to begin keeping the laws of God when in a far land (again Deu 30:1-2), coupled with professing that Jesus is Lord and believing that the Father raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 10:9 — compare Rom 10:6-8 with Deu 30:11-14).

Every clever argument made for why disciples do not need to keep the commandments is a lie; is of Satan, the father of liars; and is analogous to circumcised Israelites causing their firstborns to pass through fire (Ezek 20:25-26).

No uncircumcised person has to live by the commandments of God. Every person, circumcised or uncircumcised, has the freedom to neglect the laws of God, to ignore the Sabbath, and to fry in the fires of hell. And until the person has been born of Spirit, the person is absolutely free to do whatever he or she chooses, with the exception of course that the person cannot submit to the laws of God (Rom 8:7), for the person remains fully consigned to disobedience. Thus, this person can live in sin until his or her sinfulness is revealed as sin. The commandments of God bring this revelation to the person (Rom 7:7). But seeing oneself as a slave to sin is not good for one's self-image; so most of the endtime Church teaches disciples that they are no longer subject to laws that were abolished at Calvary. They see obedience to the laws of God as the circumcised nation that left Egypt saw the sons of Anak. They are fearful, unbelieving, without faith, without love, a rebellious people fit only for death in a wilderness of sin.

And that is what you are if by clever argument you cry out against the Lord, choosing for yourself a leader to take you back into sin.

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The reader should now read 2 Timothy chapters 1 through 4.

Commentary: Apparently the faith of a grandmother and of a mother dwelt in Timothy, whom Paul reminded to "fan into flame" (1:6) this gift of God.

If the faith of two generations dwelt in Timothy, then Timothy probably grew up keeping the commandments and believing that Jesus is Lord. Timothy would have been like the rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he must do to inherit everlasting life (Luke 18:18). Jesus told the young ruler that he must do actually two acts based in faith: (1) sell all he had and give the proceeds to the poor, then (2) follow Jesus (v. 22). These two acts Jesus calls *one thing*, for the two acts are closely connected, whereas the two acts of faith of Caleb occurs some time and some distance apart. An Edomite descended from Kenaz, Caleb first manifest his faith outside of Scripture, this first occasion causing Caleb to leave home and kin and to join with Israel in bondage in Egypt. The second act of faith had Caleb urging Israel to move quickly to take the Promised Land.

The patriarch Abraham has two significant recorded acts of faith that are separated by years. By faith, Abraham left home and kin and journeyed to the Promised Land where he was to die as a sojourner. The second act of manifested faith had Abraham offering as a sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise, the son through whom Abraham's offspring would come.

Timothy pursued the high calling of preaching Christ by faith, for he could have remained at home, working as a tradesman of some sort. But early on, he followed Paul and taught Christ wherever he was sent despite his age. Now, according to the example of the faith of Abraham and of Caleb, Timothy needed to perform one more significant act of faith—and this act was not being ashamed of Paul, from whom all who were in Asia had turned away (1:15).

Today, the person who has grown up professing that Jesus is Lord but attempting to enter His rest on the 8th-day needs to, by faith, begin keeping the precepts of the law, especially the fourth precept, the Sabbath commandment. This person then, by faith, needs to follow in the steps of Paul, and in the steps of Timothy, and preach the Jesus who died as the Passover Lamb of God to wherever God sends the person. Nothing else will be enough, unless the person has been consigned by God to die as a martyr, a very real possibility in these endtime years.

The person who, by circumcision, has grown up keeping the commandments of God must profess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead, an act of faith that most of the person's peers will never do. Then this person, too, must follow Jesus, not being ashamed of the simple message that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female.

Too many disciples quarrel over words, especially words that might be construed as, or twisted into abolishing the law...again, if you don't want to keep the law, then don't. Why pretend that it is okay to keep eight or nine commandments, but not the Sabbath commandment? Why not just scrap the entirety of the law, admit that you are rebellious, and accept the consequences of rebellion? You're going to receive these consequences whether you want them or not. Why pretend? For if you don't want to keep God's laws, He doesn't want you in His kingdom—He's not in the business of creating more Adversaries. He doesn't need another Satan. One was enough.

It is God's desire that all are saved, but Jesus has already said that many are called, but few will be chosen (Matt 22:14). So both Father and Son know that not everyone will make it. In fact, they transform disciples into vessels for honored and vessels for dishonorable use (Rom 9:21).

Herein is a mystery of God: human beings are born with no life other than that which comes from the cellular oxidation of sugars. Until born of Spirit or born from above, human beings are as spiritually lifeless as molten magma is physically lifeless. Human beings are the *maquettes* of the spiritual sons of God foreknown to God (Rom 8:29). They are made of cheap, expendable, ephemeral matter. Literally, they are the dust of the earth, and they serve God in analogy as a pencil sketch serves a painter. They allow God to visualize what a spiritual son made from one of them would be like before God invests the person with life in the heavenly realm; they show the Father how the glorified son would fit into His family. They react physically not as puppets, with strings determining their every movement, but as free-thinking plaster models of what could become gold sculptures if the models are accepted. And the Father, depending upon what He sees, draws this person and that person from the

world (John 6:44, 65) as it seems good to Him, giving once to every person spiritual life, this gift coming in this age either before death or when resurrected from death in the great White Throne Judgment.

Today, only the firstfruits have been drawn from the world and invested with spiritual life. The remainder of humanity awaits spiritual birth either in the grave, or in the darkness of this long spiritual night that began at Calvary. Today, the firstfruits are both vessels of honor and of dishonor, depending upon what the Father saw in the *maquette* that either will or won't by faith keep the precepts of the law.

So maybe you don't have much choice about whether you are a vessel for honor or dishonor. The Apostle Paul tells you to cleanse yourself from all impurity so that you might become a vessel for honored usage, set apart as holy, ready for every good work (2 Tim 2:20-21). Can you do that? Apparently it is possible. But it will mean keeping the commandments by faith because that is the beginning of every good work. All of your arguments for why you do not have to keep the commandments are fit only for toilet paper.

The nation that left Egypt never entered God's rest. The greater Christian Church that left sin (Rom 8:2) in the 1st-Century will never enter God's rest for the same reason: unbelief. In fact, the Body of Christ returned to sin [Egypt] before Paul was sacrificed in Rome—and it is this same last Eve that would have endtime disciples eat the fruit of knowledge, thereby determining for themselves whether they will keep the laws of God, which ones they will keep, and why they will keep those that are to them acceptable.

What a collection of rebels, the likes of which will never enter God's rest.

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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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