

NOTES

~ *New Beginnings* ~

- **Intro:** We think about a New Year in human terms and for new human beginnings. But, there is an ultimate and true start that brings new beginnings for Jesus' followers - and will bring an end to all else (**Revelation 22:11-13**).
- Examples of Human New Year celebrations:
 - **American/European:** January 1st
 - **Chinese** (Also known as the Spring Festival): 23rd day of the 12th lunar month of the Chinese calendar
 - **Jewish: Religious** - Pesach (Passover): The 1st Jewish month;
Agricultural - Rosh Hashanah: 7th month on the Jewish calendar
- Human New Year resolutions: Why do we make them?
 - To bring hope of a new human beginning (perhaps that the new year will be better than the last)
 - 'Do overs' – We want to change what we don't like
- A new human *and* spiritual beginning in Jesus
 - Why? To move toward God and life, and away from judgment and spiritual wrath
 - How:
 - Believe and **Repent** (our focus) (**Mark 1:15**)
 - Be baptized as an outward, physical manifestation of new faith (Mark 16:16)
 - Grow in faith, **live right**, and tell others the good news (i.e. Matthew 19-20)
- **Repentance:** Both human *and* spiritual new beginnings require this.
 - **Defined:** A change in heart that results in a change in behavior
 - Enables forgiveness, and salvation (**Luke 24:47** and **Acts 11:15-18**)
 - It's what God desires of everyone (**2Peter 3:9-10**) and often disciplines us for (**Revelation 3:19**)
 - A beginning that leads to good habits and better health (relationship, emotional, physical, and spiritual)
 - We don't *practice* sin once we repent (Galatians 5:20-23, **John 8:3-12**, and **1John 3:2-10**)
 - *Not* repenting will lead to judgment and wrath (**Romans 2:5-10**)
- **Summary:** Repent, experience a new beginning, and don't look back! The results will be spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally rewarding.

~ *New Beginnings* ~

[Revelation 22:11-13]

Read Revelation
22:11-13 first!

We think about New
Year in human terms,
but . . .

Again, Jesus is the
beginning and the end

Examples of human
New Year celebrations

American/European

ASK: You??

Chinese

Jewish

- Religious

Passover

Intro: We think about a New Year in human terms and for new human beginnings.

But, there is an ultimate, true start that brings new beginnings for Jesus' followers - and will bring an end to all else. As we just heard, Jesus is indeed the *beginning* and the *end*.

Let's talk about a few examples of New Year celebrations and why we use them to make resolutions.

Examples of Human New Year celebrations:

American/European: January 1st. We tend to gather the evening before and 'bring in the new year' with shouts, parties, countdowns, and resolutions. And, some of those parties bring regrets and spawn resolutions of their own . . .

How do *you* celebrate New Year?

Other examples:

Chinese (Also known as the Spring Festival): 23rd day of the 12th lunar month of the Chinese calendar. The idea is similar to that of the American and European New Year celebrations.

Jewish:

Religious - Pesach (Passover): The 1st Jewish month. This was when the covenant between God and His 'bride' Israel was. It was a new beginning for her.

Season One (the first month on the Jewish calendar - March/April):
Passover (*Pesach*) – When God's **peace** was received.

Feasts: **Passover**, Unleavened Bread, and FirstFruits

- Agricultural

Introduces
repentance and
rest

The Jewish New Year
introduces
repentance/atonement

All New Year
celebrations include
some kind of
repentance . . .

ASK: Examples of
typical resolutions?

Why make
resolutions?

Hope of a new
beginning

Do-overs . . .

Agricultural - Rosh Hashanah: 7th month on the Jewish calendar. Interestingly, while this is the official state New Year, it also closely relates to the new covenant with God.

This New Year begins with the Feast of Trumpets and introduces a time of repentance, forgiveness, and rest.

Season Three (The seventh month on the Jewish calendar - September/October): Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) – When God’s **rest** will be received

Feasts: Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), Atonement, and Tabernacles (Sukkot)

It’s interesting that the Jewish agricultural New Year introduces repentance since it seems that every New Year brings sorrow for things we want to change and then promised behavior. You could say that all new years are recognized as a chance to repent for something . . .

So, let’s talk about New Year resolutions. What are some examples of typical New Year resolutions?

Human New Year resolutions: Why do we make them?

