

Should Christians Observe New Moon Days?

Much has been written concerning the “new moon” days, and by new moon I mean the first day of the sacred month as marked by the first visible crescent of the moon as seen in Jerusalem.¹ Nowadays that first crescent can be easily determined — except for very rare exceptions — by astrogonical calculations available to the general public, so on-site observations in Jerusalem are not essential to determine the first crescent. The issue of why the crescent should be observed in Jerusalem, and not just anywhere on earth, to determine the beginning of the month is a subject that will not be covered in this paper, though it is an important subject because not always do observations of the crescent in North America, for example, correlate with observations in Palestine.

The Holy Scriptures² make it clear that the new moon days are special. Let us first read the several sources relating to the first moon crescent, the first day of the month, and see what these sources tell us.

What New Moons Tell Us

1. The moon helps us determine seasons and times. Genesis

1:14. “Then God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and **seasons**, and for days and years.”

seasons (Strong 4150)³ = **mowed**, “appointed place of meeting, or meeting, such as any festival or pilgrimage festival;

a fixed place or time.”

Psalm 104:19. “He appointed the moon for **seasons** [mowed]; the sun knows its going down.”

Leviticus 23:4. “These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their **seasons** [mowed].

These and other scriptures reveal that the moon, one of the major “lights in the firmament”, is a primary determinant of Holy Day times and seasons. As Leviticus 23:4 indicates, these Holy Days include the Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Tabernacles, Day of Atonement, Feast of

Tabernacles, and Last Great Day. This makes sense when we realize that these festivals are to be observed on specific days of the months, which months begin with the first visible crescent of the moon.

2. The first visible crescent of the moon after sundown indicates when the first day of the month

begins. A visual observation is required versus a calculated method, as is used today by the Jews and many other groups that observe the Biblical Holy Days. This requirement has already been quoted in Genesis 1:14, and opposes the admission of Jewish authorities who claim that the Jewish calendar is an “astro-



The first visible moon crescent in the western sky, after sundown, signals the beginning of a new month, one of the major signs in the heavens that divides time for people on earth.

nomical approximation”, not based strictly on solar and lunar observations. As Arthur Spier states in *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*,⁴

“The calculation of the Hebrew Calendar is based on the figures representing the average length of the lunar month and the average length of the tropical sun year The deviation from the true astronomical figure is very slight as far as the lunar month is concerned, and therefore the Hebrew calendar months still follow the course of the moon quite closely in our time. The difference between the traditional length of the sun year and the respective astronomical figure is, however, not negligible and causes the Hebrew months to advance against the sun approximately 4.5 days in a thousand years. For example, we [the Jews] celebrate Pesah [the First Day of Unleavened Bread] 4.5 days later, on the average, than our ancestors did 1,000 years ago at the time of Saadia Ha-Gaon.”

crescent, due to the mathematical nature of the Hillel II system devised in The Fourth Century A.D.⁵, involving postponements and other non-scriptural features. Efforts by Hillel II to unify the Jews worldwide with a uniform calendar based on mathematics certainly do not justify disobedience to God’s statutes.

3. First crescent days are often mentioned along with Feast days, when trumpets were usually blown.

Numbers 10:10. *“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginning of your months, you shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God.”*

Numbers 28:11. *“And in the beginning of your months you shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord, two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot”*

JEWISH CALENDAR DEVIATIONS FROM THE FIRST CRESCENT FOR 1901 TO 2000 A.D.

Nisan 1	Tishri 1	Total	Deviation
----- occurrences -----			
0	2	2	Three days before the visible new crescent
24	34	58	Two days before the visible new crescent
47	48	95	One day before the visible new crescent
29	15	44	No deviation from the visible new crescent
0	1	1	One day after the visible new crescent

Moreover, during the period of 1901 to 2000, for example, a comparison of the Jewish Calendar with the first crescent calendar reveals a considerable difference in the first day of the month. A study by Solinsky and Anderson tallied the deviation of the Jewish Calendar from the observed first crescent for Nisan and Tishri, and produced the results noted in the above table.

Clearly, the calculated first days of months 1 and 7, according to the Jewish Calendar, are usually not in accord with the observable first

Note, however, that the comprehensive listing of Feast days in Leviticus 23 does not mention first crescent days, indicating that they are not in the same category as Feast days; if they were, they would have been mentioned along with these seven annual Holy Days and the weekly Sabbaths. Notice how this issue is addressed in Scripture.

Leviticus 23:2. *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, con-*

cerning the Feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my Feasts.”

The blowing of trumpets does not sanctify a day as being holy, as Psalm 81:3-4 indicates.

“Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed [on the full moon], on our solemn Feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob.”

