

IS NEW YEARS DAY BIBLICAL?

INTRO: In 2003, I began a message on time. I never did complete it since I had bitten off a bigger subject than I could handle. Then in 2003 I changed it to the subject of 'New Years'. I also did not complete that message. And this morning I want to complete that message. Thirteen years ago we had the Y2K scare. It was this: What will happen when we go into the year 2000. All our computers have been built with the 1900's clock and when our computers are supposed to click into the year 2000, what will happen? And so people thought the electricity might go off and so they bought generators and there were all kinds of scares. I remember talking to people months before the big day of January 1, 2000.

Well, nothing serious came of the Y2K bug, actually nothing at all came of it, and here we are at the beginning of yet another new year. Now when I was going to speak on time, it was because "New Years" is a time reference. After putting a number of hours into that topic I found it such a complicated topic that I needed more time than I had given myself. Maybe some day I will do that. This morning our subject is 'New Years Day'.

This year in early December NASA put out a video which was prepared in advance for December 22, the day after the world was to end according to the Mayan Calendar.

So, I want to begin with this question: When is New Year's day? "Well", you say, "Duu, what kind of a question is that? This is New Year's day." Well, OK. So let me ask it like this: "Who said January 1 is new year's day?" Did you know there are all kinds of New Year's days? There is the Julian calendar new year's day, the Gregorian calendar new year's day. There is the Muslim New Year's day. To make the matter more complicated, there is the solar year which is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds. Then there is the sidereal year, which is 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, and 10 seconds. Then there is the anomalistic year which is 365 days, 6 hours, 13 minutes and 53 seconds. Then there is the lunar year of 12 months and it is only about 354 days long. And as if that is not enough, there is the cosmic year which is about 225 million years. It is the time needed for the solar system to revolve once around the centre of the Galaxy.

So my question is, "When is New Year's Day"? Or maybe I should ask, "Is January 1 truly New Year's day?" Or, "Why do we have January 1 as New Years Day?" Or maybe I should ask, "Is there a biblical new year's day?"

I. OUR NEW YEAR'S DAY

Well, let us begin by considering our own New Year's Day and its history. What kind of history does New Year's day have and where did January 1 as New Year's Day come from? Well let me tell you there are calendars a plenty from various countries and religious backgrounds. But two important calendars were the Julian and Gregorian calendars. The calendar in use today, is the Gregorian calendar.

But why did January 1 become New Year's day? Well our New Year's day has its history in Rome, both political and religious Rome. It appears that the new year in the Roman world began when the new consul took office. In 222 BC that date was fixed as March the 15th. But in 153 BC it was moved to the first day of January. And so January 1 became the first day of the new year (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Listen to what Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia has to say on New Years, and note the mention of January 1, "The earliest known record of a New Year festival dates from 2000 BC in Mesopotamia. In Babylonia the New Year began with the new moon closest to the spring equinox, usually mid-March. In Assyria it was near the autumnal equinox in September. For the Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Persians the day was celebrated on the autumnal equinox, which now falls on about September 23. For the Greeks it was the winter solstice, which now falls on about December 21 or 22. During the early Roman republic March 1 began a new year, but after 153 BC the date was January 1. This date was kept by the Julian calendar of 46 BC.

"During the early Middle Ages March 25 (the feast of the Annunciation) was celebrated as New Year's Day. January 1 was restored as New Year's Day by the Gregorian calendar, which was adopted by the Roman Catholic church in 1582. Over the next 350 years other countries followed. Russia, in 1918, was the last major nation to adopt the practice. In countries that use the Julian calendar, New Year's Day is on January 14 of the Gregorian calendar."

Let me read an internet article by the "U.S. News and World Report", December 23, 1996, and I quote: "In 46 B.C.E. the Roman emperor Julius Caesar first established January 1 as New Year's day. Janus was the Roman god of doors and gates, and had two faces, one looking forward and one back. Caesar felt that the month named after this god ("January") would be the appropriate "door" to

the year. Caesar celebrated the first January 1 New Year by ordering the violent routing of revolutionary Jewish forces in the Galilee. Eyewitnesses say blood flowed in the streets. In later years, Roman pagans observed the New Year by engaging in drunken orgies—a ritual they believed constituted a personal re-enacting of the chaotic world that existed before the cosmos was ordered by the gods.

"As Christianity spread, pagan holidays were either incorporated into the Christian calendar or abandoned altogether. By the early medieval period most of Christian Europe regarded Annunciation Day (March 25) as the beginning of the year. (According to Catholic tradition, Annunciation Day commemorates the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would be impregnated by G-d and conceive a son to be called Jesus.)

