

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. And the concept behind the readings for this Sabbath is *Jesus' birth narrative--Advent*.

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Weekly Readings

For the weekly Sabbath of December 24, 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 John chapter 1, verses 1 through 18.

Commentary: The story of the Advent doesn't begin with the angel Gabriel visiting Mary; rather, it begins with the *Logos*, who was with *Theon* and who was *Theos*, the One born as the man Jesus of Nazareth and the One who came as His own son, His only (John 3:16-17). The story begins sometime after iniquity was discovered in an anointed guardian cherub (Ezek 28:14-15), an assumption based upon the heavenly realm being timeless, with all that exists coexisting with what was and what will be. The defining attribute of timeless is oneness; for without a past, present, or future as human beings understand the concepts, all living entities must function as one entity to avoid the problems of a paradox.

Iniquity in an anointed cherub created a dilemma that required change to occur, that required one moment to become another moment, that required the creation of a death chamber, for the presence of life and the absence of life cannot coexist within the same moment. In the heavenly realm every entity that has life will not, indeed, cannot die, unless cast out of that realm and into time. The anointed cherub in whom iniquity was found, then, caused a disturbance that threatened the heavenly realm's necessary dance of oneness. And if a place of death, of darkness did not exist—there was no reason for one to exist prior to the discovery of iniquity in an anointed cherub—such a place had to be suddenly created. Confinement of rebelling angels required the creation of a realm of darkness, of no spiritual life, of death and decay, a realm into which the anointed cherub would be cast so that fire could come out from his belly and utterly consume him.

The anointed cherub in whom iniquity was found appears to this day as an angel of light, for rebellion in the heavenly realm can be no more than deciding for oneself whether to obey God. Evil has customarily been defined as the antithesis of good, but taking upon oneself the knowledge of what constitutes "good" is the ultimate expression of evil for anything can then be justified, even rebellion

against the Most High. Thus, making the decision to obey the Most High is rebellion, for the prerogative of deciding to obey or not to obey is granted neither to children nor to servants. Again, making the decision to obey encompasses the possibility of deciding not to obey...obedience to God is the expectation for all life in the heavenly realm, and is not open to discussion or decision. Born-from-above disciples do not have the right to decide whether to obey. They will either obey because it is expected of them, or they will rebel. Pondering the question of whether to obey God the Father, pondering whether the disciple will live by the laws of God written on the heart and placed in the mind is, itself, rebellion that Grace presently covers.

The disciple, today, fights an internal civil war between the law of God that is in his or her mind, and the law of sin and death that dwells in his or her fleshly members (Rom 7:25). Fighting this war involves faith in the Most High, but faith too often becomes a casualty of logical decisions made to accommodate the flesh...in every situation in which human beings make decisions, faith in the Most High suffers. Disciples are to react to stimuli based upon their faith. If a disciple has to “think about” whether to obey God (i.e., live by the laws of God), obedience is placed at risk, and on many occasions, compromised by expedience. Thus, what ever is not of faith is sin, is lawlessness.

The situation changes when disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit; i.e., liberated from the law of sin and death. Then, their minds will rule over their flesh, and the Son of Man (the body of which is the Church) will be revealed (Luke 17:26-30). Disciples will no longer need the robe of Christ’s Jesus righteousness. Sin and death will be outside of them. The civil war will have been won by Christ Jesus. And no decision to obey should be necessary, for the disciple who has practiced walking uprightly before Father and Son will do so as a matter of character.

