

2023 Already

It is hard to believe that yet another calendar year has come to an end. Most of us in this group were born last century. Do you feel old yet? While we do not celebrate New Year's Day, we can acknowledge the current calendar change. If you have not surmised it yet, New Year's Day celebrations are just as pagan as Christmas and Easter. I am not going to elaborate on the origins as I will leave that up to you all to do some research on the ties to its pagan origins. As Solomon (and Andrea) says, "nothing new under the Sun." (**Ecclesiastes 1:9**) Satan will pervert anything remotely associated with God, His Word or His Sabbaths and Holy Days, He established for His people.

We know from scripture that Satan counterfeited the days and times. "And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to ***change the set times and the laws***. And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and one-half time. But the judgment shall sit, and his dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and to be destroyed unto the end."- **Daniel 7:25-26**. Once the Sabbath had been changed, polluting and profaning the Holy Days was no challenge.

God's new year begins in the spring and coincides when we celebrate Passover.

We can find God's first month of the year in **Exodus 12:1-6**- "And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month *shall be* to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them each man a lamb for a father's house, a lamb for a house. And if the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take according to the number of the souls, each one, according to the eating of his mouth, you shall count concerning the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You shall take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it up until the *beginning* of the fourteenth day of the same month. And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the two evenings."

We know from scripture that this month is called Abib. We learn the name of it in the next chapter of Exodus. "On this day you are going out, in the month Abib."-

Exodus 13:4.

Just to for comparison, what would invoke the thoughts of an image of a new beginning? The cold, frozen dead of winter or the spring time with the trees and flowers coming into bloom? It does not take much thought to grasp the difference.

Just like the concept of going to heaven or hell compared to God's Plan of

Salvation for mankind. What is easier to swallow? Floating off to heaven to walk the streets of gold or rot back in the ground from which we were taken to await a future resurrection?

As a nation and as people in general, we have taken our focus off of God. **Psalm 53:1-4**- “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, and have worked out abominable wickedness; there is no one who does good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any who understand, who are seeking after God. Every one has turned away; they have altogether become corrupt; no one is doing good, no, not even one. Will the workers of iniquity never learn? They eat up my people as they eat bread; they have not called upon God.”

For the past couple of years, it appears that Satan has accelerated his attack on humanity and the truth of God. The fear he has unleashed and his lies through his appointed “talking heads” has caused a whirlwind of deceit and fear throughout the entire world. The great Covid “plan-demic”, vaccines, alphabet perverts and Wokeness have all but polluted any form of decency left in our nation. The so-called “churches” are not fairing much better, allowing this infiltration of “compromise” to adjust their numbers and agenda for profit. Whatever the

motivation, such conduct may seem to reign for now but, hold fast, judgment is coming.

Isaiah 3:8-11- “For Jerusalem is staggering and Judah has fallen because their tongue and their doings *are* against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of His glory. The look of their faces witnesses against them; and they declare their sin like Sodom. They do not hide *it*! Woe to their soul! For they have rewarded evil to themselves. “Say to the righteous that *it shall be* well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! For the evil doing of his hand will be given to him.”

Those folks sitting in the front row pews of their churches are not safe on base either.

“For the time *has come for* judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it first *begins* with us, what *will be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous are saved with much difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and *the sinner?*”- **1 Peter 4:17-18.**

We are witnessing scripture unfolding in front of us every day. We have probably mentioned the following scripture several times this past year and even may have recently. ***But pay attention!*** **2 Timothy 3:1-7**- “***Know this also***, that in *the* last days perilous times shall come; For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money,

braggarts, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, despisers of those who are good, Betrayers, reckless, egotistical, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; Having an outward appearance of godliness, but denying the power of *true* godliness. But *as for you*, turn away from *all* these. For from *men such as* these come those who are worming their way into houses, and are gaining control over empty-headed *gullible* women given over to *various* sins, *being* driven by all kinds of lust. *They are always learning but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”

The sin is so blatant, rampant and in your face these days, many wonder where God is in all of this? Why does the evil continue to increase? We need not be concerned. “When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases; but the righteous shall see their fall.”- **Proverbs 29:16**. God is most patient and gracious in His dealings with mankind. Why we may ask?

2 Peter 3:9-13- **“The Lord is not delaying the promise of His coming,** as some in their own minds reckon delay; rather, **He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

However, the day of *the* Lord shall come as a thief in *the* night in which the heaven itself shall disappear with a mighty roar, and *the* elements shall pass away, burning

with intense heat, and *the* earth and the works in it shall be burned up. Since all these things are going to be destroyed, **what kind of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness**, Looking forward to and striving for *the* coming of the day of God, during which *the* heavens, being on fire, shall be destroyed, and the elements, burning with intense heat, shall melt? But according to His promise, **we look forward to a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.**” Even with all the sin abounding, God wants all of His creation to come to repentance. If you are reading this and have not done so, what are you waiting for?

We have all experienced storms this past year, some more than others. **1 Peter 4:12-16-** “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you which is taking place to test you, as if some strange thing were happening to you. But to the degree that you have a share in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that, at the revelation of His glory, you also may rejoice exceedingly. If you are reviled for *the* name of Christ, *you are* blessed because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God is resting upon you; on their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

Assuredly, let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as an overlording busybody in other people’s lives. Yet if anyone *is suffering* as a Christian, he should not be ashamed; but let him glorify God because of this,”

I think it would be a safe statement that none of us has had a murder to contend with, no earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, floods, we *did* have a major hurricane, but praise God, most of us were spared any significant damage. None of us have yet endured a scourging and crucifixion either.

