

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 *the Sabbath*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of July 29, 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 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verses 1 through 4; followed by 2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9.

Commentary: A fundamental doctrinal schism separates a minority of the endtime Christian Church from the far larger majority: this schism is over the day on which disciples are to worship God. Sunday? Or Saturday? And for most fundamentalist denominations, the linguistic referent */Sabbath/* is attached to the day of worship.

Which day is the New Covenant Sabbath? Or are Christians to rest from their labors on a particular day of the week? Should Christians work every day as God works every day?

God doesn't take *a day off* from answering prayers, does He? So if God works every day, should not Christians imitate God as Jesus did (John 5:17)?

For a long time to disciples, the above questions seem like so much foolishness. Opinions were crafted in beliefs decades ago—and if God didn't give an unspoken command to worship on Sunday, then the entirety of the Reformed and most of the Protestant Church pays homage to popery, which claims credit for Sunday worship.

So returning to the foolishness of rhetorical questions, does the referent *Sabbath* even pertain to New Testament worship? Does the New Testament teach a 7th-day Sabbath observance? And if it does, where does it do so? Is not taking up an offering part of a Christian worship service—and if the Apostle Paul commands the saints at Corinth to lay aside an offering on the first day of the week, does he not by inference also command them to worship on Sunday?

Before addressing the subject of giving—

The person reading should read Philippians chapter 2, verse 18; followed by 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 15.

Commentary: All of the Christian fellowships in Asia had turned away from the Apostle Paul and from the foundation he laid before he was martyred. So the writings and practices of these churches, especially a century after turning away from the only valid foundation laid, are not the teachings of Paul, and by extension, they are not of Christ. All must be rejected as apostate writings. Therefore, an endtime disciple cannot use "Christian" writings or practices beyond those recorded in canonical Scripture and

remain certain that the disciple builds on the foundation of Christ Jesus. Endtime disciples should not look to 2nd or 3rd Century theologians, particularly not those in Asia Minor, for the foundation of the house of God laid in the heavenly city of Jerusalem. It was because of the fellowships in Asia's turning away from the *Truth* for one, two, and most of three centuries that all of Christendom was sent into mental captivity in spiritual Babylon, this captivity formalized when the Roman Emperor Constantine determined what would be sound doctrine for the Christian Church at the Council of Nicea (325 CE).

Therefore, according to what Paul writes a second [canonical] time to the saints at Corinth, endtime disciples see that the offering to be collected on the first day of every week began a year earlier (2Co 8:10) than when Paul writes this latter epistle to the Corinthians. This was not a practice that began with Peter and John in Jerusalem, but a practice begun by Paul for the mid-century relief of the saints in Jerusalem. And if no grains were available to be purchased in or near Jerusalem, the collection would not have been of money, which has no value when there is nothing to purchase, but of sacks of grain that would, indeed, keep a year before being transported to Jerusalem. Oil and wine would certainly keep a year stored in amphorae. Plus, handling sacks of grain or amphorae of oil is real work and not labor necessarily appropriate for the Sabbath, for this is work that can be done on the first day of the week.

The Apostle Paul says that what he writes is not a command, but a proof of the genuineness of the love of the saints at Corinth (2Co 8:8).

Not a command? But the assembling of a love offering involving manual labor—endtime disciples need a more conclusive textual reference than setting aside an offering on the first day of the week to scripturally establish Sunday as the day on which they should formally worship God, especially when Jesus clearly says that the person who relaxes the least of the commandments [from “the Law and the Prophets”] and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, and the person who keeps these same commandments and teaches others to do so shall be called great (Matt 5:19). The Sabbath commandment is, by every comparison, the least of the commandments. And the disciple who is faithful in what is least will be called great, a consistent principle appearing in the parables of Jesus.

Many arguments can be made for why disciples are not under *the Law of Moses*, which is a very imprecise linguistic referent. Is *the Law of Moses* the covenant made at Sinai (Ex chaps 19-24), or the additional covenant made on the Plains of Moab (Deu 29:1), or the covenant made with the nation God led by the hand out of Egypt (Ex chaps 12-14)? And where is circumcision found in *the Law of Moses*, made between Israel and God on the journey from the Sea of Reeds to the River Jordan?

Surprised by the above last reference to a covenant made on ***the day*** God led Israel from Egypt? You shouldn't be. The prophet Jeremiah identified the covenant Israel failed to keep that will lead to “a new covenant” (Jer 31:31) as “the covenant that I [YHWH] made with their fathers on ***the day*** when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (v. 32 — emphasis added). Thus, according to the prophet Jeremiah, God made a covenant with Israel on the 15th of Abib, the day on which Israel ate the Passover lambs that nation had slain. And it is this relatively unrecognized covenant made on the day of the first Passover that forms the shadow and copy of the endtime Second Covenant made on the day of the day of the Second Passover.

The contractual terms of the mostly unrecognized Passover covenant can be found from Exodus chapter 11 through chapter 15.

The reader should now read these four chapters.

Commentary: No Sabbath day is mentioned; no commandment against murder, adultery, coveting, lying, stealing, idols is mentioned. What is mentioned is selecting a paschal lamb on the 10th day of the first month, killing this lamb on the evening of the 14th day, roasting this lamb whole beginning on the dark portion of the 15th day, and eating it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs—and with loins girded, feet shod, and staffs in hand. What is promised is physical liberation from physical bondage to Pharaoh, with back wages paid in the form of gold and silver jewelry and fine clothing.

Additional terms [besides the institution of the Passover] made on this day include that whatever is first to open the womb, both of man and beast, belongs to the Lord.

The people of Israel left Egypt equipped for battle; they left with a high hand; and they were on their way to a promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey—a land that served as the geographical representation of God’s rest (Ps 95:10-11).