Every living entity whether in a physical body or as an angel cast into darkness that is confined within this physical realm will die or be changed within a moment as one moment gives away to the next moment through the decay of the realm’s foundational dark matter. That which is flesh and physical breath [*soma* and *psuche*] (i.e., the beasts of the earth, one of which is humankind — Eccl 3:18) is of this physical realm and will never leave this realm. The rapture of the flesh is an escapist myth that has been exploited by Evangelical Christianity. A myriad of pastors for the past one hundred seventy years have stood before their congregations and have promised sincere parishioners that everyone who has been “born again” will escape the [seven endtime years of tribulation](#) by being bodily raptured into heaven. They have lied to those who would trust Christ Jesus to the end if told the truth. But because they as teachers of spiritual Israel have lied to their congregations, multiple millions of parishioners will not believe anyone the morning after death angels again slay all firstborns not covered by the blood of the paschal Lamb of God. And it is this slaughter of firstborns that will begin the seven endtime years.

Spiritual Israel presently lives through the long spiritual night of watching that began after Calvary. This holy firstborn son of God (from Exod 4:22 & 1 Pet 2:9) roasts the Lamb with fire as the Lamb

bears Israel's sins. It eats the Lamb when it takes the [Passover sacraments](#) of bread and wine, and it eats with feet shod and loins girded, staffs in hands, in eager anticipation of Christ Jesus' return.

As no sin was reckoned against humanity or against physically circumcised Israel in particular until the giving of the law from atop Mt. Sinai (Rom 5:12-14), no sin is spiritually reckoned against spiritually lifeless humanity or against spiritually circumcised Israel today: all are under Grace. And all will remain under Grace until after the death angels pass throughout the land, [liberating Israel](#) from the law of sin and death that presently dwells in its members. But with liberation comes empowerment of the Church. Whether the same day, or three days, or three weeks later, a very short amount of time will pass between the second Passover [slaughter of firstborns](#) and the spiritual empowerment of disciples. And following empowerment, any lawlessness will result in the spiritual death of the disciple; any lawlessness will be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Empowered human beings in physical bodies and angels confined within space-time will have nearly equal standing before God. Lawlessness will preclude entrance into the heavenly realm, and willful lawlessness, such as attempting to enter God's rest on the following day, will result in God sending a great delusion over the rebels, a delusion that will not permit lawless disciples from repenting. Only those disciples whose inner desire has been to obey God, regardless of the cost—only those disciples who have practiced walking uprightly and blamelessly before God, thereby redeeming their time while wearing the garment of Grace, will enter the kingdom of heaven. And during the first half of the seven endtime years, most of these disciples will be slain by the rebels as righteous Abel was slain by his brother.

The task of creating a realm governed by change belonged to the *Logos*, who as *Theos*, created all that humanity knows, both the darkness and the light that shines forth from the darkness. Again, death is synonymous with darkness, and spiritually, death precedes life just as night precedes day. The Apostle Paul wrote that the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of glory (2 Cor 4:4).

Every disciple was at one time an unbeliever, even those disciples who have been reared within a sect of Christianity. Although a young person professes Christ with his or her mouth, until the person is drawn from this world by God the Father (John 6:44) and given birth-from-above through receipt of the divine breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*], the person is an unbeliever, albeit an unbeliever with substantial knowledge of God. And the person cannot know what birth-from-above entails until sometime after it occurs, until the person realizes that he or she has changed, that formerly insurmountable problems can be or have been overcome. Birth-from-above usually doesn't change a person's outward appearance. It will, however (of necessity, it has to), change the person's behavior in a manner reflective of the war now going on between the law of God in the person's mind and the law of sin and death still dwelling in the flesh. The person won't suddenly be "perfect," but the person won't deliberately seek to deceive. The born-from-above disciple will not justify the actions of the flesh by pointing to what others are doing. Such justification is convincing evidence that the person has not been born anew.

Jesus dwelling in a disciple shines as a light that darkness cannot overcome. A born of Spirit disciple will lose battles to his or her flesh, but the darkness of death that dwells in the flesh will not long prevail over the light. So genuine disciples are not without sin (1 John 1:8). Rather, genuine disciples walk in the same way in which Jesus walked, keeping His commandments as obedient children, striving to redeem the time by practicing walking uprightly before man and God.

