

The Key to Determining the Beginning of a New Year

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There are many ways to calculate the beginning of a new year. Much of the world believes January 1st is the correct starting point, while a large country like China believes their new year begins in the spring. For those who wish to obey Almighty God, this is a very important subject because an incorrect starting point for each year could mean that God's Holy Days are kept at the wrong time (see studies: God's Holy Days). If this occurs, God's people are sinning unintentionally, but nonetheless guilty of breaking God's command related to His Sabbaths (Ex. 31:13; Lev. 19:3, 30; 23:38; 26:2, 34-35, 43).

The key to a correct starting point for each new year is Jesus Christ (Isa. 22:22; Rev. 3:7); more specifically, the fulfillment of his commission which determined the starting point for a new era. This truth is mentioned a number of times in scripture, and is reflected figuratively by coming out of the darkness of winter into the light of the summer months (Isa. 29:18; 2Cor. 4:6; 1Pet. 2:9). This transition from days with more hours of darkness, to days with more hours of light, begins at the vernal equinox.

Genesis 1:14 mentions two lights, with the greater light having authority over the day and the lesser light over the night. Although these lights can be viewed literally, they are also used by God metaphorically to describe Jesus Christ and the church he is responsible for. Christ is referred to as the light of the world because he brought the light of God's truth to all people, whether they respond to it at any given time in history or not,

In him (Christ) was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (Jn. 1:4-5; NASB; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The sun in the sky is the heavenly body used by man to regulate the solar year. However, as Christ is "the light of men", Almighty God applies the phrase "sun of Righteousness" to him. This is to emphasize that the physical star, known as the sun, provides life on earth but it is of much less importance compared to the "spiritual light" whose death provided the way for sinners to repent and inherit everlasting life (cf. Jn. 14:6),

But for you who fear My name (Almighty God's), **the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings**; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall (Mal. 4:2; cf. Isa. 53:5; Mt. 23:37; Lk. 13:34; NASB; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Christ is referred to as a Morning Star, which is a title denoting his rank or position in the spirit realm (Rev. 22:16). The prophets of the First Covenant referred to him using similar language,

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near (because Christ had not yet come at this time in

history); **a Star shall come out of Jacob**; a Scepter (symbol of rulership) shall rise out of Israel... (Nu. 24:17a; NASB; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Although much of the world today refers to Venus as the Morning Star, it is actually Jesus Christ who is the Morning Star and his effect on mankind is similar to that of the sun, but in a spiritual sense as mentioned previously (Jn. 1:4-5; 14:6),

We (God's people) also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns (Christ returns) and the morning star rises in your hearts (cf. Rev. 2:26-28) (2Pet. 1:19; Ed. notes in parentheses; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

He (Christ) had in his right hand seven stars (symbol of angels), out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword (symbol of God's word), and **his countenance was like the sun shining in its strength** (Rev. 1:16; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphases added).

The entire plan of salvation is pictured by God's appointed times which point to the work of Jesus Christ, of which his death and resurrection is pivotal. Therefore, as the sun of righteousness, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover and this truth is more important than any aspect of a physical sun or its cycle (cf. Rev. 21:22-23).

For instance, the era we live in right now could have no hope of ever improving for the better without the removal, and final judgment of Satan (see study: Hallmark of Satan). Christ knew his imminent death at Passover would initiate the process eventually leading to the judgment of Satan,

Of judgment, because **the ruler of this world** (Satan; cf. 2Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12) **is judged** (Jn. 16:11; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Therefore, the entirety of God's plan to reconcile sinners to Himself, hinged on the fulfillment of the Passover. The lamb that was sacrificed during the First Covenant Passover pre-figured the death of Jesus Christ,

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! **The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**' (Jn. 1:29; emphasis added).

