

Exod 04-04-11b special

As I mentioned at the beginning and at the end of our first session, in addition to talking about the meaning of the Lord's Supper and the honoring of the body of the Lord Jesus, we're also talking about, this morning, in connection with the Resurrection, the Jewish calendar and the relation of the feasts in Israel that are given within that calendar to the events of human history. You know, of course, that we operate on a calendar that is much different than what is generally given in the Bible. The Jewish calendar began, and this goes back to the earliest events of the book of Genesis, but the year was organized on a 360-day plan.

I personally believe that before the flood, this was the period, when you think in terms of rotation, revolution, the relation of the earth to the sun, that you had a perfect 360-day year, 12 months of 30 days. And the trauma that God inflicted on the planet that caused the flood and the rearrangement of the continents and so on, also kind of knocked the earth off its normal or its original axis and speed of rotation and so on. And now we have a year that is approximately 365.25 days long.

And recognizing that previous calendars were faulty for trying to work off of a lunar method or a 360-day year, Julius Caesar, back several decades before Christ, said, I'm tired of all of this confusion. Every time we try to make a treaty and say bring your taxes at such and such a time, people keep claiming that the calendar is off. So let's fix this calendar problem.

So he went to all the wisest gray heads of the day, the mathematicians and the astronomers, and he said, look, figure me out a calendar that we can work off of and where days will hit at the same time in terms of the seasons. I'll give you an example. The Arabs still use a lunar calendar to this day.

Their months are determined by the lunar cycle. Well, if you've ever tracked on your own calendar the date of the full moon, I mean, month by month it drifts all across because you've got like a 28-day lunar cycle. And so you will notice that Ramadan and some of the other Arab festivals hit catch as catch can.

They're not at the same, even in the same season. It's a summer festival for a while, and as the years pass, pretty soon it's a winter festival, and then pretty soon it's a summer festival. Their holidays bear no relation to the seasons or to the actual years because they're on a completely lunar calendar.

Well, the Hebrew calendar was closer, but being set to a 360-day year, it would drift quite substantially. And so early on, the elders in Israel, the ones who were in charge of such things, the religious officials, would correct the calendar by throwing in an extra month, five times every 19 years or something like that. We'll get into the details of it here in a minute.

But they had to do this because the Jews, unlike the Arabs, have festivals that are tied to the seasons of the year. Your spring festivals, barley harvest and first fruits and that, that's not

going to work if it drifts off into the dead of winter. And so as their 360-day system began to break down, they said, boy, we don't even have any barley in the year yet, much less be able to waive any first fruits.

They had to compensate for this. Well, other cultures had done similar things, and there were all kinds of different calendars. So Julius Caesar went and created what is known as the Julian calendar in 50-something B.C. And it did pretty well because they had figured out that a year was 365 and one-fourth days.

And so he got the system of 12 months, and they added in days to some of the months to compensate for the 365 days. That's why we have the 30 days, half September, April, June, and November, all the rest of 31 except for February, et cetera, leap year. And the 365 and .25 fixed the problem in the calendar.

However, it turns out that a year is not 365.25 days long. It is 365.24229. And so as the years pass, you still wind up with an eventually substantial drift. So Pope Gregory figured this out back in the early days, 600-odd, around the same time that they came up with the B.C. and A.D. designation for keeping track of time.

And he said, you know, we're going to have problems with this. We need to fix it. So what they did is, first of all, they recognized that since the time of Julius Caesar, there had been, according to their calculations, they were 10 days off.

And so in one particular year, he said, all right, today is October the 5th. Tomorrow is October the 15th. And they just caught up the 10 days that they had lost.

And this was in, I don't know, 1532 or something like that. You can look all this up if you're interested in the gory details. But anyway, they just jumped from October the 5th to October the 15th.

Actually, their calculations were off, though, and there was an additional two days that they should have subtracted out. But it made it a whole lot better. But dates before a certain year are suspect because not everybody switched over at once.

The non-Catholic countries said, boo on the Pope, we don't have to do what he says. And some countries didn't actually switch over from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar until the last century, until 1921. One of the last countries, I think Russia or somebody, didn't even switch over until 1921 from the Julian calendar.

