

The following suggested or possible grouping of Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and limited commentary are, hopefully, obviously thematically related. And the concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *whether tithing retains a part of the new covenant—and if so, how should tithing be practiced.*

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of July 23, 2005

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.

Because of the past teachings of the Radio Church of God, of its immediate successor organization (the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert Armstrong), and of that organization's derivative splinters, tithing became a burden many disciples could not bear. Thus, many disciples in and out of these derivative organizations now reject tithing as a requirement of the second covenant.

The first passage read should be Luke chapter 18, verses 18 through 30.

Commentary: Often disciples look at the commandments that Jesus doesn't name, and conclude that the rich young ruler's problem was covetness, that the young ruler placed his wealth ahead of God and thus broke the first commandment as well as the tenth. Such an interpretation of this story has merit, but misses the greater point. Assume as Scripture suggests that the young ruler had kept all of the commandments since his youth—the ruler would still lack satisfying the terms of the second covenant as mediated by first Moses, then by Christ Jesus. The second covenant requires actions based on faith. When first blessings came upon Israel because the nation is the firstborn son of God (Exod 4:22), then cursing came upon Israel because the nation would not keep the laws of God, the nation was driven from Judea, the rest of God (Ps 95:10-11). If the nation would have or will now, when in a far land, turn to God and begin to keep His laws (an action based upon faith for the nation has been driven from Judea), then God will again bring the nation to Judea and will give the nation circumcised hearts and minds [*naphesh*], a euphemistic expression for receiving the Spirit of God. (This giving of the Holy Spirit to the physical nation—Paul's grafting of the natural branches back onto the root of righteousness—will occur during the first half of [seven endtime years of tribulation](#).)

The reader should now read the second covenant as mediated by Moses, noting that this covenant made at Moab with the uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt is made in addition to the covenant made at Horeb or Sinai. The reader should read Deuteronomy chapters 29 through 31.

Commentary: Note especially verses 18 through 21 of chapter 29.

“Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’ This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike...the Lord will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity” (vv. 18-19 & 21 ESV). This same warning also applies to the holy nation of spiritual Israel.

The rich young ruler would not sell all he had, distribute his wealth to the poor, and follow Jesus. Selling all he had would have required more faith than he possessed. Keeping the commandments from his youth required being obedient to parents and culture. But keeping the commandments did not require of him faith. Likewise, for second generation Sabbatarians keeping the commandments in a culture or in a household that keeps the commandments doesn't involve faith. As such, keeping the commandments is an expectation, and doesn't “please” God, which is not to suggest that a person should break the commandments. On the contrary, God's expectation is that all Israel will keep His laws that have, through receipt of the Holy Spirit, been written on the hearts and minds of disciples. So only when the person who has been living in a far country as a Gentile begins keeping the commandments is commandment-keeping an act of faith that pleases God. This is an important aspect of the second covenant, for the person called by God and previously living as a son of disobedience is a sheep, formerly lost but now brought into the sheepfold of the true Shepherd. The children of this disciple are sanctified, meaning that birth-from-above is offered to these children on the same basis as it was offered to the rich young ruler. This is why a person with a root of bitterness must be purged from the fellowship. The bitterness destroys sanctified children.

The reader should now read from 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 17 through the end of chapter 6.

Commentary: The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil (chapter 6, verse 10), not the least of which is bitterness. This is especially true in relation to what Paul writes about elders who labor in preaching and teaching (chapter 5, verses 17 & 18). These elders are entitled to “wages,” to taking their living from their work in preaching and teaching. And the disciple who is not an elder and who does no work preaching and teaching needs to be giving his or her tithes to one who does. The disciple, as an act of faith, needs to support the work of discipling those newly born-from-above Israelites who have only begun keeping the commandments.

Unfortunately, too many disciples have made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim 1:19-20), and though turned over to Satan, these disciples have continued to teach, to develop followings that identify themselves as Christian fellowships, and to then lure generations of newly born sons of God to the lake of fire. Throughout his ministry, the Apostle Paul contended with the circumcision faction that never understood spiritual birth. The circumcision faction didn't quit teaching its error following Paul's death in Rome—nor did those formerly with Paul quit teaching their lack of spiritual discernment when

Paul turned them over to Satan. Those who were with Paul most likely opposed the circumcision faction. As such, prospering when turned over to Satan (because they were again made a part of this world), they became teachers of lawlessness who set about to uproot the circumcision faction by teaching a *Grace is sufficient gospel* that would have disciples erase the laws of God from hearts and minds. This was never Paul's teaching.

