



Introduction

The Watching & Praying newsletter is founded on Jesus' words in **Luke 21:36**. "Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." This was said in reference to a series of major events Jesus declared would happen at the end of this age before He returns. If we believe Jesus, then we must watch and pray as He commanded.

What follows is an attempt to help you watch and to help you identify things to pray about. Please do not use this message as a reason not to put your own effort into watching what is going on in your local area. Each of us has an individual responsibility to get prepared for the things to come (**Matt. 25:1-13**).

Lastly, know that you cannot prepare for someone else. We cannot secure salvation on each other's behalf. Each of you has a responsibility to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, even if you are separated from other faithful Christians (**Phil. 2:12**). Nevertheless, if God has allowed you to see what is coming, then you have an obligation to warn others around you (**Ezek. 33:1-9**). Again, you cannot prepare for them, but you can (and should) warn them! So watch and pray! Be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ! Warn the brethren around you and leave the convicting to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Table of Content

[Is God First in Your Life?](#)

[Resisting the Spirit of Christmas](#)

[Eyes on the Beginning of the Year](#)

Is **GOD** First In Your **Life**?

Luke 12:15 is a strong warning against covetousness. It tells us that a man's life consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses. Reflect on this verse for a few minutes. Your life is not in the abundance of things. No matter how much you possess, you will not find life in your house, car, bank account, jewelry, clothing, etc. Think of all the recent national disasters that have happened this year. Many have suffered and are suffering still. These folks are learning (or should be learning) that their lives were not in the things that they had prior to disaster striking.

This is something we must learn before disaster happens. What you have can support your life, but it is not your life! Many give too much energy and effort to the acquisition of wealth. We covet what we do not need. We strive for status as if our lives depend on it. We seek, we acquire, and still feel empty. Why? Because we have not learned from **John 10:10**.

Prosperity gospel pushers misuse this verse to no end. Jesus Christ came so that we may have life more abundantly. This is not about financial position. Remember, your life does not consist in the abundance of the things you possess. Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father to show us what real life is. The professing Christian world has fallen into covetous idolatry just like those who do not know God. The greatest Teacher to walk this earth said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (**Matt.4:4**)

Jesus makes it clear that food (which sustains physical life) is not what we live by. Yes, we must eat, but we really are to live by every word that comes from God's mouth. Read **John 8:25-28**. Jesus declared that He spoke the words God the Father taught Him to speak. The instructions spoken by Jesus Christ came out of the mouth of God the Father. These words are what the Father wanted us to know!!

Read **Mark 12:29-30**. The first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God. To love something with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength is to put that thing first. Jesus declared that the greatest commandment is to put God first and give Him your all. Please look up the definitions of these words in Greek and review the chart below:

Term	Strong's Number	Definition/Paraphrase
heart	2588	heart, thoughts, feelings
soul	5590	breath
mind	1271	deep thoughts

strength	2479	force, forcefulness
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This verse shows us that we are required to give the whole of our heart, thoughts, feelings, breath, inner thoughts, and force. Notice the response of the scribe to Jesus' declaration in **Mark 12:32-33**. This scribe adds to the declaration by saying giving all of you is more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. This scribe saw the truth in Jesus' statement. More important than this acknowledgement is what Jesus said afterwards.

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, **Thou art not far from the kingdom of God**. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*." (**Mark 12:34**)

The word discreetly does not mean secretly. It means prudently. The scribe gave a wise reply so Jesus told him that he was not far from the kingdom of God. This man was coming into an understanding of **Matt. 6:33**. If you truly understand what the kingdom of God is you will know why Jesus said these words. The kingdom of God is the family of God that will rule over the earth with Jesus Christ (**Rom. 8:14-17**). God the Father is looking for sons to adopt into His family. Neither you nor I will be adopted into the family of God if we do not learn to put the Father first by giving Him the whole of our hearts, thoughts, feelings, breath, inner thoughts, and force.

Are your thoughts and feelings on God continuously? Do you breathe for God, that is live for God? Are your inner thoughts and desires toward God and His righteousness? Do you use force towards the things of God? God is a jealous God (Ex 34:14; Deut 4:23-24). He does not want to share your love with anything else (Matt. 4:10). He must be first!

