

Finishing Well

Lesson #15

Significance of 1st Day of Month

April 12, 2023

The Water Gate is associated with Ezra, the scribe.

Ezra 7:9 For upon the first day of the first month [Nisan 1; New Moon] began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month [New Moon] came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

- 1st day must be significant: 276x in Old Testament

The Jewish prophet Amos records in Amos 3:7: Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets.

❖ From the Old Covenant to the New, Genesis to Revelation, God provides picture after picture of His entire plan for mankind.

When did God set the Jewish calendar to begin on Nisan 1?

On the first day of Nisan in the year 2448 from creation [1313 BCE), two weeks before the Exodus, God showed Moses the crescent new moon, instructing him regarding the setting of the Jewish calendar and the mitzvah of sanctifying the new month.

Ex. 12:2-3 This month shall be for you the head of months, the first of the months of the year. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:

- This ushered in the first Jewish month and commenced the lunar calendar that Jews have since followed. It was the first mitzvah, commandment, given to the newly born nation of Israel, even before the exodus from Egypt.

For many years, Israel had been in captivity in the land of Egypt where they were severely oppressed, forced to make bricks and be menial laborers in the grandiose city building plans of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Now God had intervened in their welfare and through the persuasive power of ten successive plagues, the Pharaoh of Egypt had been forced to set free his Israelite slaves, to "let my people go."

Such a dramatic turn of fortune for the Hebrew people was so great that it was indeed a new beginning. God chose to commemorate it by introducing a new "new year."

Following the lunar calendar, the months all began with the new moon.

The first great feast of the "new year" was held two weeks later, when the moon was full.

That was the time God brought about the great deliverance of the Exodus by "passing over" their first born when their counterparts in Egypt were slain in the last of the ten plagues.

It was a new beginning. It deserved to be called "the beginning of months."

While the Exodus from Egypt marked the ending of an era for the ancient Israelites, it also marked a new beginning, the beginning of a long and tortuous journey to the promised land.

As they traveled, they encountered many hardships along the way. Oftentimes they murmured and complained. Many miracles were wrought on their behalf. Yet only two of the men over forty years of age successfully made the entire journey—Joshua and Caleb.

Many Significant Events recorded in the Old Testament occurred on the 1st day of the lunar month. [Rosh Chodesh].

Strong's #2320 = chodesh = new moon, a month, beginning of month, Rosh Chodesh

- ❖ 1st day of the month by its Hebrew name - "Rosh-Chodesh or Rosh Hodesh" = the head or beginning of the month.
- ❖ It's the name for the 1st day of every month & always marked by the birth of a new moon.
- ❖ Chodesh is from the root word: chadash = Strong's #2318 = to rebuild, renew, repair, refresh. It is a time of spiritual renewal.
- The New Moon was a day when the prophets heard from Yahweh, being a day designated for waiting upon Yahweh, for discerning His purposes and for prophetic revelation.
- God places great importance on the 1st day of each sacred month to:
Rebuild, Renew, Repair, Refresh.

A. Prepare For The Presence of God

Ex. 19: Sivan 1: [month 3; day 1] In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

Ex. 19:4-6 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.

⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

- The Lord told Moses to have the Israelites separate and cleanse themselves in preparation for His presence.
- He would reveal more of Himself to the people. Gave them His law.

B. The Tabernacle: Place Where God Would Dwell

Ex. 40:1-2 God told Moses to set up the Tabernacle on the 1st day of the 1st month. [Nisan]

Ex. 40:16-18 Moses did on the 1st day of the 1st month of the 2nd year after the Israelites left Egypt.

Ex. 40:33 God had Moses consecrate Aaron and his sons for priestly service using the blood of their sacrifices on Nisan 1.

Ex. 40:34; Num. 9:15 God's presence rested on the Tabernacle: 1st day of the 1st month

Moses Numbers the People

- On the 1st day of the 2nd month, in the 2nd year after Israel came out of Egypt, Moses was told to take a census of the people [Num.1:1-18].
- 1:3 number all that are able to go forth to war in Israel:

C. Offerings and Sacrifices

1. God's Instructions: Special offerings and sacrifices were to be made on the beginning of each new month.

❖ Num.10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days,...

