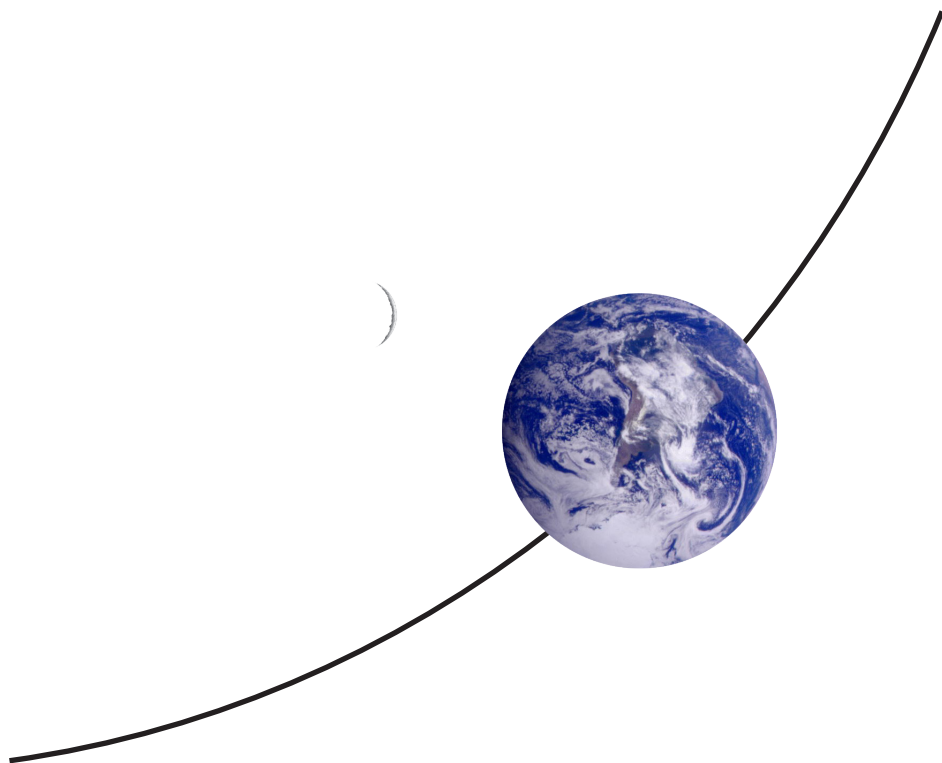




# **The Calculated Jewish Calendar:**

An Examination of Postponements,  
New Moons, Seasons and More

by  
Jim Rudd



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The search for Righteousness  
allows for lots of grey area,  
but not for fear of the unknown

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## Preface

The vast majority of those who declare themselves to be Christians have no interest in the calculated Jewish calendar because they have not interest in observing God's feasts listed in Lev. 23 and Deut. 16, including the seventh day Sabbath, even though Jesus and all the disciples followed these ordinances of God their entire lives. Therefore the target audience of this book is covenant keeping Christians whose practice is *solo scriptura*, the battle cry of the Protestant revolution to follow scripture and not tradition (something they could not do when it came to what they considered the Jewish feasts). This book is for covenant keeping Christians who have sincere questions about the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar. This book has a comprehensive examination of the calculated Jewish calendar as well as an examination of the supposedly scholastic research about the calculated Jewish calendar from a number of church of God sources.

Mr. Herb Solinsky fought the calendar fight in the churches of God, the largest current group of feast keeping Christians (There were close to a million feast keeping Pualicians over a millennia ago, so the current numbers are tiny by comparison), long before it occurred to me to question the idea of postponements and although I disagree with a number of his conclusions, this book is written to continue the battle he started more than two decades ago. Jason Churchill and I also worked together to fight the calendar fights in the late 90's without great success because the calculated Jewish calendar is at the heart of many church of God traditions. There had been some movement in the churches of God on the issue of the calendar in the late 90's when people were on fire with the desire seek and serve God more deeply, but the vast majority of the people in these churches don't want to be bothered with theological issues today.<sup>1</sup> The Karaite Jews, whose most prominent current leader is Nehemiah Gordon, have also rejected the calculated Jewish calendar for over a millennia because of its rabbinic underpinnings, especially the rules of postponement. As an opponent of the postponements that are the foundation of the calculated Jewish calendar, this author really thought most of the people who gave up following the calculated Jewish calendar, especially once disfellowshipment lost most of its sting, would not return to following its rules that postpone the feasts. However, this author is personally familiar with a number of people who previously rejected the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar who have returned to using it because it was too much bother to follow the observed calendar they had proven to exist in scripture.<sup>2</sup>

However, following the observed calendar rather than the calculated Jewish calendar does not have to be divisive, as I and many others have proven over the last dozen years, but given the propensity for dogmatic theological stances extant in the churches of God, the leaders of the larger corporate churches will probably make certain it is a divisive issue when it is brought up because the idea of change can and does threaten their power.

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<sup>1</sup> The split in the Global church of God in the late 90's and the split in the United Church of God in 2010 showed how important the politics of follow the leader versus follow in the footsteps of Christ really is in the churches of God.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. 26:11 As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool returns to his folly.

## II | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

One of the reasons for originally writing and now for revising this book is to re-enforce this author's stance equating the feast that God set aside for us every seven days with the annual feasts He sets aside for His called out people in Lev. 23 and Deut. 16. Although there are differences between all of God's feasts, they are all ordained by Him as times for His called out people to gather together and those who put artificial boundaries between these feast days have no scriptural support for their stance. This author has faith the weekly feast, the seventh day Sabbath, is Saturday, although I was not around 3,500 or even 2,000 years ago, when God last spoke directly to man about the Sabbath. But it is not blind faith. There is no historical evidence of any controversy about the day of the weekly Sabbath being switched or lost. However, there was and still is great controversy surrounding the changes in the Jewish calendar that were codified over 1,600 years ago by Hillel II.

This author started working with the intricacies of the Jewish calendar in the early 1990's while doing research for Dr. Michael Germano on his book *The First Christians* while I was attending Ambassador College. One of this author's tasks was to define the mechanics of the Jewish calendar at the time of Jesus the Christ to try to determine the date of the crucifixion. This author also spent some time working with Herman Hoeh and Mark Kaplan. I wish to extend thanks to both of them, although they would disagree with the conclusions I draw about the calculated Jewish calendar. And to Dr. Germano, a special thanks for the time to do research in Boston and for use of the Ambassador library system.

Every author has their biases. I believe it helps a reader to know what an author's biases and background are. I have a B.S. in Material Science from M.I.T. I also have a BA in theology from Ambassador College. I approach life from the prospective of an engineer a scientist, and as a Christian, all of which I find to be compatible. I am currently a computer network manager. I have 30 years of experience as a researcher in chemistry, computers and theology. I believe inconsistencies should be pointed out to the reader rather than trying to cover them up to match my convictions. I believe it is wrong to bring troubling questions on an issue up, and then ignore them as if they had no importance.<sup>3</sup>

I also believe it is intellectually dishonest to pull a quote from a source that appears to agree with my premise when the overall thesis of the source's argument disagrees without explaining the opposing premise. For example, it would be wrong to quote a Catholic publication extolling the benefits of the Sabbath as proof that the seventh day Sabbath is still holy time to be observed by Christians without pointing out the Sabbath observance they favor is a Sunday sabbath. In like manner, it is intellectually dishonest to pull one line that agrees with my hypothesis from a source when the source has listed this as a possible, but much less probable explanation, without explaining this is the minority view.<sup>4</sup> It is silly for any

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3 UCG, AIA, *Summary of the Jewish calendar*; January, 1997, This paper is examined in detail in appendix C. However, this paper brings up 12 questions that are often asked about the calculated Jewish calendar, then promptly ignores 10 of those questions. Perhaps I am being cynical, but I believe these questions were included so that the United's membership would believe their ministry had answered these questions with their paper. If this is true, and because it has been a decade and a half and these questions still have not been addressed, I believe it is true, then this paper is disingenuous and deliberately deceiving.

4 McNair, Raymond, *What are the "Postponement"*, Global Church News, March-April, 1996, p. 6 Mr. McNair quotes the "Soncino Commentary" on the issue of ben ha arbayim, between the evenings, by

scholar or teacher to use Webster's dictionary to define the English translations of Hebrew or Greek words.<sup>5</sup> This author is also highly skeptical of theological points that are based upon personal translation of scripture, especially when the translator is not a trained linguist or when the translator has no expertise in the language being translated.

This author's primary hermeneutic is the Bible is a whole, it interprets itself, and it must be harmonized if scriptures appear to be contradictory. The bible itself sets the precedent you need at least two and most likely three verses in agreement to form a theological opinion.<sup>6</sup> External sources are helpful in explaining tradition and history. Because of very limited Greek and Hebrew language skills I rely on experts and on a large research library with numerous translations, Hebrew and Greek dictionaries, lexicons and encyclopedias, as well as numerous handbooks, computer programs and commentaries, for understanding of the original text. I also use the resources of Harvard's theological library, as well as the libraries of Boston College, Boston University, and Brandies University.

Outside of scripture and the resources mentioned, there were three major sources upon which this paper is based. The first, and still most definitive work on the Jewish calendar, although it was written more than three-quarters of a millennia ago, is Moses Maimonides' *Sanctification of the New Moon*.<sup>7</sup> The second is Beckwith's *Calendar and Chronology*.<sup>8</sup> The third source, DeVries' *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*,<sup>9</sup> is a general reference on how time was perceived in biblical times. For the reader who is interested in a thorough review of not just the calendar, but how the nation of Israel reckoned time, I can't recommend these works highly enough.

This author has a bias against the type of research that has been displayed by many COG study papers. They are generally written on a 6th to 8th grade level. They are presented as if they were well researched when all the authors have done is to embrace, and occasionally enhance, the straw men they learned at Ambassador College. They rarely present an honest stating, "It is a period of approximately one-and-a-third hours between sunset and the disappearance of the light which subsequently penetrates through the clouds." However, this is a minority interpretation. As Bill Dankenbring points out in the June-July, 1996 Prophecy Flash, Soncino states, in its entirety, "'between the two darknesses,' that is to say, between the darkness of the day and darkness of the night, viz. Noon and the beginning of night, a period of six hours, reckoning the durations the day from 6 am to 6 pm." It goes on to give the explanation that another sage, the one that Mr. McNair quotes. "It is a period of approximately one and a third hours between sunset and the disappearance of the light which subsequently penetrates through the clouds." The Soncino commentary states this is a minority view and it appears to be a minority, with almost all Jewish scholars taking the view that between the two evenings is from noon to 6 or noon to sunset or dark. 5 Ibid, p. 9, Mr. McNair has a propensity for doing this. He does it on page 9 and 10 of his Passover article and twice on page five of his calendar article in the July-August 1996 Global Church News

6 Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Deut 19:15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

7 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956

8 Beckwith, Roger, *Calendar and Chronology*, Jewish and Christian: Biblical Intertestamental, and Patristic Studies, E.J. Brill, New York, NY, 1996

9 DeVries, Simon, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Time and History in the Old Testament*, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1975

## IV | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

appraisal of any issue, usually with the belief that this would confuse their flock, thus supposedly causing damage to their flock. They eschew a thorough study of scripture on almost all topics dealing with their traditions, instead relying on proof texting. A number of these churches have done everything possible to avoid the study of scripture all together on the issue of the calendar.<sup>10</sup> However, what they are really doing is building a theological house of cards any gust of honest wind topples. They apparently believe and teach in the gospel of obfuscation, which is at the core of their research on the calculated Jewish calendar, rather than the gospel of Jesus. They definitely do not follow Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 3:15.<sup>11</sup>

This author's experience at Ambassador College helped me realize most A.C. students did research by taking three quotes from three different encyclopedias (a minimum of three sources was usually required for a research paper) and parroting the information learned in class back to the instructor. Given that graduation from A.C. was almost a prerequisite for joining the paid ministry, it is not surprising study papers prepared by various church of God ministries resemble this pattern of scholarship. This pattern indoctrinates, but does not teach because it does not force the student to think and grow. Also, there are those who abandon their responsibility as teaches and leaders when questioned about a theological point by stating that everyone has to work out their own salvation.<sup>12</sup> The bible is also replete with example of leaders who not teach and instead lead God's people astray and the responsibility that they will bear.<sup>13</sup>

This author understands from students who attended Ambassador College in the 1960's that teaching methods used to be more rigorous with better teachers. But these same sources state those who were chosen for and remained in the paid ministry of the World-Wide Church of God, even during the rank heresies of the 90's, were the kind of students A.C. wanted to produce, those who would follow without question and generally without thinking. Given that the teachers of the 60's who tried to get their students to think and question are now looked on with disdain and derision by the leaders of most of the various church of God factions, I think there is justification for this statement.

Churches like the Living, Philadelphia and the Restored Churches of God reject the idea that Herbert Armstrong could have been wrong about such an important topic out of hand or with incredibly terrible scholarship. These ministries and others have re-emphasized their

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<sup>10</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

Dart, Ronald Why we use the Jewish calendar, Christian Educational Ministries Bible study notes, p. 8

<sup>11</sup> 1 Pet. 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

<sup>12</sup> Phil. 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

<sup>13</sup> Ezek. 34

1Tim. 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2Tim. 1:11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

Is. 43:27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

2Pet. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.



belief in the calculated Jewish calendar based on the authority of Herbert W. Armstrong or their interpretation of the oracles of God, a phrase used 4 times in the New Testament, or on incredibly poor scholarship rooted in circular logic.<sup>14</sup> This author still find it amazing that most of these ministries try to justify their belief that a complicated, esoteric, mathematical construct like the calculated Jewish calendar could be secretly passed down as gnosis from one generation of priests to another while also stating these same priests could not keep track of the right time to sacrifice the Passover. Such logic defies rational explanation. As my friend Russell always says, “If you can’t be right, at least be consistent.”<sup>15</sup> Although the reader may consider this author’s comments harsh, an examination the appendices of this book shows a pattern of obfuscation, deception, and illogical used to get Christians to follow the leader of the church that was almost certainly inculcated into these teachers and writers while they were impressionable 20 year olds at Ambassador College.

If you wish to see truly awful and deceptive “scholarship” in support of the calculated Jewish calendar, you can either turn to a review of the United’s calendar position in appendix D or you can go to appendix E to review Fred Coulter’s Christian Biblical Church of God. United’s paper depends on quotes that were proven to be erroneous 1,000 years ago by an astoundingly bad eisegesis of John 7 through 9 that their own suppositions prove incorrect. The United Church of God, an international association (UCG) has since abandoned this calendar study paper, with its creative scholarship and erroneous conclusions in favor of innuendo and avoidance of the issue.<sup>16</sup> When that failed, they fell back on the argument that Christians must follow church authority.

Fred Coulter, usually associated with rejecting all rabbinic authority, has re-emphasized his belief in the calculated Jewish calendar in his typical style.<sup>17</sup> The CBCOG paper suggests the calculated Jewish calendar was designed to predict the first visible crescent over Jerusalem was observed, which they predicted would occur Friday Night, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Too bad the first crescent was actually visible on Thursday night, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000 and was postponed by the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. This paper, with its creative translations and bellicose and bombastic statements, only juxtaposed the evenings of September 27<sup>th</sup> with September 29<sup>th</sup> for reasons the reader can fairly obviously surmise.

Appendix G shows the weaknesses of the calculated Jewish calendar being the so-called “sacred calendar” juxtaposed against Herb Solinsky’s research with its bias towards math rather than scripture and history. Mr. Nickels, who supported the idea of the Jews maintaining the “sacred calendar also declared until the day he died that the Jews were wrong about

14 Both the paper by Fred Coulter’s people and the calendar study paper by the United Church of God, AIA are poorly conceived and researched. They both present a classic case of circular logic that seem to be designed to placate their followers by presenting what appears to be detailed scholarship, but in reality all they have done is presented non-substantiatable hypothesis and arcane speculation. They are apparently so deeply rooted in the tradition of the calculated Jewish calendar that they don’t even bother trying to answer the questions around it, but instead create straw men upon which they build their cases.

15 To my good friend Russell Hilburn down in Texas.

16 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*, United News, September 2000. Downloaded from the UCG web site, ucg.org. The article is listed at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html>.

17 Blevins, Dwight and Franklin, Carl, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 A.D.*, Christian Biblical Church of God, Hollister, CA, March 21, 2000

## VI | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

the timing of Passover and could not count to fifty because he believed in the nonexistent Monday Pentecost. It also outlines why Mr. Solinsky's dependence on the equinox being part of the calendar is unscriptural.