How Do You Use Each Day?

Putting God first requires us to organize our lives in a certain way that emphasizes our relationship with the Father. Every Christian should have a deliberately organized schedule that includes time dedicated to the things of God. More importantly, your schedule should be built around the things of God and not just fit them in where it is convenient for you. If God is primary in your life then His things must be primary in your schedule. This means giving the things of God the best time slots in your schedule. For example, studying the word of God should be scheduled at a time when you are alert and able to focus. If you know you get sleepy after a meal, do not schedule your personal bible study time after meals. Another example to consider is scheduling prayer after a short (5-10 minute) exercise routine. If exercise revs up your body and makes you more alert, then it may be wise to schedule exercise before prayer to make sure you are alert and energized while praying. Please reflect on the two examples provided before continuing to read this message.

Now grab a blank sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Write down each hour (or half hour) beginning with the time you typically wake up. Take a few minutes to fill in each time slot with what you typically do on any given work day. The purpose of this step is to show you how you

are currently using a typical work day. Depending on your employment status, you will quickly notice that your employer dominates your schedule. Also, if you honestly fill in the time slots, you will see how much time you use to please yourself by watching tv, reading books, shopping, scrolling the internet, etc. This is not to say that these things should not be done. The question is how much time should they have in our daily schedule.

Additionally, if you go through the process thoroughly, you will notice how much time you waste daily. It is essential that you do your best to capture every activity you engage in to have a real picture of how you use your day. Please do not skip this step. Also be sure to include cleanup time with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Once you are sure of what your typical day looks like, expand the schedule to include each day of the week.

As you expand your schedule, include special activities on the days you typically do them. For example, Laundry Day on Sundays, Game Night on Thursdays, Family Bible Study on Mondays, etc.

Click the following link to see an example of squeezing God into your schedule and an example of a God-centered schedule: <https://the2olivetrees.org/how-to-create-a-god-centered-schedule/>

With a clear picture of what your current schedule is, you can begin to truly see if God is first in your life. The next step is to create a schedule that emphasizes the things of God on a separate sheet of paper. This includes but is not limited to **1)** giving prayer a dominant position, **2)** giving Bible study more time than entertainment, and **3)** deliberately setting time aside to do good for others. This new schedule should be your goal, but keep in mind that emergencies happen. In addition, your schedule will change for doctor's appointments and other prescheduled events. Take the time to fit these kinds of events into your schedule well in advance. Avoid giving up time allotted for the things of God.

As you design a new schedule that emphasizes the things of God, be ready to eliminate activities that have no spiritual value. Be honest with yourself about how much time you use for entertainment. Entertainment/leisure time should be limited to maximize the things of God. Use **Matt. 25:31-46** as a guide. Rather than entertain yourself, schedule time to help the brethren which is a better use of your time. Remember the first and greatest commandment. Make sure your schedule shows that you love God with all you have, including your time!

Implementation

No house is built in a day; no neighborhood is built in a week; and no town is built in one year. The implementation of a God-centered schedule will not happen overnight. It will take a lifetime of practice to master your schedule. You will likely have to rework your new schedule several times within the first year. Be ready to adjust as necessary but avoid giving in to convenience. Remember, you aren't squeezing God into your schedule; you are building a schedule around Him!!!

The following is a list of pointers (and a brief explanation) to help you with this process:

- Put Prayer and Bible Study As Close To The Start Of Your Day As Possible

Starting your day in communication with God is essential. This time should set the pace for the rest of the day. This makes it easier to walk in God's ways regardless of the tasks ahead.

- Do Not Schedule Entertainment Near Bedtime

Entertainment is very addictive. If consumed before bedtime, you may violate your schedule thus making you less productive the next day. Secular entertainment will also dominate your thinking which is unhealthy for your spiritual growth.

- Bible Study Before Work

The study of the principles of God before work helps you practice them while working. This will also help you maintain a positive humble attitude in the face of adversity at work. Use this time to study work-related issues whenever possible.

