

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 *marking*.

Weekly Readings For the Sabbath of December 16, 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 4, verses 1 through 7.

Commentary: Divisions had formed, or were in the process of forming in the fellowship at Corinth when the Apostle Paul addressed this first recorded epistle to the saints in the Greek city that had been destroyed by the Romans two centuries earlier ... in 146 BCE, Lucius Mummius destroyed Corinth for apparently commercial reasons: in the second century BCE, Roman eliminated Carthage in the west as an economic rival, and eliminated Corinth in the east. When Mummius entered Corinth unopposed, he slew all of the men, sold the women and children into slavery, looted the city of its wealth and art treasures, then set what remained ablaze. For a century, only a few local inhabitants dwelt in the ruins of the classical city. It wasn't until Julius Caesar, in 44 BCE, founded a renamed city, *Colonia laus Iulia Corinthiensis*, on the ruins of the former great mercantile *polis* that Corinth emerged from the rubble of history. Thus, its history during the Roman period is similar to the history of Carthage.

When Rome decided to repopulate Corinth, new settlers were, according to the Greek historian Appian, freedmen or manumitted slaves. As such, their origins were from wherever Roman Legions had overwhelmed barbarian tribes or civilized peoples—and a century later, the city remained of mixed ethnicity: Roman, Greek, Jew. It was a city noted for its wealth and immorality. At one time there were reputedly a thousand prostitutes employed by the Temple dedicated to Aphrodite.

In 51 or 52 CE, the Apostle Paul visited Corinth and stayed for eighteen months. He rented a house and taught what he had been given—and after leaving, when he wrote his first epistle of the saints at Corinth he found himself being judged by those whom he had brought to Christ. He wrote, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court” (1 Cor 4:3); so the context is that of the fellowship at Corinth thinking that it should have authority over Paul ... similar situations occur today. This endtime *Philadelphian* fellowship began as an obscure work in southern Illinois early in 2003. One individual brought to others what he had been given. In January 2002, this individual had been given a calling to reread prophecy and to unseal long sealed prophecies. He brought his work to others, and one of the others, the pastor of a Sabbath fellowship composed of mostly former Worldwide Church of God (WCG)

members, joined with him to form a new *Philadelphian* fellowship. Although this pastor was not a former WCG member, but rather, ordained by the Seventh Day Baptists, he had adopted most of the tenets of Armstrongism. However, when *The Philadelphia Church* was emerging doctrinally, he accepted the foundational construct of typological exegesis; he even offended several former WCG members who had supported him financially by, from the pulpit, speaking against Armstrongism's prophetic teachings. But after the individual called to reread prophecy left southern Illinois to begin a new *Philadelphian* fellowship, the pastor returned to precept-upon-precept exegesis and fell backwards (Isa 28:13), ensnared in the misunderstandings of Armstrongism. He now judged the individual called to reread prophecy, and *for major doctrinal differences* he disfellowshipped the individual with whom he had begun a new fellowship in Little Egypt. And such were the problems that the Apostle Paul was having with the fellowship at Corinth where he had taught.

The Apostle Paul wrote that he did not care if he was judged by the saints at Corinth, that he did not even judge himself, but that the Lord judges: "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (1 Cor 4:5) ... saints will be judged when Christ returns [the Second Advent]. This is the just and final judgment for all who are firstfruits, those saints who have been born of Spirit as fruit ripening before its time.

Paul then wrote that he had applied the principles of judgment to himself for the benefit of the saints at Corinth that they might learn not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor 4:6), that none of them become puffed up, pitting the spiritual understanding of one against another ... the fellowship was already splintering because the saints there were aligning themselves with this teacher [Paul], or with that teacher [Apollo] (1 Cor 3:4-6), Paul using his name and Apollo's as examples.

What does it mean, *not to go beyond what is written*?