But all of this is to say that we have a number of different types of calendar calculation. And this is why from year to year, Passover doesn't seem to always hit on April the whatever it is. This year, 14 Nisan was like the 6th of April.

And in different years, it bounces around because the Hebrew calendar is still on the system of having to throw in an additional month every so often. Well, the difficulty here is in trying to

always have an Easter Sunday to reflect what was obviously a Sunday in the time of Christ. And so we tend to pick a weekend and say that Sunday is going to be Easter or Resurrection Sunday.

And we'll observe Passion Week before that. But we're actually off from the Jewish calendar because of their vagaries. So for example, this year, 14 Nisan hit on the 6th of April.

And the 15th, 16th, and then 17th, which would be your Easter Sunday, actually hits on an odd day of the week. There are calendars that you can access on the web. For example, there's an interactive calendar that will give you the correspondence between the Jewish calendar and the modern, what we would call Gregorian calendar.

So if you'll bear with me a minute, let me just give you a little bit of calendar detail. It's important. We're going to arrive at a place here once I cover this.

A true year is 365.2422 days. And so 1582, Pope Gregory XIII compensated for the errors in the Julian calendar. And as I said, the day following October 4th of 1582 was going to be October 15th.

So he just skipped those 10 days and jumped forward. And France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg were largely Catholic countries, so they did that in 1582. The German states did it a couple of years later.

Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, some of these did it a few years later. Japan didn't switch over to the Gregorian calendar until 1873. Egypt switched over in 1875.

China in 1912. Turkey in 1917. Russia in 1918.

Greece in 1923. And China, depending on which China you're looking at, part of them switched in 1912 and the other part in 1949. So you have to watch when you're digging back in history, and they say, well, such and such a date.

You have to look and see, well, which calendar was in use at the time. Not only this, but there is an additional year problem introduced by the BCAD system. There is no year zero.

And so you have the year 1 BC, and then you have the year 1 AD, and it throws the math off. If you're calculating across that border, you're one year off. For example, trying to figure the life of the Lord Jesus.

Let's say he was born in 6 BC. Herod the Great died in 4 BC. Herod said, kill all the children two years old and under.

So you figure it could have been as early as 6 BC, 6 to 7 BC, that the Lord Jesus might have been born. And so then you figure, well, what year would he have been 33 years old? Well, you've got to be careful crossing that line, because you're going to be off by one year. So of these different calendar systems, you're going to find that there is always a difference in the Hebrew calendar.

But the calendar that began and was in use all the way up until Exodus 12 was basically 12 months of 30 days. And the beginning month is called Ethanim. This is its old name.

You find it referred to as this in 1 Kings, for example. And I'm going to be referring here to some work that was done by a fellow that some of you have heard of before. Joseph Goode put out a really informative book called Rosh Hashanah and the Messianic Kingdom to Come.

And one of the things he does, although he's a Gentile like us, he's based here in Texas, and he did a lot of work in recovering some of what we have lost of our knowledge of things Jewish in terms of their calendar, their festivals, and this kind of thing. And he's got an excellent summary in this book on the nature of the Jewish calendar. But the Ethanim or Tishri was the first month.

And in the Bible, any time before Exodus chapter 12, if it says something happened in the first month or the fifth month or the seventh month, this is on the old calendar that has Tishri or Ethanim as its first month. And this is the fall period of time. The original, what they call the civil calendar, has New Years, which is commemorated as Rosh Hashanah, the head.

Rosh means head. Head of the year is in the fall. So you have Tishri or Ethanim.

And the rest of the names of these months before the Babylonian captivity, before their time in Persia and so on, the Hebrews pretty much just referred to the months by their numbers. This is the first month, this is the seventh month, and so on. They didn't really get names for the months until they borrowed them from the Babylonian, Medo-Persian milieu into which they were thrust in the captivity.

So the names are, number one is Tishri, T-I-S-H-R-I. Number two is Keshvan, C-H-E-S-H-V-A-N. It's also known as Bul, B-U-L.

Then you have Kislev, K-I-S-L-E-V. That's the third month. The fourth is Tevet, T-E-V-E-T.