Since the commencement of the Second Covenant, the sacrifice of a physical lamb on the Passover has been fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice. This is included in the following statement,

Do not think that I (Christ) came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. **I did not come to destroy but to fulfill** (Mt. 5:17; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Today, God's people are to partake of the Passover with the new symbols of unleavened bread, wine, and foot-washing (see study: Christ's New Covenant Passover). So the focus of a new beginning, in man's relationship with Almighty God, depended on Christ fulfilling God's law regarding the sacrifice of a physical lamb on the 14th day of the first month of the year. Consequently, it is essential for this Holy Day period to commence on or after the vernal equinox, which is a physical reminder of a new beginning. This truth is revealed through the physical harvest that took place in the

spring. God made it abundantly clear that nothing from the new harvest was to be consumed until the Passover lamb had been sacrificed, and the sheaf of the first-fruits waved (see study: Sheaf of the Firstfruits),

You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain **nor fresh grain** until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings (Lev. 23:14; emphasis added).

The spiritual application of this command pointed to the fact that no one could participate in the new harvest of the Second Covenant until Christ was sacrificed. Therefore, to place the New Moon of the first month of the year on or after the vernal equinox is pre-emptive and presumptuous. In other words, it assumes that Christ would accomplish the main purpose of his commission even before he completed it. If this were the case, Christ would have no freedom of choice to accept, or reject, his Father's law and commands. It would also make Christ's forty day trial in the wilderness superfluous because the outcome would already have been determined (Mt. 4:1-11),

Instead, the calculation of God's New Year is dependent upon Christ accomplishing the central purpose of the commission his Father gave him. Once that was fulfilled, by his death on the last Passover he observed, Christ made a new beginning possible for all sinners who repent and begin living in newness of life,

Therefore we were buried with him (Christ) through baptism (which follows repentance of sin) into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we** (God's people) **also should walk in newness of life** (Rom. 6:4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Therefore, the timing of God's New Year is not dependent upon the relationship between the solar and lunar cycles. Instead, it is entirely dependent upon Christ fulfilling the law of the Passover lamb. This is why observance of the Passover is so important (see study: Why Passover, Not Easter, Should Be Central to Christianity). It must occur on or after the vernal equinox each year because no new beginning, spiritually-speaking, could occur until after Christ finished his commission,

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, '**It is finished!**' And bowing his head, he gave up his spirit (Jn. 19:30; emphasis added).

If the first New Moon of the new year occurred after the vernal equinox, the year is dependent upon the sun. In other words, the sun would be ruling the year and not the sun of righteousness, Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice determined the future of all repentant sinners. However, if the first month of the year is determined by identifying the first New Moon in which the Passover falls after the spring equinox, then the physical sun is not a factor in God's plan of salvation. Instead, it is just a marker of the seasons (Gen. 1:14).

Therefore, the New Moon of the new year must be dependent upon the Passover, which occurs on or after the vernal equinox. Besides, if the New Moon of a new year were meant to commence on, or after, the vernal equinox, the wave sheaf offering would not occur until sometime in the month of May in the years 2003/2004, 2007/2008,

2018/2019, 2021/2022. Based on the barley harvest in the Middle East, the first cut is made in April before it is fully mature, and the harvest proceeds quickly because barley is prone to shattering and must be harvested as soon as possible. This harvesting does not extend into the month of May as confirmed by the following quote,

The barley harvest is earlier than the wheat harvest (Ex. 9:31-32). It begins in April in the Jordan Valley... (Vegetable Kingdom, p 1328, The New Unger's Bible Dictionary by Merrill F. Unger).

Spiritually speaking, delaying the wave sheaf until the month of May is tantamount to asking Jesus Christ to wait awhile longer before ascending to heaven to be accepted by his heavenly Father. In other words, Christ's work is being held up because it is more important to start a new year from the first New Moon on or after the vernal equinox. This is "putting the cart before the horse" or more accurately making the calculation of the New Moon of the new year more important than Christ's sacrifice and ascension to Almighty God.