- Set Clear Bible Study Goals

Being deliberate about what you study makes Bible study more effective and impactful in your life. Choose specific topics to study that have immediate relevance in your life. Avoid opening your Bible to random chapters as this is the least effective way to apply God's word to your daily life.

- Avoid Meals That Require Long Periods of Active Labor

Delicious food is important for your mental health; however, it is not necessary to use excessive amounts of time to execute a meal plan. Try to stick to recipes that require no more than 1 hour for breakfast and lunch. Limit dinner to 2 hours maximum unless there is a scheduled special occasion. Simple meals save time and allow you to use that time for other productive activities.

- Deliberately Schedule Entertainment

Entertainment is a nonproductive endeavor and is a distraction from necessary labor. Use entertainment time as a means for relaxation rather than a distraction. Limit this relaxation time by dedicating specific time to it. Do not engage in entertainment outside of the scheduled time.

- Used Scheduled Entertainment To Be Productive (Prep Ahead)

Entertainment time does not have to be completely unproductive. Use entertainment time to complete tasks that do not require your complete focus such as folding clothes, mixing batters, making a grocery list, dusting the house, sorting through mail, etc.

- Avoid Unscheduled Trips To The Store

Unscheduled trips to stores diverts time away from more essential activities. Try to purchase items in advance to avoid emergency trips to the store. Keep a written inventory of essential items to help in this process. Resist the urge to purchase items due to momentary cravings.

- Avoid Use Of Electronic Devices Before Bed

Some studies have concluded that the use of electronic devices has a negative impact on our ability to fall to sleep. Avoid staring at a screen prior to laying in bed. Rather than watching tv or videos on your cell phone, try reading an informative book.

- If You Need Background Noise For Sleeping, Play Audio Bible Chapters

Rather than consume secular media, try using Bible audio as background noise while sleeping. This gives you another opportunity to consume the word of God. Try playing chapters that support your morning Bible study topics.

- Try To Schedule Social and Business Calls

Avoid taking random calls during the day that aren't emergencies. It is very easy to lose track of time while on the phone. Phone use is also a distraction and makes you less productive when trying to accomplish a task. Schedule your phone calls to maximize your productivity. Change your voicemail to include the scheduled time you will answer calls or call others back. Resist the urge to accept social calls during your business time and vice versa.

Conclusion

Putting God first in our lives requires us to manage our time more effectively. The greatest distractions in our age are the cell phone and the television. If you learn to use these two devices less, then you will discover how much time you have to engage in the things of God. If God is first in your life, then your schedule should be built around Him. Do not squeeze Bible study and prayer into your schedule. Make them preeminent!!!

Lastly, do not deceive yourself into thinking that Bible study and prayer are the limits of your relationship with God. Jesus asked, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (**Luke 6:46**). He also told His disciples, "If you love me, keep my commandments." (**John 14:15**).

To truly love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength is to try to live by every word that God has given us. Live by the teachings of Jesus and do not make excuses if you fall short. Repent and try harder. Resist secular ambition and be ambitious towards the things of God!!

Resisting the Spirit of Christmas

Any serious student of the Bible knows that the most widely celebrated holidays have their roots in paganism. The celebration of Christmas is no exception. The sad truth is that this most widely celebrated day of gift giving is practiced by professing Christians and pagans alike. This fact should stimulate Christians to look at Christmas with a suspicious eye rather than claim the day as a celebration to Jesus Christ. To their credit, many professing Christian denominations have gradually moved away from the holidays of this world. Nevertheless, there is a darker wide-reaching spirit surrounding the Christmas season that must be avoided to truly abstain from the paganism in Christmas.

Consider that Christmas decorations are displayed at retail establishments earlier and earlier as the years go by. It is not unusual to see Christmas related decor as early as September. This is not a result of the supposed joy and glee associated with this holiday. It is a coordinated effort of the merchants of this world to get you in the spending mood better known as the Christmas spirit (or the spirit of covetousness).

