

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 signs.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of October 13, 2007

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 Matthew chapter 16, verses 1 through 4; and chapter 12, verses 38 through 42; followed by Jonah chapters 1 through 3.

Commentary: Seeking signs is *prima facie* evidence of lack of faith. The person seeking a sign doesn't trust God, doesn't believe God, and has doubts about whether God even exists; for to seek a sign will have the person believing the sign rather than God; i.e., believing what is visible and physical rather than what is invisible and spiritual. Signs, as necessary reassuring reminders, become idols that will cause the person to stumble in the person's walk with Christ.

Gideon sought a sign, and three times received a sign, but for his lack of faith, Gideon had to take 300 men against a Midianite army of 135,000. However, afterwards, when the men of Israel told Gideon to rule over them, Gideon refused, saying that "the Lord will rule over you" (Judges 8:23). He rightly understood that God had given Israel release from the Midianites; nevertheless, he made a gold ephod that was set up in Ophrah, and all Israel whored after it there, worshipping it rather than God. Thus, the ephod became a snare for Gideon and his family (*vv.* 24-27). It stood as a marker revealing Israel's lack of faith.

When Jesus was asked for a sign, any sign He would have given would have likewise resulted in Israel building a snare for itself—and such is the case with the one sign that He gave: the sign of Jonah.

The sign of Jonah isn't a solar eclipse as some would have the spiritually circumcised nation of Israel believe; it isn't being in the grave for two nights and a day; it isn't resurrection Sunday morning. The sign of Jonah is being dead for three days and three nights, then being brought back to life to be the spokesman for God ... Nineveh worshiped Dagon, the fish god. When the great fish spewed Jonah out, the prophet became a man sent from Dagon, a man the inhabitants of Nineveh would believe and did believe. Thus, the inhabitants of Nineveh will rise up in their resurrection (in the great White Throne Judgment) to condemn the men of Israel, who, when the *Logos* or Spokesman came from Israel's God, did not believe the One sent but killed the Spokesman. Therefore, the sign of Jonah became a snare for Israel by which this

physical nation stumbled so that salvation could come to *the nations* [Gentiles] “so as to make Israel jealous” (Rom 11:11).

But it was not just the broken off natural branches that have been snared by the sign of Jonah: most of Christendom has been equally ensnared in disbelief and lawlessness by this one sign.

In believing the Gospels, disciples of Christ Jesus will acknowledge that Jesus was in the heart of the earth [i.e., the grave] for three days and three nights as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights; for to deny the only sign that Jesus gave is to deny Jesus. Yes, the one who disbelieves this sign does not believe Jesus. The one who disbelieves might believe Jewish tradition that would have Jesus’ disciples stealing away His body, or the one who disbelieves might believe Greek pagans who in their enthusiasm to convert cut the sign in half so they could avoid all things “Jewish”, or the one who disbelieves might believe a false teacher who had “a vision” that reinforced the tradition of early pagan converts. Regardless, the one who disbelieves does not believe Scripture, God, or Christ; so why this one who disbelieves continues to call him or herself a Christian remains the mystery that will not be resolved until judgments are revealed.

Using the timeline present in John’s gospel, Jesus eats the Passover on the dark portion of the 14th of Abib, the first month, then was crucified during the daylight portion of the 14th, the Preparation Day (John 19:31, 42) for the high Sabbath of Passover, the 15th (Lev 23:6) ... “Passover” is a linguistic icon that refers specially to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and generically to the entire period when Observant Jews assembled together in Jerusalem to select, pen, and kill Passover lambs and to keep the days of Unleavened Bread. Pharisees had, when determining when Passover lambs were to be slain, misread Moses (which shouldn’t surprise anyone, for Jesus said none of them kept the Law — John 7:19), and were killing paschal lambs on the afternoon of the 14th, beginning at the ninth hour [at 3:00 pm, or halfway between noon, what Pharisees determined was the first “even” and 6:00 pm, sunset, the second “even”].

The instructions Moses gave for the first Passover were for Israel to kill the selected lambs on the 14th at even, and for Israel not to leave the nation’s houses until daybreak (Ex 12:6, 22). Israel was not to leave the covering of blood during this long night of waiting and watching, not even after the firstborns of Egyptians (of man and beasts) were slain by the death angel. Therefore, Israel could not “spoil” the Egyptians until the daylight portion of the 14th; for the day when Israel left Egypt is the first day of Unleavened Bread, the first day when Israel left Egypt in haste so that its dough could not be raised with the leaven of Egypt.

Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples when Israel in Egypt would have eaten that first Passover—on the night of the 14th, the dark portion of that day. And disciples of Jesus are to eat the Passover on this same night, the night that Jesus was betrayed (1 Co 11:23-26). Therefore, Luke’s account that has, “Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed” (22:7), preceding Jesus eating the Passover on the dark portion of the 14th does not conflict with John’s gospel even though there would seem to be a discrepancy: the Pharisees had the wrong preparation day, and were killing Passover lambs on the wrong day. But apparently, the Pharisees having it wrong was necessary so that Jesus could both eat the Passover, changing the symbols from an actual lamb to bread and wine, an offering of the ground (Cain’s offering)

except on the night that Jesus was betrayed, as well as become the Passover Lamb, sacrificed for Israel's sins. And the previous sentence expresses an overlooked, but vital point: both Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to the Lord. Cain's sacrifice was of the ground and was rejected; yet Cain was not rejected and would have been accepted if he had done well (Gen 4:7). Righteous Abel's sacrifice of a lamb was accepted. Therefore, the disciple who takes the sacraments of bread and wine on any night other than the night on which Jesus was betrayed offers bread and wine to God—offers a sacrifice of the ground. Nevertheless, this person will be accepted by God if this person does well, but sin lurks at this person's door, and sin will devour this person if it can (a personification of sin as disobedience or lawlessness that condemns the person to the lake of fire). But the person who takes the sacraments of bread and wine on the night that Jesus was betrayed—the dark portion of the 14th of Abib—offers to the Lord the Lamb of God as the person's sacrifice, thereby entering into the covenant by which forgiveness of sin covers the disobedience of the person (Mat 26:28).

The person who does not take the Passover sacraments on the night Jesus was betrayed has no covering of Grace, but will be accepted by God if this person does well, meaning if this person covers him or herself with obedience to God in a manner like that of Abraham who “obeyed [God's] voice and kept [God's] charge, [God's] commandments, [God's] statutes, and [God's] laws” (Gen 26:5). It was by faith that Abraham obeyed God's voice “to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance” (Heb 11:8). So *doing well* is not simply a matter of professing that Jesus is Lord with one's mouth, then continuing in disobedience, living as a son of disobedience, a bondservant to sin, ignoring the Passover and occasionally offering to God Cain's sacrifice. The person who continues in uncovered disobedience after receiving the Holy Spirit will be made into a vessel of wrath to be endured for a season, a vessel of destruction to be broken “in order to make known the riches of [Christ's] glory for vessels of mercy” (Rom 9:23). This person lacked the faith necessary to take the sacraments on the night Jesus was betrayed, and if this person took the sacraments at all, took them on another night, thereby offering to God bread and wine.

Returning to the timeline found in John's gospel: Jesus was crucified on the 14th of Abib, died about the ninth hour, and was placed in the Garden tomb as the sun was setting to begin the 15th, the high Sabbath day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day on which Israel left Egypt under the full moon of the first month. He now lay dead in the heart of the earth all of the 15th, one night and one day. He then laid dead all of the 16th, the second night and the second day. He then laid dead all of the 17th, the third night and the third day, and also the weekly Sabbath. Then before daybreak on the 18th, the first day of the calendar week—the weekly cycle based upon the physical creation—Mary found that Jesus was gone from the tomb. So sometime between the end of the weekly Sabbath and the daylight portion of the first day of the week, Jesus was resurrected so that after three days, He was no longer dead but living even though He had not yet ascended to His Father and our Father (John 20:17).

Believing that Jesus was truly in the grave three days and three nights will now have Jesus crucified on Wednesday, mid calendar week, and resurrected on Sunday, mid day of the week of Unleavened Bread that would have begun on the 15th of Abib and run through the 22nd. This movement from mid physical week to mid spiritual week is in agreement with the differing reason for observing the weekly Sabbath as given from atop Sinai (Ex 20:11) and as given on the plains of Moab (Deut 5:15), where the weekly

Sabbath goes from being a memorial to the physical creation to being a memorial to God's liberation of Israel. Thus, the days of Unleavened Bread that began when Jesus' first disciples ate His body in the form of bread and drank His blood from the cup of the fruit of the vine have continued forward and will continue forward for as long as disciples take the sacraments on the night that Jesus was betrayed, thereby covering their disobedience with Christ's righteousness; for no sin is imputed to disciples who take the sacraments. These disciples are no longer in bondage to sin even though sin and death continues to dwell in their mortal members.

