The Biblical Calendar

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In the Church of God, every year we make a concerted effort to keep God's annual Holy Days. You know, the ones that are listed in Leviticus 23. We've always considered them very important. In fact, not only do we consider them something commanded that we should all keep. We believe that they reveal to us God's plan of salvation and how it works. But to be able to keep those Holy Days, we have to have a calendar. Because, as you know, if you read through that chapter, it will say things like, for example, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. “On the 15th day of the first month, you shall have a holy convocation.”

Most of the Holy Days are identified like that. As being a specific day of a specific month. Well, to determine exactly when that is -- to know when to keep those days -- we have to have a calendar to be able to nail down when they occur. So, what we're going to do today is to look at this subject of the calendar.

If you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

The Biblical Calendar

Because we're actually going to focus on what the Bible has to say about this subject. What scripture actually reveals. Now, if you're like a lot of Church of God members -- and honestly like myself for most of my life. As soon as you hear the word “calendar”, you just recoil and you want to run in the other direction.

You probably feel your eyes wanting to roll as soon as you hear the word “calendar”. The reason for that is your history with this subject. Whenever this subject was presented, it was presented as this very complicated, difficult subject that really kind of required a PhD in mathematics for you to figure it out and to understand it. By the time you got halfway through a sermon on the subject your head hurt, and you couldn't quite follow what was going on. So, you just kind of learned to dismiss the subject.

Oftentimes it was kind of summarized with just the statement of, “*Well, you just need to trust the Jews*”. You trust the Jews because they “*have the authority*”. They have “*the authority over the calendar*”. Or, they would say “*the authority of the Sanhedrin*”. That was kind of an appeal to summarize the subject. Don't worry about all these complicated details because you can't figure it out anyway. Just “*trust their authority*”.

Now, the reason that that appeal is made is because, if you look into this subject at all, history widely agrees that the Calculated Jewish Calendar that most Church of God organizations follow today was instituted in 359 CE. “CE” stands for “Common Era”. It's a term synonymous with “AD”. You're probably more familiar with the term “AD”. Either way, history very consistently agrees that that's when the Calculated Jewish Calendar

was implemented by Hillel II who was the head of the Sanhedrin. Now, the Sanhedrin was the governing body of the Pharisees at the time when this calendar was instituted. So, that's why people say, "Okay, we'll just trust the "*authority of the Sanhedrin*" or the "*authority of the Jews*"."

Now, what will also typically come in Church of God circles is a very unique claim that's added on top of this. The reason I say it's a "*unique claim*" is because it's a claim pretty much only made by the Church of God. That's the claim that what Hillel II published at that time, that was really just the same rules that had been used since the time of Moses. These rules were passed down through the Levitical priesthood and Hillel II just made them publicly available so that everyone had access to them.

Now, the reason I say that that's a "*unique claim*" is the Rabbinical Jewish world who published this calendar, *they don't even make that claim!* In fact, *they very clearly claim the opposite*. They very clearly acknowledged that this is NOT what was done all throughout their history. In fact, if you look at any major sources of Jewish history -- look in the Talmud, look in the Mishnah, look at Maimonides' writings, any of their major sources -- they very clearly document that this is NOT the system that was always used.

If you look at more secular focused history that also documents these same events, but maybe from a more secular perspective, they also acknowledge that this is NOT what was done all of these years.

So, why does the Church of God make this claim?

Well, in my opinion, the reason that this claim is made is because it's an attempt to deal with a pretty obvious logical problem that this claim creates for us. Because we appeal to the authority of the Sanhedrin for the Calculated Jewish Calendar -- the governing body of the Pharisees -- yet we reject their authority in every other area of doctrine.

We're very quick to point out that in Matthew 16 for example, Christ specifically says, "*Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees*". He compares their doctrines to leaven meaning they lead people into sin. In Matthew 23, He refers to the Pharisees as "*fools and blind guides*". Obviously, something He's steering people away from. In Acts 4 & 5, the Apostles have kind of a showdown with the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin commanded them not to preach in the name of Christ. They rejected the authority of the Sanhedrin, and Peter says to them, "*We should obey God rather than men!*"

Now, there's one verse in Matthew 23 that oftentimes kind of confuses the subject, and I'll only just summarize this because I've covered it in detail numerous times over the last 4 years. It's Matthew 23:3. As I've explained numerous times over the last 4 years, there's a manuscript error in the Greek manuscripts in that particular verse. History clearly records that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. Now most of the Greek manuscripts have the word *"they"* in that verse, which makes it sound like Christ is saying whatever *"they"* -- the Pharisees -- teach you should follow.

In other words, follow their teachings just don't follow their behavior. Well, that contradicts later in the chapter when He says they are "*fools and blind guides*". It contradicts His statement in Matthew 16 that their teachings are leaven. It doesn't really match that Christ would say, "Follow their teachings" when He calls their teachings leaven. Well, if you look in the Hebrew manuscripts of that same verse, it says *"he"* rather than *"they"*. *"He",* meaning Moses. So, Christ is saying, "Whatever Moses taught, that you should follow but *DO NOT* follow the Pharisees".

See, if we're appealing to the authority of the Sanhedrin -- the governing body of the Pharisees -- for the basis of a doctrine, that's pretty shaky ground to be standing on. So, the question we need to ask is:

"<u>What does the Bible actually reveal to us on this subject?</u>"

Because if we can appeal to the authority of scripture, we're always on solid ground if we can do that. We don't need the authority of the Sanhedrin if we can appeal to the authority of scripture. Well, what does scripture tell us? Does scripture give us guidelines? Does scripture tell us that we have to be PhDs in mathematics to figure out how God calculates time? Or does the Bible tell us that God literally hardwired His creation and His calendar to be connected with each other? That it's literally hardwired into His creation, and we can look at His creation for guides on how He measures time?

Now to answer this question let's first of all turn over to Genesis 1, because we're going to see here that God directly tells us that He literally hardwired into His creation guides for us to see how He measures time. In other words, how His calendar works. So, let's start in Genesis 1:14,

> **Gen 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;"* (NKJV)

Notice that these are basically guides for measuring time. We're talking about the light for the day and the light for the night. We're obviously referring to the sun and the moon, but let's continue on in verse 15,

> *"15) and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. 16) Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day,"* (NKJV)

In other words, the sun.

> *"…and the lesser light to rule the night."* (NKJV)

In other words, the moon.

