

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 *Salvation*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of December 9, 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 Matthew chapter 10, verses 34 through 39.

Commentary: As the holiday season approaches, thoughts turn to peace on earth brought by that child born in a manger nearly two millennia ago, but Jesus said not to think that He came to bring peace ... why do people assume that Jesus came to bring peace? Why does Jesus culturally represent the opposite of what He said He came to do? What happened to the message He brought? The message that He came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother—the message of Christ is that unless a man is set against his father, the man is not worthy of Christ.

The journey of faith of every Christian is represented by the journey of the patriarch Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeas to Canaan, the Promised Land, where after returning from Egypt Abraham waited as a sojourner for the coming of the city of God, the heavenly city of Jerusalem. Abraham did not seek citizenship in the Hittite kingdom then possessing Canaan, nor did he attempt to physically possess the land promised to him as an inheritance. He waited for God to deliver what God promised although he did attempt to help God out by going into Hagar when Sarah presented her hand maiden to him. And little good came from this union of the flesh despite the necessity of it occurring to complete the typology of salvation.

Every Christian must, if the Christian is to enter the kingdom of heaven, make a journey equivalent to the journey of Abraham. Every Christian must leave his or her father and mother, and must strike out for the heavenly city where the Apostle Paul laid the foundation for the house of God (1 Cor 3:10-11). Even if the disciple was born into a house located in Canaan, mentally represented by Sabbath observance, the disciple must still leave his or her natural father as Abraham left his father Terah in the land of Haran, part way between Ur and the landscape of God's rest. The disciple must journey to Jerusalem, then to the temple mount, then upward as a pillar as the disciple supports the endtime harvest of God, the ceiling and roof of the house of God. This endtime harvest is the third part of humankind to be born of Spirit halfway through the seven endtime years, and it will be the pillars coming from the church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:12) that stand on the foundation Paul laid and reach up to the endtime harvest.

The imagery has been present from the beginning: the Apostle Paul tells disciples that as a skilled master builder he laid the foundation, the cornerstone of which is Christ Jesus. Paul writes most of the New Testament. In his epistles he constructs the foundation upon which even the house Moses built rests ... the author of the epistle to the Hebrews wrote that disciples should consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of every Christian (Heb 3:1) who was faithful to the Father who appointed Him as Moses was faithful to *Yah*, the *Logos*, the Spokesman for the Father as Aaron was the spokesman for Moses. Thus, the juxtaposition is that as Aaron was faithful to Moses, delivering the words of Moses to Israel, Moses was faithful to *Yah*, delivering the words of *Yah* to Aaron, and *Yah* [*Theos*] was faithful to the Father [*Theon*], delivering the words of the Father to Moses before *Theos* entered His creation as His Son, His only (John 3:16), to deliver the speech-acts of the Father to His disciples, those human beings whom the Father draws from the world (John 6:44, 65). Therefore, as the man Moses first mediated the Second Covenant, made at Moab with the children of Israel (Deu 29:1), some circumcised (those under age 19 when Israel left Egypt) and some uncircumcised (those born in the wilderness)—this Second Covenant promising circumcised hearts following demonstrated obedience by faith (Deu 30:1-2, 6)—Christ Jesus became the mediator of this same Second Covenant when better promises were added.

Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house (Heb 3:3); for Moses as a house rests on the cornerstone that is Christ Jesus, meaning that in the uncommon metaphor the writer of Hebrews employs, all of Moses rests on the foundation the Apostle Paul laid. Thus, the pillars of the house of God, standing on the foundation Paul laid, reach through Moses to support the endtime harvest of Israel, thereby agreeing with what Jesus said: “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how can you believe my words?” (John 5:46-47). So Jesus made believing Moses’ writing the determiner for whether a person can believe His words.

How does that square with the infant Jesus coming to bring peace on earth?