Read **Rev. 18:1-3**. Keep in mind that this Babylon is a woman. A woman in prophecy typically means a church. This is about a church that is the home of devils, foul spirits, and a cage for unclean and hateful birds. Many do not understand these prophecies because they refuse to study the symbols as they are used in the Bible. Notice that this woman (church) is the habitation (home) of devils. This church is a dwelling place for demons. Notice she is a hold for every foul spirit. The Greek word translated as spirit is the same word used for the word ghost in Holy Ghost and spirit in Holy Spirit. In this case, it is distinguished by the adjective foul. This Greek word means impure and was more often translated as unclean.

The word hold was translated from a Greek word that means a guarding. This word was translated as prison more often than anything else. It could read that this woman is a prison for unclean spirits. The phrase unclean spirit does not exclusively mean demon (see **Rev. 16:13-14**). The unclean spirits in the cited verses are said to be the spirits of devils. This is talking about the power of demons that works on men. This woman is keeping in the power of demons.

Babylon is also a cage to every unclean and hateful bird. The word cage is the same Greek word translated as hold. Remember this means a guarding most commonly translated as a

prison. She is a prison to unclean and hateful birds, but what does this mean? When you study birds/fowls in prophecies and parables, you will see that it has at least three interpretations. They are: 1) literal, 2) symbolizing evil spirits, and 3) symbolizing a human leader or nation. Here are some (but not all) verses to consider:

- Mark. 4:4,15
- Matt. 13:31-32
- Jer. 12:7-9
- Ezek. 39:1-5
- Isa. 46:9-11
- Rev. 19:17-21

Rev. 19:17-21 is a clear example of a literal interpretation whereas **Isa. 46:9-11** shows a bird as a human. The most sound interpretation is that a cage of every unclean and hateful bird represents evil spirits if you compare it to the examples above. This shows that this woman/church is the home of demons and she keeps demons and demonic power in her. This is God emphasizing the wickedness of this entity by repeating it in three ways. It shows that this woman is a willful participant in the work of devils against mankind.

Rev. 18:3 shows that all nations participate in this woman's fornication. Fornication, adultery, and whoredom in prophecy represent committing idolatry (covenanting with false gods) and making covenants with heathen nations. See **Ezek. 23** for an understanding of this. Reread **Rev. 18:2-3**. Here we see a demonic woman/church who is covenanting with kings and nations. She has wine of the wrath of her fornication. The word wrath was translated from a Greek word that means passion. This is not about anger. This woman is passionate about her fornication. She shares it with nations and kings. Sadly, many preach that these passages are about something to come rather than being something that is actively happening in our time. This is why many professing Christians cannot identify this woman and what her fornication is.

What Does This Have To Do with Christmas?

Rev. 17:3-5 shows that this woman is the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. Her name is Babylon the Great. She is the same woman in **Rev. 18**. Remember what whoredoms, fornication, and adultery mean in prophecy. This church is the mother of harlots, churches that engage in whoredoms. These verses are about a great mother church who gave birth to other churches and widely accepted abominations. This woman's daughters engage in similar activity as their mother, the promotion of christianized paganism.

Rev. 18:3 says, “the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” The merchants have gotten rich because of the power (abundance) of her straining to get wealth (delicacies). Please look these words up in Greek. Keep in mind that this woman/church has daughters doing the same thing!

This woman/church has covenanted with false gods, kings, and nations. She has used her labor to acquire wealth. The merchants of the earth have gotten wealth through her efforts to acquire. Now pause and think about mainstream Christianity. This woman has strained to acquire land, paintings, statues, “religious” artifacts, and illustrious buildings making the merchants rich. This woman has christianized every major pagan ritual and day of worship. In order to celebrate these days, she has strained to purchase the ornaments of her worship. The merchants of the earth wax rich by providing the ornaments of this system of worship. This includes the wreaths, the trees, the lights, the costumes, the figurines, and all the gifts purchased by this woman and her harlot daughters.

Each Christmas season, in the U.S. alone, hundreds of billions of dollars are transferred from the people to the merchants of the earth. Holiday retail sales in 2023 is estimated to be \$955 billion. This number is a reflection of those who actively participate in the Christmas ritual and those who are just looking for a sale. The reality is that professing Christians, pagans, and atheists give in to this spirit of covetousness every year.

