

New Beginnings

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The calendar says New Year's day is just around the corner. Traditionally, many make New Year's resolutions – perhaps to shed those extra pounds, or to read the Bible, pray, and attend church more regularly. Whether at the new year or some other time, such resolutions can be helpful (both only if we put forth the effort to keep them)!

Did you know that in the Bible, numerous significant events occurred at the start of a new year? It's true! On New Year's day, *“Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed, the surface of the ground was dry”* (Genesis 8:13). Although two more months would pass before conditions were dry enough to leave the ark, this was an important first step toward establishing a new beginning. As the flood water saved Noah & family from the corrupt world, the water of baptism saves us from our own sin as Jesus' blood cleanses us (1 Peter 3:20, 21). Is this new year the time for you to make a new beginning?

Moses and the Israelites erected the Tabernacle on New Year's day (Exodus 40:2, 17). God repeatedly emphasized that this had to be done *“according to the pattern”* He had given. God dwelt with His people and communicated with them in a special way within the Tabernacle. As we begin a new year, let us renew our determination to serve Him according to the New Testament pattern. Let us be thankful for His presence with us, and His word by which He communicates with us.

Hezekiah began cleansing the Temple on New Year's day (2 Chronicles 29:17). His wicked father, Ahaz, had desecrated the House of God. Cleansing it and restoring true worship was the first of many things godly

Hezekiah did to reverse the apostasy of his father. Do you need to cleanse the Temple as we begin a new year? (I don't mean clean the church building!) God's temple today is the church (not the meeting house, but you and me, 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:15). Also, your body is His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). Let the new year serve as an opportunity for you to put away bad habits and start good ones!

Other important events in the Bible occurred on New Year's day, but these will suffice for now. The first day of 2018 can be “just another day” for you, or it can be the day for new beginnings. It's up to you. Happy New Year!

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This Is Why I Don't Ask!

As was customary in days gone by, a preacher said, “If anyone knows a reason why this couple should not be wed, let him speak now or forever hold his peace.” After a moment of silence, a beautiful young woman with a newborn baby in her arms arose from the back of the building and walked to the front, looking straight at the preacher.

The bride dropped her bouquet and burst out crying. The groom's mother fainted. The groomsmen looked at each other, wondering how best to salvage the situation.

The preacher asked the young woman, “Why have you come forward? What have you to say?”

She replied, “We can't hear in the back!”

--via Preacher Talk (adapted)

EAT RIGHT!

“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.” (Isaiah 55:2).

Let's admit something up front: There is food that is good for us and there is junk food. There is food that builds the bones and muscles, and there is food that clogs the arteries. There is food that provides energy, and there is food that just adds fat. In short, there is good food and bad food.

Now, understanding that, let us ask this: Why would people spend good money on bad food? I know the answer, because I have done this (and so have you). We do it because we like the way it tastes.

God asked a similar question twenty-seven hundred years ago about how His people were feeding their souls. They seem to have been more interested in consuming spiritual junk food than in eating a healthy spiritual diet. They were doing this by disobeying God and living in ways that dishonored Him. As a result of consuming the wrong spiritual diet, they were bringing spiritual sickness and harm to themselves.

But God did not just give the warning of what would happen if they continued eating spiritual junk food, He gave them a dietary plan that would bring them back to spiritual health. They were to *“forsake”* their wicked ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:7) and *“return to the LORD”* (Isaiah 55:7).

And they were to consume the food that was good for their souls – the word of God (Isaiah 55:11). Doing this would cause spiritual health which brings joy and peace (Isaiah 55:12).

There's a great analogy in this for us. When the arteries of the soul are clogged through a bad spiritual diet, cardiac arrest of the spirit can happen. Instead of beating regularly and powerfully with love for God, the heart becomes cold and heavy and spiritual activity stops.

Christian, do you desire a spiritually healthy life? Then hunger for His word. Feed on it, digest it, and allow it to generate spiritual strength and energy for your life. Eat some “soul food” every day.

--Edd Sterchi (Campellsville, KY)