Although Bill Dankenbring, often associated with acceptance of rabbinical authority, has rejected the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative, even though he savaged anyone who questioned it for decades. He made this decision after finally deciding to study into the issue.<sup>18</sup> William Dankenbring went from condemning everyone who did not follow the calculated Jewish calendar as servants of Satan in 1999 to rejecting the first postponement of the calculated Jewish calendar in 2000, but making clear if you did not accept the rest of the calculated Jewish calendar, then you were a servant of Satan. Finally in 2006 Mr. Dankenbring had the brilliant idea that we should reject the entirety of the calculated Jewish calendar because he had finally studied into it. Mr. Dankenbring's supposition about the calendar was that the Karaite Jews supposedly were seated on the seat of Moses, but of course he rejects the Karaite's position on the correct day to observe Pentecost. This total inconsistency defies logic, as does Mr. Dankenbring's condemnation of anyone who does not observe a Sivan 6 Pentecost, but fits the pattern for pushing the church of god tradition as a talmud rather than studying scripture on a topic.

This author would not group Ron Dart's Christian Educational Ministries paper on the calendar with the other churches of god listed above, not because CEM does not consider themselves a church, but because Mr. Dart's research is better, but obfuscates the issue even more. The CEM paper portrays the calculated Jewish calendar as the equivalent of any other ancient man-made calendar. Mr. Dart's presentation on why Christians should follow the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar and not care about what scripture states about the calendar is found in appendix B of this book. Mr. Dart's reasoning and conclusions are apparently designed to prevent his flock from becoming confused with facts, thus possibly leading to disunity over what he apparently considered to be an unimportant issue.<sup>19</sup> Although some may applaud this strategy, this author believes it is even more deceptive and manipulative as those who claim the calculated Jewish calendar is God's sacred calendar.

Appendix C deals with Pam Dewey's reasons for using the calculated Jewish calendar. Although she would not say this, Mrs. Dewey's writings suggest she believes members of the churches of God are not mature enough to deal with changing away from something like the pharisaical construct known as calculated Jewish calendar because all they really know is tradition. Although I respect Mrs. Dewey and her writings and opinions, unlike the writings of the other church of God leaders with their blind obfuscation techniques, I hope Mrs. Dewey is wrong about the Christians in the churches of God, but I fear she may not be. Only time will tell if the churches of God resemble Hebrews 5:11-14 or if they resemble Hebrews 4:2-9.

18 Dankenbring, William, *Which is the True Biblical Calendar*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, pp. 25-55

19 Ron Dart's literature, as well as personal conversations, as well as e-mail discussions with Pam Dewey, both of whom's theological prowess I respect, has lead me to this personal conclusion. Ron Dart has also stated one of the first issues that had to be dealt with when the Church of God International was formed was the calculated Jewish calendar He stated his belief that they should continue to follow this tradition because of the disunity changing might cause.



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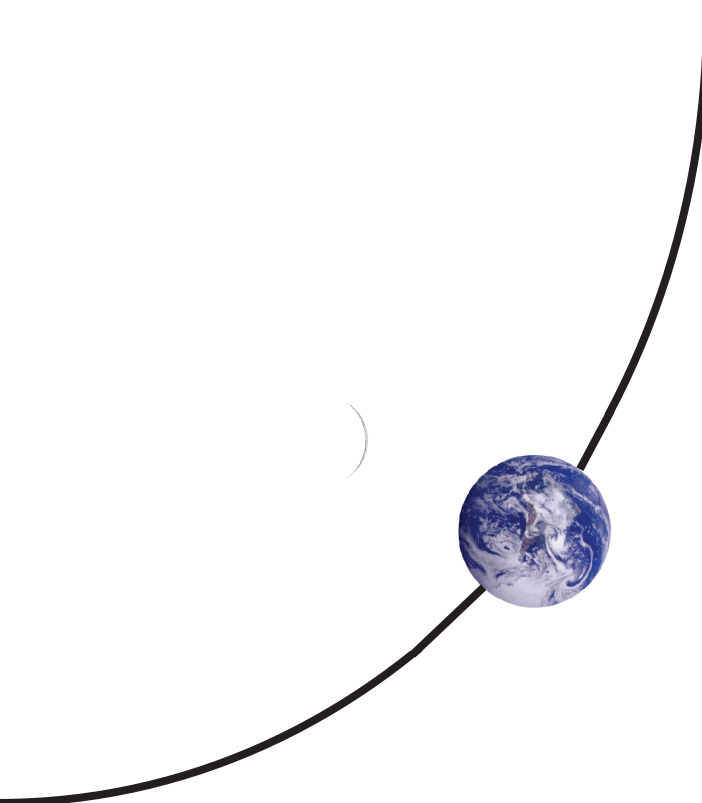
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## Chapter 1 | Introduction 1

# Introduction



Why examine the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar? Aren't there issues far more pressing for Christians to deal with? Of course there are. Issues like: how do we become holy as God as holy? How does Matt. 18 really depict going to your brother; how do Christians become more loving; how do you judge without being judgmental; what is the role of women in formal or even informal services; or what is the duty and destiny of man. I contend these issues are more pressing and more important if our relationship with God is to continue growing, but let me pose a question for the reader. Suppose a Sunday keeping church has the same list of issues it needs to

address and therefore puts off worrying about when and how to observe the Sabbath. After all, isn't worrying about how to deal with your fellow man in a loving manner more important than how to observe a certain day?

History has shown putting a theological issue off indefinitely by putting it up on the metaphorical shelf is a false and dangerous premise. Christians have to deal with both theological and relational issues because both help or hinder our walk towards God. We know the seventh day Sabbath is biblical and it is incumbent upon Christians to keep the seventh day Sabbath holy because God ordained it from the foundation of the world.<sup>1</sup> Of course we all have limited time in this hectic world and we all have very important issues that arise from time to time. The goal of this book is to give people the resources they need to study the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar in an open and honest way when the spirit leads. Of course this author hopes Christians takes this journey sooner rather than later.

Theological doctrines can be divisive. Addressing the issue of the seventh day sabbath in a Sunday keeping church can and has proven divisive, yet there are churches around the United States that have changed from traditional Sunday observance to Sabbath observance because they felt following biblical statutes and ordinances were more important than the possible division that might occur with changing to Sabbath observance in those churches. Those who continued with Sunday observance often felt uniformity was the most important thing while those who sought to follow scriptural ordinances realized that unity was not really possible under the constraints of uniformity.

Many people call for unity but what they really want is uniformity. They claim unity is important to them but reject everyone who doesn't agree with their understanding of scrip-

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

## 2 | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

ture. Unity can and must be achieved even when there is a lack of uniformity. This requires a certain degree of spiritual maturity and humility. It is only human that we get frustrated when others do not see things our way. But we must be humble before the Almighty and ask him to lead us on our walk with him. We should be united, not divided, by our love of our heavenly Father and desire to live by His Word.”<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah Gordon, a Karaite Jew, has worked with Keith Johnson, a Christian minister in unity although there is no way they have uniformity. Hopefully over time more Christians can exhibit this kind of maturity and actually follow in the footsteps of the Messiah.

The annual feasts are to be observed by God’s called out people and the calendar is essential in determining the timing of these set feasts.<sup>3</sup> The weekly Sabbath, *shabbâth*, is one of the, “feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations.”<sup>4</sup> Surprising as this is to many Christians, the annual feasts are never referred to as Sabbaths. In Hebrew, they are referred to as *shabbâthôn*.<sup>5</sup> In the New Testament the *shabbâthôn* are referred to by the Greek word *heortê*<sup>6</sup>, which is translated as holydays in the English.<sup>7</sup>

Scripture depicts the seventh day as the Sabbath, not the eighth day, as the Catholics claim nor the sixth day, as the Muslims claim. If we are letting scripture be our guide, which the Protestants said they did with their battle cry of *solo scriptura*, and not continue to follow unbiblical traditions, which the Protestants unfortunately did, we will follow the scriptural ordinance to observe the seventh day Sabbath as a day to be kept holy, which includes resting on it. We are not allowed to postpone the Sabbath one day because it is more convenient or because more Christians meet together on that day. If we are going to follow scriptural ordinances, we also can’t choose the days on which we observe God’s other feasts, the holy days. The northern kingdom of Israel chose to observe these feasts on different days than God ordained and this was one of the major reasons they were sent into the Assyrian captivity.<sup>8</sup> Of course the calendar is not as clearly defined in scripture as the seventh day

2 Gordon, Nehemia *Karaite Korner Newsletter* #498

3 1Chr. 23:31 And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD:

2Chr. 2:4 Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual showbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.

2Chr. 8:13 Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

4 Lev. 23:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are* my feasts.

5 Strong’s H7677 From [H7676](#); a *sabbatism* or special holiday: - rest, sabbath

6 Strong’s G1859 Of uncertain affinity; a *festival*: - feast, holyday.

7 Col. 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

8 1Kgs. 12:32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

1Kgs. 16:2 Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins;

1Kgs. 22:52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way

Sabbath, although there are numerous undefined ordinances about the seventh day Sabbath. However, there are some clear biblical injunctions and ordinances about the calendar in scripture, just as there are about the first of God's feast, the seventh day Sabbath.

Some Christians have asked if every jot and tittle of the calendar is not totally defined in scripture, why not avoid an issue as divisive as the calendar? There is a famous line at the end of Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith goes to Washington* where the naïve Jefferson Smith has apparently been defeated by the big political machine when he tells his mentor-turned-enemy that the lost causes are the ones that you work hardest for because they are the ones most worth fighting for.<sup>9</sup> As Jimmy Stewart so eloquently and emotional stated, if you know something is right, then you must not only do the right thing, but fight for that right thing. Paul concurs, but points out that this fight must not be personal.<sup>10</sup> This author will continue to work for this supposedly lost cause not only because it is the right thing to do, but because the leaders of my religious tradition have shirked their duties by ignoring and deliberately obfuscating questions about the calculated Jewish calendar with study papers that don't study the issue, but sidestep it. The perestroika and glasnost brought on by Joe Tkach's heretical "new covenant" teaching should have made an open and honest assessment of the issue of postponing God's appointed times possible, but control of people continued to be more important than an honest examination of almost any theological issue. The churches of God have by and large followed the Protestants by refusing to follow *solo scriptura* when doing so would have upset their traditions.

Sometimes it seems that people get caught up in the smaller issues of doctrine while ignoring the major doctrines of Christianity, which includes being holy and becoming Christ-like.<sup>11</sup> The intent of this book is not to get people caught up in the minutia of theology and preaching the "gospel of the calendar," but instead to re-enforce the idea that the days that God has set aside for us to congregate together are essential for a deeper and more meaningful relationship with our creator. This author believes if we deliberately ignore God's teachings in the vain hope of uniformity we are putting up road blocks towards a deeper relationship with our creator. This author has seen this type of roadblock in those who call themselves Christians, but who cannot accept the seventh day Sabbath. They reason most Christian worship on Sunday, thus it must be perfectly permissible for them to worship on Sunday rather than keeping the Sabbath holy, no matter what scripture teaches or what God wants. There are many holyday keeping, seventh day Sabbath observant Christians who reason their tradition is to follow the calculated Jewish calendar and it does not really matter if this calendar violates scriptural ordinances because it is what their church has done for decades.

This author believes that postponing God's appointed times, His feasts, rather its the weekly

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of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

2Kgs. 10:29 Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan.

9 Capra, Frank, *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, 1939, James Stewart as Jefferson Smith

10 The entirety of Roman 14 is a discourse on how to handle issues without hurting fellow Christians.

11 Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Eph. 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Col. 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

## 4 | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

feast of the seventh day Sabbath or the annual feasts, is inherently wrong and unscriptural because that defies biblical principles. The idea that the calculated Jewish calendar, which is built upon postponements, was given to Moses and Aaron at Mt. Sinai is also erroneous for a number of reasons, as will be shown in the body of this paper. Most Sabbath keeping, feast keeping organizations state the rules of postponement are only there to prevent the Day of Atonement from being tandem to a weekly Sabbath or perhaps to prevent too many tandem sabbaths in a short period of time. They seem to ignore the postponement that does not allow the 7th day of the feast of Tabernacles to occur on the weekly Sabbath so the willows can be waved in the Lulav ceremony. If waving the willows and citron to ceremonially show you have beaten your sins away was so important that God put in a postponement as part of the calendar for this ceremony, the organizations that embrace the calculated Jewish calendar should continue this ritual. Their reasoning is inconsistent, whereas the Jews are consistent in their theology because they do perform the Lulav ceremony and postpone God's annual feasts. Just as the Catholics are consistent in their theology when they keep the Sabbath on Sunday, referred to as the eighth day, because they believe the Pope changed the day of the Sabbath. The practice of Papal infallibility is not supported by scripture, but at least the Catholics are consistent, unlike the churches of god

This may be cynical, but this author also believes the calculated Jewish calendar is very important to most of the churches of God not only because they do not wish to disagree with Herbert W. Armstrong's traditional teachings, but because the annual feast days are also days on which offerings are gathered, bringing in 10 to 15 percent of the yearly income of these churches. If some members began to keep these annual feast days at slightly different times, these organizations could stand to loose a lot of money, thus they can't allow open discussion of the topic of the calendar because it might hurt their income. What would be even worse for most of them would be to allow this discussion and disagree with traditional teachings, only to see a large number of their members leave to join other split offs, thus hurting their income stream even more.

Ron Dart's Christian Educational Ministry only collects money three times a year, so cash flow issues are less important to him and his stance on the calculated Jewish calendar is somewhat different than most of the churches of God. However, the supposed disunity that might be caused by disannulling the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar is something Ron Dart and CEM resist. Ron Dart states, "While a church organization could conceivably write their own rules for the calendar, it seems entirely unnecessary and it would surely be divisive."<sup>12</sup> Ron Dart also suggested on his tape *Working for Unity* that we follow tradition rather than take a look at obvious discrepancies in theological practice because of the disunity that might occur. This pattern is disturbing, but it is not an uncommon belief among the churches of God. Far too often a new view of doctrine is dismissed out of hand because old guard teachers, most of whom have been "elders" since they were 22 years old, suggest the new doctrine causes confusion, which God does not allow.<sup>13</sup> This misunderstanding of 1Cor. 14:33 is used to quell dissent rather than turning to scripture to test and

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<sup>12</sup> Dart, Ronald *Why we use the Jewish calendar*, Christian Educational Ministries Bible study notes, p. 8

<sup>13</sup> 1Cor. 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.



prove or disprove doctrine openly and honestly.<sup>14</sup> The biblical model of searching the scriptures is probably not used because of many teachers lack a firm understanding of scripture, as some teachers in the churches of God readily admit.<sup>15</sup> This pattern is examined in the paper *God is not the author of confusion, but He is the author of chaos*.<sup>16</sup>

Ron Dart poses a question about the calendar many “teachers” in the COG’s have asked. “Does all this seem confusing to you? Never mind, it seems confusing to a lot of people.”<sup>17</sup> This seriously underestimates God and how He is working with His children. Dismissing a doctrinal issue because it has some complexity has the connotation of the sheep being too dumb to understand it. Far too many teachers in the churches of God believe this and practice it. This book has been written with the premise that treating Christians like ignorant sheep is wrong. People with God’s holy spirit will understand correcting a doctrinal error if a teacher teaches with the motivation of the holy spirit.<sup>18</sup> Mr. Dart’s analysis of the calculated Jewish calendar is examined in detail in appendix B of this book.

There were also articles in the Global Church News a decade ago that exemplified the low standard of a church of God response to the calendar controversy, which is examined in detail later in this book. The leader of Global wrote that they had looked at the issue of the calendar for over three years and they are satisfied with the current Calculated Jewish Calendar.<sup>19</sup> Their attitude is since “the calculated Jewish calendar is not broken, perhaps we should stop trying to fix it.”<sup>20</sup> Of course, this attitude causes stagnation rather than growth, not because all change is good, but because the calculated Jewish calendar really is broken.<sup>21</sup>

14 Acts 17:10-11 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming [thither] went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

15 On a cruise with Frank Nelte and his wife, I asked why the teachers in the COG tradition never held question and answer sessions after their sermons. He answered that is was because most of them did not know the bible. I have come to the conclusion he was correct.

16 Available at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

17 Dart, Ronald *Why we use the Jewish calendar*,, p. 6

18 Rom. 10:14-5 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Zech. 7:12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

1 John 2:27-9 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

19 McNair, Raymond The Global Church News

20 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 A.D.* p. 30

21 2Pet. 3:15-8 And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you. As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know [these things] before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen.

## 6 | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

The year 2000 was an prime example of just how broken it is with the first day of the feast of Tabernacles commencing 46 hours after the conjunction and 24 hours after the first crescent was seen in Jerusalem.

