

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary are more extensive for this week and next than will be usual; for the following will most likely be new and unfamiliar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection *returns to the role of women in the new covenant*, part seven.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of August 6, 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.

Two questions have arisen concerning these readings that should be here addressed: the first asks why public prayer to open services when Jesus said, "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matt 6:6) The situation being addressed is in the preceding verse: "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others" (v. 5). Jesus' admonishment against public prayer was to stop praying to be seen by men, who reward the flesh through giving unjustified respect to the person posing as a spiritual pillar. Jesus' admonishment is consistent with His teaching about the movement from physical to spiritual, about the commandments of God when written on stone tablets governing the flesh while when written on the heart and mind (Jer 31:33 & Heb 8:10) governing the desires of the heart and thoughts of the mind [anger & lust — Matt 5:22, 28]. Therefore, since opening and closing prayers are not said to be publicly seen by men, but as a sincere invitation and as a sincere acknowledgement that Jesus be involved in the service, and that He is involved because two or three are gathered in His name.

The second question concerns why should someone be in charge. This question has a corollary question: why two or three hymns instead of six or however many people feel like singing? And the answer to both is that all things are to be done decently and in order. Chaos results when no one has ultimate responsibility for establishing a routine and making sure that the expectations of the fellowship are met. There is no set number of hymns that can be or should be sung. Singing two or three makes sure that some are sung, for when the emphasis is on teaching or doing a work or prophecy, singing gets neglected. Thus, the numbers *two* and *three* are used to make sure that those disciples who desire to sing are able while not making singing a burden to those other disciples who are not interested in music. Fellowships are, obviously, free to use whatever number they desire without making services burdensome to those who attend. But because this number requires someone to establish it, someone has to be in charge

Now to this and next week's readings: again, because the following hasn't been previously taught concerning *Canticles*, the Reading will primarily address the form of the book, and not the meaning of the text. It is recommended that the one presenting the service spend time addressing what the lines seem to mean apart from the doubling or quadrupling of meaning that the form suggests. Hence, this week's reading will be continued a second week so that the fellowship doesn't rush through this short but very important book.

The first passage read should be Canticles or Song of Solomon, chapters 1 and 2.

Commentary: Hebrew poetry is structured in a logical but often complex coupling of thoughts, the first half of the couplet physical or addressing the hand or body, with the second half spiritual or addressing the heart and mind. The first presentation of an idea conveys the shadow of a spiritual reality, in the way that shadows represent darkness. The second presentation of the same idea conveys the spiritual reality, or light. But translators, not usually being poets nor understanding Hebraic poetics, haven't always well conveyed this hand/heart juxtaposition, especially where the ancient poet used a movement of thought couplets in a manner similar to how Indo-European poets (language users) have used movements of sound to convey complexity. Therefore, since *Canticles* is written as poetry, it is written with apparent repetition that actually has meaning in the movement within the repetition.

Although *Canticles* is usually, within Christian fellowships, said to be a series of love poems that portray the idealized relationship between Christ and the Church, problems exist with this teaching. The first problem is Solomon!

When Israel left Egypt, the nation was to enter God's rest. But this nation, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, never entered God rest (Ps 95:10-11). Because of this nation's unbelief (Heb 3:19), it died in the wilderness once the Law came and sin was reckoned to the nation (Rom 5:13). This nation in Egypt and prior to Sinai sinned without its lawlessness being counted against it as sin; thus, the nation was under a form of grace—actually, the spiritually lifeless (v.14) shadow of grace. Thus, the liberation of Israel, while a historical event, is also the spiritually lifeless shadow of the Church's (collectively) liberation from lawlessness through the revealing (or disrobing) of the Son of Man, the body of whom consists of disciples. And as with a man, the head is uncovered; the Head is Christ Jesus. The body is robed in the putting on of Christ (Gal 3:27); a garment that is like the brightness of the sun (Rev 12:1). This garment or robe that is Christ is His righteousness, is grace. No sin is even imputed to a disciple until the disciple appears naked in his (or her) judgment. That is no sin is imputed to a disciple until the Son of Man is revealed at the beginning of [seven endtime years of tribulation](#). Disciples will then be empowered by the Holy Spirit so that sin has no claim over the action of their hands and bodies. If disciples then sin, they will commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will not be forgiven. They will, if they sin, by their actions argue that empowerment by the Holy Spirit wasn't enough to keep them from transgressing the commandments