[Solemn Days = Strong's #4150 = appointed times = Feasts & Seasons]

and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

Key Point: The 1st day of the sacred month [the New Moon, Rosh-Hadesh] can be seen as a part of God's worship system, because it was proclaimed, announced, and memorialized with the blowing of the trumpets [silver trumpets].

- ❖ Call upon God to be present during the worship service on the day of the New Moon.
- ❖ The Israelites were to bring special offerings to God on each New Moon.
- ❖ Memorial = Hebrew word 'zikaron' = Strong's #2146 = an object or an act that brings something else to mind or represents something else. A zikaron may be a memorial, a reminder, a historical record, or a physical token that calls a deity to mind.
- ❖ As a monthly reminder that the Lord God was their God and that they were His people.

Numbers 28:11-15 Instructions for New Moon Festival Offerings or Rosh Hodesh

"On the First Of Every Month, present to the Lord a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect." Each of the animal sacrifices was to be accompanied by a grain offering and a drink offering [verses 12-14].

In addition to burnt offerings, a goat was to be sacrificed to the Lord as a sin offering [v. 15].

- New Moon festivals were marked by sacrifices, the blowing of trumpets [silver trumpets] over the sacrifices [Num. 10:10], the suspension of all labor and trade [Neh. 10:31], and social or family feasts [I Samuel 20:5].
- The New Moon festival marked the consecration to God of each new month in the year.
- New Moon observances were to help people focus or refocus on God and His desire for a relationship with the people.
- As with any religious ritual, there was a danger of observing the New Moon festivals without a true heart to follow God.
- Even after their hearts had turned cold toward God, they readily parted with their bulls and lambs and goats, but they would not give up their sins. They relied on the outward observations to cleanse them, even though there was still evil in their hearts.

Isa. 1:14-15 YOUR new moons and YOUR appointed feasts my soul hates: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

- When His people lapsed into external and hypocritical observances, the very things God ordained, commanded, and blessed became an abomination to Him. [Matt. 23]

- Sin is an abomination to God, and no amount of ritual or ceremony or sacrament can make up for a sinful heart.

Ps. 51:6 "Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts..."

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Offerings and Sacrifices

II Chron. 8:12-13: Moses commanded the keeping of the new Moons.

II Chronicles 2:3-4 Behold, I [Solomon] build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.

I Chron. 23:31; II Chron. 31:3 The kings of Israel kept the feast of the new moon with its stipulated temple procedure.

The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel recorded that special offerings and worship will be done on the New Moon after the return of Christ. [Isa.66:22-23; Ezek.45:17-18]

D. Festivals

- Feast of Trumpets is always to be observed on a New Moon. [Lev.23:24; Num.29:1]
- This festival pictures a new beginning for humanity [Matt.24:30-31] and the return of Jesus Christ as the conquering King of kings.

E. The Death of Aaron

- Aaron died when he was 123 years old on the 1st day of the fifth month. [Num. 33:38-39]
- The death of Aaron ended the line of priests that came out of Egypt.
- Israel completed their mourning for Aaron on the 1st day of the next month and began their journey into the promised land with a new high priest. [Num. 20:29]
- This commemorated the death of the old priesthood and the beginning of the new one.

F. The Covenant

- On the 1st day [new moon; rosh chodesh] of the 11th month of the Israelites' 40th year of wilderness punishment, Moses assembled the people and went over their covenant with God again to reconnect with God's purpose for them. [Deut.1:3].
- Moses exhorted them to faith and obedience.

G. The Promised Land

- On the 1st day of the 11th month, Moses gave the Israelites instructions to possess the promised land [Deut. 1:3-8].

Deut. 1:8 Behold, I have set the land before you: which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

H. Clean Before The Lord: I Sam. 20:5, 18, 24, 26

⁵And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit [# 3427 = yashab = to sit, remain, abide, dwell] with the king at meat [eat]: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.