Many of the teachers writing in defense of the calculated Jewish calendar state the Jews have somehow secretly preserved “the knowledge of God’s Sacred Calendar,”<sup>22</sup> even though Jewish scholars scoff at such suggestions. Think about the audacity of teaching the Jews having somehow lost knowledge of the correct day and manner on which to keep Passover and Pentecost, which are explicitly listed in scripture, yet also teaching these same Jewish leaders managed to hand down from generation to generation the supposedly secret knowledge of the calculated Jewish calendar with its postponements, which have no scriptural basis.

The knowledge of the calculated Jewish calendar supposedly being limited to a small, select group of priests for hundreds of years is not supported historically and it smacks of Gnosticism. The Mishna and the Talmud, commentaries on the law by respected Jewish sages, the supposed guardians of the secret knowledge of the calendar, is very clear that the calendar in use from 500 BCE to 70 CE, which includes the time of Jesus, is very different from the calculated Jewish calendar in use today, which was institutionalized between 100 and 350 CE. This author contends scripture mandates we walk through this life trying to follow the example of the Messiah.<sup>23</sup> This author contends Christians need to follow a calendar that is at least similar to the one used in Christ’s time because that is what he followed. Scripture mandates the calendar that we follow can’t violate biblical injunctions and ordinances, just as the calendar observed at Jesus’ time did not. The current calculated Jewish calendar does not meet that criterion.

This book will outline exactly what the calculated Jewish calendar is and why it is unbiblical. It will deal with many of the arguments supporting the calculated Jewish calendar. It will also deal with some of the rogue ideas about what calendar should be accepted if the calculated Jewish calendar is no longer the authority for setting the time for God’s called out people to congregate together for His annual feasts. This book also details some of the current scholarship that the churches of God have produced on the calculated Jewish calendar in the numerous and large appendices at the end of this book. This book will even suggest a possible calendar, but the reader should realize that this author is personally flexible in the resolution of this issue because there are gray areas surrounding the scriptural calendar. Given the dogmatic stance extant throughout the churches of God on every issue, the idea of an Acts 15 gathering to decide the gray areas of a calendar based on the new moon may be naïve and foolish, but it seems to be the biblical way to solve the differences between those who do not accept the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar. However, that does not mean that I do not see certain parts of the scriptural calendar as black and white. The blackest of those issues, postponing God’s annual feasts, is something my family and I cannot accept for any reason and is something we believe no Christian should accept.

22 McNair, Raymond, *When should the true Passover be observed?*, The Global Church News, March-April 1996, p. 16

23 Rom. 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

## Chapter 2 | Basic Astronomy 7

# Basic Astronomy

The diameter of the earth is just less than 8,000 miles and it is not a perfect circle. The earth is about 25 miles wider measured through the equator than it is measured from pole to pole. The earth's orbit about the sun is elliptical. The earth is closest to the sun, or perihelion, on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, when it is about 91,527,000 miles from the sun. It is furthest from the sun, or aphelion, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, when it is about 94,500,000 miles from the sun. The reason the Northern Hemisphere is coldest when the earth is the closest to the sun is because of the earth's tilt, which is about 23.5 degrees, as is shown in figure 1

The moon is about 2,160 miles in diameter. It is a little over mile wider at the equator than going from pole to

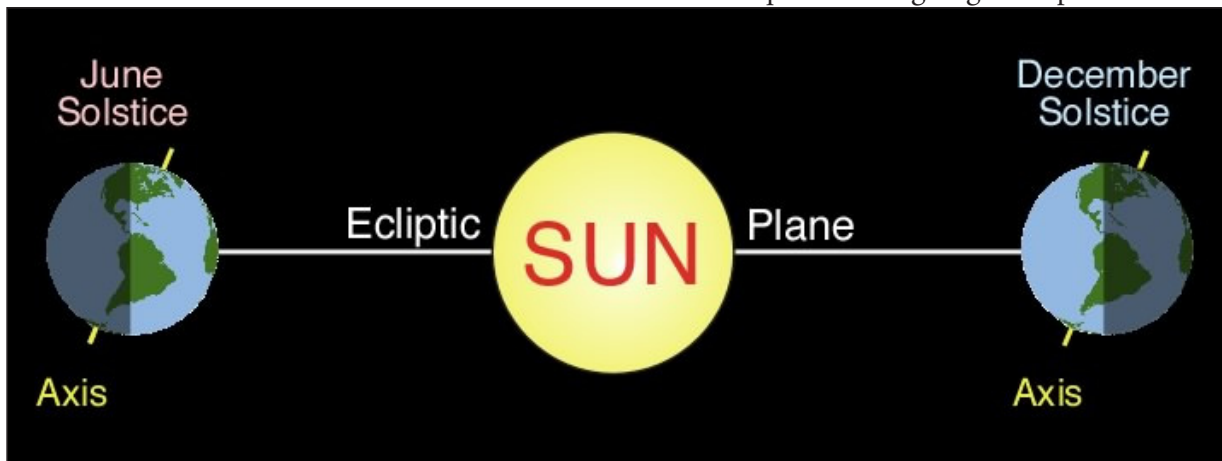


Figure 1-The Earth tilts at 23.5 degrees on it's axis

pole. The moon orbit about the earth in also elliptical. The closest the moon comes to the earth in its orbit is just over 225,000 miles, as it was in March 2011, when it is in perigee. The furthest point of its orbit is just over 250,000 miles away, when it is in apogee.

### Solar Eclipse

An eclipse of the sun occurs when the moon bisects the path of light emanating from the sun towards the earth, thus passing directly between the earth and sun, as shown in Figure 2. Solar eclipses can only occur during the period of the conjunction, when the moon passes between the sun and earth. Although the sun is much larger, it can be totally eclipsed by the moon because the moon is much closer to the earth. "The Sun happens to be 400 times the Moon's diameter, and 400 times as far away. That coincidence means the Sun and Moon appear to be the same size when viewed from Earth."<sup>1</sup> In each case the mean

1 <http://www.freemars.org/jeff/planets/Luna/Luna.htm>

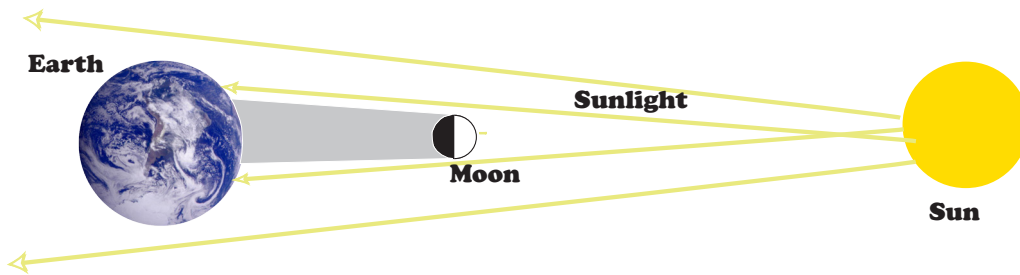


Figure 2-Geometry of a Solar Eclipse



Figure 3a- An idealized orbit of the moon around the earth that would lead to both a solar and lunar eclipse every month.

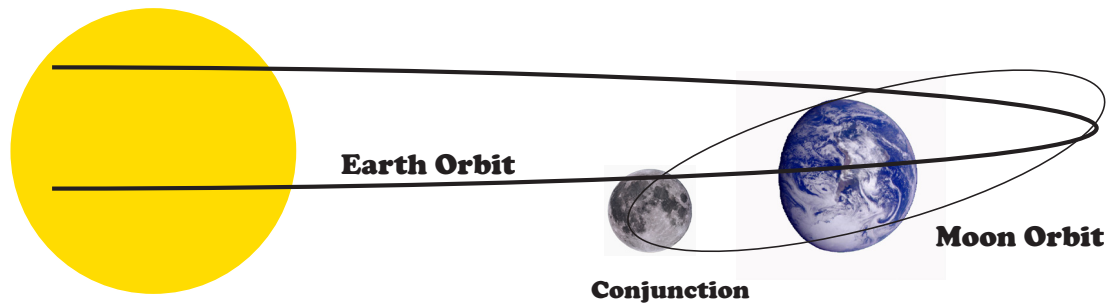


Figure 3b- The actual orbit of the moon as an ellipse five degrees out of the Earth-Sun orbit (the illustrations are not drawn to scale). The moon is between the earth and the sun at the time of the conjunction.

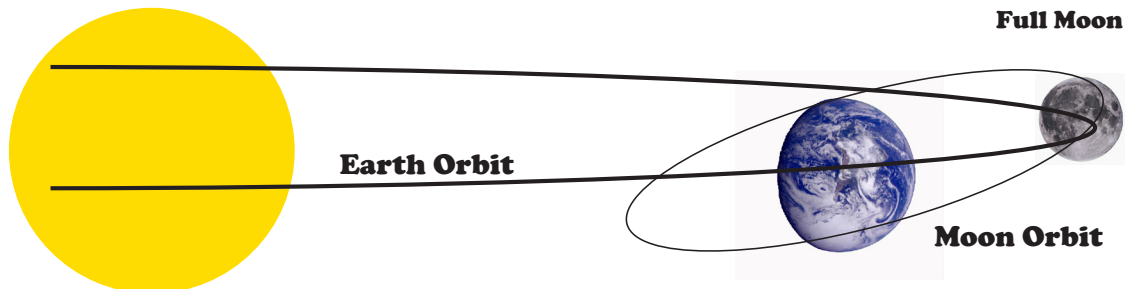


Figure 3c- The earth lies directly between the moon and the sun when the moon is full.

Figure 3-The Earth-Moon-Sun orbit

angular diameter is just over half a degree. If the moon's orbit were really as simple as shown in figure 3a, there would be a solar and lunar eclipse every month. This does not happen because the moon's path is inclined at an angle of 5 degrees relative to the orbit of the earth (*ed. note*-The angle of the moon's orbit in comparison to the earth's has been exaggerated in figure 3b and 3c and not drawn to scale to allow the reader a general sense of the how the orbits interact). "As a consequence, the Moon's orbit crosses the ecliptic at two points or nodes. If New Moon takes place within about 17° of a node, then a solar eclipse will be visible from some location on Earth."<sup>2</sup>

The shadow the moon casts on the earth during a solar eclipse is actually made up of two parts. The Penumbra is the faint outer shadow of the moon and you can observe partial solar eclipses from within the penumbra shadow. The dark inner shadow is known as the umbra and total eclipses are visible in the umbra, as shown in figure 4. The path of totality, where the moon totally eclipse the sun as seen from the earth is the path of the umbra on the earth. This shadow is typically about 10,000 miles long, but only about 100 miles wide, thus it covers less than 1% of the earth's surface. It is typically a little less than 400 years between complete eclipses on the same point of the earth's surface.

If the moon is close to its perigee, when it is closest to the earth, it appears to be about

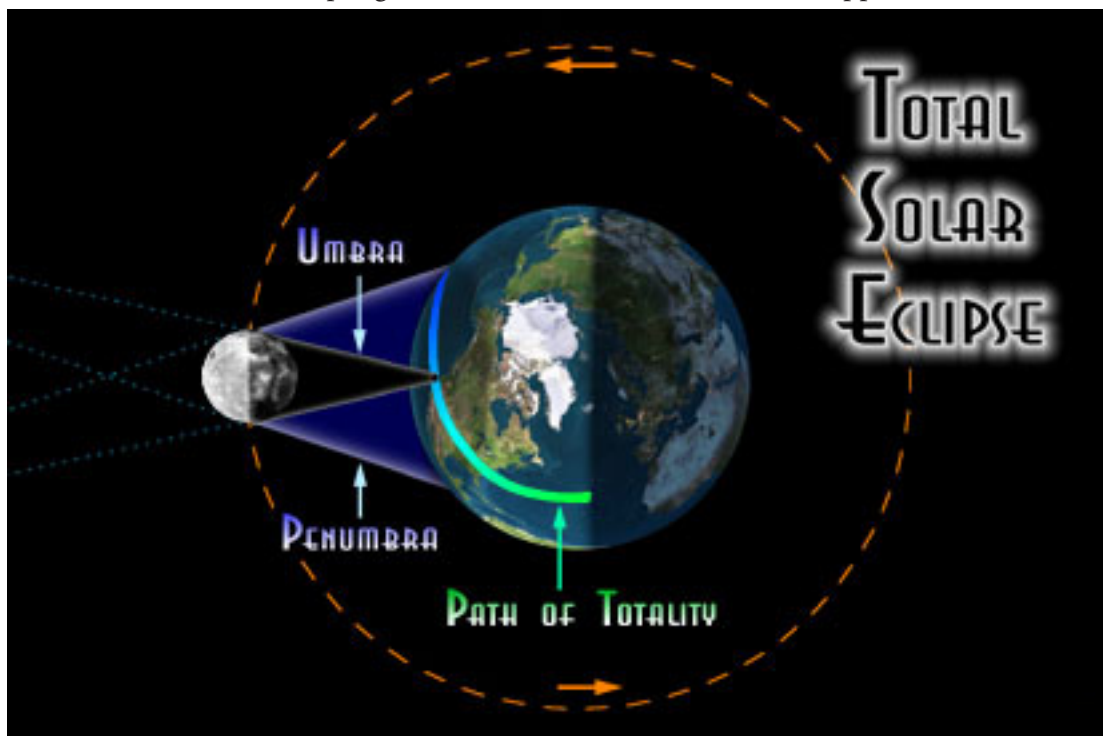


Figure 4-A Total Solar Eclipse

13% larger than when it is at apogee. When it is at its closest to the earth, it can create the umbra shadow and thus can produce a total eclipse. However, when it is at apogee, the moon appears smaller than the sun, thus it is not close enough to cast the umbra shadow. The most that can be hoped for is a partial eclipse caused by the antumbra shadow. These eclipses are known as annular eclipses.

<sup>2</sup> <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEsaros/SEperiodicity.html>

## 10 | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

Thus you normally have three kinds of eclipses; total, partial; and annular. However there is a 4<sup>th</sup> type of eclipse, the odd ball hybrid eclipse brought on by the curvature of the earth. This happens when a total eclipse changes into an annular eclipse or vice versa as the orbits of the earth and the moon interact.

Table 1-Solar eclipses from 2000 BCE to 3000 CE

Eclipse type	Number	Percentage
All	11898	100
Partial	4200	35.3
Annular	3956	33.2
Total	3173	26.7
Hybrid	569	4.8

So how often to solar eclipses occur? About twice a year, but they are spaced out in sequences that are either 1, 5 or 6 months apart. There can be as many as 5 eclipses a year. The last time this happened was 1935. “The time interval between any two successive solar eclipses can be either 1, 5, or 6 lunations (synodic months). Earth will experience 11,898 eclipses of the Sun during the 5000-year period from -1999 to +3000 (2000 BCE to 3000 CE).”<sup>3</sup> The distribution of these eclipses, rather they be partial, annular, total or hybrid are listed in table 2.

Table 2 Interval Between Successive Solar Eclipses<sup>4</sup>

Number Of Lunations	Number of Eclipses	Percent
1	1,361	11.4%
5	2,743	23.1
6	7,793	65.5

### Lunar Eclipse

An eclipse of the moon is very different from a solar eclipse because a solar eclipse occurs when the moon blocks sunlight from reaching the earth while a lunar eclipse occurs when the moon passes into the shadow of the earth. Lunar eclipses can only occur when the moon is full.

A diagram of a lunar eclipse is shown in figure 5. Again this figure is not drawn to scale, but was intended to show the relative positions of the sun, earth and moon during a lunar eclipse. The earth casts a conical shadow that is on average 860,000 miles long. The mean distance from the earth to the moon is 240,000 miles. At that distance, the diameter of the cone of the shadow of the earth is about 5,700 miles. Figure 5b is scaled to show the correct

3 <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEsaros/SEperiodicity.html>

4 <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEsaros/SEperiodicity.html>



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relationship in size between the earth and the moon, with the moon being about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the diameter of the earth, and the length of the earth's shadow as compared to the lunar orbit.

As the earth orbits the sun, its rotation allows the every point on the earth to receive sunlight for a portion of the day and be in darkness for a portion of the day. At the equator, these portions are evenly split so there are twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness. This is not the case with the moon. One side of the moon is continually receiving sunlight while the other side is in continual darkness. Therefore the same face of the moon is continually reflecting the sun's ray from its surface. However, when the conjunction of the moon occurs, it reflects light at angles that are not visible from the earth. As it continues its orbit about the earth, more and more of the light is reflected at angles that are visible from the surface of the earth. When the moon is full, the entire surface of the moon that is continually reflecting the sun's rays is at a favorable angle to reflect its light on the earth.