> *"He made the stars also. 17) God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18) and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good."* (NKJV)

So, see He directly tells us here that He made the moon and the sun, and these are tools that we can use as guides for how God marks time. In other words, how His calendar works. Because that's what a calendar's for -- to keep track of time. You know, that's what you use it for. Now, notice here in verse 14 -- we're going to come back to this -- but you see the word "seasons" here. Now, this doesn't carry the meaning that we typically think of in English when we see the word "seasons".

When we see the word "seasons", we typically think of spring, summer, fall, and winter. That's how that we typically use the word "seasons". Now, we're going to see here in a moment that is not what the Hebrew word here is referring to. The Hebrew word here is "moed" and it refers to appointed times. Before I give you a definition for that word, turn over to Psalm 104 because we're going to see another scripture here that tells us that the moon is specifically appointed for us to be able to mark time and to figure out when God's Holy Days are. Because that's really what we use a calendar for. That's the reason the calendar matters. To figure out when to keep the Holy Days. Other than that, we wouldn't really need to know how the Bible marks time. So, look over in Psalm 104:19, it says,

> **Ps 104:19** ***"****He appointed the moon for seasons; The sun knows its going down."* (NKJV)

So, again, here we see the English word "seasons". As I mentioned, when we hear the word seasons, we think of spring, summer, fall, and winter. That's not really what this is referring to here. Now, the Hebrew word that's used here is transliterated into English as "moed". It's Strong's # 4150, and the definition I'm going to read to you is from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament, by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter. Here's how they define it.

> ***"****A masculine noun meaning an appointed time or place. It can signify an appointed meeting time in general; a specific appointed time, usually for a sacred feast or festival; the time of the birds' migration; the time of wine; the same time next year. In addition to the concept of time, this word can also signify an appointed meeting place…"*

So, it's not really referring to the seasons as we think of them. This is more getting at appointed times. When you think about it, why does a calendar matter for us today? We have modern calendars that mark time. Why would we care about God's calendar? Well, it's because of the Holy Days. That's why it matters. It tells us when we should keep God's Holy Days. The sun and the moon are guides that can help us figure out how to nail down these times. You know, when the specific days and months occur that we're supposed to keep holy.

Now, if we look at the calendar from a Biblical perspective. If you just look at this logically. There are 3 basic questions that we need to answer, and what we're going to see as we go through this is we don't need to be PhDs in mathematics. We don't need to be astronomers and scholars and scientists to figure it out. It's not so difficult that it makes your head hurt and you'll never figure it out. It's 3 simple questions. Just think of it like this.

Question number 1) "*How does the Bible define a day?*"

Question number 2), "*How does the Bible define a month?*"

Question number 3) *"How does the Bible define a year?"*

If we can get solid answers for those 3 questions, then we can nail down God's calendar. Then we can just repeat the cycle year after year till the end of time. We don't need PhDs in mathematics.

So, turn over to Genesis 1, and we'll see here how God defines a day. Now, this is a familiar section of scripture. There's very little controversy around this particular point. It's Genesis 1:3.

> **Gen 1:3** *"Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4) And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5) God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day."* (NKJV)

The English word "day" here is translated from the Hebrew word "yom". Now, I won't take the time to read a technical definition for it, but it's a word that can be used broadly. As you can see, here it's used in two different ways. In this particular verse, it can refer to the daylight portion of a day -- from sunrise to sunset -- or it can refer to a 24 hour day. So, obviously here it's defining a complete day as "the evening and the morning". It's obviously referring to the nighttime portion when it's dark as "evening" and the daylight portion during the day as "morning". It's saying that a complete cycle is what's defined as a "day".

Now, we won't take the time to read through this chapter but, if you read through this chapter, you'll see that statement numerous times. "The evening and the morning was the first day", was "the second day", "the third day", etc. You'll see that again and again. It's confirmed numerous times. So, obviously it's telling us here that a day begins with the nighttime portion. What you're going to see here is the demarcation that starts and ends the day is sunset. It's a very simple observation. That's what you're going to see here in the answers to all 3 of our questions. They're simple observations that any ancient society could have done. Keep in mind here, the people that God's calendar was originally delivered to, these were not PhDs in mathematics and astronomers and scholars. These were former slaves.

These were people who had spent a lot of their career making bricks out of straw. They were farmers and sheep herders. People who had been in slavery. They were an ancient society that didn't have modern technology. So, obviously God would deliver a calendar to them that these people could follow. What we're going to see here is all 3 of our questions are answered with simple observations of nature. Because think about sunset. It's a very obvious thing. You watch the ball of the sun go over the horizon. When it disappears over the horizon, the sun is set. That ends one day and starts the next. It's pretty easy.

Now, the next question we need to answer is, *"How does the Bible define a month?*"

Now, if you read through the Bible, when you see the English word "month", the vast majority of the time it's the same Hebrew word that's translated as "month", and the very meaning of the word gives us a real big clue as to what we should look to to define a month. Now, the Hebrew word used there is transliterated into English as "hodesh". It is Strong's # 2320, and the definition I'm going to give you is again from Baker & Carpenter. It's,

> *"A masculine noun meaning new moon (first day of the lunar month), month. Its use can be put into two categories: (1) the new moon, the day when the crescent moon is once again visible…..(2) month; a time marked by thirty days normally."*

Notice where it said, "thirty days normally". We're going to come back to that here in a moment. Notice that the very meaning of the word is tied to the moon. Well, that gives us a real strong indication that we should define months in terms of the moon. And that's exactly what scripture tells us if you turn over to Numbers 28.

In Numbers 28 & 29, what you'll see is a description of the whole sacrificial system that the Israelites were commanded to perform. There were offerings they had to do every day. There were specific offerings on the weekly Sabbath. There were specific offerings on each of the Holy Days. There were also sacrifices that they were commanded to be done at the beginning of every month. As we're going to see, the Bible refers to the first day of the month as the day of the new moon. That gives us a clue as to how months are measured. Let's just notice here in Numbers 28:11, it says,

> **Num 28:11** *"At the beginnings of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish;"* (NKJV)

Notice the verse started off with "at the beginnings of your months". In other words, "on the first day of the month". This is what you're going to do on the first day of the month. Now the details of the offerings -- all the finer details -- don't really matter for our purposes today. So, just jump down to verse 14 here. Verse 14 says,

> **Num 28:14** *"Their drink offering shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-fourth of a hin for a lamb; this is the burnt offering for each month throughout the months of the year."* (NKJV)

The reason I read that verse is I want you to see that it says do this at the beginning of the month, and this was every month, every year, consistently. So, they had to do this as a regular part of their routine. They had to know when the first day of the month was so that they could do these specific offerings, because they had to do it every single month, every year, very consistently.