Also, by starting the new year on or after the vernal equinox, the Day of Pentecost can occur a month after the early summer harvest is finished, and the Feast of Tabernacles can occur almost two months after the autumn harvest has ripened. Therefore, the annual harvests are not in harmony with God's appointed festivals. God used the three harvests of the year to teach His plan of salvation, and therefore they are meant to fall in close proximity to these three Holy Day periods,

Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: ¹⁵ You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread [you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty]; ¹⁶ and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering, which is at the end (turn) of the year (end of the late summer harvest), **when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field** (Ex. 23:14-16; cf. Dt. 16:13; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The "Lord of the harvest" is Almighty God and it is incongruous that He would have the three harvests falling one to two months after the times He appointed for His people to gather and worship before Him each year,

Therefore pray **the Lord of the harvest** to send out laborers into His harvest (Mt. 9:38; emphasis added).

As our societies today are primarily industrialized, we have lost touch with the agrarian roots that were a way of life for our ancestors. This makes it more difficult to identify with the simple lessons and parables, in God's word, that help us understand the plan He is working out to reconcile sinners to Himself. The three physical harvests represent three distinct spiritual harvests involving people God is calling. None of these harvests could even begin without Christ's sacrifice. This is why Christ is referred to in a term that is associated with the barley harvest in the spring (cf. 1Cor. 15:23),

Jesus said to him (Thomas), 'I am the way, the truth, and the life (everlasting). **No one comes to the Father except through me** (Christ's sacrifice reconciles sinners) (Jn. 14:6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Christ's fulfillment of the Passover is so important to God's plan, that a second Passover is commanded for those who, for legitimate reasons, could not attend the Passover in the first month of the year. God does not extend this to any of His other Holy Days,

Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If anyone of you or your posterity (descendants) is unclean because of a dead body, or is far away on a journey, **he may still keep the Lord's Passover.** ¹¹ **On the fourteenth day of the second month**, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Nu. 9:10-11; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Also, it was ordained by Almighty God that the *Logos*, who became known as Jesus Christ, would be the key to every new beginning (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1; cf. 1:14). Although Almighty God alone is inherently immortal (cf. 1Tim. 1:17) and transcends time, as soon as He created the *Logos* time began. Prior to the *Logos* being created, time as we know it did not exist because there was no relationship between two objects. When Almighty God brought forth the *Logos* (Prov. 8:22-30; cf. Rev. 3:14b), interaction and motion related to two beings commenced, and time began. Therefore, the first act of creation caused the beginning of time. This is the real meaning behind the phrase "in the beginning" as it pertains to Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 1:1). The following scripture describes the point in time when the *Logos* began fulfilling Almighty God's command regarding the rest of creation,

All things came into being through him (the *Logos*, who became Christ), and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being (Jn. 1:3; cf. Col. 1:15-20; NASB; emphasis added).

Therefore the being (the Word, Gk. *Logos*) who became Jesus Christ is the beginning of time (Jn. 1:14), and it would be incongruous if his fulfillment of the Passover was not the key to determining when to commence a new year,

In the beginning, God (SHD 430, Heb. *elohim*, a divine name equivalent to SGD 2316 Gk. *theos*, applied to Christ by Almighty God, cf. Heb. 1:8-9; Ps. 45:6) created the heavens and the earth... (Gen. 1:1a; NASB: emphasis added).

In conclusion, the New Moon of the new year is determined by Jesus Christ. More specifically, by his fulfillment of what the physical Passover lamb pictured. Not only does the commencement of the new year depend on Christ's work, the whole plan of Almighty God hinged on his sacrifice at the end of the 14th day of the first month of the year (see study: The Timing of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ). If Christ did not complete his commission, the start of the new year would be of little importance. As mentioned previously, the Passover must fall on or after the vernal equinox. So the New Moon that places the Passover on or after the vernal equinox is the New Moon of the new year. These dates can all be calculated well in advance so there is no confusion.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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