The fifth is Shavat, S-H apostrophe V-A-T. The sixth is Adar. You remember the month of Adar comes up in the story of Esther.

The seventh month is Nisan, or Aviv. The eighth is E-R-I-Y-A-R, also known as Zipf. The ninth month is Sivan, S-I-V-A-N.

The tenth is Tammuz, T-A-M-M-U-Z. As in our calendar where you have some of the names coming from gods and goddesses and things, Tammuz was actually a pagan deity. Then you have Av as the eleventh month, A-B or A-V.

And then Elul, E-L-U-L, is the twelfth month. So the end of the year was still considered to be at harvest time. And even after the institution of the religious calendar in Exodus 12 where Nisan, or Aviv, is declared to be the first month instead of the seventh, you have the Bible talking, for example, in Exodus 23-16, the Feast of Ingathering, which is at the end of the year.

He says the end of the year, but he's already said your beginning of years is in April with the month Nisan. Well, then the end of the year technically would be the following April. But he still calls it the end of the year, the agricultural year, according to the old civil calendar.

So once you have Passover in Exodus 12, there is a change. And this is significant when you think about eschatology, when you think about what's coming up in the future. Because God took what had been the seventh month, Nisan or Aviv, and he said this is now the first month for you.

You think about our eternal future. This weekend, this past week, is all focused on the resurrection of Christ, our coming resurrection. God took the original order of things, and he said what was your seventh month is now your first month.

You look at the 7,000 year plan of human history, and when you think about living into the eternal future, we're going to have to have a way to track our dates. It's not timeless, it's just endless time. I mean, you know, Yogi Berra or somebody said time is what keeps everything from happening all at once.

And basically, we know that there will be events and progress and things that are ongoing, and so there is some kind of time that keeps everything from happening all at once in the eternal future. Well, how are we going to measure the time to come? I think, among other things, we'll have names for our millennia. And what is now the seventh millennium of human history, which is the millennial kingdom, as we call it, I think God is going to switch over and say this is now the beginning of millennia for you.

What began as the seventh month is now the first month. What was the 7,000 in human history, this is the first thousand of your eternal life. And maybe there will be an even larger plan for organizing time, but I just have the sneaking idea that in the same way that God declared the seventh month to be their first, the seventh millennium is going to be declared our first.

It's going to be the first millennium of our new life in Christ. So, Exodus 12, 1 and 2, This month, Aviv, or Nisan, shall be unto you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you.

And so on the religious calendar, you have a New Year's in the April-ish time frame. In the civil calendar, you have a New Year's in the fall, at the end of the harvest. So now, within this Jewish calendar of these 12 months, you have the problem of this drift.

And so, every so often, you have to compensate by adding in a second month of days, what they call second Adar. If you're going to begin in Nisan, then your last month is Adar. And so, you get through to Adar, and you're way off.

And so, they have second Adar, or what they call Ba-adar. The second Hebrew language uses letters for numbers. So, Aleph is the number one, Beit is the number two.

So, you have a Beit in front of the word Adar, and they call it Va-adar, or Ba-adar, which means Adar two. And they throw this in, I believe it's five times every 19 years or something, to kind of keep everything on track. So, within this calendar, you have two sets of festivals.

You have the spring festivals, and the fall festivals. What we have seen celebrated this period of time here is the set of spring festivals. It begins with Passover, 14 Nisan at sundown.

So, basically, the first full day of the Passover celebration is the 15th Nisan, 15th Abib. And in the book of John, in particular, when you're reading the Gospels, John, when he says it was so many days until the Passover, Passover, in Jewish usage, and in John, means the whole week. It is the entire festival that begins at sundown on the 14th, the first day of Passover being the 15th, and extending through the Feast of Unleavened Bread for that period of time.

So, 14th Nisan at sundown is Passover. And then you have the Feast of Unleavened Bread that begins on the 15th, and goes for seven days. Now, there is a third feast within this little group, and that is the Feast of Firstfruits.

Now, Firstfruits is tricky, and the Pharisees and the Sadducees were divided on the Feast of Firstfruits. Because, depending on how you read the Scriptures, the Pharisees said it should always be on the 16th of Nisan. Why? Because, the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we have talked about the fact that this is a High Holy Day, this is a Sabbath.