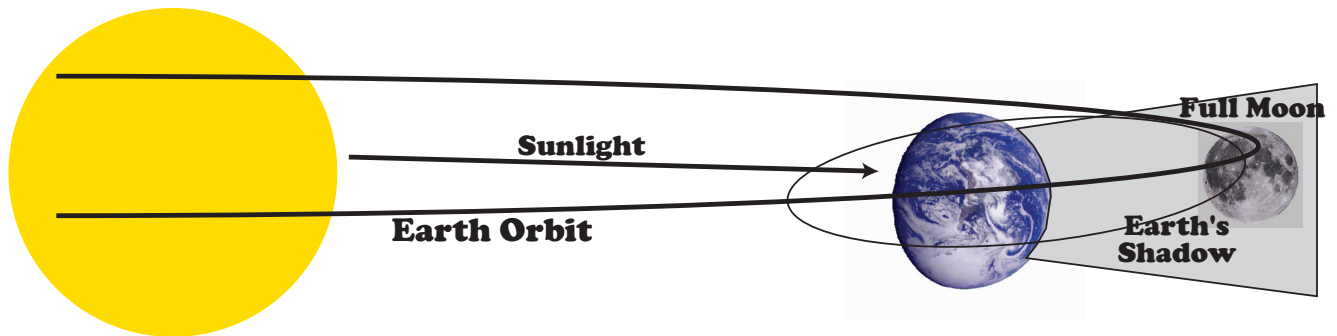


Figure 5a- The earth lies directly between the moon and the sun casting a shadow that causes the eclipse.

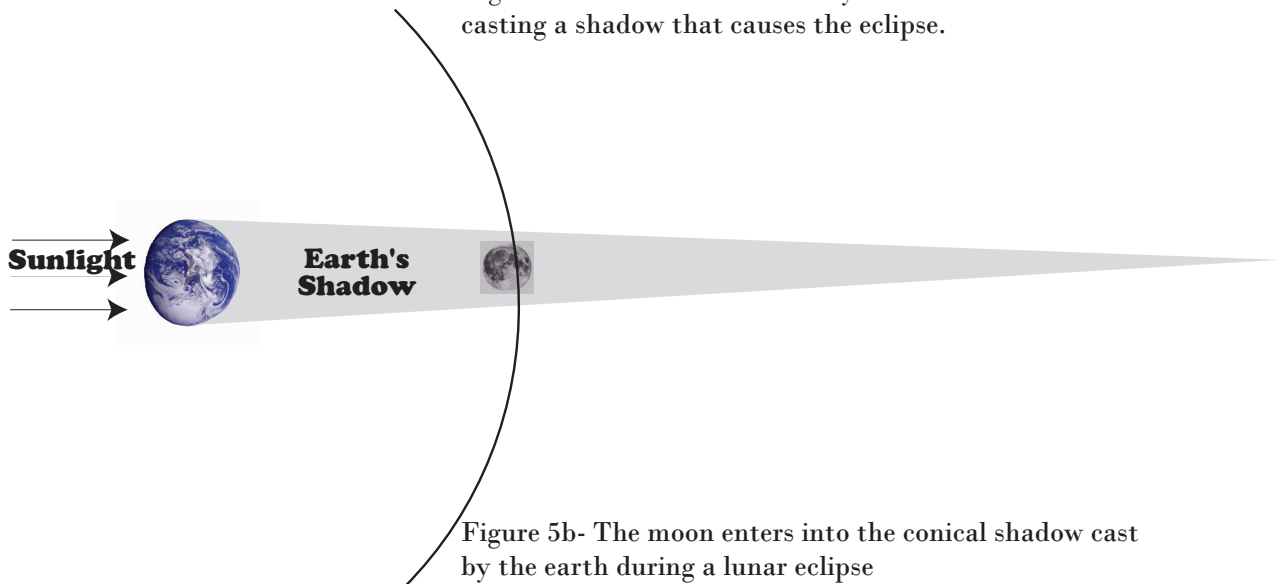


Figure 5b- The moon enters into the conical shadow cast by the earth during a lunar eclipse

Figure 5-A Lunar Eclipse

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The pattern of conjunction to first crescent to full moon and back again is shown in figure 6. From conjunction to full moon, we say the moon is waxing. As it decreases in size as seen from the earth from the full moon back to the conjunction, we say the moon is waning.

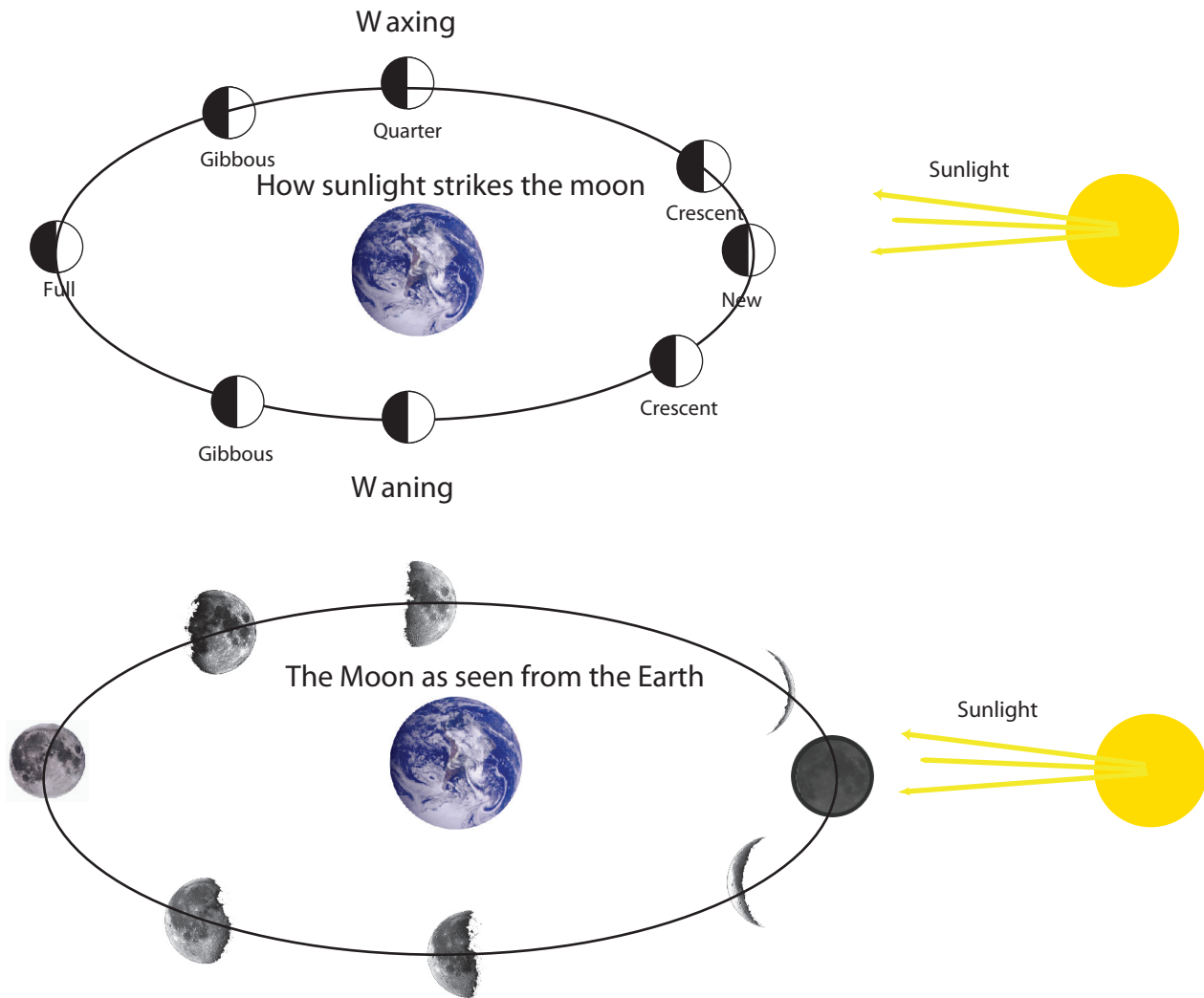
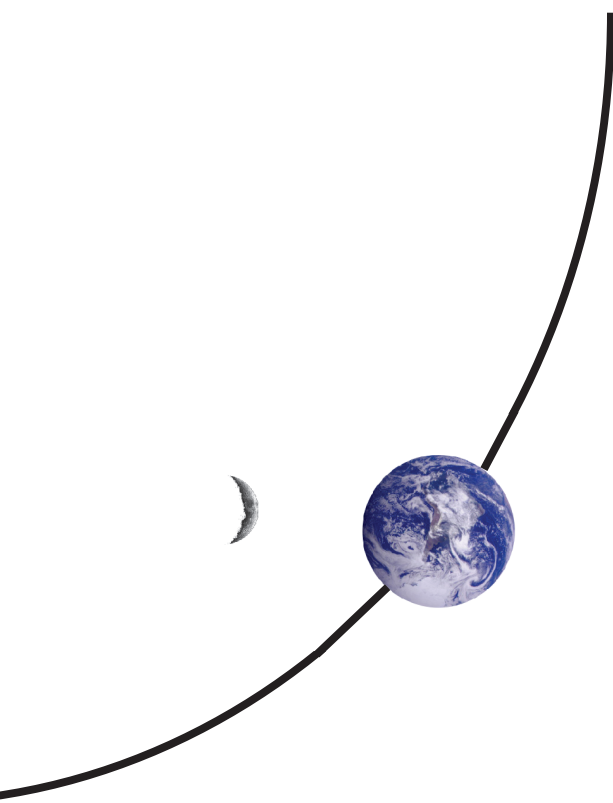


Figure 6-The Moon Waxing and Waning



The Gregorian calendar is the most commonly used calendar in the Western World. It is based on the solar year, the time it takes the earth to make one orbit around the sun. A normal Gregorian year contains 365 days, but one orbit of the earth takes an extra 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds to complete every year.<sup>1</sup> If nothing were done to compensate, the seasons would shift one month every 120 years. To adjust for this accumulated time, the Julian calendar, the pre-cursor to the Gregorian calendar, which was first adapted by Julius Caesar in 46 BCE, added a 29th day to February every four years because a partial day can not be added every year because a day is one revolution of the earth, no more and no less. This extended the year to 366 days every four years, commonly known as a leap

year. The Julian calendar also divided the calendar into twelve months that varied between 28 and 31 days in length.

The addition of 24 hours every four years exceeds the accumulated four-year difference by 44 minutes and 56 seconds.<sup>2</sup> This extra time accumulated until Pope Gregory XIII, in 1582 CE, reformed the Julian calendar by omitting 10 days when he declared October the fifth was actually October the fifteenth. He also changed the Julian calendar by eliminating future leap years at the century mark, starting in 1700, unless the century could be divided by 400. This correction eliminates three leap years every four hundred years. These corrections are necessary, in part, because the Gregorian and Julian calendars, have a fixed length of 365 days and are totally solar calendars, depending only on the Earth's relationship with the sun.<sup>3</sup>

### April Fools

Pope Gregory XIII made one more change to the Julian calendar. “Many of the ancient cultures such as Romans and Hindus and the medieval Europeans used to celebrate New Year’s Day on sometime near the vernal equinox that could range from March 20th to April 5th. In the Julian calendar, April 1st was designated as New Year’s Day and was so celebrated until 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII ordered the adoption of the new Gregorian calendar, which specified January 1st as the New Year’s Day. However, due to slow communications and resistance of people to change their traditions, many people continued to celebrate

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1 Zinberg, George, *Jewish Calendar Mystery Dispelled*, New York, N.Y., Vantage Press, 1963 p. 29

2 Zinberg, p. 29

3 Burnaby, Sherrard B., *Elements of the Jewish and Muhammadan Calendars*, London, England, George Bell and Sons, 1901, p. 512

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New Year's Day as before on 1st of April. Scottish only adopted the new calendar in 1660, Germans, Danish and Norwegians in 1700 and English in 1752.”<sup>4</sup>

Exodus 12:2 sets the beginning of the new year in what we normally refer to as spring, but it would have been the start of summer in the Promised Land because the nation of Israel really only had two seasons. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, most of the world also celebrated new years at the same general time. But the Gregorian calendar changed that. Many people did not accept this change for years or decades and they became known as April fools and those who accepted the changed date of New Years began to play tricks on those who did not accept the changes, which lead to April's fools day. Therefore those who follow the calendar ordinances in scripture actually agree with the Julian calendar that New Years starts around the beginning of April and not on January 1 as the Gregorian calendar mandated, thus those following the scriptural calendar could be considered as April fools.

### The Conjunction and the Molad

Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the scriptural Calendar is built around the lunar month, measured from one new moon until the next. The moon takes approximately 25 hours to orbit the earth, while the earth takes 24 hours to complete one revolution on its axis. On average, this causes a conjunction of the moon every 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, 3 1/3 seconds, a time period often referred to as the molad. The conjunction can be envisioned as occurring when the moon lies directly between the earth and the sun, making it impossible for the moon to reflect any light towards the earth. In reality, the moon stops reflecting light approximately a day before the conjunction occurs and does not begin to reflect light again until almost a day after the conjunction.

The conjunction is usually labeled by astronomers as the astronomical new moon.<sup>5</sup> Almanacs and astronomers agree with the nomenclature of the conjunction being the new moon. However, historically throughout the Middle East and in many parts of the world today, the first crescent was and is known as the new moon.<sup>6</sup> The first crescent was known as the new moon because the crescent appeared to be born anew after every conjunction. Although this author embraced the conjunction was the biblical new moon in times past, perhaps the scientist in me embracing current scientific practice, I now believe and practice that the new moon is the first crescent, as it was historically. The crescent new moon can usually be seen 18 to 20 hours after the conjunction, but only after sunset. This issue will be examined in detail later in this book.

4 <http://aprilfool.fundootimes.com/april-fool-history.html>

5 Almost any dictionary or encyclopedia will have both definitions listed. The reader should note the use of a dictionary or encyclopedia in this footnote is to define an English word, not a Hebrew word. Barnhart, C, ed. *The American College Dictionary*, Random House, New York, NY., 1947, p. 789 b-New moon, the noon when in conjunction with the sun and hence invisible, or the phase so represented, or the moon soon afterward when visible as a slender crescent.

6 Freedman, David, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, A-C, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 810,

[www.Karaite-korner.org/new\\_mon.shtml](http://www.Karaite-korner.org/new_mon.shtml), p. 3 “‘Astronomical New Moon’ means New Moon as the term is used by astronomers, i.e. conjunction.. In contrast, ‘Crescent New Moon’ new moon uses the term in the original meaning of the fist visible sliver.

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The conjunction of the moon occurs at almost exactly the same time everywhere on earth (There is some very small difference due to the circumference and rotation of the earth). However, it must be remembered when it is noon in New York, it is midnight in China. So the conjunction will be calculated to be at different times on the earth, unlike sunrise, which always occurs locally around 6 A.M.<sup>7</sup> Jerusalem is just over 2 hours east of the Greenwich meridian in England, the standard for time keeping worldwide. If the molad, which is different from the conjunction because the molad is an average time between conjunctions, occurs at exactly midnight in Greenwich, it will be recorded as occurring at about 2:05 A.M in Jerusalem. Because of these time differences and also because of Jerusalem's importance to God, the calculated Jewish calendar starts the new month on the day of the mean average conjunction, the molad, according to Jerusalem time unless it is postponed because of the calculated calendar's postponement rules, which is often because of the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar. Months also alternate between twenty-nine and thirty days in length in the calculated Jewish calendar, except when the rabbinic rules of the calculated Jewish calendar dictate otherwise.

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<sup>7</sup> Lasker, Arnold A. and Lasker, Daniel J., *Behold, a Moon is born! How the Jewish Calendar Works*, Conservative Judaism, Vol. 41 no. 4, summer 89, p. p. 7





Although scripture does not define the calendar in complete detail, there are a few verses that are directly related to the calendar. The first and most important is Exodus 12:2. “This month (*hodesh* or new moon) *shall be* unto you the beginning of month(*hodesh* or new moon): it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.”<sup>1</sup> The word for month in Hebrew is new moon. Although the idea of new moon being used interchangeable with month may not be common in English today, if you think back to many great western movies, the native Americans would say something like, “It has been two moons since we last meet.” The definition of *hodesh* is, “the *new* moon; by implication a *month*: - month (-ly), new moon.”<sup>2</sup> Thus God decrees the new moon is intimately involved in fixing both the beginnings of months and the beginning of the year.

The other verse that has apparently been used in the creation of the calculated Jewish calendar and which many in the churches of also want to use in the creation of an alternate calendar is Exodus 34:22. “And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end (*tekufoth*).”<sup>3</sup> Both of these verses will be examined in more detail later in the book after we have detailed the mechanics of the current calculated Jewish calendar.