Now, it doesn't specifically use the term "new moon" here, but if you turn over to chapter 29, we're going to notice the offerings for the Feast of Trumpets. Now, you're probably already familiar with the fact that the Feast of Trumpets is always the first day of the seventh month. We're going to read here the section of scripture that goes through the specific offerings that were commanded to be done on the Feast of Trumpets. We're not going to get bogged down in the details of the specific sacrifices, but what I want you to see is in addition to the sacrifices specific to that Holy Day, they also had the set of sacrifices for the new moon because it was the first day of the month. In these verses it's specifically referred to as the "new moon". Now this is chapter 29:1,

> **Num 29:1** *"And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets."* (NKJV)

In other words, this is the Feast of Trumpets. It's the first day of the seventh month. It's the beginning of the month. Now, skip down to verse 6 because again it doesn't really matter all the finer details of the sacrifices, but in verse 6 it says,

> **Num 29:6** *"besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD."* (NKJV)

So, as you can see here this is obviously the beginning of the month. It says it's "the first day of the seventh month", and it refers to the sacrifices that were done specifically because it was the first day of the month as the sacrifices for the "new moon". Well, that tells us what starts and ends a month. We saw what starts and ends a day is sunset. What starts and ends a month is a new moon. Well, now all we need is a definition for new moon. If we can nail that down, then we will know exactly when a month starts.

Now, to understand how this works, you first need to understand some basic facts about the rotation of the moon around the earth. The rotation of the moon around the earth takes on average about 29.53 days every month. The reason I say "on average" is because the rotation of the moon around the earth is actually elliptical. It's not an exact circle. So, it can vary a little bit each month, but it varies by hours not by days. So, it's always going to be within a few hours between 29 and 30 days.

That's why when we read the definition earlier it said a month is typically “about 30 days”. Because it's either going to be 29 or 30 days. It's never going to be less than 29 days and it’s never going to be more than 30 days. What happens with the moon's rotation -- if you've ever paid attention to it -- when you can first see it, it's going to be a very thin crescent. As the month progresses, that little crescent gets a little bigger, and then a little bigger, and a little bigger until you wind up with a big round ball in the sky. You see a big round white ball up in the sky, and that's typically around the time we refer to as the “full moon”.

Then as the month goes on it gets a little thinner and a little thinner, and it kind of reverses the cycle and goes all the way down to being a thin crescent in the other direction. Then it disappears for several nights. That can typically be up to 2 or 3 nights because you can't see it from earth then. What happens during that period where it disappears is what's called the conjunction. That's basically a technical term for the point where the earth and the moon and the sun become in direct alignment with each other.

The reason you can't see it during that time frame is that the moon doesn't produce its own light. It reflects light from the sun. So, when the moon is directly in front of the sun the part of the moon that's facing the earth can't reflect any light. That's why you don't see it. The conjunction is actually an exact moment in time but there's a period of 2 or 3 nights where you can’t see the moon and then it reappears again as a thin crescent.

If you look at our modern-day calendars that we typically use today, whenever they list the “new moon”, what they're referring to is the conjunction. Again, that is the exact moment in time when the moon is directly in front of the sun and it’s totally dark because they are lined up with the earth. Now, with modern-day technology, we can nail that down to the exact moment in time when it happens. Down to the minute. But what we need to figure out is, was that the definition of “new moon” that Ancient Israel used? Because keep in mind that these instructions were given to Moses and the Ancient Israelites when they were coming out of Egypt. They didn't have NASA. They didn't have satellites and all the modern-day technology that we have. They didn't really have a way to figure out exactly when the conjunction would occur. That creates a problem, but we'll get to that in a moment.

The Calculated Jewish Calendar that most Church of God organizations use today uses a definition of “new moon” of what's called the “molad”. The “molad” is an estimated time frame between conjunctions. So, it's using the conjunction as essentially the definition of new moon. At the time that Hillel II developed this calendar they didn't have the modern-day technology that could nail down the conjunction to the minute like we have today. So, the best he could do was use an estimated time frame to approximate when the conjunction would occur.

The Calculated Jewish Calendar also has another unique thing in it. It's called postponement rules. Now, what that means is that they use one definition of “new moon” for the majority of the time. Then if they don't like the way the dates of the Holy

Days turn out as a result of using that definition for “new moon”, they then postpone the start of the month by up to 2 days to get the results that they want. I'm not going to go into all the technical details of the postponement rules. I've covered all of this in detail in a study paper on my website. If you're watching this sermon on YouTube, you can just look right below the video in the comments section below this video. You're going to see a link that says, “for further study” and it's going to give you the URL for the website. It's SearchingTheScriptures.org. On there you'll see a study paper that goes into a lot more detail and covers a lot more documentation than we'll have time to address today.

The point I want you to see here is that the Calculated Jewish Calendar doesn't even use a consistent definition of “new moon”. Think about it, if the moon is going to define for us when the beginning of the month is, that means we have to pick a definition of new moon, and we have to use that same definition, every month, every year, every time, because the moon is defining it. If we're looking at what we think is our definition of “new moon”, and we don't like the results and we decide to adjust it. Then we're telling the moon when the month starts. The moon is not telling us. We're doing it backwards. You see that doesn't make sense because if we're following the Biblical system, at a minimum -- regardless of what definition you're going to use -- you're going to pick a definition of new moon and you're going to stick with it. You're going to use the same definition every single time. That's just common sense.

Well, the question we need to ask is, “*What definition did Israel use for new moon?*” As I mentioned, in the time of Moses these instructions were given to an ancient society of farmers and sheep herders. People who had been slaves spending all of their time making straw into bricks. So, how would they have known all these technical details? What would they have used as a definition of “new moon”? That is what we need to look at.

Well, what we can do is look at documented Jewish history, particularly from the time of the Second Temple period. The reason I point out the Second Temple period is the Second Temple period includes the time of Christ and the Apostles. If you read through the Gospels and the Book of Acts, it is very obvious that Christ and the Apostles were keeping the Holy Days at the same time as all the Jews of their time. There is no record of any controversy or any debate about how the Holy Days were kept, or any debate about when was the correct date to keep them. That's just totally absent. There's no mention of that in the Gospels or Acts.