The visions of the prophet Daniel were sealed and secret until the time of the end (*cf.* Dan 12:4, 9-10; 10:14; 9:24; 8:17, 26; 2:28) when they were to occur. If a vision is sealed, it cannot be understood by anyone until when God unseals it. An endtime vision cannot be understood before *the time of the end*. Although prophets delivered the words of God, it is the *teacher of righteousness* who assigns meaning to these words. Christ Jesus is that teacher of righteousness. Therefore, Christ Jesus speaking the words of the Father as Aaron spoke the words of Moses has uttered directly or indirectly what is written. The Apostle Paul wrote that according "to the grace of God given to [Paul], like a skilled master builder [Paul] laid a foundation [for the house of God]" and "no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:10-11). So the foundation of the house of God is the words uttered and deeds performed by Christ Jesus.

Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world, nor from this world (John 18:36); therefore, Jesus' will not reign over the geographical landscape of this world, but will reign in the heavenly realm over sons of God and the mental topography of all living things.

Paul wrote that "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God ... there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:26, 28). If those who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (*v.* 26), then this new creature that is a son of God is not of this world, and is not made of flesh, but rather dwells in a

tent of flesh (2 Cor 5:1-4). This new creature is born of Spirit (John 3:3-8) into a tent of flesh that is Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. Thus, this new creature is not of this world, nor from this world, but has his citizenship in the kingdom of God.

The author of Hebrews wrote, referring to Christ Jesus, “Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (8:4-5). Thus, the Levitical priesthood, the temple, the sacrifices, the law itself—all are a copy and shadow of heavenly things.

Paul wrote that the visible things of this world reveal the invisible things of God (Rom 1:20), and the physical precedes the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46), that the first Adam was a type of the last Adam (*cf.* Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45).

When it became time to unseal the visions of Daniel, the text that unsealed these sealed and secret prophecies had already been written—and written by Daniel, and confirmed by Jesus in His Olivet Discourse. The visions of Daniel were sealed by the their shadow occurring after the prophecies were delivered ... the shadows of endtime events in the heavenly realm lies horizontally across history, and it is these shadows of successive historical reigns over Jerusalem from Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon through the Greek Antiochus Epiphanes IV that sealed the visions of Daniel, preventing understanding of these prophecies until the time of the end when another man would be called to point disciples to typology and the words that were already written. The secret things of God can be known without going beyond what has been written. But as the saints at Corinth were attempting to tell Paul how to worship God [e.g., the saints at Corinth had written Paul, “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman” — 1 Cor 7:1], fellowships from the 1st-Century CE until now have attempted to tell those few men whom God has called to do a specific work how to worship God. And in every case, those who would instruct the men God has called to a work have gone beyond what is written, have added to Scripture, and have negatively judged the one God has called to a work.

Changing reading strategies—leaving behind grammatico-historical exegesis, or precept-upon-precept exegesis—neither adds to what has been written, nor amounts to a private interpretation ... “exegesis” simply means how a person leaves [exits] a text, as in how a person takes meaning from a text. The person who takes meaning by grammatico-historical exegesis looks back in time to see how early theologians understood a passage, then accepts these early understandings as authoritative. Errant doctrines introduced by early theologians are thus perpetuated by endtime disciples who believe the traditions of men who went beyond what is written.

The person who employs precept-upon-precept exegesis will gather all related passages on a subject, put these passages together, and then conclude that such-and-such is what God has said about a subject. The problem with precept-upon-precept exegesis is the removal of passages from their context, which is the entirety of Scripture. God condemned the drunken priests of Ephraim for how they were teaching Scripture: they were using precept-upon-precept exegesis as if Scripture were a measuring line, a plumb line (Isa 28:5-17 read all of this passage). They were teaching without understanding, and they caused the house of Israel to fall backward, away from God, and be broken, snared, and taken. Likewise, the former Worldwide Church of God and its derivative splinters taught using precept-upon-precept exegesis, and its teachers

caused this fellowship of saints to fall backwards, away from God, and be broken into hundreds of slivers, each ensnared in its past errant understanding of prophecy.

