

WHEN DOES THE HEBREW YEAR BEGIN?

Question No. 50:

Can you tell us the Hebrew New Year's day, and the days of their sacred feasts, in terms of our Roman calendar?

Answer:

While leading the Hebrew host from bondage to freedom, the Lord was firmly establishing them in the truth of all things, including the truth of the day on which the year begins, of the day on which the month begins, and of the day on which the week begins. Obviously, the Hebrew religion had largely to do with the days of the week, of the month, and of the year.

The Hebrews were forever to keep holy, (1) not *a* seventh, but *the* seventh, day of each week, the Sabbath; (2) the days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the first month, the Passover week; (3) the fiftieth day after the sheaf of the first fruits was offered, the Pentecost; (4) the tenth day of the seventh month, the Atonement; (5) the days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the same month, the Feast of Tabernacles; and (6) the feasts of the new moons. Thus the All-knowing One, He who created the heavenly bodies and knows the very moment He set them in motion to govern the day, the month, and the year, decreed that the holy feasts be observed in the very month and on the very day on which they were first ordained.

And He appointed the "lights in the firmament . . . for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Gen. 1:14), by the movements of which He fixed each solar and each lunar date, so that it could never be lost sight of. Then to make doubly secure against such a loss, He "spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, *This month* shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." Ex. 12:1, 2.

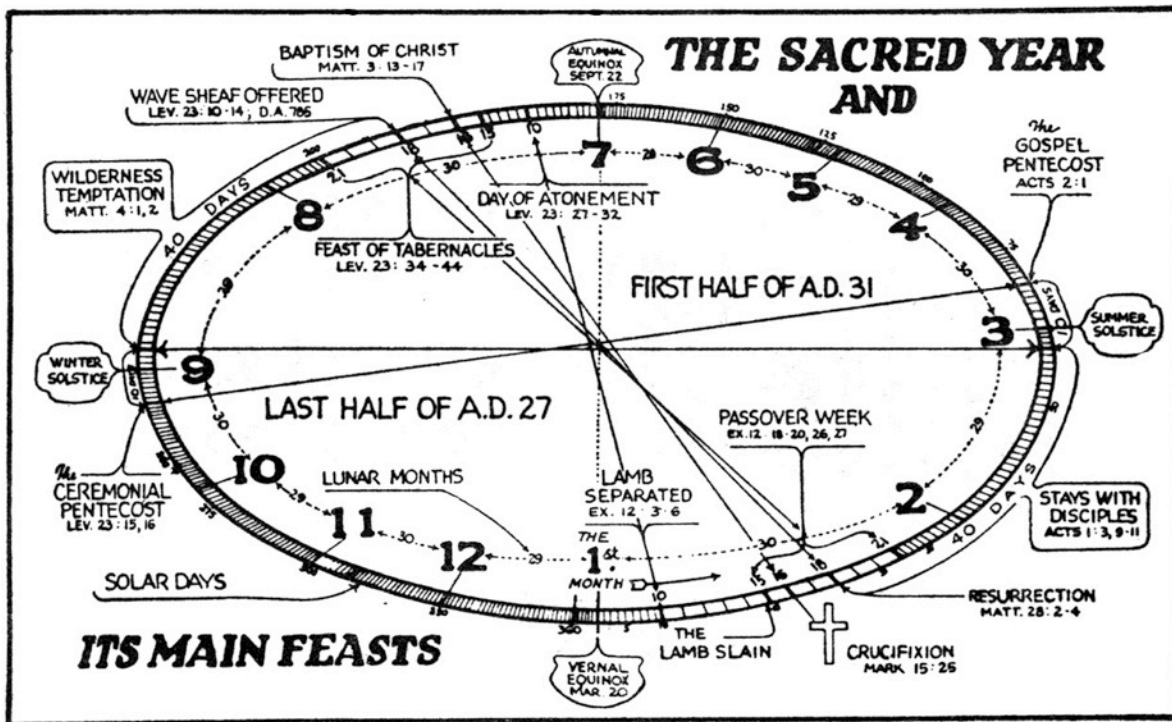
Thus we see that His great and never-erring timepiece for earth, the earth's own invariable movements, fix the day and the year; whereas the moon's revolving round the earth makes the months.

But the Roman New Year, January 1, finds its establishment, not in the movements of the solar system, but in the notions of mythology. Consequently, as the date does not coincide with either the vernal or the autumnal equinox, or with either the summer or the winter solstice, then should earth's inhabitants ever lose count of the day, and need to recover it, they would be helpless to do so.

