

Happy New Years

If you are looking at the title of the message in the bulletin or in the notes, there is no typographical error. There is always some doubt on Mother's and Father's Day whether and where you should use an apostrophe to show that it is a day of love and appreciation that belongs to your mother. While you can refer to New Year's Day with an apostrophe, someone went to the trouble to carefully spell out at thesaurus.com, a very valuable website, that "Happy New Years" (with no apostrophe) implies there are *two* new years for which you're extending good wishes. And, referring to two New Years is *exactly* what I intended. In Jewish culture, there actually are two New Years. For the Christian, we can actually recognize *three* New Years.

1. Happy New Year -

In one comedy sketch, there were two "reporters" who were covering Rosh Hashanah, which comes in October, at Times Square. They were "surprised" that no one else was there. In their confusion over the "New Year," she reminded herself that she would now have to write the year 5736 on her checks. [The Jews mark time starting from the creation]

It is more appropriate to wish someone a *shana tova*, good year, as opposed to a "happy year", especially in light of the fact that Rosh Hashanah ends 10 days later with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. That was the day in which a Jew should be reflecting on repentance with fasting and prayer. The name of the day, Rosh Hashanah, does not actually appear in the Bible. Rosh Hashana came to be considered the *civil* New Year when the Jews change the date to the next year because it marks the *end* of the year at the time of Sukkot, the final harvest feast.

Lev 23:24, 39-41 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first *day* of the month, shall ye have a

sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. **[Blowing the trumpet is not exactly like the way it is celebrated here by neighbors annoying you with trumpets, banging pots, and fireworks. However, we should take from this that making noise for the incoming year is not unprecedented. Blowing the shofar trumpet is associated with a warning.]**

...

39Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day *shall be* a sabbath, and on the eighth day *shall be* a sabbath. **[This is Sukkot]**

40And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

41And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

It is in Exodus that this harvest feast is considered to be the end of the year.

Exod 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, *which is* in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

2. Happy New Year -

So the Jewish New Year is Rosh Hashana, but the Jewish calendar is marked by *two* New Years. Rosh Hashanah, literally the head of the year, and Passover which is called the

beginning of months. While Rosh Hashanah came to be the civil New Year, Passover marks the *spiritual* New Year and the first of all the other feasts.

Exod 12:2-11 This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

3Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth *day* of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house:

...

5Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats:

6And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

7And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

9Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with* fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

10And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

11And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: *it is* the LORD'S passover.

The picture here is that of a sacrifice that would stand as protection against God's judgment. The fact that the remainder would be burned in the morning speaks of the perfection of the sacrifice. Death would not be visited

upon the houses that were marked with the blood of the lamb. Also interesting is that they were to eat with their loins girded and shoes on their feet. That picture is one of how we, as believers, are not to be settled in the world once we are redeemed. *We are to always be at the ready for our departure.*

3. Happy New Year -

January 1 has been picked to be the day we recognize the marking of time. There are pagan associations with January 1, but the new year day has bounced around quite a bit over time. Some Christian countries used Easter or March, but there could still be some pagan implications for that. Before Rome settled on January in honor of Janus, the god of new beginnings, they used March in honor of Mars, the god of war. If the Christians tried to use a spring New Year, there were other pagan celebrations that would coincide with. It is interesting that Janus was depicted as an old man and a new man. Even the pagans had a concept of the hope of a new life. We have much more to go on in the promises and challenge of Scripture.

Rom 6:1-11 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection:

6Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed,

that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The last verse is especially significant. We are challenged to *reckon*, to use reason. Whether you reckon January, March, October, or any other time to be a new year, it is your choice. There is nothing confining us to only one day a year to mark the beginning of the future. You could choose to recognize August 27th for all the world to revolve around. Don't expect that the world is going to comply. But, *you* can reckon when your new life is going to be. By reckoning, you can understand that you were, or *are*, in sin and death. By reckoning, you can understand that Jesus died for you and suffered your punishment of hell. By reckoning, you can obey God and call to Him to take your punishment. And then *also* by reckoning, you can reckon yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto Christ. You can use reason and reckon that *each* day is the beginning of the next 365 ahead.

The symbolism of the Jewish New Years is interesting to us and covers two ways to celebrate the New Year. The first way to celebrate the new year is as we mark the end of the old year. It should be a time of mourning our past as with Rosh Hashanah. The second way to celebrate the New Year should be as a time of bright hope, not because of naive wishful thinking, but because of the new life we have in Christ, our Passover sacrifice.

For the Christian, The third way we can celebrate the New Year is to pick *every* day. We should not *dwell* in the past with regrets and recrimination, but face the future with a renewed zeal *every* day. We need to always remind ourselves that we cannot fix the *past*, but we *can* fix the *future*.

2Cor 5:14-21 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

16Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

17Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave

himself for me.

You don't have to, as the coffee shop around the corner suggests, "take a cup of coffee to own the day." Going out for coffee is great, but life is not all about the coffee. You *do* have to reckon and take stock of what the challenges ahead and take measures to meet those challenges. Have you not been baptized? Then obey Christ, bringing fruits meet unto repentance. Have you neglected your Bible? Then get started on a schedule. Have you neglected the fellowship of the church? Then fix it. Are you ready to commit yourself afresh to winning souls? Are you ready to dig in to the work of the Lord to mentor and be part of someone's life?

Regardless of whatever started January 1, we can rejoice in *this* January 1 by making it a day of renewal and renewed efforts for the Lord. By application:

Ps 118:24 This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

That day in the Psalm was a Messianic prophecy of the Triumphal Entry of Christ before His crucifixion. It became the day of rejoicing for us when we accepted Him as our Savior. And then *each* day can be celebrated as we apply ourselves afresh to Him and His service.

We can celebrate, like the Jews, with repentance at the passing away of the old year. We can celebrate the new life that came through Jesus, our Passover Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. As believers, we can expand our celebration and choose to celebrate *every* day as the beginning of a fresh start for the Lord.