In general, one new moon (a first crescent, the Feast of Trumpets on Tishri 1) and two full moons (the Passover and First Day of Unleavened Bread, and the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles) are mentioned as God’s Feasts (Leviticus 23:2, 5-6, 24, 34), but the other new moons and other full moons are not. Thus, the blowing of trumpets on a new moon (first crescent) day does not automatically relegate all first crescent days as Feast days.

4. Observing first crescent days as Sabbaths is never mentioned in Scripture as a sign between God and His people, but observing Sabbath days is.

Exodus 31:13. *“Speak you also unto the children of Israel, saying, truly My Sabbaths you shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord that sanctifies you.”*

Ezekiel 20:12. *“Moreover also I gave them My sabbath to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them.”*

5. The day of the first moon crescent was sometimes observed by meetings of various people, such as the king and his friends and associates.

I Samuel 20:24-25. *“So David hid himself in the field; and when the new moon was come the king sat down to*

eat meat. And the king set upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, and David’s place was empty.”

Notice that on the second day of the month there was also a feast, as on the first day of the month (I Samuel 20:27), so to be consistent with the argument that the feasting of the king’s cadre on the first day symbolized a sanctification of the day as a Sabbath, then one must say that the second day also was to be sanctified. The meeting of a king and his friends on a certain day does not sanctify the day as a Sabbath. Moreover, if the new moon day was a Sabbath, then one would expect a meeting of the king with the priest at the temple on that day.

6. Sacrifices being offered on a particular day do not signify that the day is consequently a Sabbath. Sacrifices were commanded every day of the month, not just on the first day.

Numbers 28:3. *“And you shall say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day for a continual burnt offering.”*

Numbers 29:6. *“... beside the burnt offering of the month, and its meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and its meat offering....”*

Hebrews 7:27. *“... who need not daily, as these high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.”*

7. Work was at times commanded to be performed on the first day of the month, such as expounded in Exodus 40:1, 2, and 17.

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month

shall you set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.... And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up."

This job of rearing up the Tabernacle was no small feat; see all of Exodus 40. It involved a great deal of effort, and if the first day of the month was sacred like the weekly Sabbath God would surely not have instructed His people to set it up that day. Some other day could have been chosen. He would never have instructed that this laborious work be done on the weekly Sabbath day.

Notice also that the Lord gave the command to Zerubbabel on the first day of the month to gather wood and build the temple (Haggai 1:1-12). This command could just as easily have been given on some other day of the week if the first day of the month was to be treated as a weekly Sabbath day.

8. The importance of the new moon (first visible crescent) and the weekly Sabbath are tied together, and show the value of each. Notice Isaiah 66:22-23.

"For as the new heaven and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before Me, says the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain; and it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, says the Lord."

The setting of these two verses is in the future, when the heavens and the earth will be restored to Edenic conditions (Acts 3:19-24), but even so, based on this scripture, there is a temptation to declare the first day of the month and the weekly Sabbath as equivalent. Yet, there is no such statement made. Rather, the text in Isaiah is saying that from one month to the next, and from one Sabbath to the next, everyone will worship the Eternal Living God. This worship will not just be on the Sabbaths

and first days of the month, but will be on every day of the year. For a people committed to serving the one true God, is not every day a day to worship Him?

What Israel Did On the First Day of the Month

Ancient Israel treated the first day of each month in special ways, which included blowing trumpets and presenting burnt offerings.

Numbers 28:11. *"And in the beginnings of your months you shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord: two young bullock, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot...."*

Numbers 10:10. *"Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months you shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings, that they may be a memorial before your God; I am the Lord your God."*

Note similar instructions and references in I Chronicles 23:31, II Chronicles 2:4, II Chronicles 8:12-13, II Chronicles 31:3, Ezra 3:5, Nehemiah 10:33, Ezekiel 45:17, and Ezekiel 46:6. Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* III, X, 1, further stated,

"At the new moon they both perform the daily sacrifices, and slay two bulls, with seven lambs of the first year, and a kid of the goats also, for the expiation of sins".⁷

Some references mention new moons along with Sabbaths and feast days, but there are no specific commands given for the people ... but in some cases commands are given for the priests. These references include II Kings 4:23, Isaiah 1:13-14, and Ezekiel 46:11.

Amos 8:4-5 seems to indicate similarities between the weekly Sabbath and the first day

of the month, since selling is said to be prohibited.

“Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail, saying, ‘When will the new moon pass, that we may sell grain? and the Sabbath, that we may sell wheat?’”