To prevent His people from bringing upon themselves such a catastrophe, and to have them intelligent as to the time the year begins, the Lord gave to Moses the sacred yearly calendar, which cannot be lost or miscalculated so long as the earth remains. He told him that the day which preceded the exodus was the fourteenth day of the first month; and that forever thereafter, they were to commemorate the Passover on that very night each year, the night following the fourteenth day. Thus was the Lord re-establishing the creation calendar, reaffirming that the year begins on the day of the vernal equinox, on which spring, the first season of the year, commences, and on which the sun and the moon were created (the fourth day from the beginning of creation)—the only point in time at which, in the very nature of things, the year could begin. And so it is that the Passover, the Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles (the three most important feasts in the year), besides other feasts, are controlled by the solar year and by the lunar month; the weekly Sabbath by the day on which creation began; and the year itself by the vernal equinox, the immovable sign-post.

Beginning its first month of the year with the first new moon, at, or after, the vernal equinox, March 20-21, it puts the fourteenth day, that on which the Passover lamb was to be slain, on April 3. Once for all, is seen the utter impossibility of the Roman month's having the slightest thing to do with reckoning the time of either the Passover or the sheaf offering, and thus not the slightest thing to do with reckoning the time of either the crucifixion or the resurrection of Christ.

This is more graphically seen from the correspondence of the sacred events which came in the spring of the year A. D. 31, the year Christ was crucified, with the sacred events which came in the fall of the year A. D. 27, the year in which He was baptized, as viewed diagrammatically:



This chart enables us to see that just as one solar season matches another (the vernal equinox matches the autumnal equinox, and the summer solstice, the winter solstice), in like fashion the sacred feasts of one season match the sacred feasts of another season: the tenth day of the first month, the separation of the unblemished lamb from the flock (Ex. 12:3), corresponding to the tenth day of the seventh month, the work of Atonement, the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous, signifying in both events a day of judgment, a day of separating the holy from the unholy; the sixteenth of the first month, the day Christ was crucified, corresponding to the sixteenth of the seventh month, the day He was baptized, showing that His watery grave foreshadowed His grave in the tomb; the eighteenth day of the first month, the resurrection, corresponding to the eighteenth day of the seventh month, the first day of the wilderness temptation; His forty days of victorious ministry to His disciples, corresponding to His forty days of victorious conflict with Satan; and His disciples' preaching the gospel after the Pentecost, corresponding to His preaching the gospel after the wilderness temptation.

To establish the date of His baptism as the sixteenth day of the seventh month, we need only to consider, aside from the coincidences, the fact that the "more sure word of prophecy" certifies that He was to preach three and a half years, and then be "cut

off.” Dan. 9:26. And as He was crucified on the sixteenth of the first month, he must have been baptized for the ministry just three and a half years before, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month.

WERE THE PASSOVER AND THE BURIAL ON THE SAME DAY?

Question No. 51:

Of late, numerous efforts have been made to fix the particular days of the week on which the trials, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus took place; also the length of time He was standing trial, hanging on the cross, and lying in the tomb. The points brought as proof on the subject are confusing to me. Can you clear it? And did Jesus eat the Passover on the very day the Jews did, or beforehand?

Answer:

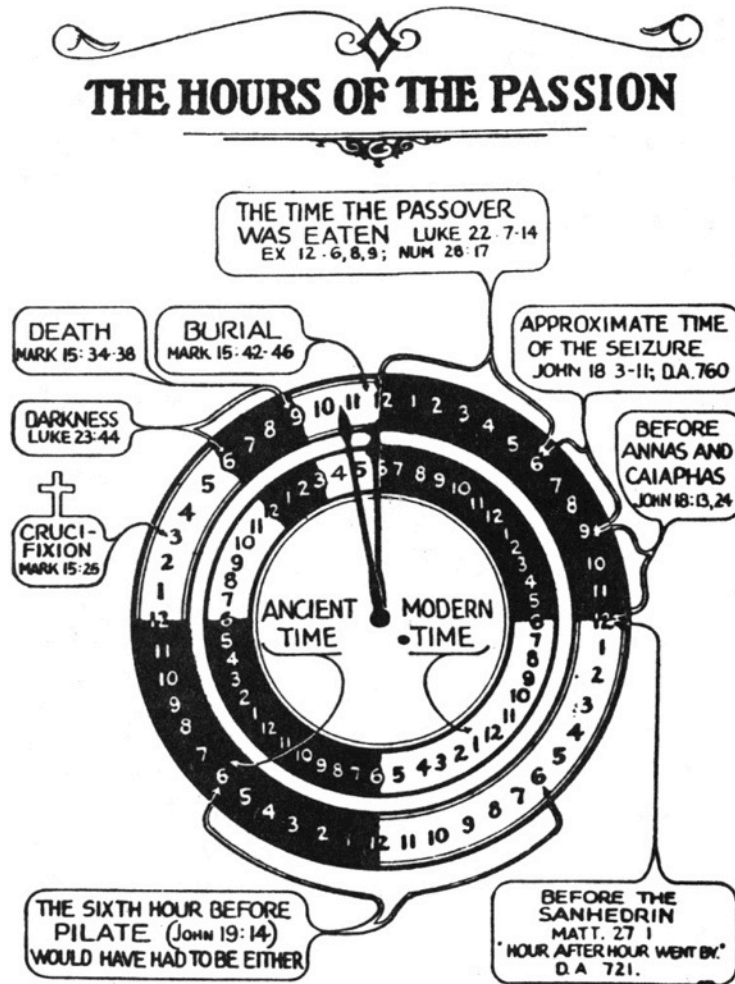
Regardless how wrapped in mystery the Gospel writers may seem to have left this subject, one sequence of facts is clearly given and stands out distinctly; namely, the hours at which the main events took place.