The covenant made with the circumcised nation on ***the day that God took Israel by the hand to lead this nation out of Egypt*** didn’t include the *Decalogue*, or the promise of spiritual circumcision. It was a covenant that was not ratified by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the lives of Egyptian firstborns, both of man and beast. God gave the lives of Egyptians as the ransom for Israel’s liberation (Isa 43:3). And God will again give the lives of men for the ransom of His holy people (*v.* 4).

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The reader should read Hebrews chapters 8 through 10, with emphasis placed on verses 18 through 23 of chapter 9, and verse 10 of chapter 10.

Commentary: Covenants that are earthly shadows of spiritual covenants, including the marriage covenant, are established by the shedding of blood and are continued until blood is again shed. Literally, a compact or covenant [Heb: *bereeth*] occurs between blood to blood, or cutting to cutting. Thus, the covenant made on ***the day*** when God brought Israel by the hand out from Egypt began with the shedding of blood by Passover lambs—and by the death of Egyptian firstborns not covered by the blood of a paschal lamb—and continued until blood was again shed. Therefore, throughout all of natural Israel’s generation, the circumcised nation was to remember the day when God brought Israel by the hand out from Egypt through the sacrifice of a paschal lamb on the evening of the 14th of Abib.

To this first Passover covenant, God added another covenant—a covenant by which the firstborn natural son of God (Ex 4:22) could become the holy nation of God (Ex 19:5-6). Note: the Passover covenant was not abolished when the Sinai covenant was offered, for the Passover covenant could only be abolished by the shedding of blood. What occurred when the Sinai covenant was added to the Passover covenant was the ending of natural grace (Rom 5:13). The circumcised nation, with knowledge of sin coming through the *Decalogue*, became responsible for its lawlessness. Therefore, it needed a “covering” for its spiritual nakedness [Israel was made naked by its circumcision] or it would immediately die for every transgression of the Law. And a temporary covering was given to this nation through the sacrifice of bulls and goats.

The Sinai covenant was ratified by the blood Moses threw onto the covenant, the altar, and the people (Ex 24:5-8)...again, this Sinai covenant did not abolish the

Passover covenant—and both this Sinai covenant and the Passover covenant were copies of heavenly covenants, for both were ratified by the shedding of blood (Heb 9:23).

To the Sinai covenant and to the Passover covenant, both shadows of spiritual realities, was added the Moab covenant (Deu 29:1), which includes everything written in the Book of Deuteronomy (30:9-10). And this latter covenant is not ratified by blood, but by a song (Deu chap 32) which all Israelites were to recite. Moses warned this uncircumcised nation that failure to keep the words would cost the nation its life.

Note: the Passover covenant will be replaced by a Second Passover covenant as the first Adam was a type of the last Adam. The Sinai covenant will be replaced by a Second Covenant by which a nation that was not before a nation shall become the holy nation of God (1 Pet 2:9-10). But the Moab covenant made with uncircumcised Israelites will not be replaced by a Second Moab covenant, for the first Moab covenant promises spiritual circumcision upon obedience by faith (Deu 30:1-2). What the Moab covenant promises is that failure to remember and keep the words of Moses uttered on that day before the uncircumcised nation crossed the Jordan to enter into God's rest would cost the evildoers their lives.

And the *Decalogue* is made a part of the Moab covenant.

The very imprecise icon phrase *the Law of Moses* is ratified in two parts by blood and in one part by song. The two parts ratified by blood will be abolished by their spiritual reality, with their abolishing requiring the shedding of blood. And at Calvary, the first Passover covenant was abolished to be replaced by a Second Passover covenant ratified by drinking from the cup (Matt 26:27-28). Every disciple is, today, under this Second Passover covenant—and the disciple who does not take of the cup on the night that Jesus was betrayed (1Co 11:23-29) is outside of the covenant by which Jesus covers the disciple's sins.

The Sinai covenant extends forward in time until it ends through the shedding of blood, which is why the writer of Hebrews says that the first covenant is "becoming obsolete and growing old" (Heb 8:13) and is ready to vanish away. It hadn't yet been abolished when the epistle to the Hebrews was written, for the shedding of blood abolishing this covenant would be the blood of the physical Jerusalem, shed by Roman swords from Jerusalem to Masada—and to be shed again in physical Jerusalem during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation.

Two parts ratified by blood and copies of spiritual realities—this pattern is repeated in God turning His hand against two parts of humankind and accepting the third part after trying the faith by fire and by pressure of this third part (Zech 13:7-9). The Moab covenant forms the basis through which God will accept spiritual sons, and this Moab covenant is all of the Book of Deuteronomy.

The above examination of the covenants forming *the Law of Moses* made with the first nation of Israel directly relates to the covenant made with the latter nation of Israel, that nation whose circumcision is of hearts by Spirit and not by the letter of the Law (Rom 2:29). So from last week's reading, the following has been included:

- 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).

There is nothing mentioned by Moses about Christians keeping the 8th-day as the *Christian Sabbath*, or day of worship. There is, though, mention made by Jesus about Moses being Israel's accuser (John 5:45-47).

A person can deny that his or her accuser has the authority to accuse the person of wrongdoing. This person can convince friends and family that the person's accuser is without authority. This person can ignore his or her accuser until the day when judgments are revealed. Then, the bet the person made with God will be called. The last card will be turned face up, and the person who bet wrongly will become "a better sacrifice" (Heb 8:23) burned in the lake of fire.

You make this bet when you bet against Moses being your accuser. How sure of your bet are you? Sure enough to gamble eternity on your reading of Scripture, when you know that Jesus lived as a Judean? On the authority of Christ Jesus, I will assure you yet again that you cannot enter into God's rest on the 8th-day. Not now. Not tomorrow. Not a thousand years from today.

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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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