"After William the Conqueror... became King of England on December 25, 1066, he decreed that the English return to the date established by the Roman pagans, January 1. This move ensured that the commemoration of Jesus' birthday (December 25) would align with William's coronation, and the commemoration of Jesus' circumcision (January 1) would start the new year - thus rooting the English and Christian calendars and his own Coronation). William's innovation was eventually rejected, and England rejoined the rest of the Christian world and returned to celebrating New Years Day on March 25.

"About five hundred years later, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII (AKA "Ugo Boncompagni", 1502-1585) abandoned the traditional Julian calendar. By the Julian reckoning, the solar year comprised 365.25 days, and the intercalation of a "leap day" every four years was intended to maintain correspondence between the calendar and the seasons. Really, however there was a slight inaccuracy in the Julian measurement (the solar year is actually 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds = 365.2422 days). This slight inaccuracy caused the Julian calendar to slip behind the seasons about one day per century. Although this regression had amounted to 14 days by Pope Gregory's time, he based his reform on restoration of the vernal equinox, then falling on March 11, to the date had 1,257 years earlier when Council of Nicaea was convened (March 21, 325 C.E.). Pope Gregory made the correction by advancing the calendar 10 days. The change was made the day after October 4, 1582,

and that following day was established as October 15, 1582. The Gregorian calendar differs from the Julian in three ways: (1) No century year is a leap year unless it is exactly divisible by 400 (e.g., 1600, 2000, etc.); (2) Years divisible by 4000 are common (not leap) years; and (3) once again the New Year would begin with the date set by the early pagans, the first day of the month of Janus - January 1.

"On New Years Day 1577 Pope Gregory XIII decreed that all Roman Jews, under pain of death, must listen attentively to the compulsory Catholic conversion sermon given in Roman synagogues after Friday night services. On New Years Day 1578 Gregory signed into law a tax forcing Jews to pay for the support of a "House of Conversion" to convert Jews to Christianity. On New Years 1581 Gregory ordered his troops to confiscate all sacred literature from the Roman Jewish community. Thousands of Jews were murdered in the campaign.

"Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, January 1 - supposedly the day on which Jesus' circumcision initiated the reign of Christianity and the death of Judaism - was reserved for anti-Jewish activities: synagogue and book burnings, public tortures, and simple murder.

"The Israeli term for New Year's night celebrations, 'Sylvester,' was the name of the 'Saint' and Roman Pope who reigned during the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.). The year before the Council of Nicaea convened, Sylvester convinced Constantine to prohibit Jews from living in Jerusalem. At the Council of Nicaea, Sylvester arranged for the passage of a host of viciously anti-Semitic legislation. All Catholic "Saints" are awarded a day on which Christians celebrate and pay tribute to that Saint's memory. December 31 is Saint Sylvester Day - hence celebrations on the night of December 31 are dedicated to Sylvester's memory", end quote.

So I ask you, is the day the new Roman consul took office a good reference point to mark the beginning of the new year? Well, for me personally, the day that the new Roman consul took office in 153 AD holds no interest. As a Christian I want to know what is the original New Year's day. So let us see if we can find the original New Year's day. Let me ask you this morning, if you were going to determine when new year's day is, what would be your first reference point? How

far back would you go? Would you go back to the Big Bang? And how far back is that? Well, let's give that up right away because we might be 48 billion years off the mark just with one little wrong guess. Would you go to the birth of Christ and begin the first day at His birth? Would you begin the first day at His resurrection? Or would you go even further back?

II. THE BIBLE'S NEW YEAR'S DAY

Well, is the word year in the Bible? Well, it occurs 322 times in the singular and 450 more times in the plural. That is 772 times, so it plays a very important part in Scripture. So, turn with me to Genesis 8 (read verse 13). Now I want you to notice the word 'year'. This is only the second occurrence of the word 'year' in the singular. Then I want you to notice in Genesis 8:13 that this was the 601 year. So, by this time, we note that there had already been 601 new years days. So, from that we now ask, 601 years from when? From where would time have begun to be marked? What would have marked the beginning of the first year, any ideas? Creation, of course. That makes sense doesn't it.

So, tell me, when was the very first new year's day? Well, that depends on how we measure the year. And I would propose that as far as the Bible is concerned, the sun must be used to mark the beginning and ending of the year. My basis for that is the feasts that Israel kept. There was the feast of first-fruits, that is when the barley was first ripe. Then there is the feast of weeks, and that is when the wheat was first ripe. And the seasons are dependant on the sun, not the moon. So the very first New Year's day would have been 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds days after creation. So our starting day is Genesis 1:1-5 at the close of which it says, "So the evening and the morning were the first day." There is the very first day. So it only makes sense that you would measure the very first year from the day of creation. You see, there could be no new year before this time. All true time measurements in years must begin at creation. That is the beginning of time for mankind.