How many of these storms did we bring upon ourselves? Were we too busy saying “woe is me” to notice their approach? “Woe *to* the rebellious children,” says the LORD, “who carry out a plan, but not of Me; and who form an alliance, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;”- **Isaiah 30:1**.

Some of the trials we endure are brought about by our own folly. “Don’t you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as* servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether *it is* of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”- **Romans 6:16**.

Have we learned from this past year’s mistakes? Hopefully we continue to learn and grow, passing these “tests and trials” as they are God’s way of bringing about His desired changes in each of us according to His purpose.

Hebrews 5:8- “Although He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience from the things that He suffered;”

1 Peter 1:3-6- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; Unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us, Who are being safeguarded by *the* power of God through faith, for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time. In this you yourselves greatly rejoice; though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials;”

It can be difficult to see the road ahead if we walk with our heads down, constantly looking at our feet. Are we walking the “walk” with God as we should? Or are we still playing church giving Him lip service?

1 Kings 8:60-61- “That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD *is* God; there *is no* other. And let your heart be perfect with the LORD our God: to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”

2 Chronicles 6:14- “And he said, “O LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God like You in heaven or in earth. You keep Your covenant and show lovingkindness to Your servants *who walk before You with all their hearts.*” Remember the “Greatest Commandment?”

Do we learn from these mistakes or do we keep repeating them? **Proverbs 26:11-12**- “As a dog returns to its vomit, *so* a fool returns to his own folly. Do you see a man wise in his own conceit? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him.”

2 Peter 2:22- “But the *pronouncement found* in the true proverb has happened to them: The dog has returned to *eat* his own vomit; and *the* sow *that was* washed *has returned* to her wallowing place in *the filthy* mire.” Do not be discouraged in repeat trials. Learn from them. Worthwhile change doesn’t occur overnight. James 1:3- “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

Dealing with an issue that may have taken years to develop will not go away in an instant. Patience and persistence are paramount. **Philippians 1:6**- “Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will complete *it* until *the* day of Jesus Christ.”

We can also learn from the mistakes of others as it has been said “learn from the mistakes of others as you’ll never live long enough to make them all yourself.” I have probably made most of my mistakes twice just to make sure I did them wrong the first time...some can be painful.

As we look ahead into turning the calendar to 2023, remember we are on a journey. We will not reach the destination on our own, Christ is bringing the destination

with Him when He returns. **Matt. 25:34-** “Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from *the* foundation of *the* world.’”

That destination is only open to the obedient who follow the instructions in His Book.

1 Cor. 6:9-10 “Don’t you know that the unrighteous ***shall not*** inherit *the* kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves as women, ***nor homosexuals***, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit *the* kingdom of God.”

1 Thes. 2:12- “And *earnestly* testifying, that you may walk worthily of God, Who is calling you to His own kingdom and glory.”

2 Peter 1:10-11- “For this reason, brethren, ***be even more diligent*** to make your calling and election sure; because *if* you are doing these things, you will never fall at any time. For in this way, you will be richly granted an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Citizenship into His Kingdom requires ***work***. **Ezek. 20:19-20-** “I *am* the LORD your God. ***Walk*** in My statutes, and ***keep*** My ordinances, and ***do*** them, And ***keep***

My Sabbaths holy; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I *am* the LORD your God.”

John 14:15- “If you love Me, keep the commandments— namely, ***My commandments***.” I fail to read any part of this that limits these instructions to just the “Jews” nor can I find anywhere in scripture that says “they were done away with” or “nailed to the cross.” Protestant hogwash to fit a narrative.

No one will do it for you. **Ephesians 4:20-24-** “But you have not so learned Christ; If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, according to *the* truth in Jesus: That concerning your former conduct, ***you*** put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; And that ***you*** be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ***you*** put on the new man, which according to God is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

We need to actively seek God and read His Word and ***do what He says*** that we may achieve change and gain insight into His truth. **John 16:13-** “However, when that one has come, even the Spirit of the truth, it will lead you into all truth because it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear, it shall speak. And it shall disclose to you the things to come.”

The clarity of direction and peace that comes with being obedient to God's Commandments will become apparent and we may even avoid some of the storms we so frequently face.

Psalm 25:10- "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies."

Psalm 34:17-19- "The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."

Psalm 91:9-11- "Because you have made the LORD, Who is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling, For He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways."

Prov. 8:32-35- "And now therefore hearken unto me, O you children, for blessed *are those who* keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and do not refuse it. Blessed *is* the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors, For whoever finds me finds life and shall obtain favor from the LORD."

Isa. 26:2-3- “Open the gates, so that the righteous nation shall enter in, one that is faithfully keeping truth. You will keep *him* in perfect peace, whose mind *is* stayed on You; because he trusts in You.”

As baptized children of God, we must look forward to fulfilling our Creator’s purpose for our lives. We cannot stay anchored to yesterday with hopes of making tomorrow better. Storms and trials are part of life. Most are God’s way of getting through to us to teach us a lesson.

Isa. 48:17-18- “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, “*I am* the LORD your God Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way that you should go. Oh, that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

It comes as no surprise to any of us who have been on the journey for a few years now, that if we fail to learn from the trials, we will get them again. He will bring them back around. He loves us that much. As this year closes, and we are in a learning mode preparing now for Passover. Satan loves to remind us of our past, but we have been forgiven and we do not live there anymore. **Luke 9:62-** “But Jesus said to him, “No one who sets his hand to the plow, and looks back at the things behind, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

We have made the choice to trust God and live by His every Word. We have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins. We are on the march towards being His First Fruits and heirs to His Kingdom. We know where the world is headed, we have been warned. We know what is required of us by God, we have been told. We trust in God to be with us every step of the way. We are one calendar page closer to His return! Amen.

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