

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 Revelation.

Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of March 6, 2010

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.

And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And *the Lord*, the God of the spirits of the prophets, *has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.*"

"And behold, *I [Christ] am coming soon*. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

And he said to me, "*Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near*. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

"Behold, *I [Christ] am coming soon*, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. ...

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely *I am coming soon.*” Amen. (Rev 22:6–20 emphasis added)

Soon doesn’t mean two millennia in the future in any language ... everything written in John’s vision is marked by the tag, *soon take place* (Rev 1:1), meaning that John’s time marker—“I was in spirit [ἐν πνεύματι] in the Lord’s day [ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ]” (Rev 1:10)—wasn’t for a day of the week, or for anytime close to the end of 1st-Century, but was for a period in the distant future known as the end of the age, or the time of the end, or the day of the Lord. In other words, John, in vision, was transported forward in time to the end of the age, that period about which the prophet Daniel wrote; that period when the kingdom is given to the Son of Man (Dan 7:9–14); that period when the feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s humanoid image are smashed by a stone not cut by human hands (Dan 2:44–45); the period that is “a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time” (Den 12:1).

The kingdom of this world will not be given to the Son of Man many times, but once, with this one time being when the court of the Ancient of Days sits in judgment and takes the kingdom and dominion over this world from Satan and his angels and gives the kingdom to the saints of the Most High (Dan 7:26–27). Satan and his angels will be cast from heaven (Rev 12:7–10) halfway through a time of trouble such as never has been. In vision, John visits heaven during this period of unimaginable Affliction.

John wrote, “I, John, the brother of you [Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν] and partner in the Affliction [καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει] and Kingdom [καὶ βασιλείᾳ] and Endurance in Jesus [καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ]” (1:9) ... the chronological structure of John’s vision is fully incorporated in this one identifying clause. As *the brother of you*, John delivers the endtime letters to the seven named churches, with the delivery of these letters concealed in a manner similar to how Daniel’s visions were sealed and kept secret until the time of the end: the delivery of these letters has been “hidden” through the letters being addressed to seven 1st-Century fellowships, with each letter addressing characteristics of the named church.

If the primary audience for the letters to the seven named churches were 1st-Century fellowships, then what the glorified Jesus says to the church at Philadelphia has problems: “Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. *I am coming soon*” (Rev 3:10–11 emphasis added). Without the argument for the claim being made here, the *hour of trial* is the seven months immediately preceding the

kingdom of this world being given to the Son of Man; this hour of trial includes the first and the second woes. And when the kingdom is given to the Son of Man, the glorified Jesus will soon come; will come in another 1260 days. So the context of the message to the church at Philadelphia doesn't pertain to the 1st-Century fellowship at Philadelphia, but to an end-of-the-age fellowship. And so it is with each letter.

So much misinformation has passed as theological wisdom for the past 1900 years that it is understandable why John's vision hasn't been understood.

Some theologians argue that John's gospel was a different message about Christ than Paul's message, but this claim is false and only serves to illustrate how poorly Paul is understood. John's gospel, epistles, and vision are composed approximately a quarter century after Paul is martyred. In typology, the glorified Jesus is the reality of Israel's *Azazel* goat, but for the Church, the Apostle John serves this role. His long life and his reaching across time as the brother and partner of endtime disciples serves as a representation of the *Azazel* goat dwelling in the wilderness, separated by geographical distance from Israel. In the reality, the glorified Jesus bears the sins of Israel in the heavenly realm, with the precipice being the barrier of entering heaven, but in the type that applies to the Church, John substitutes for Christ, delivering to endtime disciples Jesus' words and the vision Jesus was given by the Father to show his servants.

John's narrative compositions are tightly structured ... John gives endtime disciples the organizational structure of Peter's two epistles when he quotes Jesus telling Peter to, *Feed my lambs, Tend my sheep, Feed my sheep* (John 21:15–17). Peter's two epistles follow this pattern, with 1 Peter 1:1 through 4:19 representing *feeding lambs*, new converts; and with 1 Peter chapter 5 representing *tending sheep*. Peter's second epistle isn't addressed to *lambs* but to "those who have obtained a faith of equal standing to ours" (2 Pet 1:1), or to *sheep*; thus, Peter's second epistle is Peter *feeding Christ's sheep*.