The spirit behind Christmas is the spirit of covetousness, the inordinate desire to acquire something. The churches of this world promote this spirit in many ways, including the promotion of decorations, displays, gift exchanges, and special church services. Through these things and many others, the churches of this world cause their members to buy from the merchants of the earth and to commit adultery against God. Because of the widespread acceptance of Christmas, many are exposed to endless sales, deals, and ad campaigns of the season. Even those who refuse to celebrate this christianized pagan holiday directly get swept up in the idea of acquiring luxuries at discounted prices, thus drinking of the wine of the mother of harlots.

Remember, these deals are only around because of the holiday. They are linked. Don't be dishonest with yourself about their connection. Don't let covetousness blind you from seeing that going after these “deals” is a form of participation. This is not to say you should not shop during the holiday season; however, you should scrutinize why you are planning to make your purchase. Determine whether or not it is the spirit of covetousness impacting your decision-making process.

The Spirit of Covetousness

Covetousness is a very dangerous thing to engage in. This is why there are countless warnings against it in your Bible. God has commanded us not to covet what others have (**Ex. 20:17**). Cain coveted the acceptance of God that Abel received (**Gen. 4:3-7**). Cain coveted the acceptance that Abel received more than doing what was right. God tried to show Cain how to rule over sin. God tried to show Cain how to be accepted by Him. Cain chose to covet acceptance rather than

do what was acceptable. He chose to let sin rule over him and become a murderer. Covetous led to jealousy, jealousy led to anger, and anger led to murder.

Read **Eph. 5:1-5**. Many of the things mentioned by Paul come out of covetousness. It is the coveting of praise, coveting of women, and coveting of many other things that leads to fornication, foolish talking & jesting, and even murder. Think of how crime increases during the Christmas season. Is it because of a desire to honor Jesus Christ? Or is it because of a desire for material wealth?

Read this parable Jesus gave about covetousness in **Luke 12:13-21**. God prefers that we are rich towards Him. Your life does not consist of the abundance of the things you possess. Babylon and merchants who have gotten rich from her demonic promotion of idolatry want you to be rich towards the world. In reality, many of us are transferring what little wealth we have for the image of wealth. Many who engage with the spirit of Christmas go into debt for worthless trinkets, gadgets, electronics, etc. They let covetousness (the desire to fit in, the desire to look wealthy, the desire for affection, etc.) cause them to part with the wealth God allowed them to acquire. The ramifications can be months (sometimes years) of debt and stress. Families are destroyed, houses lost, cars lost, etc. over mounting debts. Obviously, this doesn't happen to everyone who celebrates Christmas; however, participation has long-term ramifications that we do not see. When properly analyzed, we see that many trade wealth and time for immediate self-gratification and future sorrow. Christians should not risk their relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ for material wealth.

How to Put Up a Resistance

Again, it is Babylon and merchants who push this idolatry, lust for material goods, the spirit of covetousness. This is an agenda sourced from devils who want the world worshipping anything but the true living God. To safeguard your heart from covetousness, you must deeply study what the word of God says about it. You must commit the word of God to your memory. You must practice what the word of God says about covetousness and seeking riches. Below are some verses to help you resist the covetous spirit that dominates this season.

Prov 13:7 This verse describes the so-called middle class that acquires much but really own trinkets of no value

Prov. 13:11 This verse shows us how we should avoid accumulating wealth through empty means.

Prov. 11:4 This verse shows that riches will not save us.

Prov. 22:1 This verse shows that reputation is more important than riches and loving favor is more precious than precious metals.

Prov. 22:4 This verse shows us how to get true riches.

Prov. 22:7 This verses shows why we should limit the use of debt

Prov. 23:1-5 These verses are a warning against setting your affection on riches and luxuries.

Prov. 27:23-27 These verses shows that real riches provide sustenance and must be maintained

Prov. 30:7-9 These verses show the attitude we should have about wealth and poverty.

Ps. 62:9-10 These verses show how we should live a life of balance, loving neither wealth nor poverty.

Mark 10:23-27 These verses are a warning against trusting in riches.

I Tim. 6:17-19 These verses show us how to appropriately use wealth.