of God. And the commandment that they will transgress first is the least of the commandments, the Sabbath commandment, entering into God's rest on the seventh day. They, like the nation that left Egypt, will attempt to enter God's rest on the following day (Num 14:40-41). For their unbelief (v. 11), they will die (v.35). They will rebel against God when the man of perdition is revealed (2 Thess 2:3). Thus, the covering of the head of the woman—and the uncovering of the head by the man—has specific prophetic importance. Although disciples are the Body of the Son of Man (i.e., of Christ), they are also the Bride of Christ. They will “marry” the Son of God so that through marriage the two will become one (Gen 2:24) as Jesus prayed (John 17:20-23). Therefore, the covering or hair of the woman is symbolic of the righteousness of Christ, of a garment of grace. The men of Israel through circumcision removed their natural covering and appeared naked before God. They were not covered by the garment of grace or by its shadow once the law was given at Sinai. And the Christian male who circumcises for religious reasons (as the Circumcision faction taught) removes the righteousness of Christ, removes grace, and now appears naked before God before being fully empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul was so terribly against what the Circumcision faction taught, for these teachers of Israel cause disciples to commit spiritual suicide.

All of this leads back to Solomon, for when the children of the nation that left Egypt crossed the Jordan, they entered God's rest—but the people of Israel were too few to occupy all of the land, so not all of it came to them under Joshua even though God gave them rest (Josh 21:44). Israel under Joshua and under the judges forms the shadow of the Church collectively, and of disciples singularly, in that the law of sin and death, like Philistines and other Canaanites (Josh 13:1-7) in Judea, continues to dwell in the flesh of disciples (Rom 7:25). God gave Israel rest, but not full victory over the land. Likewise, disciples are set free from the law of sin and death, but the law of sin and death continues to dwell in their members, a mystery that Paul did not understand. For the full liberation of disciples comes through empowerment by the Holy Spirit when the Son of Man is revealed. This occurs at the [beginning of the Tribulation](#).

Two hundred twenty days into the Tribulation, the majority of the disrobed Church will rebel against God by trying to enter His rest on the following (or 8th) day, as has been the custom of Christianity since its antiquity. As the circumcised nation rejected God by demanding a king, so too will the Church. However, Israel's first king, Saul, a man head and shoulders taller than the rest of the nation (1 Sam 10:23), but naturally or physically taller than others—a man like Ishmael the first or natural son of Abraham, and like Esau the first son born to the son of promise—is rejected. Whereas the nation's second king, David, a man spiritually taller than others in Israel, was a man after God's own heart. David was greatly loved by God, but he was a bloody man. He was physically as disciples will be spiritually in the Tribulation, when disciples become spiritually bloody through mentally resisting and prevailing against the man of perdition, and the true antiChrist. And as disciples entering the Tribulation will not physically enter the Millennium but will be either glorified or burned in the lake of fire, David was not allowed to build the permanent temple of God. He prepared materially for the

building, but his son Solomon does the actual building. God gives Solomon rest, as his name indicates.

The reader should now read 1 Chronicles chapter 22, verses 9, and 17 through 19.

Commentary: Israel under Solomon forms the shadow of the Church in the Millennium, not in this present age. The Church is singularly and collectively the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17). So the temple/Church built in the Millennium is a beautiful building, but Israel under Solomon built for the king an even more magnificent house—and at the end of a thousand years, when Satan is loosed for a short season, humanity turns from God as Solomon when old turned from God because of his many foreign wives.