Without John identifying the structure of Peter's epistles, would endtime disciples realize that Peter did not commission others to follow in his alleged footsteps as vicars of Christ? Once John gives his brothers and partners the pattern Peter used to write his epistles, endtime disciples understand that Peter did as he was commanded by Christ. Peter did not leave feeding the lambs of Christ to another person, but by his epistles, Peter reached forward through time to feed lambs until the end of the age.

John organized the narrative of his own gospel after the model of spiritual maturation that is foreshadowed by human maturation: about his gospel, John wrote, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ*, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:30–31 emphasis added). So John chose not to record everything Jesus did, but only those things that would cause a disciple to believe that Jesus is the Christ. Thus, John begins his gospel's narrative with the death of the old self seen in turning water into wine. He follows with spiritual birth (Jesus with Nicodemus), then gives John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus. John introduces salvation going to Gentiles with the woman at the well; for God seeks those who worship Him in spirit and truth, not those who are merely circumcised by hands. And to worship God in spirit and truth, a person must walk uprightly before God as exemplified in the healing of the invalid of 38 years: the person is now spiritually equivalent to a year old human child.

In John's gospel's narrative structure, understanding dual referents (probably not language John would have used) or understanding manna as the representation of the true Bread of Life that comes from heaven is next ... a human child before 36 months of age struggles with dual referents whereas dual referents are easily grasped after 36 months. And John does everything but beat endtime disciples to get them to understand that meaning comes via dual referents, or by revelation coming by realization; for disciples have the spirit of truth that gives to them knowledge that cannot be otherwise known.

John works as an oral storyteller works—John doesn't record just what happens or even interesting things that happened, but John chooses narrative elements that work together into a pattern that can be remembered: once a disciple realizes that his gospel is modeled after human maturation, his gospel can be easily remembered as the disciple thinks of a child being conceived, born, circumcised, walking as a toddler, and grasping dual referents and figurative language. When narrative elements are seen as aspects of human physical maturation, the gospel "stands and walks" by itself. Growing in grace and knowledge, when it comes to John's gospel, has been given a torso, arms, legs, and feet so that his gospel can be understood and probably quoted exactly; for the element that gets a person born is a "unit" that can be recited; so too is the unit that has the disciple walking as a toddler, a biped (the healing of the invalid of 38 years).

With John giving disciples the narrative pattern of Peter's epistles, and with John organizing his own gospel after the pattern of human physical growth, it would therefore logically hold that John organized his vision by its memorable structure, and that he would give this structure to his *partners*.

Beginning with chapter four, the Book of Revelation is a chronological presentation of the Affliction, the Kingdom, and the Endurance (these three representing the last 2520 days before Christ Jesus returns), followed by the thousand years, the great White Throne Judgment, and the coming of the new heavens and new earth ... the resurrection to glory of the firstfruits when Christ Jesus returns at the end of the Endurance forms a mirror image of the great White Throne Judgment after the thousand years; therefore, those who will be slain when Christ Jesus returns (Rev 19:11–16; Isa 66:15–17) form the mirror image of those who will be slain when Satan is loosed for a short while [1260 days] after the thousand years (Rev 20:7–10).

On four occasions during the endtime years, a third of humankind will be slain: (1) at the Second Passover liberation of Israel; (2) in the sixth Trumpet Plague; (3) when Christ Jesus comes as the Messiah; and (4) when Satan is loosed after a thousand years. The first two of these slaying will be while the kingdom of this world remains with the spiritual king of Babylon; the second two will be after the kingdom has been given to the Son of Man. The first two will target uncovered firstborns whom God has reserved for Himself; the second two will target those who have marked themselves for death through believing and serving the Adversary ... uncovered firstborns are marked for death because they are "uncovered."

By John giving to his brothers and partners the narrative structure of his vision, John permits meaning to be taken from his words that would otherwise be sealed and kept secret even though they are not seal in any common way.