James 5:1-3 These verses are a warning to those saving up wealth for themselves.

II Tim. 3:1-4 These verses are a warning against becoming a lover of pleasures and covetousness.

Remember that God knows what you need (**Luke 12:29-30**). Do not set your affection on or worry about what you do not need. Read this warning from the apostle James in **James 4:1-5**. Are you striving for things so that you may consume it upon your lusts? Do you have a spirit that lusts to envy? Do you covet the friendship of the world? Are you trying to live like the people of this world to gain their friendship or respect?

John the apostle recorded a dire warning he heard from a voice in heaven (see **Rev. 18:4-5**). DO NOT join yourself to this spirit of covetousness promoted through Babylon! DO NOT become an enemy of God! Come out of her! Drink not of the wine of her passion for spiritual fornication (idolatry). It is Babylon who has loved mammon and amassed wealth (land, buildings, statues, jewels, artifacts, paintings, etc.) to her own destruction. She has promoted holidays that are an abomination to God. She has worked with the merchants of this world to promote the instruments of this demonic worship system. You, oh Christian, must come out of her system and resist re-entry.

During this holiday season, resist the urge to buy what you do not need. Do not give in to the worship of mammon and the spirit of covetousness. Financially, you will be better off. And more importantly, you will be better off spiritually.

“But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. **32** Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. **34** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (**Luke 12:31-34**)

Eyes on the Beginning of the Year

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever. (**Ps. 111:10**)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (**Prov. 1:7**)

Please reread the two verses above. Note that this word fear is not literal fear. Its meaning is determined by the context in which it is used. Generally speaking, this word means respect wherever it was used in the “Old Testament.” The reason for covering such an obvious issue is to magnify the fact that Christians must learn to respect God in all things. Respect for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. Please note that that respect for God is the BEGINNING of wisdom and knowledge. This is where Christians begin to get wisdom and knowledge. Additionally, we must recognize if we do not respect God, then we will never begin developing true wisdom or knowledge.

Reread the second half of both of these verses. **Ps. 111:10** tells us that those who do His commandments have a good understanding. **Prov. 1:7** tells us that fools hate wisdom and instruction. Why is the world void of understanding? Why do so many people act so foolishly? It is because the vast majority of the world refuses to respect God and to keep His instructions (commands).

All of the endless confusion we see is a direct result of disrespect for God and His commands. Even professing Christians have no respect for what God has commanded. Some try to excuse themselves from listening to what God commanded saying that Jesus did it for them. God is not a Father we get to ignore whenever we feel like it. Our Father in heaven has provided for us all the instructions we need to live happy functional spiritual and physical lives.

Overlooked Instructions

Because the professing Christian world separates the “New Testament” from the “Old Testament,” many refuse to look at what was commanded by God in the first five books. Moreover, some use Paul’s writings as an excuse to ignore the law. Some say that the law is a special covenant exclusively for Israel while they ignore what Paul had to say in **Rom. 11** which declares that the gentiles are grafted into the tree of Israel. Note **Rom. 11:6**. In most translations, half of the verse is missing. The reason it is missing in most versions is to hide the meaning. **Rom. 11:6** compliments **Rom. 3:31**.

Paul made it clear on several occasions that those in the faith uphold the law of God. At the time Paul was writing these letters to gentile churches there was no such thing as a New Testament. These gentile groups would have been learning about how God wants Christians to be through the Old Testament. (see **Acts 17:10-13, I Cor. 10:1-11**). The cited verses show how Paul was teaching out of the Old Testament, yet so many ignore the books of Moses because the law is written there. The books recorded by Moses were not preserved for us to pick which parts we want to live by. In fact, Jesus is very clear about which parts we should live by (**Matt.4:4**). Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God includes every instruction given by God.

Did you know that God has declared when the beginning of the year is? **Rom. 8:7** says that the carnal mind cannot be subject to the law of God. In **John 4:23-24**, we see that God wants His worshippers to worship Him in spirit and truth. The world is not interested in worshipping God in the way He has revealed in His word, but if you are going to truly worship Him then you must learn to follow His system.