Now, as you can see particularly from chapters like Matthew 23, Christ was not shy at all about brutally critiquing the Pharisees and Sadducees for everything He disagreed with them about. The fact that He doesn't take any issue with them on when they were keeping the Holy Days makes a pretty big statement. Now, if we look at what their definition of “new moon” was from their own history, it was something they could see with their eyes. To verify this, I'd like to quote from the Mishnah Tractate Rosh Hashannah 1:7. You don't have to follow all the technical details of this. Just notice the whole discussion is about citing the new moon with your eyes. This states,

“If a father and a son have seen the new moon, they should both go [to Jerusalem], not that they can join together as witnesses but so that if one of them is disqualified the other may join with another witness. Rabbi Shimon says that a father and son and all relatives are eligible to testify to the appearance of the new moon. Rabbi Yoshe said: There was an incident with Toviyya the doctor. When he saw the new moon in Jerusalem, he and his son and his freed slave all went to testify. The priests accepted him and his son as witnesses and disqualified his slave, for they ruled stringently that the month may be sanctified only on the basis of the testimony of those of Jewish lineage. And when they came before the court, they accepted him and his slave as witnesses and disqualified his son, due to the familial relationship.”

Now, notice it made reference to the “priests” and the “court” separately. The reason for this is that the “priests” is a reference to the Sadducees. The Levitical Priesthood at the time was the group of the Sadducees. The “court” is a reference to the Pharisees. As you know from reading the New Testament, these were groups that fought with each other and disagreed with each other on various issues. What I want you to see is they both had a system for taking eyewitness testimonies of the “new moon”.

This tells you two things. One is if they were using a calculated system where having to see the new moon each month was irrelevant because you were just using an estimated date -- and you did that well in advance -- and there was no reason to verify it. If that were the case, there's absolutely no reason for this system to even exist in the first place. So, that shows you they were not using the calculated system that's used today.

The other thing that this shows you is that their definition of “new moon” was something you could see with your naked eyes. You could testify to being an eyewitness saying, “I saw the new moon”. Now, they couldn't have been taking eyewitness testimonies of the conjunction because -- as I explained before -- the conjunction is the point where the moon is directly in front of the sun and therefore it's not reflecting any light to earth. You can't see it. The fact that it's dark that night, that doesn't nail it down either. Because typically you have 2 or 3 nights there where it's dark around the conjunction. So, there's no way to specifically nail that down, but you can look up and see that the new crescent has reappeared.

Now think about this from the perspective of an ancient society in the time of Moses where you haven't even figured out all these calculations. You can look up and watch the moon. It disappears for several nights, and it pops up and it's new again. In a society like that, what would be your definition of “new moon”? “*I can see it again*.” It's as simple as watching the sun go over the horizon. You watched it go down. It's set. Well, if the moon starts off as a thin crescent, slowly becomes bigger and bigger and bigger, and then becomes a thin crescent in the other direction and then disappears for multiple nights, what would your definition of “new moon” be? “*I can see it again. It's back up in the sky*”. It's very simple and you don't have to have a PhD in mathematics. If

you're an ancient farmer, you can just stand on a hill at night and look at it and there it is. It's very simple.

Now, there is one other factor that we need to consider as well. As I mentioned, the moon's rotation around the earth typically varies each month by a number of hours. A month is never going to be less than 29 days, and never going to be more than 30 days. So, it's always going to be either 29 or 30 days. If you're an ancient Israelite farmer, you know that after day 29 you start looking for the new moon. If you don't see it after the end of day 29, by default it's going to be the next day. You know whether there's clouds that next night or not, a month can't be more than 30 days.

That nails it down to a one day variable, but that also means that because weather factors can play a role in all of this, different locations could potentially see the moon on different nights. That could cause disputes. So, how do you solve that particular issue? Well, if we look specifically at how the Israelites solved this issue themselves, we see a very clear system that was put in place to avoid any debates or confusion on the subject. This is documented in their history.

Just as a side note, as I'm going through this sermon, I'm giving a minimal amount of quotes and documentation from history just simply for time's sake due to the time limitations of a sermon. If you look at the study paper that I mentioned -- it's on my website -- it's much more extensive because you don't have time restrictions there. The website is SearchingTheScriptures.org. If you look there, it's real easy to find the paper. You can't miss it. If you look at that paper, you'll see that for most of these points there's a lot more documentation than just the ones I'm reading here in the sermon because I have the time restraints of a sermon.

To verify how they handled this particular issue in Israel. Again, this is from the Second Temple period. Keep in mind this is the time period that overlaps the time of Christ and the Apostles. Obviously, Christ and the Apostles went along with how Israel was doing it at that time which tells us a lot. Here's what they did. This is from the Mishnah Tractate Rosh Hashannah 2:3. It says,

> *"Initially, after the court sanctified the new month they would light torches on the mountaintops, from one peak to another, to signal to the community in Babylonia that the month had been sanctified. After the Samaritans…corrupted and ruined this method by lighting torches at the wrong times to confuse the Jews, the Sages instituted that messengers should go out to the Diaspora and inform them of the start of the month. The mishna asks: How would they light the torches during that earlier period? They would bring items that burn well, e.g., long poles of cedar, reeds, pinewood, and beaten flax, and tie them together with a string. And someone would then ascend to the top of the mountain and light the torch on fire with them, and wave it back and forth and up and down, until he would see his colleague doing likewise on the top of the second mountain. In this manner he would know that the next messenger had received the message and passed it on. And similarly, the second torchbearer would wait for a signal from*

the one on the top of the third mountain, and so on. In this manner the message would reach the Diaspora. And from which mountains would they light the torches? They would transmit the message from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem to Sartava, and from Sartava to Gerofina, and from Gerofina to Ḥavran, and from Ḥavran to Beit Baltin. And from Beit Baltin they would not move to light torches in any other predetermined location. Rather, the one who was appointed for this task would wave the torch back and forth and up and down, until he would see the entire Diaspora before him alight like one large bonfire, as they would light torches to continue transmitting the message from place to place all the way to the farthest reaches of the Diaspora."

They used Jerusalem as the location for where the moon was sighted. Then they informed not only the rest of Israel but even the Diaspora through a system of signal fires to get the word out. Now, why would they do this? Well, just think about it. Three times a year what do you have to do? Travel to Jerusalem to keep the Holy Days. So, obviously it just made sense to keep everyone in touch with when they saw the new moon in Jerusalem. That way when people showed up for the Holy Days there was no dispute. There were no arguments and debates about what's the correct day. Everything's done decently and in order without confusion and in peace. There's no debating and everyone's on the same page.