So, according to the Mayan Calendar, we are in the year 5125. According to the evolutionist of the Bib Bang theory, the earth is about 13 billion years old, give or take a few billion. You see, you cannot come anywhere close to considering the month or day. But, according to the Jewish calendar we are in the year 5773.

From there we go on to ask what time of year was the very first New Year's Day? Well, the year is divided into months, and there are 12 lunar cycles in a year. But these lunar months are 29 1/2 days. That complicates things. So, we notice now further in Genesis 8:13 the word 'month'. It occurs twice in this verse and has occurred. And in Genesis 8:13 we are in the first month of the 601 new year's day. So, we know that somewhere there was both the first year, and the first month of that year.

So, just what is a month? Well, we have said already that the lunar year is not accurate to the four seasons, so the year, to be accurate must be based on the sun. The earth travels around the sun once in one year. But, the solar year is divided into almost 12 lunar cycles. So the month was originally determined by the moon. So you know every time it was full moon, a month had passed. And when you had completed 12 of those you had approximately one year. But, the lunar month is 29.53059 days. So if you go by lunar months, your seasons soon get thrown off and soon you are harvesting in January, then in December and so on.

So the Jews developed a system to take care of that. Their year was lunisolar, that is it used both the sun and the moon. They had 12 months in the year of alternating 29 and 30 days. But to keep the seasons the same each year they developed a system of adding a leap month every so many years. Their calendar went through a 19 year cycle. On the 3rd, 6th, 9th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th year they added one month. So they had seven leap years in a cycle, and then the cycle would begin again. That way their calendar always was true to the seasons and the feast of First-fruits and Pentecost always remained in the right time of year.

Well, now that we have the original New Year's day, let me ask, in what month did creation take place? In which month did God create the heavens and the earth? Was it January, or was it March, the two dates that have so often been used? Well, I recommend that we cannot trust the Roman rulers, nor the Roman Popes. We must go to the Jewish people who wrote the Bible and kept very close track of days and years because of religious observances such as the Sabbath and First-fruits and Pentecost.

So I want you to go back to Genesis 8:13 (read). Now the word for 'year' in Hebrew is 'shannah'. Now the Hebrews have a very special day, it is a very high holy day even to this very day, and it is called 'Rosh Hashaneh', meaning 'the head of the year' or new years day. Now, in

which month is this day? Well, turn to Leviticus 23 (read 23-25). This is the day they commemorate as Rosh Hashanah. But notice very carefully that it says it was, not in the first month, but the seventh month. So, how can you have Rosh Hashanah on the first day of the seventh month? This is the month Tishri. How could creation have taken place on day one, but in month seven?

So our problem is that Rosh Hashanah, new year's day in the Hebrew world does not fall in the first month. It falls on the first day of the seventh month, the month of Tishri. Is it still possible that this is the first month, the month of creation? Well, turn to Exodus 12 with me (read 1-2). Now this month that we have here was to be the first month of the year to the Jewish people from this time forward. This is the month 'Nisan'. Now what are we to make of all that? Well, here it is. Why did God have to tell them that this was to be their first month? Well, because it was different from the first month of creation. Here is the first month of their salvation. It is the seventh month of the creation year but the first month of their salvation out of Egypt. They had two months that were the first month of the year and marked the beginning of that year. The first month of their salvation year, the first of Nisan was not important to them. But the first month of the new year with regard to creation. And this second one was a very high and holy day. You see, they had the civil year and the religious year. The civil year began at the day of creation, and the religious year began in the month of Passover. Since this was their new beginning from the time after Egypt, it became the beginning of their religious year.

But though they had two months that were their first months, they only commemorated one New Year's day. And that day is the day which marks creation. So, Rosh Hashana, having become a religious holy day as well as marking the new year's day from creation is said to be in the seventh month because it was a religious holy day. But in the civil year, it marked the first day of the first month of the very first year when God created the heavens and the earth.

So, here is how it worked. The seventh month of the civil year which began at creation, was the first month of their religious year, which began the day they left Egypt. So the seventh month of their religious year, was also the first month of their civil year, and so on. We are familiar with new year's resolutions. For the Jew, that happens on Rosh Hashanah.

Now, if I am correct so far, then the month of the New year is Tishri. Rosh Hashaneh is on the first day of the month Tishri. Now the month of Tishri falls somewhere between our September and October. So let us go to Leviticus 23 once more (read 23-24). This is 'Rosh Hashana', or head of the year or New Year's day starting at creation. And you will notice that it is on the first day of the seventh month. But this day is a religious festival and therefore it is said to be the seventh month, but from creation it is the first month. So it is the first day of the first month of the civil year.

