

The Old Paths

Volume 21, Issue 44

December 28, 2014

“A New Beginning”

Jarrod Jacobs

This week Lord willing, we will see the start of a new year. Seeing as we are starting a new year, as well as a new week and a new month, I thought we would do well to study some beginnings, and be encouraged to make the best of new beginnings.

A New Year

Just before the last plague was unleashed upon Egypt, God spoke to the people through Moses and Aaron, telling them, *“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you”* (Ex. 12:2). As the chapter unfolds, we read of the instructions for the sacrificing of the Passover lamb, as well as what was expected of them when the Egyptians sent them away. On this occasion, God let it be known that these people had a new beginning. They were going to count their years in a new way (ex: Ex. 17:1, 40:17; I Kings 6:1; etc.). They were going to “start over!” They were no longer going to live as slaves to Egypt, but as a free nation, subject only to God, their Master and Judge! This is but one example of “a new beginning” found in the Scriptures.

Other Beginnings

Exodus 12 is but one of many “beginnings” recorded in the Bible. In addition to Genesis 1:1 and other Old Testament “beginnings”, we can read in the

New Testament that the Lord’s church had a beginning (Acts 2). When Peter spoke about the conversion of Cornelius to those at Jerusalem, he said, *“the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning”* (Acts 11:15). Peter saw the events of Acts 2 as the “beginning,” of the church’s existence on earth!

In connection with the Lord’s church, we see that the New Testament emphasizes the importance of *“the first day of the week”* for the Christian. Each week has a first day, a “beginning,” wherein Christ expects Christians to gather to worship Him (Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42, 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; etc.). Can you think of a better way to begin one’s week than in worship to God?

Besides what we have listed, it is apparent to all that January 1, 2015 ushers in a new year for us. As of Thursday, we start a new year, and a new month. This year lies before us untouched, unstained with tears, and without mistakes — yet. 2015 does not yet hold happy or sad memories for us. It does, however, hold enormous potential for us. The question is, “What will we do with this year?” What will we do with this “new beginning”?

On a personal level, doesn’t man also experience “a new beginning” when he gets married? The number of years a couple is married is counted from the day of their wedding to the present day. Therefore one’s wedding day con-

stitutes the beginning of a new year, a new month, as well as a new life!

In connection with one’s marriage is the birth of children. When children are born, this is another “beginning.” A child’s birth marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the family, with each subsequent year of a child’s life being celebrated by the family.

The Greatest Beginning In One’s Life

While we could list many more “beginnings,” I believe the greatest beginning in the life of every Christian is the day that he/she became a Christian! The day one’s faith in Christ took action, and one repented of sins, confessed Christ as the Son of God and was baptized (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38, 8:35-38. 22:16; I Pet. 3:21), is the beginning of many wonderful things.

When one becomes a Christian, it is “a new beginning” for one’s relationship in Christ! Though at one point, sin separated us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), once in Christ, we are reconciled (II Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:16). Though we at one time were considered “aliens” and “without hope” (Eph. 2:12), once we were baptized into Christ, we “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27)! In thinking about this “new beginning,” the New Testament reveals that though we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), when we became a Christian, we became alive spiritually, and forgiven of all our sins (Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:13).

Can you thank God for your “new beginning;” this new day and new year in a new life you have since obeying the gospel? If not, today is the day for a new beginning” (Mk. 16:16)!

Philemon

Aric Russell

In this very short and personal epistle, Paul addresses Philemon, a beloved friend and fellow laborer with Paul (vs. 1-3).

After his salutation, Paul expresses his thanks for the qualities which have characterized Philemon in the past, especially his love for the saints. It is because of Philemon's past that Paul is confident his plea will be carried out faithfully (vs. 4-7).

Paul's plea concerns Onesimus, a slave who had run away from Philemon.

Somehow, he had run into Paul at Rome and was now a new convert to Jesus Christ. As a brother in Christ, Onesimus had made himself very useful to Paul in Rome. Yet because he still legally belonged to Philemon, Paul sent him back with a plea that Onesimus be forgiven and received as a brother in the Lord (vs. 12).

Let us look at a couple lessons we learn in the book of Philemon. First, we learn that it is okay for another individual or church to write a letter of commendation (or condemnation) regarding the spiritual state of another. Paul wrote this letter to Philemon that he may know that Onesimus was not the same "do-nothing" sinner that had originally left him (vs. 10-11). We see this again when the church in Ephesus composed a letter on behalf of Apollos so that the brethren in Achaia would receive him into their fellowship (Acts 18:24-28).

We also learn what it means to forgive and forget. Onesimus had obviously wronged Philemon by leaving him and having a "do-nothing" reputation (vs. 11, 15). Philemon could have easily responded to Paul's letter with anger. We are not told what Philemon's response to the letter was; however, we do know that Paul felt that he knew Philemon well enough to judge that he would forgive and receive Onesimus (vs. 21). We should expect no less of each other. If one has wronged us and asked us to forgive them, we should be ready and willing to do so with a spirit of great joy (Lk. 6:37; 17:3).

The book of Philemon is very short in length. However, it is a very powerful book. Let us all take the time to read and study this epistle and apply the lessons we find in it to ourselves.

Thought:
A mule can't pull while kicking; and cannot kick while pulling! The same thing goes for people. Are you a "puller" or a "kicker"?

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(From bro. Luther Martin's book entitled: "Information Concerning The Bible")

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