There is no question the calculated Jewish calendar has been authoritative for the vast majority of Jews for more than 1600 years, although there has been a small minority of Jews, general known as the Karaites, rejecting the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative that entire time. The persecution of Constantius in the fourth century CE threatened the very existence of the Sanhedrin, the body responsible for officially proclaiming the new moon in Jewish law and ushered in the era of the calculated Jewish calendar.

Under the trying circumstances of Constantius’ persecution, “the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to preserve the unity of Israel. In order to prevent the Jews scattered all over the surface of the earth from celebrating their New Moons, festivals and holidays at different times, he made public the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a closely guarded secret. It had been used in the past only to check the observations and testimonies of witnesses, and to determine the beginning of the spring season.”<sup>4</sup> The rules released by Hillel II were not the rules for the earlier calendar, but the rabbinical rules used to check the validity of the observed cycle. These rules were modified somewhat, especially the structure of the metonic cycle, which controls the intercalation of the “leap

1 Exodus 12:2

2 Strong’s H2320

3 Ex. 34:22

4 Spier, Arthur, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, New York, N.Y., Feldheim, Publishers, 1986, p. 2



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months,” over the next four centuries, but are essentially the rules for current calculated Jewish calendar today.

There are either twelve or thirteen months in the calculated Jewish calendar, which are listed in the table one. The vast majority of the time months are referred to in scripture by number rather than by name, like Passover being on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month or atonement being on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month. It appears Israel commonly referred to days and months by their numeric value and not by names, at least until the return from the Babylonian captivity.

Table Three—The months of the Year in the calculated Jewish calendar

Number	Names	Reference in Scripture
1	Nisan, Abib	Ex. 12, Esther 3:7, Neh. 2:1
2	Iyar, Ziv	
3	Sivan	Esther 8:9
4	Tammuz	
5	Ab	
6	Elul	Neh. 6:15
7	Tishri, Ethanim	
8	Marheshvan, Bul	
9	Kislev	Neh. 1:1, Zech. 7:1
10	Tebeth	Esther 2:26
11	Shebet	Zech. 7:1
12	Adar	Ezra 6:15, Esther 3:7, 13
13	Adar II	

Although the Hebrew month in the calculated Jewish calendar differs from the Gregorian, the measurement of the days and hours are the same. However, instead of minutes and seconds, the hour was divided into 1080 parts (Halakim), with each part corresponding to 3-1/3 seconds, and each part was divided in 76 moments (Regaim).<sup>5</sup> Therefore the traditional time given for one Moladot, the period from one Molad to the next, which is the mean average time between conjunctions, is 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 parts. The length of a normal year on the calculated Jewish calendar consists of twelve of these months. Therefore a normal, or common, Hebrew year is 354 days long. It is also possible for the year to have only 353 or 355 days under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. The shorter year is called a defective year while the longer year is called excessive.<sup>6</sup>

“If a year is defective because of rabbinical rules for the Metonic cycle, the month of Kislev will have 29 days instead of 30. If the year is excessive, the month of Heshvan will have 30 days instead of 29.”<sup>7</sup> These two days are “left variable, as being dependent on certain circumstance in Astronomy and Jewish Law [*ed. note*-This is with the current calculated Jewish calendar].”<sup>8</sup> If no leap months were added to the Jewish calendar, a process called intercalation, the seasons would shift through the year in a 33 year cycle because eleven and a half days

5 Spier, p. 13

6 Spier, p. 15

7 Burnaby, p. 18

8 Ibid, p. 18

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normally accumulate every year. The Islamic calendar does not intercalate months. Because of this, Ramadan occurred in December in 2000 CE, but it will occur in June in 2017. This shifting of the season in which the annual feast days occur is not allowed according to scripture because unleavened bread must occur at the time of the initial barley harvest, what we refer to as March or April. Scripture dictates that six and a half months after the Passover, which must be sacrificed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, is the time feast of ingathering and the other 3 of the seven holydays. Therefore scripture mandates the intercalation of the leap month even if it does not detail how to intercalate the leap month.

If a month is intercalated, that year can still be normal, defective, or excessive in the calculated Jewish calendar. Therefore a year that contains the intercalated thirteenth month will be 383, 384, or 385 days long rather than the normal 353-5 days long. The distribution of year lengths under the calculated Jewish calendar is listed in table 4

Table Four-Length of Years in the calculated Jewish calendar

Length of year	Percentage of years
353	10.0
354	24.3
355	28.8
383	15.5
384	5.3
385	16.1

The feast of Unleavened Bread, also commonly known as Passover,<sup>9</sup> must begin at the end of the fourteenth day of the first month, Abib, also called Nisan.<sup>10</sup> Because the Hebrew day is calculated from even to even, the first day of Unleavened Bread will occur during a full moon but traditionally “must not occur before the beginning of spring.”<sup>11</sup> This is also true of the observed calendar. The first day of Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles, also occurs during a full moon, which is 15 days after the new moon of the seventh month, Tishri, on the observed calendar.<sup>12</sup> However, on the calculated Jewish calendar, the first day of the feast of Tabernacles occurs 15 days after the declared new moon, which is based on the molad and the rules of postponement and not on the new moon, which will be discussed next.

So the times of these two festival seasons, unleavened bread and tabernacles, depend on seasonal variations because of the harvests involved, which depend on the solar year. The calculated Jewish calendar therefore depends on the cycles of the moon, 29 and 1/2 days long, and the solar year, 365 and 1/4 days long. “Thus, the Jewish calendar is Luni-solar.”<sup>13</sup> Both the observed Jewish calendar, the one practiced during the time of Christ, and the calculated Jewish calendar are Luni-solar.

9 Luke 22:1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

10 Zinberg, George, *Jewish Calendar Mystery Dispelled*, New York, N.Y., Vantage Press, 1963 p 35 [Note: This note is Zinberg’s and not mine. Although this is Zinberg’s note, after much research I have found that I agree with this statement.]

11 Zinberg, p. 35

12 Lev 23:34

13 Spier, p. 1

## The Postponements

The foundation of the calculated Jewish calendar is the four rules of postponement. These rules, called the *dehiot* [*ed. note*-different authors have different English spellings of this word], are really very simple to understand, but their implications are profound. Under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar, days on which the feasts would be observed are postponed, supposedly for the convenience of the people, and most certainly because of rabbinical rules of *halacha*. The 4 rules of postponement are:

When the molad Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the following day. [*ed. note*-notice calculations are done on the seventh month, not the first].

When the Molad Tishri occurs at noon (18h) or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day. If the next day is a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, the day will be postponed another day, for a total of 2 days. [*ed. note*-Jerusalem time is used for postponements 2, 3, and 4].

When the Molad Tishri of a common year falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 am, i.e., 3d 9h 204p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to a Wednesday, and, because of Dehiah 1, it is postponed to a Thursday.

When, in a common year succeeding a leap year, the molad Tishri occurs on Monday morning 589 parts after 9 am, i.e., 2d 15h 589p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day.<sup>14</sup>

The reason for *dehiot* 1, the first postponement, is to prevent the day of Atonement from falling tandem to the weekly sabbath and to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on a weekly sabbath so the Jews can wave the willows in the air as they march around, part of the Lulav ceremony where they ceremonially beat away their sins. The Lulav ceremony on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles involves taking the 4 species of plants mentioned in Lev. 23:40 and marching around the altar seven times.<sup>15</sup> Today many Jews walk around their sukkot seven times on the seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles, also known as Hoshana Rabbah, with the four species in remembrance of what was performed at the temple. The actual process of beating or waving the willows to supposedly drive away sin is considered to be work under rabbinical rules, thus it has been decreed this ceremony cannot occur on the weekly Sabbath. The practical effects of postponement one is to prevent tandem sabbaths from ever occurring in “the fall.” “It was desirable to prevent a Sabbath, and any other day upon which all work must cease, from following each other consecutively. Two such days coming together would give rise to great practical inconvenience in the social life of the people. Perhaps the most important consideration was that no dead body could be buried, while in a hot and sultry climate like that of Palestine it was highly essential that burial should take place so soon as possible after death.”<sup>16</sup> The supposi-

<sup>14</sup> Spier, p. 219

<sup>15</sup> Lev. 23:40 “On the first day you shall take the product of the beautiful (hadar) tree, branches of palm trees, thick branches of leafy trees, and willows of the brook and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.

This author believes that the sukkot were supposed to be built out of the 4 species and rejects this idea that there should be a ceremony that symbolically beats your sins away, especially for Christians.

<sup>16</sup> Burnaby p. 66

tion that a dead body could not be buried on a Sabbath is not found in scripture, nor could this author find it in the Talmud.<sup>17</sup>

### Sabbath *Halacha*

Matthew 12 shows how the priests supposedly profaned the Sabbath by working in the temple, yet they were guiltless before God.<sup>18</sup> There were other actions that needed to be done on the Sabbath, even though they could easily be considered work. “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore scripture states circumcision took place on the eighth day, even if it was a Sabbath, at the time of Jesus. This was a godly statute that was important enough for the Messiah to mention in his ministry. However, in a clear example of rabbinic authority being used to supposedly preserve the sanctity of the weekly Sabbath, the Mishnah lists the rules for postponing circumcision if it occurred on a weekly or annual feast. The Mishnah states, “A child can be circumcised on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth day, but never earlier and never later. How is this? The rule is that it shall be done on the eighth day; but if the child was born at twilight the child is circumcised on the ninth day; and if at twilight on the even of the Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the tenth day; if the Festival-day falls after the Sabbath the child is circumcised on the eleventh day; and if the two Festival-days of the New Year fall after the Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the twelfth day. If a child is sick it is not circumcised until it becomes well.”<sup>20</sup> So although Jesus stated a child should be, and at the time of Jesus was, circumcised on the weekly Sabbath, the rabbis decided Sabbath *halacha* was more important than God’s will about circumcision and postponed the timing of circumcision. This author believes the rabbis created this rule to supposedly help the Israelites preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, but in so doing violated the word of God for the sake of their traditions and thus robbed the people of the ability to show Godly judgment. This author believes the only reason a body is not buried on the Sabbath is also rabbinic *halacha*, which was also probably added after the time of Jesus. (More information on the topic of the Sabbath and burials is available in *Jesus the True Passover*).<sup>21</sup>

Much of rabbinic *halacha* is recorded in the Mishnah and later in the Talmud. “The Mishnah reflects debates between 70-200 CE by the group of rabbinic sages known as the Tannaim.”<sup>22</sup> As shown above, the Mishnah records it was not just possible, but plausible to have the annual feasts tandem to the weekly Sabbath.<sup>23</sup> The mishnic ordinances on changing the day of circumcision specifically list annual Sabbaths occurring on the first day of the week, tandem to a weekly Sabbath. These rules of *halacha* defy this scriptural ordinance of

17 Computer searches of the Soncino Talmud revealed many rules about how to handle a dead body, but I found none that listed a time frame by which burial had to occur nor did I find any rules on burials being forbidden on the Sabbath.

18 Matt. 12:5

19 John 7:22

20 Danby, Herbert, *The Mishnah*, Oxford University press, London, England, 1933, p. 117

21 This book can be downloaded from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

22 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah>

23 Danby, Mishnah, p. 117

## 22 | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

circumcision on the eighth day, even if it was the weekly Sabbath because the rabbi's were attempting to build a fence around the Sabbath. These rabbinical rule of *halacha* are built into the calculated Jewish calendar.

Perhaps the best article this author has read on the rules of postponement is by Lasker and Lasker. They not only list the postponements, but also detail results of the postponements. They state:

Rule 1: "Lo ADU Rosh."

THE KEY: Sunday (the 1st day of the week); L=Wednesday (the 4th day). I = Friday (the 6th day).

TRANSLATION: [The first day of] Rosh Hashanah may not be on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday.

MEANING: If the molad comes on any of these three days, Rosh Hashanah is not observed (Tishri does not begin) until the following day. The avoidance of Wednesday and Friday helps keep Yom Kippur from coming on Friday or Sunday, thus obviating the succession of two days with the full Sabbath restrictions. The avoidance of Sunday prevents Hoshana Rabbah (with its ritual of beating the willows) from coming on the Sabbath.

APPLICABILITY: All 19 years of the cycle.

Rule 2: "Molad zaqen Sal tidrosh"

THE KEY: "Molad Zaqen"=A molad which occurs when the day is already "old". (zaqen), having had 18 hours elapse since its start at 6:00 P.M. Hence, from noon on. (Literally, "the molad of an old one.")

TRANSLATION: Do not interpret the molad [as indicating that Rosh Hashanah is on that day if the molad comes] from noon or later.

MEANING: If the molad (only of Tishri, of course, since it is the only one that counts) [ed. note-Calendar scholars all know that it is Tishri, not Nisan, that counts with the current calculated calendar] comes at noon or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day. If that next day is Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, then, by Rule 1, it is further postponed to the day thereafter.

This rule seems to be vestigial. Its original purpose was to help the Court to judge as to whether witnesses who claimed to have seen the young moon could actually have seen it. The supposition was that, if the calculated molad had come before noon, it was conceivable that the moon might have become visible at nightfall and the testimony could be accepted. If, however, the molad was computed to be at noon or later, the moon could not have been seen and the testimony would be rejected. Once the molad replaced the phasis as the determinant of the new months the rationale no longer applied, but the memory lingered on.

APPLICABILITY: All 19 years.

Rule 3: "GaT RaD be-shanah peshutah gerosh."

THE KEY: I=Tuesday (the 3rd day); U =9 hours since the beginning of the day, i.e., 3:00 A.M.; LI = 204 parts.

TRANSLATION: Drive out [Rosh Hashanah away from any molad that comes on] Tuesday from 3:00 A.M. plus 204 parts in a plain year.

MEANING: When the molad of Tishri occurs on Tuesday, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to Thursday not only if it (the molad) comes at noon or later (Rules I and 2), but even if it is as early as 3:00 A.M. and 204 parts. Were it not postponed, the plain year starting then would end up having 356 days, longer than acceptable. This rule cuts it down to a permissible 354 days.

APPLICABILITY: Only the 12 plain years in the cycle.

Rule 4: “Be-TaV TaQPAT ‘ahar ha-’ibbur ‘akor me-lishrosh. “

THE KEY: 2 = Monday (the second day); L U = 15 hours after the beginning of the day, i.e., 9:00 A.M.; UHLP = 589 parts.

TRANSLATION: Prevent [Rosh Hashanah] from taking root [on the same day as the molad if the molad occurs], in a year following a leap year, on Monday from 9:00 A.M. plus 589 parts.

MEANING: If the molad is on Monday at 9:00 A.M. plus 589 parts or later, Rosh Hashanah is observed on Tuesday. The purpose is not to keep the succeeding plain year from being too long (as in Rule 3), but to allow the preceding (leap) year to be long enough.

APPLICABILITY: The 7 plain years following the 7 leap years

The Winners and the Losers

It is generally known that, by reason of Rule 1, the first day of Rosh Hashanah can occur on only four days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday). What is not so well known is that as a result of all the dehiyyot, each of those four has its own particular likelihood of starting the new year. (The first of Tishri comes on Thursday, the big winner, almost three times as frequently as it does on Tuesday, the big loser.)

Rule 1 makes the biggest contribution to this discrepancy. Because of it, moladot, which occur on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday cannot signal Rosh Hashanah to come on their own days. Instead, they are added to the moladot of Monday, Thursday and Saturday, respectively, to give those days a double opportunity to be Rosh Hashanah. Tuesday, however, has no such advantage because the day preceding it (Monday) can be Rosh Hashanah. On the basis of this rule alone, Tuesday, would have half the chance of the other permissible days of being the first of Tishri.

Rule 2, by contrast, is perfectly even-handed, giving to each of the four permitted days exactly as much as it takes from them. It gives them the last quarter (from noon to 6:00 P.M. of the preceding permitted day and transfers their last quarter-day to the next permitted one.

Rule 3 continues to cut down on the opportunities that Tuesday has to start the new year. In the 12 plain years of the 19-year cycle, that day loses the benefit of more than one-third of its moladot, those from 3 A.M. and 204 parts until noon (which, by Rule 2 alone, would have been the cutoff point). They go to Thursday (the next permitted day), giving the latter a big advantage over its fellows.

Rule 4 finally gives Tuesday some small additional opportunity—at the expense of Monday—to be the first day of Tishri. In those 7 years out of 19 to which it applies, Tuesday is given the moladot of the last 2 hours and 491 parts prior to Monday’s noon to add to its own. This brings its chances of starting the new year up a trifle while bringing Monday’s ranking down to third, slightly behind Saturday.