The son of the Observant Jew must by faith profess that Jesus is Lord and believe that the Father raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:6-10), with this professing of faith being the equivalent of Israel in a far land turning to God with all the nation’s heart and mind (again, Deu 30:1-2). This son will now be set against his father—and this son is not worthy of Jesus or of salvation if this son places his relationship with his natural father ahead of his relationship with God, the Father of Christ Jesus and of every disciple (John 20:17).

The son of a Mennonite must by faith begin to keep the precepts of the law, becoming inwardly like the son of the Observant Jew, before this son’s heart is spiritually circumcised (Rom 2:29). Keeping the precepts of the law, especially the Sabbath commandment, will alienate this son of a Mennonite from the faith of his father—and this son of a Mennonite is not worthy of Jesus or of salvation if this son places his relationship with his natural father and the faith of his natural father ahead of his relationship with God.

Paul writes that the son of the Observant Jew will be justified by faith, and the son of the Sunday-observing Mennonite will be justified through faith (Rom 3:30) when both spiritually move beyond the beliefs of their natural fathers. Paul further writes that faith does not overthrow the law, but rather, confirms or upholds the law (*v.* 31); for without

faith, neither the Jew nor the Mennonite would leave the mental land of his nativity to journey into the Promised Land of God's rest.

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The reader shall now read Jeremiah chapter 25.

Commentary: In all things pertaining to Scripture, the visible reveals the invisible and the physical precedes the spiritual (Rom 1:20; 1 Cor 15:46). The visible history of the nation of physically circumcised Israel reveals the invisible history in the heavenly realm of the nation of spiritually circumcised Israel—the history of the Christendom that concerns every disciple wasn't written by Church fathers who ran as fast as they could into lawlessness, but by Christ Jesus through Moses, the judges, and the kings of natural Israel. Thus, physical Babylon serves as a copy and shadow of spiritual Babylon, with Nebuchadnezzar serving as a type of the spiritual prince of this world, the king of Babylon (Isa 14:4-21). Therefore, the letter that Jeremiah wrote to all the people of Judah serves as a copy of the letter Christ Jesus sends to His disciples, who went after other gods and provoked the Father to anger.

God has made Christendom a horror to the world. Lawless disciples have been made into vessels of wrath and destruction to be endured for a season. The entirety of the mental topography of Christendom has become a landscape of ruin and waste ... where is the disciple who will by faith keep the precepts of the law, thereby allowing his or her physical uncircumcision to be counted as circumcision, causing this disciple to live as a spiritual Judean? Certainly some messianic disciples pretend that they are Jews, but they are not. The labor to keep the commandments of God, but they do not hold the testimony of Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy (*cf.* Rev 12:17; 19:10)—and proof that they do not understand prophecy lies in their adding Rome, the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Roman Church to Scripture. Yes, the Roman Empire and Roman Church were and are instruments of the prince of this world, but then every human government is such an instrument, including the democratic government of the United States. No organization can participate in the governance of this world and not become an instrument of the prince of this world.

English Separatists arrived on the shores of North America early in the 17th-Century; German Separatists arrived in the latter decades of the 17th-Century. Both varieties of Separatists began early in the 16th-Century, the English with the separation of English Catholicism from Roman Catholicism which opened avenues of separation to Dissenters, and the German with the Protestant Reformation. English Separatists were ill-equipped for colonization, and were within a few decades overwhelmed and absorbed by Puritans determined to bring Christ's kingdom to New England. But Christ's kingdom is not of this world, nor from this world (John 18:36); thus, it cannot be brought to this world by any assembly of human beings. The attempt to do so was doomed to failure from its beginning because those who attempted to usurped the authority of God to remove the prince of this world from the throne he still occupies even through another [Christ Jesus] has qualified for this throne.

The kingdom of this world will not become the kingdom of the Father and His Christ (*cf.* Rev 11:15; Dan 7:9-14) until God has punished all nations.