So, in my estimation, here is the real New Year's day. In 2012 the day of creation was September 18. The year we are in, according to the Jews, since September the 18 of 2012 is the year 5773 from creation.

So, now that we have established the first month of the first year, let us see if we can establish the first day as well. So, if we take the Jewish people as setting the standard for determining such things, we might find this out from the Sabbath day. You see, the Sabbath was the seventh day. So, what day of the week is the Sabbath? (anyone?) It is Saturday. But I want to remind you about something. The Jewish day, since it is based on Scripture, does not begin in the middle of something, not even the middle of the night. It begins in the beginning of the day. And when does the day begin? Well, this may surprise you, it begins in the evening. And you say, "Hey, that is the end of the day." Well, so it is, that is in our culture.

But go with me to Genesis 1 (read 1:5). It says the evening and the morning were the first day. So the evening starts the first day and it takes us through the night until morning. Then the morning takes us through until evening, and that is one day. The first part of the day does not begin in the middle of anything. It begins at the beginning and the beginning is in the evening. So in God's reckoning, and thus Jewish reckoning the day begins in the evening. So evening and morning are one day. So the next evening and morning are the second day and so on. So the seventh day began Friday evening and went until Saturday evening. So, you tell me which day was the first day, the day God began creation? (Sunday.)

So, now that we have established the first day of the first month of the first year, let us see if we can

establish the first hour of creation in Genesis 1:1-5 as well. You see, for us the first hour of the new year starts at 12:01 pm January 1. So we go back to Genesis 1 once more (read 5). It says the evening and the morning were the first day. So, we conclude that creation began in the evening. So we are getting it narrowed down a little. But we want to find the hour.

Go with me to the book of Mark, chapter 15 (read 15:25, 33-34). So Jesus was crucified the third hour, and the sixth hour darkness fell over the land and the ninth hour He died, and we know He was buried just before the sun disappeared which marked the evening. That means the ninth hour is not far from sunset, which would mark the beginning of the Sabbath. Now go to John 11 (read 9). You see, when Jesus said, "Are there not 12 hours in a day" he is referring to that part of the 24 hour day that begins the light time. So the man that walks during the day does not stumble because he can see. The verse is clear on that.

So, let us take a little intermission right here to mention another subject. May I ask you if you are walking in the light time of God's day of salvation? Can you see where you are going? Do you know where you are going? In the light you can see where you are going. John says if we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another. I think in the context in which that is given, it speaks of fellowship with God. May I ask you, do you have fellowship with God? If not, today, according to Scripture, is the day, the daytime of salvation. If you do now know what I am talking about, then here is what you need to do. Acknowledge you are a sinner and walking in the night, and then repent of your sins and receive the work of Christ on the cross when He died for you, and you will experience walking in fellowship with Him in the light.

Listen to what comes right after John 3:16: "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

So, back to the hour of the day when creation began. The third hour, the hour Jesus was crucified is 9:00 a.m. That makes the first hour of the biblical morning to begin at 6:00 am. That means the first hour of the night begins at

6 pm, that is based on Jesus' words that there are 12 hours in a day. And that is roughly the time of sun sets in Israel and it is the zero mark of evening. And so, since creation began in the evening, it would have begun at 6:00 pm Sunday evening, on the first day of Tishri 5773 years ago, last September 12, in our year 2012. In September 4 of 2013 we will enter the year 5774. This is the Jewish calendar of today.

All of that to tell you this, you needn't have stayed up until 12 midnight last night to watch the new year come in. That actually happened almost 4 months ago, and it happened in the evening, not at midnight.

CONCL: And to conclude and on a more serious note, out of all this we note how very Gentile our New Year's day is and that it is not related in any way to either the original new year's day or to the OT religious New Year's day. Furthermore, the original New Year's day is to be based on creation. And according to the Jewish calendar September the 27 of 2003 will mark the 5774th New Year's day, according to the most reliable sources we have.

But, let me remind us that God set out a religious year for the Jews that was based on their salvation from Egypt and not creation. And we saw that the seventh month of the religious year started the first month of the creation year. I did not have time to tell you the significance of these days, but I believe that it is well possible that the Lord will come to earth, not at the rapture but at the second coming on Rosh Hashana, New Years day, or the birthday of the universe. It is called, in the Bible, the feast of trumpets, and the Lord returns to earth, at the end of the tribulation, at the last trump. The final trumpet blown on the feast of trumpets is called the last trump.

And it is my view that Christ will come for His Church before that. So, I remind us in this coming year, to watch for the imminent return of Christ.