This also answers another question. Do you look to a single location for the sighting of the new moon? Or do you just do it locally wherever one is at? Well, think about it, if you're in Israel or even in the Diaspora and you're standing on a mountaintop at night, why look for a signal fire? Why not just sight the moon yourself? The only reason that you're looking for a signal fire is because you're trying to stay in sync with Jerusalem so that everyone's on the same page and everyone's doing it uniformly. This way everyone's keeping the Holy Days in unison.

Well, we can do the same thing today. As you hear this, you're probably thinking, "Well, wait a minute. I don't live in Israel. How am I supposed to keep up with that?" Well, there's a couple of easy ways to be able to do this. Now, I've mentioned a couple of times in this sermon that on my website there is a study paper that goes into this subject in a lot more detail. One of the things I've included in that study paper is a link to a free software program. It won't cost you anything. You can easily download it. It's basically built with an algorithm that can go forward and backwards in time to predict for you when the new moon will be sightable over Jerusalem. I've tracked it for the last 4 years. It's extremely accurate. So, it can nail down for you when the new moon will be physically sightable over Jerusalem.

Now the one thing it can't account for -- because no computer program can -- is weather conditions. It's always possible that there's a storm, there's cloud cover, and that interferes even though it's physically possible to see the new moon. Well, you can make up for that factor. There are numerous sites on the internet that do monthly sightings of the new moon. They will post photographic evidence of it. I can refer you to good sources for that. So, you can verify that and do it exactly like Israel did. Think about it. If

Ancient Israel was able to manage it like this through a system of signal fires, with their lack of technology. We today -- with all the technology we have -- can easily follow the same system and do exactly what they did.

Keep in mind this is taking information from the Second Temple period. The reason I emphasize that this is the Second Temple period is because it includes the time of Christ's ministry and the time of the book of Acts of the Gospels. If you read through those books, you're going to see there's no debating about the correct dates for the Holy Days. They don't dispute what the Pharisees said about the calendar and when they're keeping the Holy Days. That's just not a source of debate.

Now they debate and argue about lots of other things. Christ brutally critiques them over numerous issues, but the dates of the Holy Days is not one of them. So, that tells us that obviously Christ must have thought the way that they were doing the calendar was okay because He didn't take any issue with it. Well, if we look back at how they were doing it. They weren't using the conjunction as the definition of "new moon". They were using the sighting of the new crescent moon because their definition of "new moon", you could see it with your eyes, and they did it from Jerusalem. Then they notified the rest of Israel and the Diaspora (those who were outside of Israel) with a system of signal fires. If they could do it with signal fires, we today have the internet and we have computer algorithms, we can easily follow the same thing and follow the example of what Christ followed.

Now, as I mentioned, there were 3 basic questions that we needed to answer. We need to answer, *how does the Bible define a day?* Well, we defined that. *It's sunset to sunset*. Again, it is a simple observation of nature. It is watching the ball of the sun go over the horizon.

How does the Bible define a month? Well, *it's new moon to new moon* and we can see again from history and comparing that with the Bible, the definition of new moon, again it's a consistent definition. The moon tells us when the month starts. We don't tell the moon when the month starts. We don't decide we don't like the date and we adjust it to suit our needs. The moon tells us. That's just common sense. Their definition of new moon was something you could see with your eyes. That has to be the first sighting of the new crescent, because again think back in the time of Moses. They didn't have a way to figure out when the conjunction was. But they could look up in the sky and say, "*I can see it again*." It's common sense.

Now, there's a third question we need to answer. *How does the Bible define a year?* Does it give us the information we need to figure out the year? Because we can figure out a day. We can figure out a month. But what about the year? Well, if we turn over to Exodus 12, the Bible tells us what month the year starts. It makes a point of telling us exactly the first month of the year. It's Exodus 12:1, it says,

> **Ex 12:1** *"Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2) "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."* (NKJV)

So, the Bible does specifically tell us that the first month of the year -- if you read through the rest of this chapter -- it's the instructions of how to keep the Passover. So, obviously the first month of the year is the month where Passover and Unleavened Bread occur. Leviticus 23 verifies that Passover and Unleavened Bread are in the first month. Unleavened Bread starts on the 15th day of the first month. That's when the Israelites came out of Egypt.

So, we know all those events tie to the first month of the year, but how do we identify that first month? And how do we deal with the fact that if we're tracking a year based upon whole months, we have an extra issue to deal with? We're going to periodically need a 13th month. What I mean by that is if you're looking at what's called a solar year -- in other words the amount of time it takes for the earth to revolve around the sun -- and you compare that to a year that you're measuring with exact lunar cycles -- with complete months. Now twelve months that are measured by the moon compared to a solar year of the earth rotating around the sun -- it's going to take about eleven days longer each year for the earth to go around the sun than twelve months is going to add up to.

Now, if you don't account for that difference, after a number of years what's going to happen is your lunar calendar is going to start shifting in terms of when the seasons take place and when the months are falling. They're going to get out of alignment. So, the way to deal with that is you periodically have to add a 13th month. Now, as I have mentioned multiple times in this sermon, there's a study paper on my website that goes into a lot more detail on this subject than I'm going to have time to cover today. Well, one of the things I cover in that paper is I cite all the scriptures that show that you can see specifically twelve months being directly mentioned in scripture.

Prior to the Babylon captivity, the Bible always refers to months numerically. It refers to them as first month, second month, third month, etc. As a general rule, it does not give them names. We oftentimes refer to the first month of the year today as Nisan -- and I'm not criticizing that, the Bible does include that term -- but what you'll find is that those names came into use from the Babylonian captivity forward. They're actually Babylonian names. The Bible, as a general rule, refers to them numerically and you'll see that the Bible specifically mentions twelve months.

It doesn't specifically mention the 13th month, but as you'll see in the paper, -- because I won't take the time to go through all this today -- the Bible does imply the 13th month. As we're going to see, the Bible tells us that the harvest in Israel and the Holy Days have to correlate with each other. Well, if you don't periodically add a 13th month that's going to get seriously out of alignment after a number of years. So, obviously that's a factor that has to be dealt with.

So, *how does the Bible tell us how to nail down that first month?* And how do we know when to add in a 13th month, because that's periodically just mathematically going to have to take place? Well, as I've mentioned several times so far in this sermon, historically, if you look at how the Bible refers to months particularly prior to the Babylonian captivity, as a general rule, it's always numerically. It's first month, second month, third month. They're not given names. If the Bible gives a name to a month or a descriptive phrase, it's an exception to the rule. It's something to pay attention to. Now, the reason I mention this is because the Bible gives us a descriptive phrase to describe the first month of the year. If we understand the terminology in this descriptive phrase, it gives us a real good clue of how to figure out how to identify the first month of the year. It also gives us a clue as to when to add the 13th month.