Working backwards from Jesus being crucified on Wednesday, the 14th of Abib, John writes that Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover (the 15th), meaning that on the 9th of Abib, Martha and Mary gave a dinner for Jesus (John 12:1-3). The following day, the 10th, the weekly Sabbath, Jesus entered Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. This is what visible Christendom celebrates as Psalm Sunday, but the event did not happen on Sunday, but on the Sabbath—on the day when the Passover lamb was to be selected and penned.

Thus, Jesus entered Jerusalem on the 10th of Abib as both the Passover Lamb of God, a Lamb appropriate to the size of the household of God, and as high priest of the next generation of Israel. He entered the temple and drove out those doing business on the Sabbath; He healed on this Sabbath day the blind and the lame (Matt 21:12-14); then He returned to Bethany, two miles or so away (*v.* 18). The following day, He curses the fig tree (Matt 21:18; Mark 11:12-14).

In Mark's gospel, Jesus cleanses the temple on the day following when He enters Jerusalem. Luke's gospel seems to agree with Matthew's account. So either Jesus cleansed the temple on consecutive days [the 10th & the 11th], or there is a discrepancy between the accounts. Since Jesus had cleansed the temple in a similar manner six months into His ministry (John 2:13-17), and was asked, "What sign do you show us for doing these things" (*v.* 18), the cleansing of the temple was the precursor to the sign given when Jesus answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (*v.* 19), the sign of Jonah. It is reasonable to believe that Jesus cleanses the temple three times, especially since this is the combined testimony of the Gospels. Therefore, it is most likely that Jesus thrice cleansed the temple, once when Passover was at hand three years before He was crucified, then twice again when Passover was at hand at the time of His crucifixion, with the doubling of the cleansing carrying typological significance.

Of course a person can say that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were writing about only one event—one cleansing of the temple—and that they just didn't get their facts right. But if they didn't their facts right as to when Jesus cleansed the temple, then what else isn't right? Either Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning of His ministry, then again at the end of His ministry (twice at the end of His ministry), or the Gospels simply cannot be trusted.

Teaching that Jesus cleansed the temple only once is analogous to teaching that Jesus was crucified on Friday and resurrected on Sunday—that Friday night, Saturday day, and Saturday night equates to the three days and three nights that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish. Any such teaching stems from simply not believing what the text says. This is the domain of skeptics, doubters, and apostates.

Let us here assert that cleansing the temple is a necessary part of the sign of Jonah, the message conveyed in John's account, and that cleansing the temple is analogous to

Jonah being tossed into the sea, the event that immediately precedes Jonah being swallowed by the great fish.

The sign of Jonah, like Jesus being the Bread of Life, is a more complex sign than the sign initially appears. So the following correspondences pertain:

- Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19).
- These three days equate to the three days Jonah is in the belly of the great fish, and are the three days Jesus is in the heart of the earth.
- Destroying the temple, now, equates to the death of the flesh.
- But it isn’t Jesus that destroys *this temple*; rather, it is corrupt temple officials—the high court of Judaism.
- Cleansing the temple by driving out the moneychangers is a confrontational act that leads directly to *destroying this temple*, or to the death of the fleshly body of Christ.
- In this way, cleansing the temple is analogous to Jonah telling his shipmates to throw him overboard. They would not have thrown him overboard—they would not willingly be guilty of shedding innocent blood—if Jonah had not introduced the idea.
- After Jonah said that he was a Hebrew, and feared *YHWH*, the God of heaven, the ship’s crew no longer prays to their gods, but prays to the Lord (Jon 1:14), and offers sacrifice to the Lord (*v.* 16) and made vows.

The sea upon which the ship sails is a universe that is analogous to the temple universe. Jesus causes a tempest in this “temple universe” when He cleanses the temple by driving out the moneychangers in a manner analogous to *YHWH* causing a tempest at sea that threatens the ship and its crew. In the Jonah story, the angry seas are calmed when Jonah is thrown overboard—and the sailors “feared the Lord exceedingly” (Jon 1:16). Two things: the life of one man is sacrificed for the whole of the ship, and the whole of the ship now fears God. Good immediately comes from Jonah being thrown overboard, with additional good to come when Nineveh, upon hearing the preaching of Jonah, repents of its wickedness.