John's vision takes place in the timeless heavenly realm when, on earth, the last 2520 days are about to begin. Therefore, truly, everything is *soon to take place*. All

elements of John's vision are "marked" by the necessity that they will *soon take place*; for the angel tells John not to seal up the words of the prophecy (Rev 22:10) because the time is near. When Revelation is understandable, the time of John's prophecy is near; is close at hand—the Book of Revelation was not understandable for 1900 years (from the end of the 1st-Century to the end of the 20th-Century). It couldn't have been more "sealed and secret" than it was, meaning that the element of *soon take place* was missing so the vision could not be comprehended.

The importance of what the apostle John records about his vision needs to be understood within the context of human utterance (the words of any language) being able to only indirectly describe the things of God: John had no words to describe heavenly things. He could only use the words of this world to record the things of heaven that he saw. Thus, John consistently uses "Lamb" for the glorified Jesus; e.g., "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:6).

A lamb slain is a lamb hung by its head so it can be skinned; a lamb slain will look like a standing person; a lamb slain will not look like a lamb standing on four legs, but a lamb standing on its hind legs. So in John using "Lamb" as the identifier for the glorified Jesus, John uses how the named entity "functions" in the narrative: the glorified Jesus functions as the Passover Lamb of God. Hence, John, in choosing which linguistic icon he will use once he is called into heaven, preferences *function over appearance*. In his vision, when John encounters those things he records, he looks at how the thing or entity functions and uses a Greek icon to reflect this function. He doesn't name things by their surface appearances for cause, but the subject for another reading. Therefore, once John is called into heaven, the glorified Jesus he saw and describes in Revelation 1:13–16 becomes a *slain lamb*.

When the glorified Jesus is described by how He functions in the plan of God, the seven named churches—each based on the indwelling of Christ in disciples—function as "horns" on the head of the Lamb, and the angels to the seven churches function as "eyes" for Christ Jesus.

When the glorified Jesus is described as a burning humanoid entity, the seven churches are described as seven lampstands (little fires), and the seven angels as seven stars (heavenly fires). But when the glorified Jesus is described in His role as the Passover Lamb of God, the seven churches that are of Him aren't lampstands but parts of Him as horns are distinguishing traits of sheep. Because readers would not logically recognize angels when described as "eyes," John makes the connection for his brothers and partners.

When the glorified Jesus functions as the Passover Lamb of God and is identified as a slain Lamb, a "scroll" is not a scroll ... it's easy to accept the slain Lamb as the glorified Jesus (a metaphoric correspondence), but the scroll with seven seals will be read as a real scroll (a literal or mimetic assignment of meaning). This, however, would be mingling metaphoric and mimetic language in the same passage when John holds metaphoric consistency. So the "scroll" in Revelation chapters 5 and 6 functions as a scroll, but will be something else.

If a scroll is not really a scroll but is *a thing* that functions as a scroll with seven seals, then Revelation needs to be revisited; for the reality is that this "scroll" has been

read without John's brothers and partners realizing what they were reading. This *scroll* can only be unsealed by the glorified Jesus, who has been restraining the lawless one so that this man of perdition will be revealed in his time (2 Thess 2:6) ... it is the glorified Jesus who has kept sealed the *scroll* until the time of the end then a sequence of narrative events becomes a *scroll* that tells a story disclosed after the visions of Daniel were unsealed. So if endtime disciples look for a mimetic scroll with seven seals, they look for something other than what John saw ... reading the sealed scroll metaphorically, with John being the partner of these endtime disciples and thereby wanting these disciples to understand what he saw, John gives disciples a metaphorical narrative that begins just before the single great horn—the first horn—of the spiritual king of Greece is broken and the four kings emerge from around the stump of this first king, these four kings being the four horsemen of chapter 6, portrayed as the removal of the first four seals of the scroll.

The removal of a seal comes when Jesus permits an event to happen; when Jesus no longer holds back an event.

When *seals* are not really seals but previously undisclosed events that were concealed because Daniel's visions were kept secret until the time of the end—the marker *soon take place* limits John's vision to the same timeframe as when Daniel's visions are set—then the scroll that is the Book of Revelation was unsealed by Christ Jesus when Daniel's visions were unsealed. Endtime disciples were simply too young spiritually to read the scroll when Daniel's visions were first unsealed in 2002.

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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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