According to your Bible, January is not the beginning of the year. Read **Ex 12:1-2**. God told Moses when the beginning of months was. The beginning of months is known as Abib according to **Ex. 13:3-4**. Why is it important to know when the beginning of the year is?

God’s Calendar and Timeline

This question is overlooked by the majority of professing Christians because it seems trivial. The reason it seems trivial is because most do not understand or acknowledge the reason God made a covenant with the Israelites. In **Ex. 19:5-6**, God tells Moses if the nation keeps His covenant they would be a peculiar treasure above the other nations. They would become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. What do priests do? They

represent a deity, they point others toward the deity, and they execute His work. The Israelites were chosen to point other nations to the self-existent God by keeping His teachings. This was a part of the agreement presented to the Israelites before God gave them the ten commandments. The people of Israel agreed to these terms (see **verses 7-8**). Thus the tribes of Israel agreed to be a peculiar treasure above all nations by keeping God's commandments. Please read **Deut. 14:1-2; Deut. 26:16-19; and Ps. 135:1-5** for affirmation.

To reiterate, God gave the Israelites a way of living different from all the other nations to make the nation of Israel a peculiar treasure above all nations, a kingdom of priests. This is undeniable. Unfortunately, the Israelites failed to keep their part of the agreement, that is they failed to point the nations to the God who is not made by human hands. Nevertheless, God continued His work of establishing a peculiar treasure, a holy nation of priests on this earth. This is confirmed by two great apostles in the New Testament. Read **I Pet. 2:9-20** and **Titus 2:11-15**.

God gave the Israelites specific instructions on how to live as a peculiar treasure unto Him. They were to show forth the praises of God. This included instructions for when the year should begin. Observing God's standard for the beginning of the year is important because it points to God's plan. I repeat, God's plan is revealed to His people through His calendar, not the solar calendars of the sun gods of pagan nations.

Eyes on the Beginning of the Year

Note that January is named for the two-headed god named Janus (and other names). The observance of New Year's Day is to this pagan god. Christians should abstain from celebrating this day and making resolutions (vows) for the new year. God does not want His people to do anything like the pagans even if they claim it is for Him (**Deut. 12:29-31**). This is exactly what modern Christianity has done by incorporating ancient pagan rituals into their worship claiming to worship Jesus Christ.

Again, the beginning of the year is in the month of Abib according to God. This is important because God reveals His plan through His calendar. Please read **Ex. 12:1-14**. This is the first instructions for the Passover of the Lord. The true beginning of the year points to God's plan of salvation. Also read **Deut. 16:1-2**. This memorial service represents God providing for us a sacrifice without spot or blemish. John the baptist declared this publicly in **John 1:29,36**. The Passover service is a representation of Jesus Christ's life being sacrifice for us yet the professing Christian world does not observe it.

This service was to be kept at the beginning of the year. In **Ex. 12:1-14**, we can find the original instructions for the observance of Passover. **Verse 7** shows that the doorposts of the Israelites' homes were to be covered in the blood of a blemish free lamb just as Christians are to be covered in the blood of the Lamb of God (**Rom. 5:8-9; Heb 9:11-14**).

The theme of Jesus' blood (sacrifice) being critical towards our salvation is emphatically mentioned throughout the New Testament. The Passover service was foreshadowing the work that Jesus Christ would come to do. For example, God requires us to have faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ just like the Israelites would have needed to have faith that the act of spreading the blood of a lamb without blemish would protect them from the destruction to come (**Ex. 12:21-28**). Only those who believed what God said through Moses would have taken action.

Sidenote: Note that the spreading of the blood on the doorposts is an act (works) of faith.

Passover was the event that freed the Israelites from bondage. The apostles explained to the early church members how we have been in bondage to sin. **Rom. 6:16-18** discusses the issue of being a servant to sin. The Greek word translated as servant means a slave or bondman. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, a nation filled with idolatry. When God judged the nation, Israel was spared because their doorposts were covered in the blood of a lamb sacrificed to God. Likewise, God is going to judge this idolatrous world and Christians will be spared through the blood of the Lamb of God (see **I Thes. 1:6-10**).