The reader should now read John chapter 2, verse 23, though chapter 3, verse 21.

Commentary: Nicodemus was a teacher of circumcised Israel, and Jesus asked how Nicodemus could be a teacher and not understand the earthly example He, Jesus, gave about spiritual birth. To Nicodemus, a second birth implied entering the womb a second time—and nearly all of Christianity fails to understand humanity's second or spiritual birth any better than Nicodemus understood the concept.

Jesus' nativity that is celebrated in the Advent story is His birth of water (of the womb). His birth by Spirit [so that all righteousness will be fulfilled] occurs about thirty years later.

The reader should now read Matthew chapters 1 through 3.

Commentary: Matthew's emphasis is the fulfilling of all righteousness (Matt 3:15); thus, he records Jesus entering Egypt as a babe and leaving while still a babe. Egypt is analogous to sin, and as an infant is innocent of sin and indeed cannot sin, Jesus enters sin but cannot sin. Therefore, the Scripture (Hosea 11:1) stating that God will call His Son out of Egypt is fulfilled in Jesus as well as in the natural nation (Exod 4:22) that died in the wilderness because of unbelief, and in the spiritual nation of Israel that will die physically or spiritually during the first half of the seven endtime years of tribulation. Jesus died at Calvary. With the exception of a remnant, in the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years the spiritual nation of Israel will die. This holy nation will be martyred (death will, following liberation, be outside of each disciple), or will come under a great delusion (2 Thess 2:11-12). Rebelling disciples, 220 days into these endtime years, will come under a great delusion sent by God, which will result in the rebels going into the lake of fire. Either way, except for the remnant which Satan goes after when he is cast to earth (there is no escapism in biblical prophecy), the entirety of the present Christian Church will die, along with many others who keep the laws of God but have not yet received spiritual birth. Entering metaphorical Egypt/Babylon is entering death, with no escape for the flesh. And every disciple who has died in the past and who is living today was a son of disobedience, with his or her citizenship in this world, in Egypt/Babylon. Death has already claimed the flesh of many, and with the exception of the remnant, will claim the flesh of those living today.

Again, except for the remnant that keep the commandments of God and have the spirit of prophecy (Rev 12:17 combined with Rev 19:10), in the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years the entirety of the Christian Church will be either spiritually or physically dead—and "Christianity" will prevail as the

world's conquering religion, with Arian Christians fighting against Trinitarian Christians. But the prevailing forms of Christianity will be composed of disciples who have rebelled against God and have come under the great delusion so that they will not repent of their lawlessness. The [mark of the beast](#) is not a microchip, but the tattoo of the Cross, the mark of death. The Cross kills: this is the beast with iron teeth that is terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong (Dan 7:7). And without the mark of this beast [*chi xi stigma*], no one in the latter 1260 days of the seven endtime years will be able to buy and sell (Rev 13:18).

Satan, the old dragon, and his angels that presently form the reigning hierarchy of spiritual Babylon will be cast to earth in the middle of the seven endtime years of tribulation. He and his angels will have no authority of their own for continuing to reign over humanity, for the kingdom of the world will have become the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9-14). Thus, when cast into time, Satan will pose as the returned messiah as he usurps the authority of Christ Jesus. And the third part of humanity (Zech 13:8-9) that will be born of Spirit when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) will live by faith during the last 1260 days of the endtime years. This third part will not be able to buy and sell unless it takes the mark of death upon itself, but this third part will not need to buy and sell to be saved. It endures by trusting in God, and not trusting in the flesh.

The good news that will be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations is that [everyone who endures to the end shall be saved](#) (Matt 24:13). But enduring means not taking the mark of death upon the person. And here is where the lie the last Eve believed before taking to herself knowledge of good and evil causes difficulties: until a person has been born of Spirit, the person has no life but that which comes from the person's physical breath. The person does not have an immortal soul that needs regeneration. Rather, the person waits, as a spiritual corpse, for spiritual life received from the divine breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*]. The person is as Adam was before *Elohim* breathed the physical breath of life into Adam's nostrils.