Turning an Israelite over to Satan (1 Cor 5:1-13), a practice of God displayed through Him sending both the house of Israel and the house of Judah into physical captivity in foreign lands, reveals the typology used today by *The Philadelphia Church*.

The reader should now read from 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 7, to the end of chapter 5.

Commentary: According to Paul, the physical body is the tabernacle or house of the born-from-above and spiritually circumcised son of God. A disciple's flesh and blood body is, thus, equivalent to the house (or tent while in the wilderness) of the physically circumcised Israelite. More so, the chosen disciple's body forms a living stone in the spiritual temple of God. Therefore, turning a spiritual son of God over to Satan, the spiritual king of Babylon (Isa 14:4-21), becomes equivalent to *YHWH* sending physically circumcised Israelites into captivity in physical Babylon.

The typology Paul uses but doesn't well explain (2 Pet 3:15-17) is that the physically circumcised nation that is the holy firstborn son of *YHWH* forms the shadow of the quickened (or enlivened) Church, consisting of spiritually circumcised disciples born of the water of the womb and of the Spirit of the Father. Shadows are lifeless and exist in one less dimension than does that which produces the shadow. The physically circumcised nation, although offered spiritual circumcision (Deu 30:6), was with very few exceptions spiritually lifeless; it wouldn't otherwise be a shadow. This spiritually lifeless nation dwelt in stone and wood houses. The living nation, born from above thereby having life in the heavenly realm, dwells in living houses, in which the laws of God are written on tablets of flesh. For disciples, physical circumcision is a modification to the house in which a spiritual son of God dwells. It would be meaningless except as meaning is assigned to it. So when a born of Spirit disciple voluntarily becomes physically circumcised, thus assigning meaning to making himself naked before God, the disciple rejects Christ and makes his own obedience to the law the standard on which he asks for judgment. This disciple just as assuredly commits spiritual suicide as does the disciple who erases the law from his (or her) heart and mind.

Whereas physical circumcision was the usually concealed identifier of a physical Israelite, spiritual circumcision is now that usually concealed identifier of who has been born from above. In this physical realm, spiritual birth cannot be detected by sight or by taste or by touch. It should be, but is not always revealed by prolonged observation. But in the heavenly realm, it is discernable by its presence or absence. Hence, God knows His own, as do the angels. Unfortunately, human beings do not necessarily know who is of God, or who has been born from above. As Paul observed, Satan has

servants who pose as ministers of righteousness. And too many disciples tithe to, and give offerings to those who have been turned over to Satan by genuine elders of fellowships. This is not a new problem, but one that began in the 1st Century. It is, though, still a persistent problem.

Tithing is an act of faith that has solid Scriptural support. It is certainly doing less than selling all one has and distributing the money among the poor. It is the disciple's opportunity to test spirits, to test results, to determine who best does the work of God here on earth. But the tithe was never the Israelite's portion of his harvest. Likewise, the tithe is not the disciple's money once it is given. If the money is given to a disguised minister of Satan—and if the money was given in good faith—the money will produce little or no increase for God, and by extension, gain for the disciple. Thus, a disciple can, for a lifetime, send money to a ministry of Satan and acquire for God little or no profit. The disciple has, by extension, produced little or no reward for him or herself, but the disciple did not bury his or her pound or talent.

Today, *The Philadelphia Church* contends with would-be teachers of Israel who do not understand spiritual birth, as well as contends with teachers of lawlessness. The first teaches disciples to keep the law, but assigns significance to keeping the law (they are physically minded). The latter would have disciples erase the laws of God that have been written on hearts and minds—they teach a dispensation of Grace that will cause the vast majority of the Church to rebel against God in the first of seven endtime years of tribulation.

If a disciple elects not to tithe, let this disciple remain silent about the subject. If this disciple becomes a root of bitterness and causes others not to tithe, this disciple should be turned over to Satan. He or she harms the fellowship and the sanctified little ones.

What constitutes the tithe and how many tithes are there—there is only one—will be next week's subject.

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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