Well, if you need any proof of that beyond what Scripture says, the Pharisees said 15 Nisan is a Shabbat, it is a Sabbath. And, when Scripture says on the day after the Sabbath, in this time period, this is when you will celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits. They said, well, obviously the Sabbath that is being referred to is the 15th Nisan Sabbath, so the Feast of Firstfruits should always fall on the 16th.

The Sadducees, and this is really ironic when you think about it, the Sadducees said, no, no, no, you have Passover, sundown on the 14th, you have the seven-day week, which is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that begins with a High Holy Day Sabbath, but, inevitably, somewhere in that seven-day week is going to fall the regular Saturday Sabbath. The regular Sabbath is going to hit, and the first day after that is what God wants to be the Feast of Firstfruits. Does this make sense? Think about Crucifixion week.

We know that 14 Nisan fell on a Thursday. The Lord Jesus was crucified on Thursday. His body was taken down just before sundown and entombed.

Friday, which is a High Holy Day Sabbath, this is why they had to eat the bodies off the cross, because, you say, well, what's the big deal? There's two days before anybody is going to be able to do anything with the bodies, and it's going to be nasty trying to get them down two days later. So, they had to get them down before the Friday Sabbath that preceded the Saturday Sabbath, and that year, the Feast of Firstfruits did not fall on the Saturday Sabbath. It fell on

Sunday, the day after the Sabbath that fell in the Feast of Unleavened Bread week.

Does this make sense? Somewhere in the week of Unleavened Bread, there's going to be a Saturday Sabbath. Now, how do we know that the Sadducees were right about this? Because, for one, you have the Lord Jesus rising on the day of the Feast of Firstfruits, and the Feast would have kind of lost its foreshadowing significance if it hit on Saturday, and He didn't rise until early in the morning on Sunday, which, in the Jewish reckoning, is in the middle of the day. But, the main point here is, think about your Spring Feast.

This first set of three hits within a week of each other. Passover, the week of Unleavened Bread, and within that, Firstfruits. This is important to know when Firstfruits is, because you count, and this is how we know the Sadducees were right, because the next Feast is Pentecost, which is the Firstfruits of the barley harvest.

Figuring forward from that, you're supposed to count seven Sabbaths, and if you're counting the Sabbath that you're reckoning from as the 15th Nisan Sabbath, what if you have a year, and there are many years in the time frame of the Lord Jesus, like 26, 27, 28, 29 A.D., if you go back and look, where 14 Nisan hit on a Monday or Tuesday. So that would make the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, let's say, on Wednesday. And you say, the Pharisees are right, that Wednesday is the Sabbath.

Well, now you're supposed to count seven Sabbaths forward to get to Pentecost. Are you going to count every Wednesday as a Sabbath? I mean, that doesn't work. The only way you can calculate with Sabbaths is for it to be the Saturday Sabbath.

And so the Sadducees are correct. You start with whatever Saturday hits in that week of Unleavened Bread, that's where you begin your 50-day count to get to Pentecost. Otherwise, the whole thing just becomes a chaos of confusion.

Why do we care? What's important about this? The Spring Feasts all picture things that have historically happened. Passover goes without saying. Unleavened Bread, that week, the first part of that week, it goes without saying.

The blood of Christ cleanses us. We sang, there is a fountain filled with blood. Sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

How can you be purging out the old leaven unless there is atonement, unless the Passover lamb has been slain? And then, firstfruits. Paul says, Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep. He was raised on Sunday morning, Feast of Firstfruits, after the Saturday Sabbath, after the Friday Sabbath of the 15th, after the 14th.

You can work back from this, by the way, from John, talking about the fact that Jesus came into Jerusalem for what has been called the Triumphal Entry, Palm Sunday, six days before Passover, i.e. six days before the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover Festival, the first day of it is the full day of the 15th. Six days earlier, Jesus comes into Bethany and stays at the

house of Lazarus and Mary and Martha. And that's a Saturday night.

How did he get there without being arrested? He traveled on the Sabbath and all the religious observant Pharisees couldn't be out there trying to nab him and do the work of arresting him on a Saturday Sabbath. So they were at home. Jesus, knowing the spirit of the law, travels with his disciples and takes advantage of their legalism to get into Bethany without being arrested.

