



January 12, 2024

### **Meetings or Convocations associated with New Moons?**

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'm actually writing this on Monday, the 8<sup>th</sup>, as we have family in town visiting, but will send this letter out to all this Friday.) Here in lower Alabama we'll again have cooler temperatures for this week...and it appears storms will be throughout parts of the United States today and tomorrow.

We'll have temperatures here into the 60's F this evening. It probably feels like a heat wave compared to the sub-zero temps my son in law and daughter often experience where they live in Minnesota. I'm not going to hold my breath thinking cold winter conditions here in the Northern hemisphere are completely behind us. It's pretty normal how much of the U.S. and Canada is affected by extreme winter weather every winter.

Over the years, I've sometimes had to cancel Sabbath services. When we pastored in the Carolinas, on occasion we did so due to ice, and the roads were too dangerous to travel on. For those who are able to meet in person, there is something special missing from the week when we aren't able to have these encouraging convocations, discuss God's Word, and connect with one another.

Speaking of "convocations", some have asked me relating to my last several letters, "Were there meetings or convocations associated with the new moons?"

This remains to be a much discussed topic these days. In my decades in the church, this is cyclical. I remember it being a much spoke about topic at least twice in the last 50 years...

There are some who claim “that we are supposed to have convocations *only* associated with a new moon.” You all know the Bible chapter that lists all of the appointments and convocations that are established by the Lord. That of course is Leviticus 23. If we search that chapter we will not find meetings to be convened on the new moons. The only exception is the Feast of Trumpets which happens to fall on the first day of the seventh month.

So, a good question might be, were there special actions or ceremonies associated with the new moon or the first day of the month?

Numbers chapter 10 describes the construction of two special silver trumpets. The Hebrew word for these trumpets is *chatsotserah*. When the word "trumpet" is found in the Authorized Version translation of the Old Testament it is usually translated from the Hebrew word *shophar* and signifies some kind of animal horn.

In Joshua 6:5 the *shophar* is equated with the ram's horn. The silver trumpets were blown at special occasions or events. They were blown to announce the movement of the camp of Israel from one location to another. (Numbers 10:2) (I've talked about these silver trumpets in a couple messages which can be found on the CGM website.) They were sounded at the time of entering a war with an enemy. (v.9) They were blown at the time of the festivals or appointed feasts (Hebrew - *mow'ed*). (v.10) They were blown when sacrifices of burnt offerings and peace offerings were made. (v.10) And they were blown at the "beginning of your months" literally "head of months" (Hebrew - *ro'sh chodesh*). (v.10)

Who was authorized to blow the trumpets at these occasions?

"The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets . . ." (Numbers 10:8)

Someone today cannot simply take it upon himself to call a religious assembly when he thinks then new moon has come and blow a silver trumpet that he has created himself. That responsibility belonged to the priests. The history of Israel records that the silver trumpets were blown when a new king was announced or

inaugurated. (2 Kings 11:14; 2 Chronicles 23:13) The trumpets were blown when the Ark of the Covenant was moved. (1 Chronicles 15:28) Solomon assembled the leaders of Israel when the Ark of the Covenant was moved to the newly completed Temple, and when it was being brought into the Temple (where there were crowds gathered to celebrate) and the silver trumpets were blown then. (2 Chronicles 5:1-13) It appears that traditions developed where the silver trumpets were also blown.

What about the meal and assembling of certain ones that king Saul held at the New Moon? (1 Samuel 20:5, 18, 24).

There's no command to do this. Why he is doing this, and where this apparent ceremony arose isn't explained.

Let's look at the comments in Amos 8. The Lord announces His decision to punish the nation of Israel. He quotes what some of them are saying, "*When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat?*" (Amos 8:5) One might assume that a tradition had developed that involved suspending work on the new moons similar to the instructions concerning the weekly Sabbath. But, this very well could be referring to THE New Moon – or the Feast of Trumpets.

What about references to New Moon celebrations that will take place after Christ returns and especially when the Millennial temple is set up and functioning? (Isaiah 66:23; Ezekiel 46:1-7)

It's important to consider that you or I can't simply impose additional instructions or circumstances (that will be implemented in the future) back to our time apart from the instructions we have been given in the Scriptures. Also, we cannot perform functions that were restricted to the Aaronic priesthood and associated with the presence of the tabernacle or Temple.

Let's look at one more Scripture. "*Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths . . . but the body [is] of Christ.*" (Colossians 2:16-17 NKJV)

The word "is" in brackets because it has been added by the translators. The church at Colossae was a Gentile congregation (Colossians 1:27; 2:11). Paul taught them about the celebration of God's Sabbaths and Holy Days. He must have instructed them about using God's calendar instead of the Roman calendar to determine when to observe the Holy Days. He both informed them and warned them to not let some individual set themselves up as the expert or judge in these matters but instead to look to the true unified body of believers.

The apostle Paul wrote extensively about the "body" using the same Greek word *soma* also used in Colossians 2:17. He stated, "*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27) Christ then more thoroughly explained offices and functions within "the church" to administer the work of "the church". There are decisions to be made by the church and its administrators. That being said, those decisions must never contradict Scripture or simply become traditions of men.

If a body of people or men, or a single person departs from the commandments of God and basic teachings of Scripture, then they cease to represent as being part of the body of Christ. We must judge where that body is and seek to build unity and harmony within that body, of course based on the Scriptures. We're all individually and collectively a work in progress. We are all also commanded to exhibit the love that Jesus spoke of in John 13:34-35.

There is a plethora of information floating around on the internet these days. What is important is that we continue steadfast in searching God's Word, to examine ourselves, allow Christ to live in us, and be ever so careful to not gobble up all of the opinions, erroneous teachings, or man-made traditions taught as doctrine by some, that are out there today. Some thoughts to consider, as we

begin God's Sabbath.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Hoefker', written in a cursive style.

Scott Hoefker

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