So that all righteousness would be fulfilled, Jesus was baptized by John, and immediately upon His baptism, the divine breath of the Father [*Pneuma 'Agion*] descended upon Him as a dove (Matt 3:16). Now, with His breath resting and remaining on Jesus, God the Father says from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (v. 17). This is, within the fulfillment of all righteousness, when Jesus is born of Spirit—it isn't Jesus' physical birth that has the greatest significance for disciples, but this moment when He establishes the pattern for disciples to receive birth-from-above and sonship. Disciples will, after receiving the Holy Spirit, have to overcome Satan as Jesus did. Until liberated through being "filled with" or empowered by the Holy Spirit, every disciple will have to wage war against his or her flesh, in which sin and death continue to dwell. But liberation comes when the Son of Man is revealed or disrobed.

Without the *Logos* as *Theos* entering His creation as His son, His only (John 3:16), and being born as the man Jesus of Nazareth, there would be no path between dimensions over which human beings could escape death. At Calvary, Jesus completed or finished His creation by dying as the acceptable sin offering for all of humanity. Human beings could now be born of Spirit as literal sons of the God prior to longtime demonstrated obedience to God. Thus, the way was paved for the harvest of humanity.

The reader should now read Luke chapters 1 through 3.

Commentary: While Matthew's emphasis is upon the fulfillment of all righteousness, Luke places a human face on Jesus, while showing how Jesus' divinity was confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Although details differ between accounts, no conflicts exist, even in Herod's slaughter of innocents and Joseph taking Mary and the infant down to Egypt.

When the Magi inquired of King Herod where the infant king of the Jews was born, Herod assembled the chief priests and scribes and inquired of them where was the Christ to be born. These chief priests answered, saying in Bethlehem of Judea. This, then, was the answer that Herod gave the Magi. But Matthew's account doesn't say that the Magi went to Bethlehem; rather, Matthew writes that after listening to Herod and leaving the king's presence, the star the Magi had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the house in which Jesus and Mary were (Matt 2:9-10). There is no textual evidence that this house was in Bethlehem, or that Jesus was an infant. Rather, Matthew suggests that Jesus was by this time a toddler, which would account for Herod, not knowing where the Magi went and only knowing what the chief priests had told him, ordered the slaughter of males two years old and less in and around Bethlehem. According to when the Magi first saw the star, Herod apparently believed Jesus could be as old as two. But Joseph and his family would have been living in Nazareth. So it was from Galilee that Joseph took his family to Egypt, and it was to Galilee that he returned after Herod's death.

The Christmas story as portrayed with shepherds and wise men around a winter solstice manger scene is a fabrication that neglects Jesus' birth from above in His fulfillment of all righteousness. According to the duty schedule for the division of the priesthood of Abijah (Luke 1:5), John the Baptist would have been born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in the spring of the year, nine months after Zechariah was chosen by lot to enter the temple. Jesus would then have been born to Mary in the fall, about Sukkoth. Jesus would have been thirty years old in the fall, thereby giving Him a three and a half year earthly ministry that ended with Him being the Passover Lamb, sacrificed for the household of God.

Since the traditional Christmas story mingles and mangles Matthew's and Luke's account of Jesus birth, the extent to which disciples participate in these traditional celebrations, though remaining a matter of conscience, should not be great, if at all.

The reader should now read Jeremiah chapter 10, verses 1 through 5.

Commentary: As natural Israelites were told not to be afraid of decorated trees made or carved into idols, spiritual Israelites need not fear the modern idol of mass marketing mostly unneeded merchandise that occurs at or near every winter solstice. The Jesus born of Spirit left no instructions to remember His human birth. Rather, His emphasis was salvation, which isn't found in a manger but hanging on a tree at Calvary.

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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