What I'm referring to here you can see in Exodus 23. Let's turn over to Exodus 23. We're going to see here a descriptive phrase that the Bible actually gives to describe the first month of the year. If you're like myself, you have probably read over this numerous times and really didn't grasp what you were reading. What I want you to notice here in the scriptures we're going to read is this phrase comes directly from the mouth of God. In other words, this isn't something that Moses came up with. It's not just a cultural reference that was added in for the Israelites. This is the name that God gave this month. So, it's something we should pay attention to. Now, this is Exodus 23:14,

> **Ex 23:14** *"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:"* (NKJV)

Now it's obvious who "Me" is. This is God Himself speaking.

> *"15) You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty);"* (NKJV)

When you see this term "Abib" in most English translations of the Bible it's going to be spelled A-B-I-B, like B as in boy. Now, phonetically in Hebrew, it's probably more accurate to have A-V-I-V, like V as in Victor. You'll notice that's how I typically pronounce it because it's a little more phonetically correct. If you notice how I stated it, I worded it a little differently than it's typically worded in your Bible because I said, "the month of *the* Aviv". The reason being is that's how it actually is in Hebrew. Oftentimes you read over this and don't even notice that that's there.

This phrase is used to describe the first month of the year 6 times in the Bible. We won't look at all 6 references today for time's sake, but, if you read the paper on my website, it lists all of them. If you look these up in an interlinear, what you're going to find is every time it's referring to the month, what it actually has in Hebrew is "ha Aviv". "Ha" is the definite article in Hebrew. It is the equivalent to the word "the" in English. So, it's saying "the month of *the* Aviv". As we're going to see, this is a descriptive phrase that helps us identify the first month of the year.

Notice it's God Himself who called it this, and it's an exception to the rule. He normally just refers to months numerically. So, we should pay attention! Why does He give this one a descriptive phrase? This is mentioned multiple times. Turn over to Exodus 34. We're going to read verse 18. We'll see a couple more references here. It says,

> **Ex 34:18** *"The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt."* (NKJV)

We know that's the first month of the year when they came out Egypt and He's calling that month "*the month of the Aviv*". Now, I won't take time to go through this whole chapter, but if you start back reading in verse 10 going forward, you'll see that Moses is directly quoting God in this section of scripture. So, it's God Himself who directly says, "*the month of the Aviv*". He gives it this descriptive phrase.

Now, what does this mean? If you're like myself you've probably read over this phrase many times and you saw the word "Abib" and you thought, "Oh, that's just equivalent to saying Nisan" and you didn't put any more significance to it than that. That's because there's a couple of key verses in the Bible that define this term, but unfortunately the English translators didn't put the word there in English. So, we read right over it and don't even realize it. Let me define the word "Aviv" from The Theological Workbook of the Old Testament by Harris & Archer. Here's the definition they give for it.

> *"This noun refers to barley that is already ripe, but still soft, the grains of which are eaten either rubbed or roasted."*

So, "Aviv" actually refers to a stage in the ripeness of grain. That is what this term refers to. Now, to help you kind of wrap your head around what this means, turn over to Mark 4. We're going to see here an example that Christ uses in a parable that gives us a good idea of how grain is developed. It kind of helps us understand this term Aviv. Now obviously Christ is making a different point here about the Kingdom of God in a parable. But we'll see here He makes some accurate statements about how grain is developed that kind of helps us understand the process of how grain develops. So, Mark 4:26.

> **Mark 4:26** *"And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, 27) and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28) For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. 29) But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.""* (NKJV)

Notice it says that grain starts off as just a blade of grass. Then as it matures it develops the head and then the grain in the head. After it develops the head, then there's a fluid substance inside that head. As it matures, that fluid then slowly congeals into a solid until you have solid grain.

What we're going see here is Aviv is a stage of ripeness right before it becomes a solid hard grain that you can use. We're going see here the Bible in Hebrew refers to fully developed grain with the term “karmel”. That's grain that you can basically just harvest. You can just immediately crush it or grind it up into flour and use it for food. You can also use that in a grain offering to God. Now, there's a stage of ripeness just prior to this where you have to actually parch it in fire to be able to use it. Now, if you're parching or roasting it in fire, it's not really cooking it. Don't think of that as a means of trying to cook it. What you're doing is dehydrating it because there's extra moisture in it.

As I mentioned, it starts off as just a fluid, and then slowly as it matures it congeals into a complete solid. Right before it has fully matured, it is in what they call a “worm stage”. This is where it is still in a little bit of a liquidy stage, but it's solid enough that you can dehydrate the extra moisture and then you have good grain to use.

Well, that's called “Aviv”, and there are two key scriptures in the Bible that give us a Biblical definition of what “Aviv” means. Unfortunately, the English translators who translated our English Bibles don't use the term “Aviv” in these verses. So, we typically don’t connect this definition with the name of the month. If you're like myself, you've read over this for years and you never connected them together because you never realized the Hebrew connected them. So, turn over to Leviticus 2, and we'll see here the instructions for doing a grain offering to God. We're going to see this is going to be a key scripture that defines this term “Aviv” for us. This is Leviticus 2:14,

> **Lev 2:14** *“If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire,…”* (NKJV)

Notice that it's roasted. Now we'll come back in a minute here to this term “green heads” because that's not a good translation but notice that it's roasted. Then it says,

> *“…grain beaten from full heads.”* (NKJV)

Now, if you look at an interlinear what you're going to see here for full heads is the Hebrew word “karmel”. As I mentioned, that's fully developed grain. You don't have to roast it in fire. You can just grind it up into flour and use it to make food or use it as a grain offering to God.

It also mentions here “green heads of grain roasted on the fire”. Now, “green heads” is not a good translation. The reason I mention that is because notice that you have to be able to roast it in fire and then have grain that you can utilize to eat or give as a grain offering to God. If you take barley that is still green, -- it has heads but it's still green and you roast it in fire -- you're not going to have anything left because it hasn't matured enough. It's in too much of a liquid stage. It's just going to evaporate and you're not going to have anything to use. Aviv grain is actually more of a light yellowish color.

Unfortunately, in a lot of cases you'll see the word “Aviv” translated as “green heads” or “green ears”. That's because it was translated by people who don't really understand the issue. If you realize that you have to be able to roast it in fire and have something useful. Well, that conclusively shows you that “green heads” or “green ears” is not a good translation. If you try to roast it when it's green you won't have anything to utilize.

