



December 22, 2023

The Calendar System Alluded to in the Scriptures

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

I am writing this week (per the norm from the Northern Hemisphere, but in the deep southern part of the United States.) In talking with folks from all over the U.S. many live in the northern parts of the country. My wife and I lived in and served God's children in many of the northern states over the years.

I recently looked back over some of my letters where often I would write about winter. One such example was interesting to reread "The temperatures are cold here, well below zero Fahrenheit, and plenty of snow. But the Spirit here is warm and we are enjoying the camp. We had a "heat wave" with a high in the low 20's F this past Tuesday, but now we are back to temperatures hovering just above 0 F during the day." I remember the coldest temp I ever experienced was in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I came out of worship services after giving the sermon, and someone had broken into the car we were driving, and stolen all of our clothing out of it! The temperature was -42 °C (-44°F). That's when I really realized how a suit even with a wool trench coat was not something one would want to be wearing outside for very long.

I also wrote in that letter "Along with the cold, we have had some clear conditions at night and *the moon has been very visible* and seems quite bright with the snow on the ground being illuminated by the reflected light from the moon." Cherished memories for sure. We don't see those temps here where we have lived now for the last 6 plus years.

So let's talk about the moon. According to *www.sunrisesunset.com* the next full Moon, the "Cold Moon", will occur on Tuesday, December 26, and reach peak illumination at 7:33 PM Eastern Time. Interestingly, although it reaches a "full" phase for a brief moment, our eyes may perceive it to be full for up to three days!

The next lunar conjunction or "new moon" will take place on January 11, 2024.

Okay, so might we also ask "What is a month?"

You and I are used to the Roman Gregorian calendar where the months have a fixed length that varies from month to month. The only month that has a changeable length is February in which an extra day is added in leap years. This is a solar calendar that is associated with a 365-1/4 day year. The first day of the month has no relationship to the lunar cycle.

What about the calendar system that is alluded to in the Scriptures?

The first mention of the determination of appointed times is found in Genesis 1:14 *"Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.'"*

There are a number of lights that are visible in the great expanse we call the sky or heaven. The brightest one is the sun. The next brightest one when it is illuminated by the sun is the moon.

Other "lights" are also visible - planets that revolve around and are illuminated by the sun and stars and clusters of stars called galaxies. There are those occasional visitors called comets and even at times meteors. Interestingly, the signs and seasons that they point to are not mentioned or defined here. The Hebrew word translated "seasons" is *mow'ed* and this word is translated "feasts" in Leviticus chapter 23. That being said, one must be cautious about claiming that God is referring to defining a calendar or determining His feasts in Genesis 1:14!

The first mention of the Passover takes place in Exodus 12, long after the flood of Noah! There is no evidence that God directed mankind before the exodus of Israel to observe the festivals listed in Leviticus 23 (other than the weekly Sabbath).

The sun and the moon - "two great lights" - are clearly referred to in Genesis 1:16. God says He made "*The moon and stars to rule by night*" (Psalm 136:9) then in Psalm 104:19 we find: "*He appointed the moon for seasons (mow'ed) . . .*" But, exactly how that was done is not defined.

The first mention of the word "month" in scripture takes place at the time of the Noachian flood. "*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*" (Genesis 7:11) The word translated "month" is the Hebrew word *chodesh*. This word is translated "month" 254 times and "new moon" 20 times. It is derived from *chadash*, a primitive root word, referring to "to be new, renew, repair" (Online Hebrew Lexicon).

The next use of the word *chodesh* is found in Genesis 8:4: "*And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*" I find this interesting because Genesis 7:24 tells us that "*the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.*" They began to prevail on the 17th day of the 2nd month and were subsiding on the 17th day of the 7th month as stated in the above verses. It seems that exactly 5 months elapsed during those 150 days which would mean that evidently each month was about 30 days in length ($150 \div 5 = 30$) at that time.

What naturally occurring cycle is about 30 days in length?

The only obvious cycle is the lunar cycle which is created as the moon revolves around the earth, and because of the orbit and positioning of the moon, the illumination of the moon as seen from the Earth varies from 0 to 100%. Because

the light of the sun shining on the moon is blocked (or partially blocked) by the Earth, we have this lunar cycle. Therefore, it is logical to connect the term month found in Scripture with the moon (or rather the lunar cycle).

Genesis chapters 7-8 refer to months by number. We find references to the 2nd, 7th, 10th, 1st, and 2nd months. This obviously reveals that there was some kind of calendar system in which there was a recurring cycle of months in what we would describe as a year.

However, no details are given concerning this cycle. Did all month have 30 days? How many months were there in the yearly cycle? Was the orbit of the earth and the tilt of Earth's axis different than it is now?

The tilt of the Earth's axis and the revolution of the Earth around the Sun results in the seasonal phenomena of Equinoxes and Solstices.

We have many questions about the calendar that was in use then, but not a lot of specific answers. I'll comment more about this subject in next week's Friday evening pastoral note to you all...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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