Thus, the Church in the Millennium, when all of humanity enters into God's rest, is the spiritually living reality of the physically circumcised nation during Solomon's reign. Solomon's wisdom and wisdom literature forms the lifeless shadow of the spiritual knowledge and spiritual literature that will be produced during the Millennium. Solomon's wisdom writings are about that which is physical; the Church's millennial writings will be about that which is spiritual. So Israel under Solomon anticipates humankind's entrance into God's rest and life in the Millennium.

The second problem was how to convey the sense that *Canticles* is both prophecy about and a foreshadowing of events on the other side of an actual division in the course of human history. The return of the Messiah following the baptism of the world in the Breath of God will dramatically alter reality, for human nature is a received nature, the product of the prince of the power of the air, and not exclusively the production of biology. And one way storytellers have used to indicate a turning of reality is through telling a story as a play. An example is in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, itself a play (*all the world is a stage*), having within the play the drama *The Mousetrap*, which is used to trap the king, or used to cause the king to reveal his complicity in Old Hamlet's death. Drama is, therefore, a now commonly used narrative form to indicate an alternative reality.

What hasn't been widely recognized is that *Canticles* is a three part or three role drama, written in Hebraic verse, meaning that it carries dual meaning within the text (that of hand and of heart, of body and of mind; that which is outside of a person and that which is inside the person; that which is physical and that which is spiritual). The visible movements of characters on a stage suggests this doubling, so the book becomes a doubling of an altered reality, thereby making the book a very complex work.

Again, King Solomon was given rest (1 Chron 22:9, 17-19), Israel's second period of rest (Josh 11:23 & 22:4) since entering God's rest (Ps 95:10-11). Thus, the geography of Judea represents God's rest, and peace in this landscape represents rest in a place of rest, or the millennial reign of Christ Jesus. Therefore, Solomon's reign—and the wisdom given Solomon—represents as its shadow

the Church, and wisdom imparted by the Holy Spirit in the Millennium. Solomon's sin, now, foreshadows the sin of the Church, for the greater Church has presently wed many foreign wives or concepts or doctrines or theologies which will eventually be remembered in the Millennium. The Apostle Paul would not recognize the greater Christian Church as "Christian," for Paul taught on the Sabbath, taught that the Law was good and was holy. He taught disciples to take the sacraments on the same day that Jesus was betrayed. He kept the high Sabbaths, and he told Gentile converts at Colossae, who had never before kept the Sabbath, new moons, or festivals, not to let their relatives and former friends judge them concerning food and drink. He wrote to encourage these Gentile converts, who were suddenly living contrary to the mores of the Hellenistic societies of Asia Minor, not contrary to Mosaic law which they had never before kept.

The three roles in the drama of *Canticles* are "She," based on the gender and number [female singular] of the speaker; "He," based on the same criteria; and "Others." In Greek three-part drama, which this anticipates if it were written by Solomon, the two central characters are on stage, and onto the stage dance the chorus, dividing left and right so that an equal number of singers are on both sides of the stage. The spokesperson for the chorus will address either or both characters, or the other half of the chorus that can, with one voice, answer the spokesperson back. In Greek drama, what the chorus speaks is sung. In *Canticles*, the daughters of Jerusalem represent the chorus.

Since *Canticles* is received without stage directions and is usually not recognized as a staged drama, and since it is further received in translation or even by a Hebrew speaker, not in the first language of its auditor (first languages govern perception of reality), a definitive reading of the book is not possible. Understanding has to be given through hearing the voice of Christ, and full understanding comes when it is time for the book to be understood, a Catch-22 situation that must be accepted. Because the book is often taught without understanding, it is now presented here for its complex imagery that speaks to the male/female relationship.

Bluntly, *Canticles* is perceived to portray an idealized relationship between a man and a woman, but no idealized relationship exists in the book. Rather, when the book is appreciated, a disciple will understand why after a thousand years under Christ Jesus' rule some people will follow Satan when he is loosed.

