

The Significance of Nisan 17 (aka Abib 17) – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

The first month in the biblical year is Nisan (aka Abib, fn. 2). As that calendar is luni-solar, Nisan may fall in either March or April.¹ The first biblical mention of day 17 is when the world-wide Flood of Noah *began* in the 2nd month (Gen. 7:11).² The Deluge not only judged mankind's wickedness, it also *delivered* Noah & family from such evil & man's violence (Gen. 6:11-13). Now the Ark settled on Mount Ararat on the 17th day of the 7th month (Gen. 8:4). Though neither Genesis 7:11 or 8:4 were *Nisan* 17, the 17th day is once again brought to our attention.

A second deliverance came on the same day (Nisan 17) many years later at the 1491 BC parting of the Red Sea. Days before, Passover was established on the 14th of Nisan (= Abib) when God said: "This is the day you are to commemorate, for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival in the LORD - a lasting ordinance" (Exodus 12:14). The Israelites left Rameses the following day (Nisan 15) and camped that evening at Succoth. On the 16th of Nisan they traveled as far as Ethan. The following day they journeyed to Migdol and began crossing the Red Sea during the late daylight part of the 17th day of Nisan (Num. 33:1-8).

A third deliverance occurred on this same day 40 years later – after the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness before being allowed to enter the Promised Land. After the miraculous 1451 BC crossing of the Jordan during flood stage, the Passover was celebrated (always on the 14th of Nisan). The day after Passover (Nisan 15), Israel ate of the Canaanites old crops (grain stored in silos: undoubtedly barley, Josh. 5:11). The manna stopped the next day *after* they again ate of these old crops (16 Nisan, 5:12a) – the Lord no longer furnished any manna for Israel.

On the 17th day of Nisan, they ate of Canaan's new spring crops: fresh food from the land of promise (Joshua 5:12b).³ That same day (cp. Josh. 5:13 & 4:19) Joshua went to check out the walls of Jericho and saw a man with a drawn sword. Joshua asked if he was friend or an enemy, whereupon the man replied, "Neither, but as the commander of the army of the LORD I have now come" (Joshua 5:14). Joshua then received detailed instructions of how to conquer Jericho. Jericho did not fall until seven days later, yet in a very real sense the day the angel gave Joshua these instructions was the day in which Jericho fell (First Fruits day is also the 17th – Lev. 23:10-11).

¹ Luni-solar means a calendar uses the moon to determine months and sun to govern the year. It was used by most of the ancient world. The solar year averages 365.24219879 days or 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.975 seconds. The lunar cycle for a new or full moon varies slightly, but averages 29.530587 days. Thus 12 lunar cycles take only about 354 days (354.367056), approximately 11¼ days less than the length of the solar year.

² Until God told the Jews to change their calendar at the time of the Exodus, the beginning of their year had been in the autumn (Exo. 12:2; 13:4; cp. 9:31 and 23:15). The month which they designate "Tishri" (September-October) had been their first month whereas "Abib" (Hebrew meaning "first ear of ripe grain", March or April) had been their seventh month. The current arrangement of the Jewish calendar, with its civil year beginning in Tishri and its religious calendar beginning in Nisan, is a vestigial reminder finding its roots in this God-given decree.

As many of the Old Testament books were written while the Jews were captives in Babylonia, these latter books used the Babylonian (Aramaic) word for Abib, which is "Nisan". Thus in Scripture, both Nisan and Abib signify the same month. From the historical account of the plagues of Egypt in the cited verses, the Exodus occurred in early springtime. Thus the Hebrews changed their calendar by calling Abib their first month whereas it had been their seventh. Tishri, formerly the first month ever since the Creation, then became their seventh.

³ Joshua 5:10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the **fourteenth day** of the month (14 **Abib**, Josh. 4:19) at even in the plains of Jericho.