The differences among the days are not merely theoretical. In the three centuries from 1801 to 2100, there are, respectively, 32, 31, and 32 Thursday Rosh Hashanahs, as against 11, 11, and 12 Tuesday New Year Days. Saturday’s average over those 300 years is 28.7 days, while Monday’s average is 28.3 days.”<sup>24</sup>

Christians know God is not a respecter of persons.<sup>25</sup> But believers in the postponements

<sup>24</sup> Lasker, Arnold A. and Lasker, Daniel J., *Behold, a Moon is born! How the Jewish Calendar Works*, Conservative Judaism, Vol. 41 no. 4, summer 1989 p. 12-14

<sup>25</sup> Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:



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apparently believe He is a respecter of days. He apparently does not like Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday because they can never have the honor of being Rosh Hashanah. Nor can Friday or Sunday have other autumn feasts occur during them. However, He must like Thursday, but does not really care for Tuesday. Of course this is ridiculous. This is not the pattern God has shown in the Bible.

Thirty nine percent of the time the first of Tishri is not postponed under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. Thus the new moon is declared to be on the same day as the molad. Forty seven percent of the time, the first of the month is postponed by one day. Fourteen percent of the time the first day of Tishri is postponed 2 days after the molad. Therefore under the calculated Jewish calendar the beginning of the month, which Exodus 12:2 and the Hebrew word *hodesh* define as the new moon, varies from being the conjunction to being the first crescent to being a fairly large crescent. The calculated Jewish calendar therefore mandates that the new moon is not defined by an astronomically observable event.

Jewish leaders institutionalized the rules of postponement in the calculated Jewish calendar more than a millennia and a half ago to end tandem sabbaths and make sure the seventh day of Tabernacles did not occur on a weekly Sabbath. In so doing they mandated that the new moon was actually three separate things while being one thing. The new moon, according to the calculated Jewish calendar is; the conjunction; the first crescent, and the day after the first crescent. The Kabbalah is replete with mentions of the triune and apparently the new moon is just one more instance of the trinity from this mystical, Gnostic variant of Judaism which permeates mainstream Judaism. Most Christians have no issue with the trinity's three in one and one in three and it appears most holy day keeping Christians, many of whom reject the trinity of the godhead, have apparently accepted the new moon being three in one and one in three things.

The postponements are used to prevent the day of atonement from occurring tandem with a weekly Sabbath and to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from falling on a weekly Sabbath so the Jews can wave the willows and march around in the Lulav ceremony. It is true that the portion of the postponement to allow the waving of the willows also prevents the feast of Trumpets from being tandem to a weekly Sabbath, but the main reason for that portion of the postponement rule according to the Jewish authorities who supposedly guarded the secret knowledge of the calendar is so the Lulav ceremony does not occur on the weekly Sabbath. If various church leaders accept these postponements as authoritative, it should be incumbent upon them to practice the Lulav ceremony, which includes the waving the willows on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles. To accept the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative and then not follow the ordinance of the Lulav ceremony is sheer hypocrisy. How anyone in the churches of God can justify postponing God's appointed times, His feasts, for the Lulav ceremony, especially when they do not observe the Lulav ceremony, should be recognized for the logical fallacy it is.

Authors such as Spier, Burnaby, and Beckwith are very clear the main reasons for the postponements is to prevent a Sabbath from being tandem to the day of Atonement and to make sure the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles is not on a weekly sabbath. The Encyclopedia of Judaism



states, “A major problem was the designation of rosh ha-shanah, the New Year. To prevent the day of atonement falling on Fridays or Sundays (which would create problems of Sabbath observance) or hoshana rabbah (*ed. note*-the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles) from falling on a Sabbath (for the same reason), the rabbis ordained that the first day of the New Year could not fall on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday.”<sup>26</sup> Under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar, even the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, the fast day for the destruction of the temple, can also never occur on Friday.<sup>27</sup> The destruction of the temple occurred in 70 CE. Since the rules of postponement incorporate an event that happened in 70 CE, it should be obvious the rules of postponement were added to the calendar well after the time of Christ’s death, after the separation of Judaism from Christianity, and as we will see, for reasons that are not scriptural.

Once all of the postponements are calculated for a given year, they set the time for Tishri 1, which is obviously no longer related to the scriptural new moon. The Jews then count backward 177 days to set Abib 1, so it also will have no relationship to the scriptural new moon. Therefore the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar can be described as follows. Start with the molad, which is the average time between conjunctions, in the seventh month. Apply a number of pharisaical rules, the kind that Jesus condemned throughout his ministry, to erect barriers around the annual feasts in the same way the Pharisees erected barriers around the law. Jesus described this practice in detail in Matthew 23. Once you have applied these rules, you count backwards, yes backwards, 177 days from the day you declared Tishri 1 and no matter what state the moon’s orbit is in with the earth, this is Abib 1, the supposed start of the “religious year.” Does this sound anything like the ordinance of Exodus 12:2? “This month (*hodesh* or new moon) *shall be* unto you the beginning of months(*hodesh* or new moon): it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.”

### Intercalation, the Jewish Leap Year

Unlike the postponements, the intercalation of a leap month is mandated by scripture. The leap, or embolistic, year adds one thirty-day month.<sup>28</sup> An embolistic, or leap, year will consist of thirteen months, containing 383, 384, or 385 days in the calculated Jewish calendar because leap years can be regular, defective, or excessive, just like common years. Adding 7 leap years every 19 years allows the annual festivals to occur at the same general time every year. The first recorded systematic nineteen year luni-solar cycle, with seven leap years inserted every 19 years, known as the Metonic cycle, was used in Babylon in the first half of the fifth century BCE.<sup>29</sup> The seven leap years of the calculated Jewish calendar are currently distributed in the nineteen year cycle during the following years: The 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 19th.<sup>30</sup> As will be discussed later, the 8th and 19th year will be problematic in

26 Wigoder, G. editor, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, MacMillan Publishing, NY, 1989, p. 145

27 Dankenbring, William, *What’s all this Furor over “Postponements.”* Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 54

28 Beckwith, Roger T., *Cautionary notes on the Use of Calendars and Astronomy to determine the Chronology of the Passion*, FROM Chronos, Kairos, Christos, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989),, p. 196

29 Wacholder, Ben Zion, *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography*, New York, N.Y.:KTAV Publishing House, 1976, p. 61

30 Zinberg, George, *Jewish Calendar Mystery Dispelled*

this fixed cycle because both occur only 2 years after an intercalation, making them a little different from the other 5 intercalations. But to add 7 intercalations in 19 years, there will always have to be at least two intercalations that are a little out of the ordinary. The process of intercalation will be examined in great detail later in this paper. However, there can be no argument twelve years of 12 lunar months combined with seven years of 13 month lunar years reconciles almost exactly with 19 solar years.

The calculated Jewish calendar is built upon the molad, not the conjunction. The conjunction is not the same as the molad because the moon travels in an elliptical orbit about the earth while the earth is also moving in an elliptical orbit about the sun. The rules for calculating when a molad is declared are examined in great detail in Spier on pages 1-22<sup>31</sup> and in Burnaby on pages 3-102.<sup>32</sup> The two elliptical orbits cause the actual conjunction to be as much as 16 hours before or after the average length for the conjunction. Therefore the time from one conjunction to the next can be as short as approximately 29 days or almost thirty days apart with the molad being the average time between conjunctions. Therefore the conjunction will almost never match the time of the molad. As stated earlier, the rules for the calculated Jewish calendar are based on the molad and a set of postponements, not on the conjunction or any other astronomical event. The ratification of the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative can be traced back to the fourth century CE, although the roots of the rules for the calculated Jewish calendar can be traced to the reformation of Judaism at Jamnia after the destruction of the temple, between 90 and 200 CE.

Because of the persecution of Constantius in the fourth century CE, “the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to preserve the unity of Israel.”<sup>33</sup> Hillel II publicly released the rules that are the basis of the calculated Jewish calendar. According to Author Spier, recognized as a Jewish calendar authority of the 20th century, the calendar used today is different than the calendar used during the time of Jesus and the apostles. The method for determining the new moon and intercalation of leap months throughout the second temple period (516 B.C.E to 70 CE), as long as there was an independent Sanhedrin was much more empirical than the methods used today.<sup>34</sup>

The priests kept the rules and set the calendar under Jewish law.<sup>35</sup> The Talmudic writings show a transition from the calendar of the second temple period, which was based solely on observation, to intercalations being done by some calculation and some observation in the second and third centuries.<sup>36</sup> And the calculated Jewish calendar, with no observational component, became authoritative in the fourth century CE.

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Spier, Arthur, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*

31 Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar* p. 1-22

32 Burnaby, *Elements of the Jewish and Muhammadan Calendars*, p. 3-102

33 Spier, p. 2

34 Ibid, p. 2

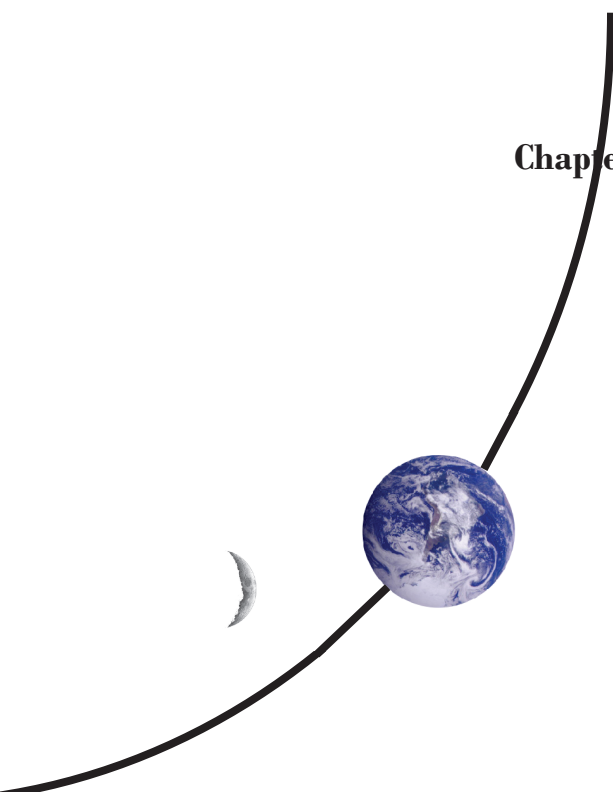
35 Gandz, Solomon, *Studies in the Jewish Calendar, The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 40 no. 3 Jan 1950 p. 275

36 Segal, J.B., *Intercalation and the Jewish calendar*, *Vetus Testamentum* Vol. 7, 1957, p. 284

## Chapter 5 | The Calendar of the Second Temple Period 27

# The calendar of the Second Temple

### The Observed Calendar, The Calendar Jesus used



The calendar of the second temple period is the calendar used when Jesus the Christ was alive and walking the earth. It is the calendar he used for determining the annual feast because he observed the annual feasts at the same time as the rest of Israel and, although he spoke out against the corruption at the temple, he never spoke out about the mechanics of the sacrifices performed there nor of the calendar that was proclaimed from there. The second temple was built by those who returned to Israel from the Babylonian exile around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The second temple period lasted more than 500 years, from the return of the exiles until the second temple was

destroyed in 70 CE. Although Herod's temple greatly expanded the size and prestige of the temple, it is considered to be part of the temple and is part of the second temple period.

There is a wealth of information about the Jewish calendar used during the Second Temple period. The beginning of the months was determined by direct observation of the first crescent over Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Because the calendar was based on observation, it would not have been possible to shift or postpone days for the convenience of the people or to follow some rabbinic tradition or rule. However, there are historical records to suggest the leaders of the Sanhedrin may have begun attempting to postpone feast days by intimidating witnesses and distorting data even a little before the temple was destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

Rather the Sanhedrin was distorting the rules of the observed calendar by intimidating witnesses or not, the Mishnah and Talmud have an abundance of information on the calendar of the second temple period, which consistently depicts that the calendar was determined by observation of the first crescent.<sup>3</sup> Moses Maimonides' *Sanctification of the New Moon* is the definitive work on the calendar of the second temple period. Maimonides' purpose in writing *Sanctification of the New Moon* was so that students could study, "even this (extraneous) branch of the Law, and have no need to roam about in search for it in other books."<sup>4</sup> Maimonides does an admiral job. "Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical

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1 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956

2 Wigoder, G. editor, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, MacMillan Publishing, NY, 1989, p.. 145

"Sometimes the Sanhedrin would deliberately postpone the announcement of the new year on Tishri 1 for a day and sometimes for two days.

3 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956

4 Maimonides, p.. xxx

months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its ‘proper time’ for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”<sup>5</sup> Maimonides, the greatest of all Jewish astronomers and one of its greatest sages proclaimed the rules of the observed calendar, the one used during Jesus’ lifetime, prohibit the use of any type of postponement.

Maimonides’ attack on Gaon’s statement that calculation was the foundational principle of the calendar during the second temple period is quite revealing. “Thou, however, discerning scholar, must affirm that observation had been a fundamental principle of our religion, and when the new crescent could not be observed a day was added to the outgoing month. To this truth, statements in the Mishnah and Gemara bear witness, as well as many events that occurred in past times.”<sup>6</sup>

### Scholarly Evidence of an Observed Calendar

An abundance of scholars agree with Maimonides that calculation was not the basis of the calendar during the second temple period. Although Maimonides supported the use of the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative, he was an honest scholar who stated the Jews had the authority to change from an observed calendar to a calculated calendar based on pharisaic rules just as many Catholic scholars admit the scriptural Sabbath is the seventh day, but the Pope supposedly had the right to change it. Just a few of the multitude of scholars who write that the calendar of the second temple period was based on observation are listed below.

During the Bible period, time was reckoned solely on astronomical observations.<sup>7</sup>

In the religious calendar, the commencement of the month was determined by observation of the crescent New Moon, and the date of the Passover was tied in with the ripening of the barley. The actual witnessing of the New Moon and observing of the stand of crops in Judea were required for the functioning of the religious calendar.<sup>8</sup>

In the early times of our history the solution was found by the following practical procedure: The beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the moon. The new months were sanctified and their beginnings announced by the Sanhedrin.”<sup>9</sup>

The Jews calculated the month according to the phases of the moon, each month consisting of either twenty-nine or thirty days, and beginning with the appearance of the new moon... If the new moon had appeared at the commencement of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—which would correspond to our evening of the 29<sup>th</sup>, as the Jews reckoned the day from evening to evening—the Sanhedrin declared the previous month to have been one of twenty-nine days, or ‘imperfect.’ Immediately thereon men were sent to signal-stations on the Mount of Olives, where beacon-fires were lit and torches

5 Ibid, p.. xxviii

6 Maimonides, p.. liii-liv

7 Tenney, Merrill, ed. *The New Bible Dictionary*, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI 1987, p.. 182

8 Calendar, *Ancient and Religious calendar systems* from the Britannica CD-rom.

9 Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*; p.. 1

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waved, till a kindling flame on the hill in the distance in the distance indicated that the signal had been perceived.<sup>10</sup>

On the thirtieth day of the month a council would meet to receive the testimony of witnesses that they had seen the new moon. If two trustworthy witnesses had made deposition to that effect on that day, the council proclaimed a new month to begin on that day, this is, the day on which the testimony was given became the first day of the new month instead of the thirtieth day of the old month. If no witnesses appeared, however, the new moon was considered as beginning on the day following the thirtieth... This method of determining the new moon had its defects. During certain periods of the year continuous rainfall might prevent the new moon from being seen at all until several days after the month should have begun. Witnesses might be overzealous and imagine they had seen the new moon too soon; or malicious witnesses might purposely give false testimony. The leaders of the community, therefore, had to study astronomy, in order to ascertain by means of calculation when the new moon should appear, and thus check up on the testimony of witnesses.<sup>11</sup>

The history of the Jewish calendar may be divided into three periods—the Biblical, the Talmudic, and the post-Talmudic. The first rested purely on the observation of the sun and the moon, the second on observation and reckoning, third entirely on reckoning (*ed. note-* The Talmudic period is generally reckoned as 100 to 500 CE).<sup>12</sup>

For practical purposes, however, the months are reckoned by the full days and set in with the beginning of night. They contain either 29 or 30 days: in the first case the month is ‘haser’ (deficient) by half a day; in the second (‘male’, over full) by half a day. The first appearance of the new moon determined the beginning of the month. At first a small and faint arc, like a sickle, can be seen by those endowed with good sight, from spots favorable for such observation... Although the Jewish calendar was thus regulated by direct observation, the members of the court seem to have been in possession of a recognized system, called ‘Sod ha-‘Ibbur’—(‘Ibbur’ is the intercalation of a day in a month, making it thirty days, and of a month in the a year. The principal object of the calendar was to regulate these two points)—which enabled them to test the accuracy of the evidence of the eye-witnesses, and which was probably resorted to on exceptional occasions.<sup>13</sup>