What we're seeing here is this term “Aviv” refers to a stage of ripeness of grain. This is a key that helps us understand this term. Then we can use this definition and apply this to the first month of the year. There's another scripture in the Bible that also backs up this definition. If you notice here in Leviticus 2:14 -- unfortunately it said “green heads” -- but it didn't say “Aviv”. So, you don't have any reason to realize that you can connect this definition to the first month of the year. Well, the same is true over here in Exodus 9. This is another key scripture that uses this same term. If you look this up in an interlinear, you'll find this term “Aviv” is used in both of these verses. This gives us a Biblical definition that we can use to define this term of “Aviv”.

This is in Exodus 9. Now, just to give you the context here, I'm sure you're familiar with the story of the Exodus. There were numerous plagues that were brought upon the Egyptians to give them enough pain so that Pharaoh would finally give in and allow the Israelites to leave. Well, one of those plagues was a severe hailstorm. That's the context of this particular chapter. It's referring to this severe hailstorm and the damage that was done. Pick up here in verse 31. It says,

> **Ex 9:31** *“Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the head…”* (NKJV)

Now that's actually “Aviv” there in Hebrew.

> *“…and the flax was in bud. 32) But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they are late crops.”* (NKJV)

Basically, what it's describing here is the barley had matured to the point that it was already in the head. It was already getting to the point where you could roast it in fire and have useful grain to utilize. It's almost fully ripe in that stage. As the grain matures it becomes stiffer. When it's initially just a blade of grass it's very flexible. There's not a lot to damage there, but as it develops the full head and then matures into having full grain it gets stiffer and stiffer. Well, now when the hail strikes it it's a lot more damaging because it shatters, and the hail can destroy it. Well see, that's the point it's making here. If we realize this term “Aviv” is here in this verse, now we can get a concept of what we're talking about.

Remember that the first month of the year was nicknamed by God Himself as “*the month of the Aviv*”. So, it's basically referring to an event here. It's identifying the first month of the year as the month when the barley becomes Aviv. In other words, when the barley harvest becomes ready to be harvested.

Now, I won't take the time to go into all the details here, but I did a sermon on May 29th, 2021. It was titled “Spiritual Harvests”. The whole premise of the sermon is that God designed His Holy Days and the agricultural harvests in Israel to correlate with each other. The harvests are directly tied to the meaning of the Holy Days. As I explained in that sermon, the wave sheaf offering that had to be done during the Days of Unleavened Bread, that was done from barley. The two wave loaves that are given at Pentecost. Those are wheat. The Bible also ties the fall Holy Days of the Feast of Tabernacles as being right after the grape harvest.

So, you can see that the harvests in Israel are indications of when to keep the Holy Days. It literally tells us that God designed His Holy Days and His calendar to correlate with each other and nature itself to be an indicator of His calendar. Because the harvests and the Holy Days have to correlate with one another. That's the point that this is getting at. The reason that this matters in terms of the barley harvest and the start of the year is because of the wave sheaf offering. Now turnover to Leviticus 23. We'll start reading here in verse 9. It says,

> **Lev 23:9** *“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10) “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.”* (NKJV)

Now notice here, it's talking about this offering that has to be given when they come into the land. Now it doesn't specifically mention here that this is barley but, if you understand the agricultural cycles in Israel, barley is the only harvest that would be ready at this time of year. Now, just to verify that, let me read to you a section of a commentary. It's Jameson, Faucet, & Brown, and this is their commentary on Leviticus 23:10. It says,

> *“A sheaf of the first-fruits - a sheaf, an omer of the first-fruits of the barley harvest. The barley being sooner ripe than the other grains, the reaping of it formed the commencement of the general harvest season; because previous to that, no Israelite could begin his harvest nor eat of the new grain.”*

Notice it makes two claims in what it just mentioned here. One of them was they could not eat of the new harvest until after the wave sheaf offering had been done. Now we're going to read that directly off the page right here in Leviticus 23 in just a moment. It also makes a second claim that they couldn't harvest any of the barley until after the wave sheaf was done. We're going to see that is in Deuteronomy 16. It's going to directly tell us that was literally the day the harvest had to begin -- on wave sheaf Sunday. So, you can see the importance of these two having to line up with each other. We will not only read that off the page in the Bible, but we will also read several quotes from Jewish history that verify that this as well. So, just continue on reading here in verse 11.

> **Lev 23:11** *"He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.* (NKJV)

This is wave sheaf Sunday when this is taking place. In verse 12,

> *12) And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. 13) Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14) You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain…"* (NKJV)

Parched grain is Aviv.

> *"…nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."* (NKJV)

Notice I mentioned that there were two claims that Jameson, Faucet, & Brown made. One was that they couldn't eat the grain until after the wave sheaf. That's directly stated here. Notice here it says "parched grain". Now, the word of Aviv does not appear in verse 14, but that's why you parch grain. And it says "parched grain nor fresh grain". If you look at it in an interlinear, karmel is the Hebrew word used here for "fresh grain". Karmel is fully developed grain. So, again, we're still talking about these same two statuses of ripeness -- Aviv and karmel.

But notice that Jameson, Faucet, & Brown made a second claim. They said that they couldn't actually harvest the barley until after the wave sheaf. Well, that's directly stated in Deuteronomy 16. Turn to Deuteronomy 16:9. Now what this verse is going to be addressing here is the count to Pentecost. As you know, Pentecost is counted from wave sheaf Sunday. That's when you start your 50 day count. Your seven weeks between wave sheaf Sunday and Pentecost. In verse 9 it says,

> **Deu 16:9** *"You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain."* (NKJV)

Notice it's tying the count to putting the sickle to the grain. Now, just to read this from another translation that's a little more exact. This is from the New Revised Standard Version. This is how they translate verse 9.

> **Deu 16:9** *"You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain."* (NRSV)

In other words, you're going to start the harvest on that day. Because, think about it, you're doing an exact 50 day count. To be able to arrive on the exact right day for Pentecost, you have to start on the exact right day to begin your count. If you're going to

describe that day in terms of a harvest, you can't say, “We’ll start counting just around the general time that you start to harvest”. Well, if you start counting from a vague general time frame. Then you are going to land on a vague general time frame. You have to start on the exact right day to land on the exact right day. So, what this says is when you “first put the sickle to the standing grain”. In other words, you're not going to start the harvest until wave sheaf Sunday. These two have to correlate with each other.