Typological exegesis does not add to what is written, but says that what has been written—all of what has been written—forms the visible shadow and copy of the invisible Book of Life, an unwritten text in which the lives of disciples are epistles from Christ Jesus, written not with ink on parchment [the skin of sheep], but with the Spirit of the living God on human hearts (2 Cor 3:3). Therefore, what has been written forms, when read, an invisible text in the minds of disciples, a text in which the mysteries of God have been revealed and made plain. This invisible text exists in the supra-dimensional heavenly realm where sons of God still dwelling in tents of flesh have their citizenship. And the logic for why one historical event is included in Scripture and another is excluded—both events being valid historically—is that the included event forms part of the shadow of what occurs in the heavenly realm, and the excluded event does not, with the prime example of this being how the sons of light rid the house of God of the abomination that makes desolate. In the shadow, Antiochus Epiphanes IV defiled the temple by placing a statute of Zeus in the Holy of holies, and by sacrificing a pig on the altar. The sons of light [the Maccabees] went to war with this Greek-Syrian king, and defeated him. But in the spiritual reality, the man of perdition will defile the temple of God [disciples are the living stones forming the temple — 1 Cor 3:16-17; 1 Pet 2:4-5] by declaring himself god (2 Thess 2:4) and by attempting to change times and the law (Dan 7:25), and this lawless one will be broken by Christ Jesus (2 Thess 2:8) at the end of the age (Matt 24:15). Thus, Scripture does not prophetically mention Rome, the Roman Empire, the Roman Church, or the Roman bishop. The shadow ends with the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes IV; the spiritual reality forming this shadow ends with the fall of spiritual Babylon when Satan is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9-10). And all who teach that a revived Holy Roman Empire in the form of a United Europe will play a significant role prophetically have added to what is written, and are false prophets.

Here is where judging returns: can a person be judged a false prophet? Or even a false disciple?

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The reader shall now read 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 8, through chapter 5, verse 13.

Commentary: The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the saints at Corinth have no authority over him; yet, these saints were not necessarily of that opinion ... Paul does not have the authority to demand that saints in any fellowship desist from errant worship practices. When saints in the fellowships in Galatia began to physically circumcise themselves, Paul wanted the practice to immediately cease. But he lacked the authority to command these saints: he had to write a classical Aristotelian argument to these saints [chapters one and two of Galatians]. Then when he apparently realized that his argument would not be strong enough, he threw everything he had at the errant practice, concluding with, “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal 6:1).

The kingdom of God does not consist of talk, but of power (1 Cor 4:20). And it is the power of Christ Jesus to acknowledge or deny a disciple upon His return that will determine to whom He will give life (John 5:21). He has already said that He will deny all teachers of lawlessness (Matt 7:21-23); He has already said that the person who

keeps the commandments and teaches others to do likewise will be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:19).

Basic tenets of discipleship are not to add to what has been written; for the Woman is to be silent and learn from Her Husband, Christ Jesus. Basic tenets include keeping the precepts of the law (Rom 2:13-16, 26-29). Basic tenets include believing the writings of Moses, who wrote of Jesus (John 5:46-47). And basic tenets include judging those inside the church, purging the evil person from among disciples (1 Cor 5:12-13).

The Apostle Paul wrote in an apparent earlier letter to the saints at Corinth that they were not to associate with sexually immoral people, an important prohibition in a city with a temple dedicated to Aphrodite and a thousand cult prostitutes who appeared like today's movie actresses while the wives of saints looked more like today's plain dressed Christian women. But Paul qualified this prohibition: he wrote that he did not mean "the sexually immoral of this world" (1 Cor 5:10), for judgment was not yet upon those who would appear before God in the great White Throne Judgment.

Today, judgment is only upon the household of God (1 Pet 4:17), the firstfruits, the early barley harvest of Judea.

Because judgment is upon the household of God, disciples can be judged on issues of being sexually immoral, issues pertaining to being greedy and a swindler, to being an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, and again a swindler (1 Cor 5:9-11). A disciple is not to even eat with such a person.

The issue of not eating with a sexually immoral person, or a swindler, or any of the other named transgressors caused dissatisfied members of the Mennonite faith, in 1698, to separate themselves from their parent fellowship and organize under the popular leadership of Jacob Amen, of Amenthal, Switzerland. The descendants of those who then separated themselves are today's Amish, who adhere to the teachings, beliefs, and customs of the past, changing only grudgingly and only enough to continue to survive as Separatists.

If a disciple is not to eat or have any fellowship with the disciple who has been delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor 5:5), then the disciple who does eat with the one delivered to Satan willfully denies that Christ has acted through the fellowship that delivered the person to Satan.