The Jewish calendar is based on a lunar year of 12 months, each month of 29 or 30 days. The year lasts approximately 354 days. Since the biblical festivals relate to the agricultural seasons of the 365-day solar year, the shortage of 11 days between the lunar and solar years has to be made up. To overcome this problem, a 13th month is added in certain years. In Temple times this was done periodically, after examining the agricultural situation at the end of the 12th month. In a later period the additional month was introduced automatically seven times in a lunar cycle of 19 years.<sup>14</sup>

Before the introduction of a fixed permanent calendar the identification and designation of Rosh Hodesh—the day of the New Moon—was of crucial importance for the timely observance of festivals during that month. In Temple times, to avoid the

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10 Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Service*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p.. 156

11 Lundman, Isaac, Ed, *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, Baal-Canada, 1940, Calendar, p.. 632

12 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, Bencemero-Chazanuth, Funk and Wagnalls, 1903 Calendar, p.. 498

13 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3 Calendar, p.. 502-3

14 Wigoder, G. editor, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, MacMillan Publishing, NY, 1989, p.. 145



possibility of festivals being observed in different communities on different days, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem insisted on retaining its centralized and single authority for fixing the date of the new moon as well as for the intercalation of the 13th month of the leap year when they thought it was necessary. Originally, the beginning of the new month was decided after eyewitness evidence to the appearance of the new moon had been accepted by the Sanhedrin.<sup>15</sup>

The New Moon (Num. 28:11, and parallels) was determined by the phasis in the preceding evening, hence the plausibility of an early biblical record (1Sam. 20:18) of its prediction for ‘tomorrow.’ At a much later age, any month consisted of either 29 or 30 days, the ‘sanctification’ of the 30<sup>th</sup> as the New Moon being subject to two witnesses’ reports of the time and circumstance of their sighting of the new crescent scrutinized by the court competent to check them, and only accepted if tallying with each other and not contrary to the astronomical prediction, with further proviso of agreement by the court and formal declaration of the ‘sanctification’ before the night set in.<sup>16</sup>

In the early times of our history the solution was found by the following practical procedure: The beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the moon. The new months were sanctified and their beginnings announced by the Sanhedrin.<sup>17</sup>

The Talmudic Rabbis recognized the variation in length of the synodic month...and hence they determined the beginning of every month separately by observation of the new moon as well as by calculation.<sup>18</sup>

But unless all indications are deceitful, they did not in the time of Jesus Christ possess as yet any fixed calendar, but on the basis of a purely empirical observation, on each occasion they began a new month with the appearing of the new moon.<sup>19</sup>

The scholarly evidence is abundant and clear. During the second temple period, which includes the time when Jesus Christ was alive, the calendar was determined by observation of the first crescent to declare the new month and observation of the seasons to determine when to start the new year.

### Declaring the New Year

The Calendar Council (*Sod Haibbur*) of the Sanhedrin regulated the Jewish calendar by balancing the solar year with the observed lunar month. “Whenever, after two or three years, the annual excess of 11 days had accumulated to approximately 30 days, a thirteenth month, Adar II, was inserted before Nisan in order to assure Nisan and Passover would occur in the spring and not retrogress toward winter.”<sup>20</sup> But needing to add back in the accumulated days is only one reason for intercalating a leap month. The other primary reason for declaring the new year was a late “summer” (Like California, there are only two seasons in Israel, summer and winter. Summer is when things grew and were harvested and

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, *Calendar*, Vol. 5, C-Dh, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 1972, p.. 50

<sup>17</sup> Spier, Arthur, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, Behrman House, Inc., p.. 1

<sup>18</sup> Feldman, W. M. *Rabbinical Mathematics and Astronomy*, Hermon Press, 1965, p.. 123

<sup>19</sup> Schurer, Emil, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, trans. MacPherson, John, First Division, Vol. 2, Hendrickson, 1998, p.. 366

<sup>20</sup> Gandz, *Studies in the Jewish Calendar*, p.. 275

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winter was the rainy and cold season. So what we usually call spring would be the start of summer to Israel). Summer was considered late if crops were unripened or new-born animals were too young.<sup>21</sup> Beckwith found six primary reasons listed for intercalating a month to delay the start of the year. They were:

1. Barley was immature.
2. Fruit trees were immature.
3. Remoteness of the equinox.
4. The Passover ovens were not yet dry.
5. Bridges on the road need repaired.
6. Jews from the Dispersia had not yet arrived.

There were also 4 minor reasons for intercalating a month:

1. Lambs were too small.
2. Turtledoves were too young.
3. Weather was cold or snowy.
4. Dispersia had not left home.

An eleventh, and disputed, reason for delaying Passover by intercalating a month was if a large part of the nation was unclean.<sup>22</sup>

Segal found, “A year may be embolistic on three grounds—on account of the (state of the green ears of) corn (*ed. note*—barley corn) or (that of) fruit (growing on the) trees or the lateness of the *tequphah* [equinox]. Any two of these reasons may justify an embolistic year, but one of them (alone) does not justify an embolistic year.”<sup>23</sup>

Maimonides writes, “Intercalation of the year depended upon the following three criteria: The *tekufoth*, the barley harvest, and blooming of the tree fruits. Namely, if the court had ascertained by calculation that the *tekufoth* of Nisan would fall on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, or later, it intercalated the year and declared the Nisan of this year to be a Second Adar, so that Passover might fall in the season of the barley harvest. This criterion alone was sufficient to rely upon for the intercalation of the year, and no attention was paid to any other criteria.

Similarly, if the court found that the barley crop was not yet ripe, being retarded, and that such tree fruits as usually sprout during the Passover season had not yet produced buds, it took these two conditions as a criterion and proceeded to intercalate the year even if the *tekufoth* was to take place prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the Nisan in order that the barley crop might be available for the offering of the Sheaf of Waving.”<sup>24</sup>

So there were really two causes for intercalating a leap month during the second temple period. A month had accumulated from the 11 and half days not added each year and needed to be placed into the year, which is what would be expected. Exactly how these days were account for, especially their relationship to the equinox, will be dealt with later. However, even if these days had not accumulated and it was an unusually long winter, the leap

21 Roger T. Beckwith, *The earliest Enoch literature and its calendar: marks of their origin, date and motivation*, RdeQ 10 (1981) p. 194

22 Ibid

23 Segal p. 287 from BT Sanhedrin 1 lb; Tos Sanhedrin ii.2; JT Sanhedrin i.2

24 Maimonides, *Sanctification*, p.. 17



month could still be added. Of course these two events are interdependent, but either one being out of sync appears to have been enough to allow a month to be intercalated.

To compound the problem, there is a possibility that even the rules for intercalation of the leap month may have not have been followed because some of the Jewish leaders may have intercalated Adar II randomly during the second temple period to maintain their power. This is particularly true of the Sadducean priests, the supposed keepers of the oracles of God's Sacred Calendar.

### **Declaring the New Month**

There should be no doubt that historically the calendar of the second temple period was determined by the coming of summer, whose primary indicator was the ripening of the barley crop, and the start of the month was determined by the observation of the first crescent over Jerusalem. The obvious problem faced with declaring a new moon by observation is visibility. If the skies were overcast and stormy for a few days at the time of the new moon, a new month could not be declared by direct observation. "Hence, they ruled that months were limited to 29 or 30 days, with no fewer than four months in a year having either one or the other of these two lengths."<sup>25</sup> The rules limiting the number of days in a month and number of excessive or defective months are extra-biblical because they are not in scripture, but they are not unbiblical because they do not violate biblical principles. This author believes God deliberately left grey areas in the calendar to force His people to look to Him to determine when to start the year. Just as Israel rejected God as king,<sup>26</sup> they also rejected His authority on when to start the year. And as we will see, far too many people still reject Him because they require a rigid rule or a printed card so they don't have to look to God nor acknowledge His authority.

The rule limiting the number of excessive or defective months to four during the Second Temple period means the length of the year was not fixed to 353-5 days. A year may have contained as little as 352 or as many as 356 days.<sup>27</sup> Because postponement rules three and four limit the year to 353 to 355 days, postponements three and four also could not have been in effect during the second temple period.

### **Difference between the Calculated Jewish Calendar and the Observed Calendar**

According to many church of God authorities, most of whom reject the oral law as authoritative, the calculated Jewish calendar is the "sacred calendar of God" and the secret knowledge of the calendar, including the postponements and the metonic cycle, was given to Moses and/or Aaron at Mt. Sinai.<sup>28</sup> However, rabbinic Jewish authorities, who believe that the oral law is binding, do not believe there was some secret knowledge of the calendar

<sup>25</sup> Spier, p. 1

<sup>26</sup> 1 Sam 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

<sup>27</sup> An easy calculation. If there are eight 30-day months and four 29-day months, the year was 356 days long. If it was reversed, the year was 352 days long.

<sup>28</sup> Bromiley, G.W., ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 4*, Moulter, W.J., 'Sadducees', Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1979, p. 279

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bound in the oral law until they added it between 100 and 400 CE. This inconsistency means that those who reject the oral law as binding state the calculated Jewish calendar is binding oral law, yet those who accept the oral law as binding reject the idea that the calculated Jewish calendar was binding until the fourth century CE and then only because the Jews changed it. If you can't be right, at least be consistent, but that would require the churches of God to change their traditions, something most of the churches of God are loath to do. However, there is a sect of Judaism, the Karaites, who reject the oral law as authoritative and thus they reject the calculated Jewish calendar and instead actually follow *solo scriptura*, an example that Christians should follow.

The Sanhedrin had to sanction each new moon and each new year under Jewish law. Although there was no secret calendar knowledge in the oral law supposedly passed down from Moses, the traditional rules and regulations for intercalation that were formed during the second temple period actually were a closely guarded secret. Notice these are the rules dealing with intercalation, a biblical mandate, not about the postponements to start the month. Because months had to be added, the Jews in Jerusalem had to send messengers to the Dispersia to tell them if a month had been added or not so they could observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread at the right time.<sup>29</sup> It is possible the Sanhedrin manipulated the rules of intercalation deliberately to keep the Dispersia guessing when the Passover would be, thus keeping them dependent upon the leadership in Jerusalem. It is even possible this was one of the rationales used by the pre-Essene movement for splitting from mainstream Judaism in the second century BCE was manipulation of the calendar by the so-called Sons of Zadak, the ruling Hasmonean dynasty.<sup>30</sup> This author believes there is enough historical evidence to support this theory, especially because this evidence coincides with the pattern of Pharisaic and Sadducean traditions depicted in scripture. If it is true, then the seeds of the controversy over the Jewish calendar may go back over 2200 years, not just 1600 years. If the Sadducees, who controlled the calendar court, did try to manipulate the calendar for their own ends, it was still done without any rules of postponement. Instead they intimidated witnesses so they could postpone the declaration the new year to maintain their power and prestige.

Just as there were reasons for intercalating a month, there were restrictions on how it could be done according to the Mishnah. Two leap years were allowed to come in a row, but not three.<sup>31</sup> Adar II, the leap month, also could not be added in a sabbatical year. During a sabbatical year the ground had to lay fallow for the entire year. Requiring the land to be fallow thirteen months instead of twelve would have caused undue hardship for a nation surviving only on stores of food. For the same reason the month could not be added during a time of famine.<sup>32</sup> Although the rule stating you could not have three leap years in a row may be extra-biblical, this author believes it is not unbiblical. However, the rules about not adding

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29 Davies, W.D. and Finkelstein, Louis, *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 1 Introduction; the Persian period* London: Cambridge University Press 1984, p. 66

30 Beckwith, R.T., *The earliest Enoch literature and its Calendar: Marks of their origin, date and motivation*, p. 385-90

31 Ibid, p.. 394


32 Ibid

## 34 | The Calculated Jewish Calendar

an extra month because of some kind of hardship seem to parallel the rules of postponement, something this author believes God did not want and would not sanction.

## Chapter 6 | Declaring the New Moon 35

# Declaring the New Moons



In addition to declaring the new year, the Sanhedrin also declared the new moons on the testimony of witnesses who directly observed the first crescent during the second temple period, but they only had the power to decide if witnesses' testimony was true or false. They did not establish when the new moon was like the calculated Jewish calendar does. They only announced that what had been observed was accurate.<sup>1</sup> Thus the new moon had to be an astronomical event, like the conjunction or the first crescent during the second temple period. It could not have been some amorphous darkness/first crescent/large crescent rolled into one as the calculated Jewish calendar mandates. If the testimony of the witnesses was true, then the Sanhedrin had no choice but to declare the new month.

The first four verses of Lev. 23 state that God told Moses to speak unto the children of Israel about His holy convocations.<sup>2</sup> This author has been told the first four verses of Lev. 23 give the priesthood the authority to proclaim when the annual feast days will be and therefore had the power to postpone the holydays.<sup>3</sup> There is a large difference between announcing an event has or will occur and having the ability to proclaim when this event will happen. There is little doubt that God is telling Moses to announce His feasts to the nation of Israel. However, God is not giving Moses nor the priesthood the power to set when they would occur. Keil and Delitzsch write, “*the festal times of Jehovah, which ye shall call out as holy meetings, these are they, My feasts,*” i.e., those which are to be regarded as My feasts, sanctified to Me. The festal seasons and days were called ‘feasts of Jehovah,’ times appointed and fixed by Jehovah (see Gen 1:14), not because the feasts belonged to fixed times regulated by the course of the moon (*Knobel*), but because Jehovah had appointed them as days, or times, which were to be sanctified to Him.”<sup>4</sup> God told Moses to announce His appointed times, His feasts, to Israel and in no way did this give Moses or the priesthood the power to change when the feasts were.

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1 Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, New York, N.Y., Feldheim, Publishers, 1986 p. 2-4

2 Lev. 23:1-4 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: The appointed seasons of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of work; it is a sabbath unto the LORD in all your dwellings. These are the appointed seasons of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season. JPS

3 Jim Franks, the head of doctrinal committee of UCG, aia used this explanation when I had a conversation with him about the calendar North of Boston in 1997. Others have also turned to these verses for the same reason.

4 Keil and Delitzsch, from e-sword on Lev. 23:1-2

The feasts were to be declared to the people “in their season.”<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew word for proclaim is qara.<sup>6</sup> It is defined as calling out, reading aloud, or naming something.<sup>7</sup> It is used with the same connotation of naming a child,<sup>8</sup> or Pharaoh calling for Moses or Moses calling the nation of Israel,<sup>9</sup> or even reading the law.<sup>10</sup> However, it never gives anyone the authority to set ordinances, only to pronounce them aloud. They are God’s feasts and He sets everything about them.

The Sanhedrin heard witnesses and examined facts to determine if it really was the time of the new moon. They could not change when the new moon was by simply declaring 20 or 25 day after the last new crescent, when the waning moon was still clearly visible in the sky, that it was the new moon, thus a new month. They had to determine what the new moon was according to the ordinances of God. This author believes God allows supplementing the rules about those ordinances, but only if they do not violate scripture. Once the criteria were met, once the new moon was observed or should have been observed when the night was cloudy, they had to proclaim to everyone this was the new month. Exactly the same kind of procedure was used for the declaring the start of the year at the end of winter.

Lev. 23 depicts God using the prophet Moses to teach, both orally and in writing, the nation of Israel about what God had taught him. The entirety of the Pentateuch shows God trying to teach Israel to be dependent upon Him, something they never really became.<sup>11</sup> It does not depict a priesthood being given the power to control these appointed times the way the Pope has the power to control when the weekly Sabbath occurs. Combining the first few verses of Lev. 23 with Matthew 23:1-2 as a basis for allowing the Pharisees to make proclamations of when the annual feast days will be is dealt with later in this paper, but it should be noted the very first convocation, the very first feast to be proclaimed in Lev. 23, is the weekly Sabbath of the Lord.<sup>12</sup> No one outside of the Catholic Church would ever suggest the Levites or the Pharisees had the authority to postpone with the timing of the weekly Sabbath.<sup>13</sup>

5 Lev. 23:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations,

Lev. 23:4 These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

6 Strong’s 7121 Strong, James, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Abington Press, Nashville, 1986, Hebrew Chaldee Dictionary

7 Brown, Francis, *The new Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1979, p. 895

8 Gen. 27:1; Gen 29: 32, 3; Gen. 30: 8, 11, 13, 18, 20, 21, 24; etc.

9 Ex. 8:8, 25; Ex. 19:7, Deut. 5:1,

10 Ex. 24:7, 34:5, 6; Deut. 31:11, 32:3

11 1 Sam. 8:7-8 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

12 Lev. 23:2-3 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

13 The council of Nicea in 325 changed the Sabbath from Saturday to the venerable day of the sun on the

Of course there are differences between the weekly feast, the seventh day Sabbath, and the annual feasts. However, these differences do not mean the priests of the northern nation of Israel were allowed to proclaim the annual feasts in an unscriptural manner, as they did for hundreds of years, even though they were proclaiming weekly Sabbath observance on the seventh day.<sup>14</sup> This deliberate aberration of the pattern of worship set up by God, this deliberate change in the timing of the annual feasts, is declared a sin throughout the scriptures.<sup>15</sup>

Some in the churches of God have tried to compare the controversy over the calculated Jewish calendar with the sin of Jeroboam, which is not the intent of this author. Jeroboam's sin was deliberate and malicious and used to control God's people and keep them away from God. The calculated Jewish calendar was a valuable tool used to help God's people when they did not have access to Israel and could not proclaim His feasts. It is true the rabbis added unscriptural ordinances, but the purpose of the calculated Jewish calendar was to mimic as closely as possible the observed calendar, with the additions of their unscriptural beliefs in the form of postponements. However, the days when it was not possible to follow an observed calendar from Jerusalem, as Jesus did, are long past.