See, this is why this is a great indication of when the first month of the year is. The harvest in Israel and the Holy Days have to correlate with each other. Nature itself gives us the answer. And, just to verify I'm not making more of this than it actually states, let me show you from documented Jewish history. This is going to speak to the Second Temple period. This is what Christ and the Apostles went along with. This shows you that they literally believed the same thing. That you don't start the harvest until wave sheaf Sunday. This is from Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 3, Chapter 10.

> *“And while they suppose it proper to honor God, from who they obtain this plentiful provision, in the first place, they offer the first-fruits of their barley….And after this it is that they may publicly or privately reap their harvest.”*

Notice that there was no public or private harvesting until after the wave sheaf. He's directly stating that. Remember Josephus is born a few years after Christ dies. He lived during the Second Temple period. He was alive when the temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

Here is another quote to back this up. This is from the Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin 11b. Pay attention to the wording of this because this also speaks to what they used to determine the 13th month. It says,

> *“If the grain is already ripe, however, the extra month would simply prolong the period during which the grain may not be eaten due to the prohibition of the new crop, as the new crop may be harvested and eaten only after the sacrifice of the omer offering....”*

Notice it's directly saying that they couldn't start the harvest until wave sheaf Sunday. Now, if you understand barley, as it begins to mature to Aviv and then to karmel, it starts to become very brittle. If you let it sit in the field too long, what will happen is when you try to harvest it the action of hitting it with a sickle will wind up shattering it. If it sits in the field too long after it's become ripe it'll shatter on its own. So, it's very important that you start harvesting it right when it's first beginning to be Aviv and moving on to karmel. Particularly if you're doing it with older methods like with a sickle. Otherwise, if you delay that by a month, what's going to happen is you're going to lose the majority of the crop. And that's going to severely affect the food supply for Israel. So, you can see the importance of tying these two together.

Now, let’s notice Deuteronomy 16:1. Because what we're going to see here is, if we understand the wording, it's literally an instruction for the Israelites to pay attention to

when the barley becomes Aviv because that's when you're going to start the year. That's the month when you're going to keep Passover and Unleavened Bread. That is directly stated. This is Deuteronomy 16:1,

> **Deu 16:1** *"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night."* (NKJV)

Now, if you notice the English word "observe" there. Let me give you the Hebrew word that is translated into "observe" in this verse. It's transliterated into English as "samar". It's Strong's # 8104, and again this definition's going to come from Baker & Carpenter. It says,

> *"A verb meaning to watch, to keep, to preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard……The Hebrew word means to maintain or to observe something for a purpose and is followed by another verb indicating the purpose or manner…."*

In other words, it's saying pay attention to when "*the month of the Aviv*" happens. The month when the barley becomes Aviv, because that's when you're going to keep Passover and Unleavened Bread. That's how you identify the first month of the year. Let me also give you a historical quote to verify this very fact. I am only going to read one here for time's sake, but again if you look at the paper on my website, you'll see that there's multiple quotes there from multiple different sources that all say the same thing. This is from The Encyclopedia of Judaism page 145.

> *"The Jewish calendar is based on a lunar year of 12 months, each month of 29 or 30 days. The year lasts approximately 354 days. Since the biblical festivals relate to the agricultural seasons of the 365-day solar year, the shortage of 11 days between the lunar and solar years has to be made up. To overcome this problem, a 13th month is added in certain years. In Temple times this was done periodically, after examining the agricultural situation at the end of the 12th month. In a later period the additional month was introduced automatically seven times in a lunar cycle of 19 years."*

Notice it directly says "in Temple times". In other words, in the Second Temple period when Christ and the Apostles were doing their ministry. It was determined by looking at the agriculture in Israel to determine whether to add the 13th month. They were looking to see if the barley was going to be Aviv in time for wave sheaf Sunday. That's what they based it on. Then it said "in the latter times" it became done by a 19 year time cycle. That's referring to the Calculated Jewish Calendar, because it uses a 19 year time cycle and then just adds in a 13th month at regular intervals. What that results in, unfortunately, is there are periodic years where the Calculated Jewish Calendar gets the harvests in Israel and the Holy Days -- as it reckons them -- out of sync by a month. That happened in 2016 and in 2019, and again this year in 2024. It got them a month out of sync.

Well, how do we determine what month to start the year since we don't actually live in Israel? Again, as I mentioned, there's a paper on my website that covers this in detail. It refers you to a good website that follows the agriculture in Israel every year. It posts photographic evidence, explains it in detail, and lays it out for you. There's a link in the paper that will point you to this website. They'll track it in the months leading up to the harvest, and even after the year starts to show you all the evidence so you can see it yourself to see that these correlate with each other.

What you can see from this is these are methods that we can follow today. It's foreign to our thinking today, because we don't think in terms of having to look at agriculture on the other side of the world or the new moon being sighted on the other side of the world. But clearly this is what Christ and the Apostles followed and this is what Israel did all throughout their history. It's very clearly documented in not only Jewish history but in even secular history that the Calculated Jewish Calendar that we point to today was not what was always done. Again, it's just the Church of God that makes that claim. We do that because it's a big logical contradiction to appeal to the authority of the Sanhedrin with one doctrine and then reject them in every other area of doctrine. We're much better off if we look at the authority of scripture.

The authority of scripture tells us it's as simple as 3 questions. *How does the Bible define a day?* Sunset to sunset. *How does the Bible define a month?* New moon to new moon. We can see from history that's the new crescent moon when it's first visible again. That's done from Jerusalem, and we can easily do that today even though we don't live there. *How is the year determined?* Aviv to Aviv. And, again, we can watch that as well. There's even methods to be able to predict that in advance for the majority of years. The details of that are explained in the paper that I have on my website. There's only certain years where it even really becomes much of a question. Because after tracking it for decades, they've figured out that there are ways to predict it ahead of time for the majority of years.

It's easily a system that we can follow today. As I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon, appealing to the authority of the Sanhedrin is a shaky place to be. We're far better off appealing to the authority of scripture. So, if you study this subject, you'll see that scripture's clear, and history backs it up. So, what I think we should all do, brethren, is follow the example of the Apostle Peter. When the Sanhedrin with their authority told him not to preach Christ, his response to them was, "*We shall obey God rather than men!*" Well, brethren, we have the choice of following the calendar instituted by the Sanhedrin and they themselves admit, the Rabbinical Jewish world admits, it's not what was always done. It's just the Church of God that makes that claim. So, we can follow the authority of Sanhedrin, or we can follow the authority of scripture. Personally, I'm going to follow the example that Peter said, "*We should obey God rather than men!*"