¹⁸Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. [King Saul held feasts on the new moon according to the law.]

²⁴ So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat, David's place was empty.

²⁶ Nevertheless Saul spoke not anything that day: for he thought, something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean.

I. The Temple [Solomon's] and Jerusalem

➤ Hezekiah commissioned the cleansing of the temple on the 1st day of Nisan.

II Chron. 29:17 Now they began on the first day of the first month [Nisan] to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first they finished.

❖ It is interesting that it took 8 days to clean the temple area up to the porch of the Temple and another 8 days to complete the repair and cleaning.

The number 8 indicates a new beginning associated with the 1st day of the sacred month.

Zerubbabel, Haggai, Ezra & Nehemiah - The 2nd Temple Built After Babylonian Captivity

1. Cyrus the king of Persia commissioned the Jews to build a temple for God in Jerusalem.

❖ After their arrival, they built the altar of God and began to offer sacrifices to the Lord beginning on the 1st day of the 7th month, which was the Festival of Trumpets [Ezra 3:1-6].

Consider: The remnant arrived in Jerusalem on Feast of Trumpets [pictures a new beginning for humanity] under leadership of Zerubbabel to rebuild Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. WOW!

Note: Foreshadows the remnant after the 7 year Tribulation Period under the leadership of Jesus Christ to rebuild Jerusalem and build the Millennial Temple.

❖ But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. [Ezra 3:6]

2. Ezra 3:8a, 11b Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the 2nd month, ... to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

3. The enemy was successful in having work on God's house stopped. [Ezra 4:1-24]

Ezra 4:24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem.

So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. [~16 years]

Haggai 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month [Elul], in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

- Haggai's first prophetic message [Haggai 1:1-11] was given on the first day of the sixth month, the first of Elul, which is amazingly appropriate.
- The first of Elul marks the beginning of 40 days of 'teshuvah' or repentance. According to Jewish tradition and rabbinic teaching, these 40 days are representative of a period of 40 days when the children of Israel repented of their sins, after the shameful episode of the Golden Calf, while Moses was up on Mount Sinai for another extended period with God to receive a new set of stone tablets.

Haggai 1:2-15 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying,

This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.

³ Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

⁴ Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your paneled houses, and this house lie waste?

⁵ Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. [Elul; day 1; New Moon]

⁶ Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes.

⁷ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. [Elul; day 1; New Moon]

⁸ Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. [work on the dwelling place of God]

- All the hardship they were experiencing is because you have neglected God's House.
- Remedy: Go...Bring...Build For God's pleasure and His honor

⁹ Ye looked for much, and, lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

¹⁰ Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

¹¹ And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands.

¹² Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

¹³ Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

¹⁴ And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, In the 24th of the 6th month, in the second year of Darius the king. [23 days they finished]

The Temple and Jerusalem: Ezra Raises The Ruins

Ezra departed from Babylon on the 1st day of the 1st month [Nisan 1] carrying with him the decree of King Artaxerxes to free 2nd group of Jews from Babylonian captivity and to bring spiritual renewal to the people. [Ezra 7:9]

Ezra 7:8-9 Ezra arrived in Jerusalem on the 1st day of the 5th month with the decree.

Mal. 2:10-16 Four months after his arrival, Ezra learned over 100 civil and religious leaders were guilty of taking foreign wives; some had even divorced their Jewish wives.

- Ezra tore his clothes, pulled out hair from his head and beard, and sat down appalled. A large crowd of Jews gathered around him and wept bitterly.
- God's remnant: God's showering His love on them and giving them a chance to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem.
- Ezra: You are at risk of getting it wrong yet again by intermarrying with the people who have filled the land with abominations, idol worship and disobeying the prophets' orders not to do this. God, please don't destroy them all.
- While Ezra prayed and wept at the temple, a large number of Jews came and wept.
- One man suggests everyone make a covenant with God agreeing to send away their foreign wives. Ezra agrees and makes the priests, Levites, and all the people swear to it.
- The proclamation orders everyone in Judah to gather in Jerusalem in the next 3 days.
- If they show up late, they'll lose all their property, and won't be allowed back in the congregation of the people. Everyone gets there on time.
- The tribes of Judah and Benjamin show up, sit in the heavy rain and tremble.
- Ezra explains their sin, tells them to confess to God and then separate from their foreign wives.
- They agree to do so. We need time, since so many people have transgressed this way. Give them appointed times. It will take months.
- On the 1st day of the 10th month, Ezra and other priests begin their deliberation to solve the problem.