11 And they did eat of **the old corn** of the land **on the morrow after** the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. (15 Abib)

12a And **the manna ceased on the morrow after** they **had eaten** of **the old corn** of the land; (i.e., it ceased after they ate the old corn the second day after Passover: Abib 16) neither had the children of Israel manna any more;

12b but **they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan** that year. (Promised Land food for first time on 17 Abib)

A fourth deliverance on this day occurred about 725 years after the 1451 BC entrance into the Promised Land. After the period of the judges and the subsequent reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, the kingdom was divided and 19 evil kings from 9 different dynasties ruled the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah, the southern kingdom, was ruled by descendents of David.

Some of David's followed God faithfully; others did not. One of these latter kings, Ahaz, was so evil as to cause cessation of worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. He was followed by Hezekiah, a godly son, who cleansed the Temple and restored worship therein. The chronological events of this revival are recorded in 2 Chronicles 29:1-36: they climaxed on the 17th day of Nisan (cp. 16th day of 2 Chron. 29:17 with vs. 20 "the king rose early" = the next day: the 17th).

Yet a fifth deliverance occurred on this notable day. The Book of Esther has the story of the Jews in Persia whom a certain Haman (having become second to King Darius I Hystaspis)⁴ intended to utterly destroy. The history begins in the winter of Darius' regnal third year (Est. 1:3, 519 BC: note, Shushan was Persia's winter palace) in which he made a great 180 day feast (thus ending in the spring of BC 518). Esther was brought into the king's house in 516 (cp. vv. 2:12 & 16) and made Queen in 515, Darius' 7th year (2:16). Esther 3:7 begins in the king's 12th year (510 BC). On the 13th day of the first month (Nisan, Est. 3:12), Haman misled Darius into signing an edict to slay all the Jews in the kingdom. Learning of this, Esther had the Jewish community fast and pray three days and three nights, bringing us to Nisan 16 (Est. 5:1).

Esther then besought the king allow her to honor both he and Haman that same day at a "banquet of wine." This, he granted. There she requested to give another such banquet the next day (Nisan 17). That night, Darius was reminded that Mordecai had saved his life and not been rewarded. Believing the king wished to honor himself, Haman's proposal for such glory being bestowed on him ended with his having to publically lead Mordecai on the king's horse, while the hated Jew wore royal attire and the crown royal (a type of the returning Christ). Later that same day, while at the 2nd banquet, Haman's evil designs were exposed, and he was executed on the very gallows upon which he intended to hang Mordecai – both events were on 17 Nisan.

By far, the sixth and most important deliverance in the history of the world was thru the Cross and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Now our Lord has said the Old Testament was about Him (Luke 24:27 & 44). Yet today most place His resurrection on a Friday Nisan 16. This yields only part of Friday's daylight period plus a full one on Saturday and just two nights. Such violates four scriptures that declare Christ arose from the dead after three days *and* three nights (Mat. 12:40, 27:63; Mk. 8:31; Luk. 24:21). Indeed, there is no precedent for any notable happening on any 16 Nisan prior to the resurrection. This time the deliverance was for *all* mankind – not just Israel. Christ Jesus, the Creator of the heavens and earth – our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), was crucified on Nisan 14: the very day of the first Passover. God's preceding five examples shed light as to that precise month and *day* – surely it was Nisan 17! And the year that fits that day is AD 30 (where Nisan 14 is *Thursday*, which honors the 3 days & 3 nights!) – not AD 29, 32 or 33.

Finally, a 17th day resurrection is both the day and event that proved the very person of Messiah. Jesus Christ of the seed of David according to the flesh was declared to be the Son of God *by the resurrection* from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4). How does the resurrection prove Christ's person? Well, would Father ever bring back from the dead and glorify a false Messiah? That God so did proves Jesus is *the* authentic Lord! The odds = 783,864,876,960,000,000 to 1 against so many major events occurring on a given day. He is the firstfruits of the resurrection! (1 Cor. 15:20)

⁴ Though Ahasuerus is widely accepted as Xerxes, he is proven not to be (F.N. Jones, *Chronology of the OT*, 2022, pp. 199-205). Indeed, almost all chronologers from c.AD 200-1823 also identify him as Darius I (aka Darius of Marathon).