To bring **hope of a new human beginning** (perhaps that the New Year will be better than the last). Because we know of the good and bad things the current year has brought, the thought of a ‘better’ new year can bring anticipation of good things to come!

‘**Do overs**’ – We want to change what we don’t like. This is where ‘repentance’ – even for the non-religious or non-follower comes into play. We’re *sorry* for behavior we don’t like and, therefore, vow to do something about it.

Covered 'human' new beginnings – what about the 'spirit'?

Spiritual new beginning in the covenant with God

Why is this important?

Judgment and reward and wrath are coming

We can choose a new beginning that dictates the end . . . **How?**

1. Believe

2. Repent

3. Be baptized

4. Be obedient

Obedient to what?

That covers human new beginnings and why we seek them in the flesh, but what about new beginnings in the *spirit*?

A new human *and* spiritual beginning can be found in a new covenant with God through Jesus.

Why should this be important? To move toward God and life, and away from judgment and spiritual wrath!

Make no mistake, judgment for how the spirit used its physical body, along with reward or punishment, is coming. Because the human we know as 'Jesus' was faithful in both body and spirit to His heavenly Father, we can choose life by following Him and entering into a covenant with God – a new *beginning* that will dictate our *end*.

So, how do we begin this covenant with God and enter our spiritual New Year?

First, we need to **believe** in God and the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. We call this 'faith', which is confidence – trust- that our God and His Christ as who they said they are. We gain this trust not blindly, but through hearing of things like fulfilled prophecies, personal experiences including miracles, etc.

Then, we need to **repent**; this is our focus today – especially since, as we've learned, it seems everyone's human AND spiritual New Year requires it. More on repentance in a moment . . .

[Mark 1:15]

We must also be baptized as an outward, physical manifestation of new faith (Mark 16:16) and be obedient in our new covenant. After all, our covenant – agreement – with God through the Christ is no different than a marriage contract: both require the honoring of terms.

Obedient to what terms? Well, in a nutshell, we're to honor God, care for our fellow brothers and sisters of the Faith, grow in faith, **live right**, and tell others the good news (i.e. Matthew 19-20).

Recap & intro to repentance

Repentance defined

It enables forgiveness and salvation

Salvation is what God desires of EVERYONE

God disciplines those whom He loves

Repentance can introduce a beginning that leads to good habits and better health

ASK: Other examples?

To recap, we believe and, therefore, follow. That ‘following’ requires mimicking the actions and commandments of our savior, Jesus. And, if we truly believe, we must take action by not only following, but first by turning away from sinful behavior – repentance.

Repentance: As we’ve mentioned, both human *and* spiritual new beginnings require this. After all, we don’t wish to change what’s working! So, what is a good definition of repentance?

Defined: A change in heart that results in a change in behavior.

What we’ll learn is that repentance enables forgiveness of sins, and salvation. In fact, salvation is impossible without forgiveness. And, forgiveness won’t happen without repentance.

[**Luke 24:47**]

[**Acts 11:15-18**]

It’s important to understand that repentance that leads to forgiveness and, therefore, salvation is what God desires of everyone.

[**2Peter 3:9-10**]

In fact, the Bible tells us that God often disciplines us for the sake of repentance and resulting salvation.

[**Revelation 3:19**]

Repentance can introduce a new beginning that leads to good habits and better health:

Relationship: Treating others as God/Jesus commanded

Emotional: Outward-focused instead of self-centered

Physical: No more sensuality, gluttony, etc.

Spiritual: Again, on the road to salvation from God’s judgment . . .

Don't *practice* sin

Not repenting leads to wrath!

Summary

We don't *practice* sin once we repent (Galatians 5:20-23) and . . .

[**John 8:3-12**]

[**1John 3:2-10**]

Not repenting will lead to judgment and wrath!

[**Romans 2:5-10**]

Summary: Repent, experience a new beginning, and don't look back! The results will be spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally rewarding.

Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy. Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” —Revelation 22:11-13

and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” —Mark 1:15.

and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. —Luke 24:47.

. . . When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.” —Acts 11:15-18.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. —2Peter 3:9-10.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. —Revelation 3:19.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery . . .” . . . And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.” Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” —John 8:3-12.

. . . Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. . . . No one who is born of God practices sin . . . —1John 3:2-10.

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who **WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS**: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation . . . —Romans 2:5-10.