God—in this case, Jesus—had to create a tempest in the temple in a manner similar to how He hurled a great wind upon the sea. In Greek, the same linguistic icon [πνευμα] is used for both wind and the Holy Spirit; so for Jesus through the Holy Spirit to speak the words of the Father on the Sabbath day when He enters the temple to cast out the moneychangers is a type of the antitypical event of *YHWH* hurling a great wind upon the sea.

The tempest created by God—Jesus—is the precipitating event that causes the destruction of the temple that will be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. This is the temple about which Jesus told His disciples that there would not be left one stone upon another (Matt 24:2). Thus, the sign of Jonah is a sign pertaining to the destruction of the temple and to this temple being rebuilt after three days.

When asked for a sign after Jesus feeds the four thousand, Jesus told the inquiring Pharisees and Sadducees, “When it is evening, you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.” And in the morning, “It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening”” (Matt 16:2-3) ... one sign, but two differing contexts producing opposing meanings—the sign of a red sky pertains to sailing and the sea.

Jesus gives one sign—that of Jonah—which like a red sky has two differing meanings: one of peace when the sign precedes darkness, and a second meaning of turmoil and tempest when preceding the hot portion of the day.

Here understanding is required: as there was first the physical body of Jesus, crucified at Calvary, buried in the Garden Tomb, resurrected after three days and three nights to ascend to the Father as the reality of the Wave Sheaf Offering (the first handful of new crop barley harvested that year), there is also the spiritual Body of Christ, the great harvest of firstfruits that will be completely gathered into barns by the Feast of Weeks, with this spiritual Body crucified with Christ and buried with Him by baptism into death (Rom 6:3-7). Just as the gates of Hades did not prevail over the physical body of the man Jesus lest He suffer corruption, the gates of Hades will not prevail over the spiritual Body of Christ lest it suffer corruption. However, as the physical body of Jesus died and was resurrected after three days, the spiritual Body of Christ also died and will be resurrected after the third day ... the spiritual Body of Christ dies from loss of breath, or loss of the divine Breath of God, the Holy Spirit [Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον], with this loss coming when hearts are not cleansed by faith so that they can be circumcised.

Infant baptism is of no value to the child, for physical birth and maturation reveals and must precede spiritual birth and maturation. An immature person will not be raised from the dead through a second birth by receipt of the Holy Spirit—and unless hindered by extenuating circumstances, a mature person must bury the old self in baptism before the heart is cleansed so that it can be circumcised. Sprinkling an infant only scares the baby and subjects the child to pneumonia. Therefore, the Church built from generations of sprinkled infants lacks possessing the Holy Spirit and is dead, and this was the case for centuries. Prior to the Anabaptist movement of the 16th-Century, the visible Church was a spiritually dead entity.

If the Body of Christ spiritually dies, the Body ceases to exist for the Body consists only of those individuals who have the Holy Spirit and circumcised hearts. But if the Body no longer exists, then the Body cannot suffer doctrinal corruption until after it is resurrected to life. The lawlessness of the visible Church would have corrupted the Body if the Body were alive. Thankfully, the Body is dead—and this lawless visible Church serves now only as the *universe* from which God will draw those whom He has “predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29). It is upon this universe that God will send His divine Breath to create a tempest when the spiritual Body is resurrected from death, and it is those of the visible Church (analogous to the Pharisees and Sadducees) who would kill faithful disciples if these disciples do not flee as Jacob fled from Esau.

The red sky, when going into darkness, means fair weather and calm sailing, the conditions that have occurred for the past centuries while the Body was dead. The tempest of the 1st-Century, caused by the Holy Spirit dividing the waters of humanity into those who have been born of Spirit and those who have not been so born (day two of the Genesis chapter one creation account), ended when the Body died (and only of day two does God not say that the day was good). The third day will see the waters divided ... Moses divides the water to walk across dry shod, and to plant crops and trees. From reading Moses, who wrote of Christ, comes the fruit of the Spirit. Therefore the day portion of the third day will be a time of tribulation as the world (and the fourth beast of Daniel 7) attempts to stamp out Moses.

The sign of Jonah will be a sign of turmoil and tribulation when the spiritual Body of Christ is resurrected from death on the third day. Jesus will not have brought peace to this world, but a sword. He will have set a man against his father (especially if this man makes a journey of faith into Sabbath observance) and a daughter against her mother (Matt 10:34-35). And this time of trouble is apparent in the sign of a red sky being analogous to the sign of Jonah.

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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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