

Understanding Biblical Calendars and Times

I. The Complexity of Ancient Calendars

- Without archeology and the men and women who not only discover, but also research ancient artifacts, it would be impossible to perfectly understand how the ancient Jews kept time.
- "The Jewish calendar is based on three astronomical phenomena: the rotation of the Earth about its axis (a day); the revolution of the moon about the Earth (a month); and the revolution of the Earth about the sun (a year). These three phenomena are independent of each other, so there is no direct correlation between them. On average, the moon revolves around the Earth in about 29½ days. The Earth revolves around the sun in about 365¼ days, that is, about 12.4 lunar months.
- "The civil calendar used by most of the world has abandoned any correlation between the moon cycles and the month, arbitrarily setting the length of months to 28, 29, 30 or 31 days.
- "The Jewish calendar, however, coordinates all three of these astronomical phenomena. Months are either 29 or 30 days, corresponding to the 29½-day lunar cycle. Years are either 12 or 13 months, corresponding to the 12.4 month solar cycle." -Judaism 101-

II. The Value of Using Your Own Calendar

- It's okay if one of us values one day over another and another doesn't value the day at all. As long as the Bible doesn't prescribe it . . . all we have to do is make sure we're observing or not observing the day in confident faith that we're glorifying God.
- That means that some of you may choose to observe the Crucifixion on a Wednesday, some on a Thursday, and some on a Friday. And some of you may choose to celebrate Easter on specific date every year instead of the changing Jewish reckoning. And that's fine.
- A truly born again believer is *definitely* going to celebrate the resurrection of his Savior from the dead, but God didn't demand that it take place on a certain day and time, so there's freedom in when we observe it.

III. The Value of Appreciating Other Calendars

- Should our calendars observe Children's Day on Sunday, June 14th (which is the American observance), June 1st (according to the World Conference for the Well-being of Children in Geneva, Switzerland) or on November 20th (as established by the United Nations in 1954)?
- You may find that you like how another country's calendar schedules the day in relationship to other special days, or you may want to entirely avoid when the world celebrates something because you don't want to participate in their secular version of the day, or you may prefer to observe an international celebration because there are better chances that you're worshipping God on the same day that Christian's all over the globe are thanking Him for the exact same gift.
- The choice is yours, but there is value in appreciating other calendars.

IV. The Value of Understanding Biblical Calendars and Timetables

- The Old Testament is just as practical and applicable and relevant to modern Christians as it was the day it was written to its original audience. God is never changing, and His character is exemplified from Genesis through Revelation. So, if discipleship is us knowing and understanding God better in order that we can celebrate Him better, then we need to do our best to understand what we find in the Scriptures — and that includes how God speaks of time.
- **Clarity**
 - Mark 15:25; John 19:14; Matthew 20
 - Let's say that Christ's sentence was delivered at 11am and shortly thereafter began His march to Golgotha. Mark could honestly say He was crucified in the third hour. And if John — who was actually there — referred to Christ's crucifixion occurring when He was nailed to the cross, John would have easily recorded that it took place at the sixth hour.
 - There is absolutely no legitimate contradiction. And that's the clarity that comes from understanding how the ancient Jews looked at time.
- **Beauty**
 - The following 7 historical events occurred on the same day — Nisan 17.
 - In Genesis 8:4 we learn that Noah's Ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat. By the way, if you look at this particular passage up and are confused, just note that the seventh month was later designated as the first month at the time of the Exodus in Exodus 12:2.
 - In Exodus 12:40-41 we're told that the Hebrews entered Egypt.
 - In Exodus 3:18 and 5:3 we learn that — 430 years later — Moses led the Israelites through the Parting of the Red Sea on the 17th of Nisan.
 - Joshua 5:10-12 tells us that Israel entered and ate the first fruit of the Promised Land on the same day.
 - In II Chronicles 29:1-28 we find that Hezekiah cleanses the Temple. This is exactly eight hundred years after entering the promised land on Nisan 17.
 - The events of Esther 3:12 and 5:1 also occurred on Nisan 17 when Queen Esther saved the Jews from Elimination.
 - And Jesus Christ rose from the dead on . . . you guessed it, the 17th of Nisan.
 - Each of those events is God providentially and miraculously protecting and caring for His people. Noah represents all mankind, the Jews are God's chosen people, and Christ's death on the cross purchased protection for Jews and Gentiles alike. And the Lord chose the 17th of Nisan for each of those momentous occasions. It was His chosen day to celebrate new beginnings. That is not coincidence . . . and that is beautiful.
- **Guidance**
 - Acts 20:7; I Corinthians
 - Both of these passages as well as plenty of historical evidence teach us that the early church decided to hold their special assemblies on Sunday as opposed to the previous tradition of meeting on Saturday.
 - This is the reason the vast majority of Christians from protestant denominations meet on Sunday. This is an example of how some of the days and times can actually be prescriptive for us.