Until all nations drink the wine of God's wrath, with spiritual Babylon being the last to drink for this kingdom incorporates all others, the prince of this world remains on his throne—and worthy disciples are Separatists, separated from this world by their liberty to keep the commandments of God. They are no longer mental bondservants to

disobedience. They are free to keep the precepts of the law; they are free to keep the Sabbath commandment, the visible marker revealing who has entered into God's rest.

Worthy disciples leave the mental landscapes of their natural fathers and journey to the heavenly city where God will be their Father. And they undertake this journey without stopping along the way to help the prince of this world make his kingdom function more godlike.

German Separatists—Mennonites, Amish, Old German Baptist Brethren—came to a land already being governed by the followers of William Penn, and these followers of Penn were then and would for another century wrestle with how disciples of Christ Jesus can occupy geographical territory without becoming an agent of the prince of this world. In the end, Penn's followers [the Quakers] accepted the yoke of the prince of this world. Nathaniel Green, a Quaker, became one of George Washington's favorite and most successful generals. Thus, these German Separatists were spared having to form, or make work civil governments. They were free to remain separate.

When Israel under Joshua entered into Judea, Israel was governed by judges, appointed by God. No other form of civil governance is of God. Thus, when Israel asked for a king so Israel would be a nation like its neighbors, Israel rebelled against God and accepted the yoke of the prince of this world even though God choose the first three kings Israel would have.

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The reader should now read 1 Samuel chapter 8.

Commentary: Through Samuel, God tells Israel that they shall be the slaves of the king (v. 17). They shall no longer be a free people, but shall return to slavery—and when Israel cries out to God because of the harshness of servitude to the king, God will not answer.

Hellenistic disciples did not want to be *Jewish*, or do those things that pertained to Judaism, especially after the Judean rebellion in 70 CE. They wanted to be like the religions of the Greco-Roman world, and they rebelled against God as natural Israel rebelled against God during the days of Samuel. These disciples became political animals ... no, not at first, but over time: when Emperor Hadrian banned Jewish practices, a divide was created. On one side were those disciples who would, because of the Emperor's decrees, separate themselves from participation in the Roman Empire in any form. To continue living as a spiritual Judean, they would have to withdraw beyond Rome's geographical borders, or they would have to accept the persecution that would come from continuing to keep the precepts of the law, especially the Sabbath commandment.

On the other side were those disciples for whom keeping the precepts of the law meant keeping the intent of the law—and for these disciples the intent of the law could be kept by worshiping on the 8th-day as well as on the 7th day. Thus, for these disciples observing the Sabbath commandment could be accomplished on Sunday, the holy day of the Roman world, as well or better than on the Sabbath, the only day on which an Israelite can enter into the rest of God.

James the Just said that to break the law in one point was to break the entirety of the law (Jas 2:10); to break the law in one point causes the law to be broken, and makes the person a lawbreaker. Therefore, those disciples in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Centuries who separated themselves from the Roman Empire and from disciples participating in civil governance literally disappeared into the flotsam of history, which records those things

that will cause God's wrath to be poured out upon the world. Once in a while a little of these early Separatists' history is seen in the spindrift of their persecutors, but for the most part separation from this world for them meant separation from recorded history.

In North America, endtime disciples have the luxury of non-participation in civil governance, thereby allowing them to remain separate from this world, and free from bondage to the prince of this world. But too few disciples appreciate what others do for them; too few have love for their neighbors who remain as bondservants to disobedience so the disciple can keep the commandments of God. Too few keep the commandments, especially the Sabbath commandment **which cannot be kept on Sunday**. Too few value just how special they are to God, for if it were not for the sake of the Elect [disciples who keep the precepts of the law], the days of spiritual Babylon would not be cut short and no flesh would be saved alive (Matt 24:22).

Let each one of us give special thanks to God for the freedom to keep His commandments, especially the Sabbath. Let each one of us leave his or her natural parents and journey to where our only parent is God the Father. Let each one of us pray that we become worthy of Christ Jesus.

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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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