Pause a moment to consider the previous statement: the disciple who eats with the one delivered to Satan bets with his or her spiritual life that Christ has not acted through the fellowship that delivered the person to Satan. The disciple who eats will have denied Christ if he or she loses the bet—and in the person's judgment, Christ will deny those who deny Him.

A lamentable situation arose after the death of Herbert Armstrong: the fellowship he founded on precept-upon-precept exegesis fell backwards and was broken. A new generation gained control of the Worldwide Church of God and returned the fellowship to grammatico-historical exegesis, meaning that the son of Joe Tkach embraced the lawless errant ways of the early church, errors that sent the early church into Babylonian captivity—and the leadership disfellowshipped all of the ministry that would not also embrace lawlessness ... Herbert Armstrong had led a several-times-removed remnant of the remnant that left spiritual Babylon in the 16th-Century to the heavenly city of the Jerusalem above, but it wasn't for him to locate the foundation of the house of God that Paul laid, nor was it for him to be a pillar in the temple built on that foundation, a pillar that stands on the foundation and reaches upward to the roof, the endtime harvest of

God. Thus, what has been seen is that the ministers who cling to the theological turf to which Armstrong brought them have all been disfellowshipped by the fellowship that turned away from heavenly Jerusalem and returned to spiritual Babylon. Being disfellowshipped has become a badge of honor that conveys the message that the minister will not be a teacher of lawlessness. But being disfellowshipped has also caused these ministers to cease growing spiritually and to become entrenched in breastworks near the outer walls of the heavenly city. They will not go forward or backward, but have become theologically fossilized. Sobeit. If these ministers continue to take the Passover sacraments as Christ Jesus established the example, and if their love for God is greater than their love for their physical bodies, then they will have a place in the resurrection to glory when Christ Jesus returns. But they will not be allowed to teach the third part of humankind, born of Spirit halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation (which might be why they teach that there will only be three and a half years of tribulation—for them, there will only be three and a half years; none of them will enter into the second half; all will be slain physically if they continue to teach what they now do).

The Apostle Paul urged the saints at Corinth to be an imitator of him, post conversion. He wrote about those who would judge him, “Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power” (1 Cor 4:18-19) ... the power of those who disfellowshipped the ministry that would not leave Jerusalem and return to Babylon has been shown to be weak and ineffectual. The power of the one who was of *Philadelphia* who left typological exegesis and returned to precept-upon-precept exegesis is equally none-existent. Power resides with Christ Jesus, not with those who deny Christ and deny the ones whom Christ has called to do a specific work.

There is today an unrepentant disciple, a swindler, who has been delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh by *Philadelphians*. Unfortunately, other disciples still eat with this man who defrauded his brothers ... nothing has changed since when the dissident Mennonites separated themselves in 1698 CE from the mainstream of Anabaptists that rushed from the confines of spiritual Babylon in 1525-27 CE. Nothing has changed since the Apostle John wrote, “I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority” (3 John 9). Those who would be first will be last, if they are even resurrected to glory rather than to condemnation. And those who would be first will cause divisions by which both God and angels can discern the genuineness of every disciple (1 Cor 11:19).

The Apostle John named the one who was putting out of the church genuine disciples. The local [*Philadelphia*](#) fellowship that delivered the one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh [has likewise named the individual](#). The question of power will be resolved by whether the one delivered to Satan continues where he presently is.

The divide between talk and power cannot be reduced to material resources but always remains in the heavenly realm, where those whom God foreknew have been [past tense] predestined, called, justified, and glorified (Rom 8:29-30). In the timeless heavenly realm, those who will be glorified have already been glorified. Each disciple who will be glorified has put away the evil person who was among the saints. Each disciple who will be glorified no longer regards anyone according to the flesh (2 Cor 5:16), and no longer lives according to the flesh (Rom 8:13). Therefore, the one who will be glorified in this world—and has been glorified in the heavenly realm—judges rightly,

and has no fellowship with sexually immoral disciples, or disciples who are idolaters, revilers, drunkards, or swindlers. These rejected disciples are vessels of wrath, created for destruction and endured for a season. They are necessary “to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he [God] has prepared beforehand for glory” (Rom 9:21).

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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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