Ezra 10:17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the 1st day of the 1st month.

4. Ezra read to the people from the book of the law on the 1st day of the 7th month, the Festival of Trumpets. [Neh. 8:2]
5. This was the first time this had been done since the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon [Neh.8:1-3]. ~94 years

In the restoration of the law under Nehemiah the New Moons were re-instituted and kept from that time through to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

J. Consulting Prophets for Advice - II Kings 4:8-37

It was usual during the Temple period to seek guidance from the prophets on the New Moon.

- ❖ The Shunamite woman fed and provided lodging for Elisha when he stopped by.
- ❖ When Elisha offers help to her, she tells of her desire to have a child.
- ❖ Elisha promises her she will have a son within a year.
- ❖ One day when he is older, the son gets a strange headache and dies.
- ❖ The woman lays the child on the bed Elisha sleeps in and sets out to find Elisha.
- ❖ Listen to the husband's remark as she is getting ready to find Elisha.
- ❖ II Kings 4:23 And he said, Wherefore, wilt thou go to him [Elisha] today?
It Is Neither New Moon, nor sabbath.

K. Revelation of Prophetic Events

God often spoke to His servants on the 1st day of a new month to give specific instructions and to reveal prophetic events.

- God spoke to Ezekiel on the 1st day of several months to reveal that He would destroy Tyre [Ezek.26:1-4] and Egypt. [Ezek.29:17-19; 31:1-2; 32:1-2].
- The Word of the Lord came to Haggai on the 1st day of the 6th month to reveal the complacency and apathy of the people regarding the building of the Temple at Jerusalem.
 - ❖ My house is in ruins; Consider your ways! [Hag.1:1].
- After Christ's return, the temple that will be established in Jerusalem for the worship of God will be purified on the 1st day of the 1st sacred month:

Ezek. 45:18 "This says the Lord God; In the first day of the first month, you shall take a young bull without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary."

Ezek. 46:1, 3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looks toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. Likewise, the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons.

Application:

1. First day of month = New Moon = Rosh Chodesh is a day set apart holy by God.
2. It can represent a new beginning.
3. It is a time to rebuild, renew, repair, refresh; a time of spiritual renewal.
4. It was a time to set apart to prepare for the presence of God.
5. It was a time to remember who our God is and that we are His children.
6. It was a time of special worship and offerings.
7. It was a symbol of death of the old and entrance of the new.
8. It was a time to reconnect with God and His purpose for His children.
9. It was a call to faithfulness and obedience.
10. One was required to be clean before the Lord.
11. It was a day of purification.

12. Instructions were given to possess your land; your inheritance.

J. C. Ryle: "Resolve by the grace of God that you will have regular seasons for examining yourself and looking over the accounts of your soul."

Ps. 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

The real "new year" for the follower of Christ begins with his deliverance from the conditions of sin and death when he accepts Jesus Christ as his redeemer and makes a commitment of his life to him.

My commitment to follow the Lord must be followed by the much more arduous task of actually carrying out my initial vows. I will be tempted to murmur and complain.

I Cor. 10:1-5, 11-12 Paul describes the similarities between the Christian walk and the wilderness wanderings of Israel.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

⁵ But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he stands, take heed lest he fall.

Key Point: Let us seek to celebrate our spiritual new year with renewed commitment to run the race and finish well. Only then shall we reach our promised abundant life with rivers of living water flowing out of our hearts.

Phil. 3:13-14 but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.