And he eats the meal there Saturday night. Sunday morning, he comes in. But what this tells us is, when you look at John and he says, six days before Passover, he comes in and that's a Saturday.

When you work forward, John basically tells you it was a Thursday crucifixion. And it's just such a shame that people... I heard somebody on the radio this morning saying, well, you know, the way the Jews reckon time, it's just a part of a day counts as a whole day. So Friday, just before sundown, was one day.

And Saturday was a whole day. And then Sunday was early in the morning on the third day. But they never talk about the nights.

Jesus said, Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. And I don't care how you slice it, you can't get three nights out of Friday night and Saturday night. Well, when they rolled the stone, it got real dark.

And that was like night. I mean, how can you justify it? You can't. You have to say that Jesus was just figurative or sloppy or approximate.

We've talked before about the dangers of having a sloppy and approximate God when it comes to keeping track of the lists of the saved. Well, I've got most of them on the list. I don't see your name in the Lamb's Book of Life here, but hey, you know, it's approximate.

It's just an estimate. Good grief. But this tells us a lot about the calendar and all these spring feasts are the historical fact now.

Well, the next set of feasts come in the fall. You have the first one is the Feast of Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah, which is on Tishri 1. Remember that in the civil calendar, Tishri is the first month. In the religious calendar, Tishri winds up being, or Yethanie, winds up being the seventh month.

And so you have this relationship of one and seven that is affirmed every year in the Hebrew mind by observing these two different calendars. And all of the festivals, of course, are figured on the religious calendar. So the Feast of Trumpets, celebrating the new year, or the head of the year.

Then you have Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which is on the 10th of Tishri. And you have Sukkot, or the Feast of Tabernacles, which is the week of Tishri 15 through 21. What is fascinating about this calendar is that creation of the world starts the weekly cycle, right? When

God said, Let there be light, what day was it? Sunday.

The evening and the morning that were the first day, that was a Sunday. And isn't it interesting that the first day for the new life that Christ prefigures was a Sunday. The first Sabbath when God rested, that was the first Saturday.

We've been keeping track of Sunday through Saturday ever since. In Genesis 8-4, it tells us that Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat on the 17th day of the seventh month. This is pre-Exodus 12.

We're on the civil calendar. What is the seventh month? Nisan, Abib. What is the 17th day of the month? It's three days after the 14th day of the month.

The Ark came to rest on Resurrection Day in the Hebrew calendar. This is the month Aviv. If you look at 2 Chronicles 29, 2-20, it says that Hezekiah came in the temple and made sacrifice after it had been cleansed.

And guess what? That was the 17th day of the first month. This is after Exodus 12. What is the first month? Nisan, Abib.

And Hezekiah comes in and cleanses the temple on the anniversary of Noah's Ark coming to rest and the pre-anniversary, if you will, of the day that the Lord Jesus rises from the dead. There is nothing accidental about the timing of God's plan. We're going to be taking a look in an extended way at the calendar of Israel when we begin our study of Ezekiel here in a few weeks.

After we finish 1 Samuel and do an excursion into Job, and I'm basically doing Job to stall for time so I can be prepared for Ezekiel, and because I really want to do Job as well. I don't mean to trivialize the study of Job, but I am doing it now because I have done a lot of preparation in Job and I need to do more preparation than I have in Ezekiel. And one of the reasons is to pay attention to the time references in Ezekiel.

It's critically important. God never mentions a time reference without a purpose. And you can see the coordination, and you can see the schedule that God has mapped out in His Word and in the feast days of Israel.

We don't have time this morning to go through the symbolism of the fall festivals. We will in our Ezekiel study. And we will see that in the same way that the church began on the day of Pentecost, there is a reason for that.

There is a reason why everything that Christ accomplished in His first coming is pictured in the first set of festivals. Everything the Lord is going to accomplish in His second coming is in the second set of festivals. Rosh Hashanah, the feast of trumpets.

The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump. So those fall feasts tell us what is coming up. And as I said before, you have that

overlapping and alignment of the first and the seventh month.