All the Gospels testify that Jesus was seized the same night He ate the Passover with His disciples (Matt. 26:34; Mark 14:30, Luke 22:34). John states that immediately thereafter He was “led . . . away to Annas” (John 18:13), and Mark discloses that later that night He was brought before “the chief priests and all the council.” Mark 14:54, 55. “And as soon as it was day,” as all the accounts agree, He was arraigned finally before the Sanhedrin. To make the trial legal, the court could not (by Jewish law) convene before sunrise, the twelfth hour, ancient time. To be exact, the time of the trial could not have been earlier than 11:50 A. M. ancient time (5:50 A. M. modern time), for the Passover week was observed from the fourteenth to the twenty-first day of the first month of the Hebrew year beginning with the vernal equinox (March 20-21), the time of the year when the day and the night are equal.

Subsequently, as all the Gospel writers show, He was taken to the Roman judgment hall, where, according to John’s testimony, He was tried before Pilate at “about the

sixth hour.” John 19:14. And Mark records that He was crucified at “the *third hour*” (Mark 15:25), while Matthew and Luke, along with Mark, testify that as He hung on the cross, darkness covered the earth from the *sixth* to the *ninth hour* (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). Finally, all join in concluding witness that He was buried just before the *twelfth hour, sunset*—before the Sabbath drew on (Matt. 27:57-62; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:54-56).

The accompanying chart represents a forty-eight-hour period. On it every hour is designated, and the reference for each event is given opposite the hour in which the event took place. The outer figures of the chart represent the ancient timepiece; the inner figures represent the modern timepiece. The shaded parts show the hours of the



A FORTY-EIGHT-HOUR TIME COMPUTATION

nights involved, also the darkness which occurred while Christ was hanging on the cross.

Were one to conclude that the events in connection with Christ's passion,—His seizure, trials, crucifixion, and burial,—took place in one day, then, as can be clearly seen from the chart, there would be no "sixth hour" for the trial in Pilate's judgment hall; indeed, there would then be no time at all allowed for the trials before the Roman Judiciary—Pilate and Herod!

And to assume that Luke 22:7-14 records only a Passover substitute—that Jesus and His disciples celebrated a passover before the day arrived—is to take a position at variance with the "law" as well as with the "testimony" of the prophets and the apostles (Isa. 8:20). And had such been the fact, the Jews who were desperately anxious to hang on Christ some act of lawlessness, would have made much of it, and as a result the apostles would have written about it.

To satisfy the immutable demand of the "law," the lamb had to be slain in the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the first month (Num. 28:16), and the feast had to be celebrated on the fifteenth (verse 17), the night following the fourteenth day (Ex. 12:8). In conclusive corroboration of this fact, the Spirit of Prophecy emphatically states: "On the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, the very day and month on which, for fifteen long centuries, the Passover lamb had been slain, Christ, having eaten the Passover with His disciples, instituted that feast which was to commemorate His own death as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 399.

While the Passover week was regulated by the month, the day upon which the sheaf was to be offered (the type of the resurrection—1 Cor. 15:20; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786) was regulated by the week. And according to Lev. 23:3, 11, the sheaf was to be offered on the day following the seventh-day Sabbath, for the Sabbath of verse 11, is the Sabbath of verse 3—the one in connection with which Moses introduces the subject of the feasts.

The Scriptures, moreover, never call a *feast* day "*the Sabbath*," but always "*a sabbath*" or "*sabbaths*." (See verse 24.)

(For extensive treatment of the subject of the days of the Passover week, and of the “three-days-and-three-nights” period—Matt. 12:39, 40—see [Tract No. 10, *The Sign of Jonah*](#).)

These answers came from *Answerer Book No. 3*, pp. 9-19 published by V. T. Houteff.

To request a complete original print copy of this tract for your own studies,
please contact us at:

upa7.org
PO Box 722
Rogersville, TN 37857
hosea21@gmail.com
www.shepherds-rod-speaks.org