

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary are offered as openings into dialogue about the subject or concept. This Sabbath's selection addresses *whether natural disasters such as Katrina are of God*.

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Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of September 17, 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.

The person conducting the services should read or assign to be read Genesis chapters 18 & 19.

Commentary: When the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, Isaac was not yet born. Abraham's only son was Ishmael, the son of Hagar, a woman of bondage and allegorically comparable to present day Jerusalem (Gal 4:21-31). Abraham is called the father of the faithful, and he argues for the salvation of Sodom, the younger sister of Jerusalem (Ezek 16:46). Certainly Abraham knew of Sodom's wickedness, for he argues for salvation based upon on a few righteous individuals being present among great wickedness.

Again, no son of promise was yet born when Abraham pleaded with the Lord that Sodom might be spared if only ten righteous men were found in the city. The Lord agreed that for the sake of ten righteous men, the city would be spared. But here negotiations ended, for the Lord went His way (Gen 18:33). The Lord knew how many righteous men were in the city, and there were not ten. There was one, Lot, whose righteousness was not perfect. And for the sake of one, the Lord would not spare the city, but would remove the one from the city. Everyone else was utterly destroyed by baptism (i.e., immersion or submersion) by fire as an example of what the earth will experience prior to the coming of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 20:14-21:1).

Isaac was the second born son of Abraham, and comparable to the Jerusalem above, which is of promise (Rev 21:2). This Jerusalem of promise is not today here on earth. And here is where wisdom is required: the Church began as the second Israel, the beloved son of Isaac that wrestled with the Lord and prevailed. But the Church is also the firstborn son of the last Adam, and the Church was born into bondage, in that the law of sin and death dwells in its members (Rom 7:25). It is as Israel was when that firstborn son of the Lord (Exod 4:22) dwelt in bondage to Pharaoh. The Church is in need of liberation from bondage to sin. It presently lives through the first half of the long night of watching that began when the Passover Lamb for the household of God was sacrificed at Calvary. [Death angels will again pass throughout the land](#) at the midnight hour, slaying physical and

spiritual firstborns who have not covered their sins with the blood of the Lamb. Thus, the Church roasts its paschal Lamb with fire, and it eats of this Lamb with its feet shod and loins girded and staffs in hand. But it eats while still in bondage, while still in Babylon.

Because the Church remains in bondage to the law of sin and death that dwells in its members, the Church is as Ishmael was; i.e., it is today the firstborn spiritual son of Abraham. The second son that is of promise will be born when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh halfway through seven endtime years of tribulation. Thus, the destruction of Sodom, Jerusalem's younger sister, occurs before the son of promise is born, this son of promise being all of humanity who were not previously born of Spirit—when Christ Jesus returns, every person who has endured to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13). They will be saved, for they will have been born from above, or born of Spirit. Enduring to the end, however, will mean not taking the mark of the beast [*chi xi stigma*], the mark of death, the tattoo of the Cross. Those who have taken unto themselves the mark of death, the fourth horseman (Rev 6:8), shall be killed by Christ Jesus and his returning army.

Spiritually, the Church is as Ishmael was...Ishmael dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran, halfway or so between Egypt [sin] and Judea[God's rest]. Ishmael was physically circumcised, just as the Church today is spiritually circumcised. But Ishmael married an Egyptian woman; his mother was an Egyptian. And the greater Church today was conceived in sin, then married sin, with this lawlessness (1 John 3:4) being especially visible by the day upon which it attempts to enter God's rest.

Disciples should do as Abraham did: they should reason with God to save sinners for the sake of the righteous who dwell among them. These sinners will, someday, be born from above and will become the great harvest of God. In particular, if these sinners live to the middle of the seven endtime years of tribulation, they become the featured great harvest that is silently ripening even though they are not now part of the Body of Christ. They will become the Body when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh.

The Lord is today doing a mighty work apart from the efforts of the greater Church. This work is being done with a remnant of those spiritually circumcised disciples who left Babylon nearly five centuries ago. And in the near future, this work will be done by the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth (Zech 4:14 — compare to Rev 11:4). These two witnesses are like the two who went into Sodom to bring forth Lot. These two will go into the Church that has become an allegorical representation of enslaved Jerusalem, and they will bring forth from the Church those who are righteous. But few righteous sons of God will dwell in enslaved Jerusalem after the Church has been empowered (and by extension, liberated) by the Holy Spirit.

The reader should now read Genesis chapters 6 through 9.

Commentary: The Lord will not again destroy human beings with water—it wasn't the Lord who caused people to die by drowning in the Southeast Asian tsunami last December, or in New Orleans this month. His promise is, never again (Gen 9:11). And while some will argue with the word "all," those who would argue do so from ignorance. Destruction from the Lord is complete, as complete as the Flood of Noah's day was, when only the eight survived, or as complete as when Sodom was destroyed by fire, with only Lot and his daughters surviving. Destruction that comes from God doesn't leave some who are unrighteous alive while killing some who are righteous. Rather, when destruction comes from the Lord, all of the unrighteous perish, and the few righteous live. And this is especially important to remember as wars and natural disasters become even more frequent.

The reader should now read Matthew chapter 24, verses 1 through 14.

Commentary: The seven endtime years of tribulation begin between verses 8 and 9. The delivery of the "good news" [[gospel](#)] that all who endure to the end shall be saved comes during the first half of these seven endtime years, occurs during the 1260 day ministry of the two anointed ones. The "end" references the last three and a half years when Satan is cast to earth (Rev 12:9-10) and comes against the saints as a roaring lion, knowing that his time is short.

Satan will come, when cast into time, claiming to be the returning Messiah. He will come in the fall of the year, and he will deceive many. But he will not deceive the remnant who keep the commandments and have the spirit of prophecy (Rev 12:17, coupled with Rev 19:10). They will be as Joshua and Caleb were, and they will lead the saints to victory over Satan, a victory won by enduring in faith to the end. They will know that when God sets His hand to destroy wickedness, no wickedness shall survive. There will be no wars, no false peace, no abominable behavior. Instead, the dead shall rise, some to joy, some to everlasting contempt. And the false messiah with his two demonic cohorts will be taken.

Destruction that is of God will not be incomplete, nor will it leave a wet city able to rebuild itself. *Katrina* isn't of God, which is not to say that God cannot use the disaster for His purposes. Indeed, He can—and He will.

The reader should now read Psalms 93 & 94.

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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