

The Old Paths

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“A New Year”

Jarrod Jacobs

Exodus 12:2 records the words God spoke to Moses and Aaron when He said, *“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”* These words preceded God’s command to observe the Passover feast for the first time. This feast was then commemorated by Israel each year as a memorial to the time God granted them freedom and victory over Egypt. I think of Exodus 12 around this time of year, for we are also allowed to see “the beginning of months” when we enter the month of January. Even greater than this is the fact that those who are Christians can look back to the day when they became Christians (Mk. 16:16; Acts 11:26), and realize that the day they were born again, was the “beginning” for them spiritually.

A “New Year” Is Significant

A new year means something to mankind. We know a new year is significant to man when we see the numerous people shooting fireworks, firing guns, having parties, etc., when the new year arrives. More than this, the beginning of a new year represents something important. It means we can look forward to 12 months in which to renew ourselves, better ourselves, and to grow spiritually if we apply our-

selves. However, 12 more months can be wasted if we decide we will not do anything more in 2008 than we did in 2007 or 2006, etc. Similarly, the Israelites were allowed an opportunity to leave Egypt and to start a “new life” on their own and away from the shackles and sins of Egypt. Unfortunately, many of the Israelites were not happy with God’s way and wanted to go back to Egypt (Ex. 14:12; Num. 11:4-5; Acts 7:39; etc.). The “beginning of months” from Exodus 12 ultimately meant nothing to them.

God Is Interested In Our “New Year”

God, though eternal, understands that man lives within the confines of time. This is made clear as He inspired men to write such truths as: *“...behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (II Cor. 6:2); and *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (Eph. 5:15-16). Obviously, God is concerned with how man, His creation, spends his time! Are we being wasteful with our time, or are we doing our best to “redeem” that time, i.e., use our time in the best way we can?

How often have we been asked by someone, “Where did the day go?” Does such an expression not show us just how fleeting life is? David prayed, *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”* (Ps. 90:12). He also said our life, even at 70 or 80 years,

is *“soon cut off, and we fly away”* (Ps. 90:10). James said our life is *“even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”* (Jas. 4:15). In light of these facts, what are we going to do with 2008? We have already used up 5 days out of 2008. What have we done with them?

What Will We Do With

This “New Year”?

Brethren, will we live 2008 for the better or for the worse? Will we spend our time this year glorifying God or self (I Cor. 1:30-31)? How about spending some time in this new year mending some fences? Are there people in your life against whom you have sinned? Stop ignoring this situation, and go to them and try to work out whatever problem you have with one another. This is what Jesus taught us to do in Matthew 18:15. This is also what Jesus told the people when He said, *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come offer thy gift”* (Matt. 5:23-24). In other words, **do not** wait for them to come to you in 2008! Go to them and work it out!

Perhaps we need to repent before God and make things “right” with Him through repentance and prayer (Acts 8:22). God is ready and willing to forgive us when we repent and return to Him. Will we do this, or will we waste another year away from God and out of fellowship with Him (I Jn. 1:5-6; II Jn. 9)? It is true that there are things which happen in the course of a year that we cannot control. However, there are things we can control, beginning with our attitude, our speech, and our ac-

tions (Phil. 4:8; I Pet. 3:10; Matt. 7:21). In other words, in 2008, change the one you CAN change — self!

Answering our question another way, we might also ask, will we spend this year looking for opportunities to bring lost people to Christ? The Bible makes it clear that Christians are taught to teach (II Tim. 2:2). Christ came to this world, wasting no time, but being active in looking for lost people (Lk. 19:10; etc.). Are we following in His footsteps (I Pet. 2:21)? Will we follow in the Lord's footsteps in this new year?

What will we do with this new year? How about spending time in 2008 doing our best not only to save the lost, but also to keep the saved, saved! There seems to be an attitude among some that our work with others ends at simply teaching folks about faith, repentance, and baptism! Yes, people need to know this (Mk. 16:16), but they also need to know what is necessary to remain faithful and obedient to the God of Heaven (Matt. 28:20; I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10)! I find it more than coincidental that we have five books of the New Testament written to tell folks what to do to be saved; and then we have twenty-two books of the New Testament written to those who have already been saved! Get the point? Obviously God is concerned about keeping the saved, saved! Are we interested in the same things God is interested in? If we were not in 2007 and previous years, why not begin a new way of thinking and living in 2008!

Conclusion

The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said, "I beseech you

therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). Could we think of any greater encouragement? We are the servants/ slaves of God! Let us be the best we can be by living for God today and everyday. Let us make 2008 a year dedicated to Him, and to doing everything by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17).

You Finish The Story ...

Selected

There was once a congregation in which every member was just like you. Each one cooperated and supported every phase of the work just like you. Everyone worked as hard and attended the same services and gospel meetings that you did. The elders, deacons, and preacher were all as interested in the church as you are. They put the same emphasis on recreation, business, and other material affairs that you do. Each member contributed monetarily just like you do. Within a year or so, the congregation ?
_____?
_____?



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God

M.M. Davis

Editor's Note: The following excerpt is taken from a book entitled: Queen Esther, by M.M. Davis, p. 13-14. Read this and then let us ask ourselves how it could be that someone, with such abundant evidence as we observe on earth (Ps. 19:1), could deny the existence of God. -JJ

"His name is not written in the flowers; but who, beholding their beauty and inhaling their fragrance, can fail to recognize Him as their maker? His name is not written on the waves of the sea; but who, as he watches them roll from shore to shore, and hears the deep, rich tones of their music, can fail to see in them the power of God, and hear his praises from the voice of the deep? His name is not written on the mountains; but who, seeing their rugged summits piercing the clouds, can fail to feel that the power which reared them is divine? His name is not written on the sun, moon, and stars, and yet "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Is the Gulf Stream, sweeping through the ocean, changing the climate of the globe, any less a river because no signboards are erected on its shores saying, "This is the Gulf Stream"?"

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