The above verse is the only place in the Bible that indicates no selling was to be done on a new moon day, so it may be referring to the Feast of Trumpets, which falls on the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:24-25). Selling was prohibited on that day. Therefore, this one verse cannot be used as a proof text that the first day of the month and a weekly or annual Sabbath are equivalent in prohibiting buying and selling.

Some Christians have presumed that fasting on the first day of the month is prescribed, since the apocryphal book of *Judith* states that fasting occurred on that day (*Judith* 8:6). However, no scripture confirms that such fasting is needed. For instance, Romans 14:5-6 states.

“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day observes it to the Lord, and he who does not observe the day to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks, and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.”

Though this scripture could refer to some people fasting on the first day of the month, there is certainly no mandate to do so, since I Samuel 20:24 relates that Saul and his cadre were feasting — not fasting— on the new moon day.

We see instructions in Isaiah 66:23 (quoted earlier) and Ezekiel 46:3 for people to worship God on new moon days, but this direction is for after the resurrection. Likewise, offerings will be

presented (Ezekiel 45:17, 46:6), but again this is a prophecy for after the resurrection.

What God Requires of Us On the First Day of the Month

Having reviewed scriptures relating to the first day of the month, it is clear that the “new moon day” is very special. It signals the beginning of the monthly count which shows us when to keep the feast days, as directed by the sun and moon and outlined in Genesis 1:14.

We can say with certainty that Christians are not required to present burnt offerings on the first day of the month, as was required by Old Testament laws. The offerings were fulfilled with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as we read in Hebrews 10:4, 9, and 10:

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.... Then said He, Lo, I come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

We today are offered up as living sacrifices — not burnt offerings — holy and acceptable to God (Romans 10:1). The requirement for offerings made by fire has been superceded by the need for each of us to be crucified daily with Christ, to let Christ live within us, who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

As shown during the course of this discussion, there is no requirement to observe the first day of the month — except of course on the first day of the seventh month (the Feast of Trumpets) — as one would a weekly Sabbath. There is absolutely no condemnation to someone who observes it as a Sabbath, but there is no such need today, as there was not during the Old Testament period.

The only New Testament reference to new moons is in Colossians 2:16-17, where Paul states,

“Let no man therefore judge you in

meat [food], or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of a new moon, or of the sabbath; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body of Christ.”

This reference does not give instruction regarding eating, drinking, holy days, new moons, or sabbaths, so does not help in ascertaining how we are to keep the first day of the month. It does indicate “the body of Christ” is to have a part in this judgment, for indeed researchers and teachers in the ecclesia can provide excellent insight into such subjects, such as specialists in calendar research like Herb Solinsky.⁸ As I Corinthians 12:4-7 states,

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the spirit was given to every man to profit withal.”

In conclusion, while it is very important to note the beginnings of months through knowing the day of the first visible crescent of the moon at evening, we have no obligation to keep this day as a Sabbath or holy day. Some scriptures do show that anciently the Hebrews did at times assemble on the new moon day, and some sort of ceremony took place to notify the people that a new month had begun. Today we have computer calculations to show us accurately the times of the visible first crescent, and this information is available from several sources.⁹

While a special observance during the first day of the month is not required for Christians — except at the beginning of the seventh month — some brethren desist from usual work and rest, or meet much like during a weekly Sabbath. Some reduce their work load and spend time planning for the coming month, while others may prepare a special meal or event to mark the month’s beginning. We must all be convinced in our own minds what is acceptable in God’s eyes regarding new

moons, and let no man judge us, but we must approach this issue with sincerity and humility, convicted that what we are doing is, to the best of our knowledge and the holy spirit’s wisdom, the right thing to do. May the Eternal Living God guide our steps in all that we do!

Bibliography

1. The fact that the “new moon” means the first visible moon crescent is discussed in several papers, a good one being “What is the Biblical new moon”, *Yahweh’s Restoration Ministry*, 2007, found at www.yrm.org/whatisbiblicalnewmoon.htm.
2. The *King James Version* of the Holy Scriptures is used for the scriptural citations of this paper, with a modernization of archaic words.
3. Reference will be made to words indexed in *The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, by James Strong, plus dictionaries by John R. Kohlenberger, III, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee, 2001.
4. Spier, Arthur, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, New York, New York, 1952, page 226.
5. Solinsky, Herbert, and Anderson, Rob, *The Calendar God Gave to Moses*, Churchlight Publishing Association, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1982, pages 57-58.
6. Spier, page 2.
7. Josephus, Flavius, *Complete Works*, translated by William Whiston, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960.
8. Solinsky, Herbert. See various references on calendar calculations on www.thebiblicalcalendar.org.
9. For holy day information based on the first visible crescent in Jerusalem, contact www.thebiblicalcalendar.org, www.karaite-korner.org.