This is the first event of God's calendar. It sets the pace for the rest of the year. God in His mercy has provided for us a sacrifice to wipe away our sins. Do not think that the Israelites were serving God while they were slaves in Egypt. Most likely, the majority of the Israelites would have been participants in the Egypt religious system. Please read **Ex. 4:21-23** and **Ex. 5:1-9**. These verses indicate that the Israelites were not allowed to serve God at their leisure. They were in bondage in an idolatrous system. God freed these people from bondage to this sinful system through the Passover even though they were participating in it.

This is a picture of what God is doing for true Christians. Christians are burdened by a sinful system that keeps us busy with burdens and hinders us from worshipping the Almighty God. Nevertheless, Christians can be free from this system (bondage to sin) if

we believe God's message and act on it. We have to believe that God will forgive our participation in sin if we take of the blood of the Lamb. We have to acknowledge the Lord's Passover and worship God in word and deeds.

*Sidenote: In **Ex. 5:1-9**, we read of the Israelites taking a day of rest and asking for time to sacrifice to God. This is a picture of the sabbath. The Pharaoh accused them of being idle. The system that exists in the world today would accuse you of the same if you try to earnestly keep the sabbath as the Lord has commanded. If you keep sunday (which requires no abstention from vain activities), then you will face minimal resistance. The more that you grow in and practice the truth of God, the more you will experience resistance.*

The Real New Year and the New Man

The very purpose of the Passover was to point the Israelites to the plan of God for the forgiveness of sins (**Heb. 10:1**). This was placed at the beginning of the year. Do you believe that God knows when and how we should start the year? Do you think He doesn't care about when and how we start the year? The Passover is so important that God made provision for it to be held in the second month under certain circumstances (see **Num. 9:1-15**). Also note that **Ex. 12:14** says that this is an ordinance that must be kept forever.

Now, if **Rom. 11** says that gentiles are grafted into Israel, why don't Christians observe Passover forever as commanded? Because the Passover is connected to a holy day known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which pictures coming out of sin and abstaining completely from it. This feast pictures the human effort to willfully remove sin out of your life (**Ex. 12:15-20**). Paul talks about the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Corinthians (gentiles) long after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (**1 Cor. 5:6-8**).

The professing Christian world utterly abhors the idea of works, but the Bible is clear that the followers of Jesus must follow in His works. The work is not the ritual service of these days. The work is the full abstention from sin and walking in the good works that God the Father ordained just like Jesus Christ did. The ritual services of these days were meant to point the Israelites to this truth.

The beginning of the year, as God designed it, was to point God's people to the Lamb of God. Fourteen days into the new year, the ceremony of the Passover must take place. The ceremony reminds God's children of our need for a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was that sacrifice and fulfilled every detail written in Exodus. Passover points to our need to come out of bondage to sin, to purge sin out of our lives. The beginning of the year was designed to remind us of the new life we have in Jesus Christ.

Please read **Eph. 4:17-32** with emphasis on **verse 24**. These verses are a powerful explanation of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the very day the Israelites came out of Egypt. It was the start of a new life for the Israelites. It was an opportunity to be new men who operated in the righteousness and holiness of Almighty God. This can only be done through Jesus Christ.

Read **II Cor. 5:17-20**. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are about being reconciled to God. Christians cannot claim to be reconciled to God if they continue to live like the world. When the world thinks about the new year and New Year's day, they think of parties, drinking, health goals, economic goals, and other worldly endeavors. The world doesn't think about godly character, abstention from sin, and reconciliation with God the Father.

Christians need to keep their eyes on the beginning of God's calendar. Because we have to operate in this world, it is difficult to ignore man's calendar, but it must be done. Man's calendar points to idols, pagan gods, and vanity (empty pursuits) all of which God called us out of!!! Celebrating New Year's Day in the month dedicated to Janus does not bring us closer to God. We have to come out of this idolatrous system just as the Israelites had to walk out of Egypt and begin a new life with the true living God. The real beginning of the year represents a new life offered to us through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Set your eyes on the beginning of eternal life and purge your heart of the desire for riotous rebellious living!