The first speaker is *She*, whose utterance moves from kisses of the mouth to love [hand/heart construction], oil to name [again the hand/heart metaphor], followed by "Draw me after you; let us run. / The king has brought me into his chambers" (v. 4). Discussion of what these lines seem to mean to the person conducting the services would be appropriate, for *She* addresses differing audiences... *She* has turned from the character *He* to the chorus and audience, and her last line is, most likely, directed to the chorus. For the chorus answers back: "We will exult and rejoice in you" a sentiment suggesting that *She* somehow represents the chorus, but a sentiment followed by [again hand/heart construction] "we will extol your love more than wine," which suggests *She* loves the chorus. And the

last clause of verse 4 seems to be by the spokesperson for the chorus: “rightly do they love you.” The spokesperson speaks to *She*, and reflects upon the relationship between *She* and the daughters of Jerusalem.

Successful literary compositions teach their audiences how to read the compositions in their first few lines. As a love poem between a man and a woman, too much has occurred in verses 2 through 4. An authoritarian voice has been heard, a voice possessing at least the authority of the spokesperson for the chorus, a voice that could represent the perspective of God. The king’s chamber now doubles as both palace bedroom and the throne of God, when considering that the presentation of *Canticles* is a staged drama. Again, Shakespeare wrote that the whole world is a stage, a profound realization within the context that humanity is continuously observed by God and the angels from the heavenly realm. The writer of *Canticles* used this concept of continual observation, adding to the concept the doubling afforded by Hebraic poetics. A presentation in which two are to become one as in marriage—as in two presentations of the same thought, one of hand, one of heart, to form one couplet—is therefore the perfect subject to convey the concept that human beings are to become one with God. This makes *Canticles* especially interesting for the male character, as will be seen, is flawed, suggesting that perhaps the female character is a personification of the land of Israel, and the male character is Israel under Solomon as a man (or the Church under human governance). The fact that *Canticles* is a play causes it to now be the presentation that is equivalent to the first line of a Hebraic thought couplet.

The above is correct: *Canticles* as a book, as a play, becomes the first line or shadowing line of a thought couplet. Thus, the book can be very sophisticated political criticism, or God rebuking Solomon in a way that Solomon in his wisdom would understand without anyone else necessarily understanding. Jesus did this to the mocking Pharisees in the Lazarus and the rich man parable, which is a classic Cynic, after-death-fortune-reversal story. By Jesus telling the Pharisees the parable, He placed Himself in the role of a Greek master, and them in the role of Greek students. He called them Gentiles without using the word, and called them Gentiles in a manner that they, by their education, understood but that no one else (other than Luke, the educated physician) understood. So *Canticles* is, most likely, the *Logos* redressing Solomon and by extension the Church in a way that was understandable to Solomon and will be understandable to the Church at the proper time (in the Millennium).

Again, because of the complexity of *Canticles*, the book is worthy of considerable reflection. Without this Reading becoming a book itself, comments will henceforth be limited to whom speaks to whom.

The female voice is heard first, then the daughters of Jerusalem, then the spokesperson for the daughters. Now, in verse 5, *She* speaks again to the chorus. Verse 6 could be directed to the chorus, but most likely to the spokesperson for the chorus. *She* then directs verse 7 to *He*, the male character.

He speaks to *She* in verses 8 through 10. The chorus speaks to *She* in verse 11. *She* addresses the chorus in verses 12 through 14. In verse 15, *He* addresses *She*, making a reference to “eyes are doves,” referring to Genesis 8:8. Verses 16 and 17, and verse 1 of chapter 2 are *She* to *He*. Verse 2 of chapter 2 is *He* to *She*. Then the first thought couplet of verse 3 is *She* to *He*. In the second couplet of verse 3, *She* turns and addresses the daughters of Jerusalem. Verses 4 through 7, are all *She* to the chorus, and with verse 7, Scene One of the first Act One concludes—the drama seems to be broken into Acts, but may originally have been presented only in Scenes. If *Canticles* were composed for or by Solomon, the drama predates known Greek dramas, so the concept of dividing plays into Acts as well as Scenes might not exist. The concept isn’t necessary for the presentation of the action. But certainly with verse 7, the first Scene concludes.

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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