What was the seventh month becomes the first month. And what is the 7,000 years going to be the first of the new work that God is going to do in the human race on this earth. So again, the fall festivals, trumpets, Israel's regathering.

This is one of the three pilgrim festivals. You have Passover, which is a pilgrim festival. You are supposed to assemble.

You have Pentecost, or the feast of ingathering of the first fruits. That is a pilgrimage festival. And then trumpets was one that they were supposed to.

And the day of atonement. All in that seventh month. And then the feast of tabernacles, or feast of booths.

So, when the Lord Jesus had the supper in the upper room that we talked about in our first session that we are about to commemorate, it was not the Passover. All of the stories that you hear, and all of the symbolism that is invested in the observance of the Pesach, and the cracker that is hidden under the table, and this, that, and the other. That is all fine, but it has nothing to do with the upper room observance.

That meal was an ordinary meal until the Lord made it extraordinary by picking up the bread. And he says, you see this piece of ordinary bread? This is my body, which is broken for you. Eat this in remembrance of me.

You see this cup? This cup is the new covenant, the new agreement in my blood. Drink ye all of it. He didn't convert the Passover into an observance for the church.

He started with something fresh. He started with something new. That evening, this was Wednesday night.

It was the 13th of Nisan, ended at sundown, and the 14th Nisan began when it got dark. And it was in the upper room, early hours of 14 Nisan, before the Passover was slain. Then down at the temple, just as the Lord Jesus was hanging on the cross, at the 9th hour, measuring from 6 o'clock a.m., this is 3 p.m., this is the very time that the Passover lamb was being slain.

Jesus, when he went into Jerusalem that preceding Sunday, the Palm Sunday, the Passover lamb was brought up four days before it was slain. And so back on the 10th, the priests would get the lamb without spot and without blemish and would lead it down from the pastures, through the gates of the city, down to the temple to be kept up for four days for that time of observance to make sure that it was pure. And the Lord Jesus, on that same Sunday, after the priests had led the lamb down, the Lord Jesus followed the very same path down into the city as the lamb, and he goes to the temple just like the lamb did.

And he looks around and then he leaves. Probably looked at the lamb that had been tied up

there, the symbolic lamb that would be slain for the nation. And how much clearer a picture can you get of the Lord Jesus than that identification, riding into the city following the very track of the Passover lamb that had been led there just hours earlier by the priests.

And then as that lamb lost its life down at the temple and the priest slit its throat at the altar and said, the Lord Jesus, having accomplished our atonement and redemption on the cross, said, All of these were done according to God's plan. It was foretold it's a part of a schedule. And the great thing that impresses me is God has a schedule not only for the macro view, the large view of human history, but individually for us.

Things do not happen accidentally. They are not happenstances. They're not random.

God has a plan and a purpose for our life. And when you look at the universe and the large scale at which God has carefully balanced gravity and so on to have life on this earth, yet you go to the microscopic level and he is equally careful, equally detailed, equally provides at the microscopic level as he does at the universal level. The same is true when you look at the plan of God unveiled in the scriptures for nations and for millennia.

You have the same Lord God at the microscopic level of your life and my life equally careful, equally attentive, making the same kind of provision, assigning the same kind of purpose, issuing the same kind of call to us as individuals that he has done at these larger levels. And it's a reminder that the Lord Jesus died and redeemed us and saved us not just to give us a bright eternal future, but to live this life, to experience resurrection power now and to observe the working of God in time and to have that as our focus as we think our thoughts and make our decisions as we treat one another in love. We'll close the Bible study portion of our service with a word of prayer and then we will observe the Lord's table.

But let's close. Father, thank you for the beautiful picture that you paint for us in your word, the detail, the careful orchestration of events all through human history. We thank you for the Lord Jesus and his work on our behalf.

We pray that these truths will impress on our hearts in such a way that we will remember who we are and why we're here as we look at one another. We will be reminded of the body of our Lord. As we look forward, we will remember that your plan is going to come to fruition.

Its great victorious conclusion is near at hand, and we want to be ready. We are not of the night or of the darkness. We are of the day.

We pray that we can see clearly in the light of your word so that we will be prepared and will be available to serve and to reflect your glory both now and in the age to come. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.