As the book of Jeremiah shows, God used the temple of Solomon until the people worshiped it rather than worshipping God, so He destroyed it.<sup>16</sup> This pattern is repeated again and again, as this author shows in *How does God work with man?*<sup>17</sup> As a rabbi told me when I was taking a comparative religion class at MIT, a Jew's calendar is his catechism. God never wanted His people to worship the law and especially not the calendar, but to use them to honor Him. Unfortunately most Jews have not heeded God's call to worship Him in spirit and in truth, without the traditions that Jesus deplored and condemned. The

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authority of the church with the blessing of the Emperor.

14 1Kings 12:32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that [is] in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

15 1Kgs. 15:29-30 And it came to pass, when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite: Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.

1Kgs. 16:19 For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin.

1Kgs. 22:52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

2Kgs. 10:29 Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan.

2Kgs. 10:31 But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

2Kgs. 15:24 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

16 Jer. 7:4-8 Trust ye not in lying words, saying: 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are these.' Nay, but if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

17 Available for download at [www.KeepersOfTheWay.org](http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org)



Karaite Jews, on the other hand, have shown it is not just possible, but practical to return the observed calendar. Even if the calculated Jewish calendar was originally designed as a stop gap to help God's people keep His feast at their appointed times, Jeroboam's example shows that when God's people realize they are not following His ways, it is incumbent upon them to change. God does consider the timing of his appointed feasts to be important. It is incumbent upon Christians to do the best they can in all things and this must include keeping God's feast at the time He designates. The postponements built into the calculated Jewish calendar prevent people from doing this.

### Computer Models of the Observed Calendar

The rules for the observed calendar in the second temple period cast grave doubts on being able to determine on which day of the week any event transpired without internal evidence because of the variability of intercalating a month. The most common example of trying to accomplish this is to calculate the year of Jesus' crucifixion. There can, and have been, extensive computer studies done to determine when a selected conjunction occurred according to the Gregorian calendar. However, this does not mean the first of the month, as determined by the Sanhedrin, occurred on the day after the conjunction (The crescent moon can usually be seen 16 to 20 hours after the conjunction, but only after sunset). The start of the month could have been delayed by a day beyond this calculated date, two days after the conjunction, if the previous month had twenty-nine days and visibility was poor at the time of the next visible crescent. Please remember, it was possible for this to happen almost every month because there could be up to eight 30 day months a year.<sup>18</sup> This is the only possible event that could be construed as a postponement of the start of the month this author has found in the Mishnah. There is no evidence of postponements to prevent tandem sabbaths nor to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from coming on a weekly Sabbath so the Jews can beat the willows in the air at the Lulav ceremony.

These uncertainties make it impossible to know for certain when the new moon was declared during the second temple period nor can we know for certain when the new year was declared because there was no set pattern for intercalation. Thus, a month could have been added that today's calculation would not take into account or perhaps one was not added when it would have been expected. This uncertainty could delay or advance the day of the week on which a date of the month would fall by two days, at least as determined by today's computer models.


For example, if Adar II had been intercalated in a manner that the computer model did not account for, rather than Abib, the first month, starting on a Monday, it would start on a Wednesday, 30 days later than estimated. This is because computer models can only determine when a conjunction occurred, not when the first crescent was visible or what the weather conditions were that spring. This process could also be reversed, so that if an expected intercalation did not occur, the month of Abib would start on a Saturday, 30 days earlier than expected.

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<sup>18</sup> Spier, p. 1



## The Mishnah and the Talmud on the Calendar



The calendar was regulated by observation during the time of Jesus. Therefore the idea of predetermined postponements, for any reason, is preposterous. The new moon was declared when the first crescent was seen over Jerusalem. You can not postpone what you see, nor can you add to what you have not seen, unless you lie. Therefore it was not possible to have any rules of postponement of the kind that exist in the calculated Jewish calendar with an observed calendar. The historical record agrees because there are numerous instances of religious regulations and ordinances for dealing with tandem sabbaths in the Mishnah and the Talmud.

### Jewish Sages planned for Tandem Sabbaths

The Mishnah and the Talmud were written by the Pharisees and their descendants. The Mishnah and the Talmud agree that the postponements that are now an integral part of the calculated Jewish calendar were not practiced at the time of the Messiah, nor for hundreds of years before. The Mishnah is a compilation of commentaries on the Torah by the various Jewish sages that was compiled around 200 CE. This compilation contains judgments from sages long before the temple was destroyed. The Talmud is the same kind of commentary, but it was compiled in Babylon around 500 CE. There is a Palestinian Talmud that varies a little from the Babylonian, but for the purposes of this book, the differences are negligible.

The Mishnah's rules about the calendar controlled if and when a leap month should be added, but there are no rules about postponing the annual sabbaths to prevent tandem Sabbaths. In the second or third century, as recorded in the Talmud in Rosh Hoshana 24 a and b and Sukkot 43, we have rabbis arguing over rather to use postponements or not. This suggests the use of postponements was still very controversial in Judaism in the second and third century CE, just as it became controversial in the churches of God in the mid to late 90's. Readers should remember Judaism was massively transformed during the 100 year period starting with the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. History suggests the calendar began to change in form and mechanics during the reformation of Judaism, well after the death of Jesus and the scattering of the Christian church. There is no doubt that Jews were barred from Jerusalem after 135 CE, thus making observation and declaration of the new moon more difficult. There is little doubt these calendar changes were institutionalized with Hillel's calendar in the fourth century CE. However, as shown below, both the Mishnah and the Talmud show the Day of Atonement was not postponed if it was tandem to the weekly Sabbath during the second temple period.

### References to Tandem Sabbaths

There are a number of ordinances about tandem sabbaths reported in the Mishnah and the Talmud. In referring to the ordinance of the atonement, the Mishnah states, “They burnt the dishes [of frankincense] and the loaves were shared among the pries. If the Day of Atonement fell on a Sabbath the loaves were shared out at evening. If it fell on a Friday the he-goat of the Day of Atonement was consumed at evening. The Babylonians used to eat it raw since they were not squeamish.”<sup>1</sup> Without doubt, Jews in Palestine and Babylon observed Atonement on Friday in Mishnic times, between 200 BCE and 70 CE. The Talmud has, “If it were of immediate importance, the shebath would have been permitted. But in any case when the Day of Atonement falls on a Friday, the vegetables, even if trimmed, cannot be cooked.”<sup>2</sup> The Jewish sages, those who were supposed to be in charge of the calculated Jewish calendar, declared even if vegetables had been prepared in advance on the Thursday before a Friday Day of Atonement, they could still not be cooked on the weekly sabbath after Atonement. The Talmud also has, “The Day of Atonement. When the Day of Atonement fell on a Friday the shewbread was baked on a Thursday.”<sup>3</sup> And tract 19a of Kerithoth states if “a Sabbath and the Day of Atonement [follow each other].”<sup>4</sup> The Talmud and Mishnah are clear that the day of atonement being tandem to a weekly Sabbath was not only allowed, but planned for by Jewish leaders two to four hundred years before Hillel II released his calendar and more than a hundred years after the death of Jesus. Therefore the postponement to prevent the first of Tishri from being on a Friday or a Wednesday was not extant at the time of Jesus.

The second part of the major postponement, *dehiot* 1, that Tishri 21 cannot occur on a Sabbath, was also not in effect when the Mishnah was compiled. The Lulav is both a set of branches and fruit and the ceremony that is performed with them. As a reminder, the seventh day of Tabernacles is not allowed to fall on the weekly Sabbath under the calculated Jewish calendar so the ceremony of the Lulav can take place because waving the Lulav was considered too much work to take place on the Sabbath. However, at the time of Jesus, “The Willow-branch....seven days’-thus if the seventh day of [the rites of] the Willow-branch fell on a Sabbath [the rites of] the Willow branch continued seven day.”<sup>5</sup> The seven circuits of the Sukkot and the beating of the willows as part of the Lulav ceremony took place on a weekly Sabbath during the time of the second temple.

The practical effect of the postponements is to prevent the first of Tishri from occurring tandem to a weekly Sabbath. The Mishnah states, “A child can be circumcised on the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth day, but never earlier and never later. How is this? The rule is that it shall be done on the eighth day; but if the child was born at twilight the child is circumcised on the ninth day; and if at twilight on the even of the Sabbath, the

1 Danby, Herbert, *The Mishnah*, Oxford University press, London, England, 1933, p. 508-9

I would like to thank Bill Dankenbring for bringing up three new examples of postponements not being in effect at the time Christ.

2 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Vo1. 4 Menahoth Tract 100b, Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 615

3 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Vo1. 1 Shabbath, Tract 19a, Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 147

4 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud*, Vo1. 4 Kerithoth tract 19a Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 561

5 Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 178

child is circumcised on the tenth day; if the Festival-day falls after the Sabbath the child is circumcised on the eleventh day; and if the two Festival-days of the New Year fall after the Sabbath, the child is circumcised on the twelfth day. If a child is sick it is not circumcised until it becomes well.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the weekly Sabbath could be tandem to the Feast of Trumpets, the first of Tishri, during the second temple period according to the Mishnah. If there were a tandem sabbaths when the male child was to be circumcised, the circumcision was delayed till Monday. When the first of Tishri was that tandem sabbath, the circumcision was delayed until Tuesday because they celebrated the first of Tishri as a two-day feast. Thus the feast of Trumpets was allowed to be tandem to the weekly Sabbath. This makes it highly unlikely that the first postponement become part of the Jewish calendar until the time period between two to three hundred CE.

The second postponement, which delays the declaration of the seventh new moon if the molad occurs after noon has no meaning in a calendar based on observation of the first crescent, which is visible only shortly after sunset. It would appear this postponement was added to placate those who insisted the first crescent moon had been the starting point of the calendar for hundreds of years because it increases the number of days that the calculated Jewish calendar declares the new moon to be on the same day the first crescent became visible over Jerusalem.

As pointed out earlier, there was no attempt to strictly regulate the number of days in a year with the observed calendar of the second temple. The year could have as many as 356 or as few as 352 days.<sup>7</sup> Since postponements three and four limit the length of the year to 353 to 355 days, these postponements also could not have been in effect during the second temple period. Therefore the calendar at the time of Jesus did not include any of the postponements that are the foundation of the calculated Jewish calendar.

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<sup>6</sup> Danby, *Mishnah*, p. 117

<sup>7</sup> Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, p. 1



## Declaring the New Month in Scripture and in History

### The New Moon-*Hodesh*

How did the nation of Israel know when to start a new month? What is the new moon, the *hodesh*? There is no direct biblical reference stating you shall determine the start of a month by observing the conjunction or by observing the first crescent over Jerusalem. So the question of what was observed can be contentious because the bible gives no definitive answer of what a new moon is and only contains a couple of clues as to how we should define the new moon. However, anyone who has made even a cursory study of the biblical calendar knows the month started with the new moon. God told Moses, “This

month shall be unto you the beginning of months (*hodesh*): it shall be the first month (*hodesh*) of the year to you.”<sup>1</sup> “The two words commonly used to designate ‘month’ in Hebrew both have lunar referents and etymologies. Yerah is derived from a root meaning ‘moon’. Hodesh may be used to refer to either the month proper (Ex. 23:15, 34:18. Dt. 16:11) or the day of the new moon (Nu. 29:11, Hos. 2:13, Am 8:5). Textual evidence seems to indicate that both words were used as a designation for month from the early period in the history of Israel, thus reflecting the lunar nature of the calendar.”<sup>2</sup>

Besides tradition and linguistics, there is scriptural proof that the first day of the month was the new moon. Numbers 29:1 states, “And in the seventh month (*hodesh*), on the first day of the month (*hodesh*), ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.”<sup>3</sup> The annual feast of trumpets occurred on the first day of the seventh month. There were a number of sacrifices that were required to be made on that day, “beside the burnt offering of the month.”<sup>4</sup> So the offerings for the feast of Trumpets were to be done in addition to the offering for the new moon.<sup>5</sup> So the first day of the seventh month had to be on the day of the new moon according to scripture. There is little doubt that the first day of any month was also the same as the day of the new moon was observed according to scripture.

1 Exod. 12:2

2 Bromiley, G.W., ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, Cobern, C.M and Armerding, C.E., ‘Calendar’, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1979, p. 575,

3 Numbers 29:1 And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.

4 Num. 29:6 Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.

5 Num. 28:11 And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot;

Ps. 81:3 states, “Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.”<sup>6</sup> Although this verse will be examined in detail later, Ps. 81 depicts the new moon as an important time. Isa. 66:23 also states, “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.”<sup>7</sup> We are also told when the new heavens and the new earth come to fulfillment people will observe the new moon.<sup>8</sup> The new moon was celebrated differently than the weekly Sabbath or the annual feasts, but it was to be observed.<sup>9</sup> Even the first century church observed the new moon.<sup>10</sup> The moon was created to fix the sacred seasons and Israel used the moon for this reason.<sup>11</sup>

Although scripture shows the first day of the month was on the day the new moon was observed, there is no precise definition of the new moon in scripture. This has led to some contentious debates among members of the churches of God who do not accept the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar. However, there is no controversy among scholars. Listed below and in Chapter 5 are a number of references which verify that the new moon was the first crescent during the second temple period.

### The Historical definition of the New Moon

Each month the moon disappears and becomes invisible for about two days, or somewhat more or less for about one day at the end of the end of the old month, before it reaches its conjunction with the sun, and for about one day after its conjunction with the sun. Then it reappears in the evening in the west, and this night one which it becomes visible in the west after its disappearance, is the beginning of the month. From this day on 29 days were counted, and if the new crescent appeared on the night of the 30<sup>th</sup> day, this 30<sup>th</sup> day was the first day of new month. If however, it did not appear on the night, the 30<sup>th</sup> day would belong to the old month and the 31 days would be the first day of the new month. And no matter whether the moon did or did not appear in the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> day, no attention was paid to it, for the lunar month never lasts longer than thirty days.<sup>12</sup>

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6 Ps. 81:3

7 Isa. 66:23

8 Isa. 66:22-3 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

9 Ezek. 46:6-7 And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. Num. 28:14 And their drink offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third part of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of an hin unto a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year.

10 Col. 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

11 Brown, Francis, *The new Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1979, p. 417 “It is most probable that in Gn. 1, ..., the reference is to the sacred seasons as fixed by the moon’s appearance; and so also.. he made the moon for sacred seasons, although many Lexx. & Comm. refer these to the seasons of the year.” Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

Ps. 81:3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

12 Maimonides, Moses, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. 3-4

The lunar month was taken uniformly throughout the ANE and Mediterranean (by Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Arabs, and Greeks) to begin with the sighting of the first visible crescent. Only the Egyptians (and later the Romans) did not conform, but instead disregarded the irregular natural time indications in favor of regular arbitrary measures, such as the fixed 30-day month or the 365-day year.<sup>13</sup> For practical purposes, however, the months are reckoned by the full days and set in with the beginning of night. They contain either 29 or 30 days: in the first case the month is ‘haser’ (deficient) by half a day; in the second (‘male’, over full) by half a day. The first appearance of the new moon determines the beginning of the month. At first a small and faint arc, like a sickle, can be seen by those endowed with good sight, from spots favorable for such observation.<sup>14</sup>

The New Moon (Num. 28:11, and parallels) was determined by the phasis in the preceding evening, hence the plausibility of an early biblical record (1Sam. 20:18) of its prediction for ‘tomorrow.’ At a much later age, any month consisted of either 29 or 30 days, the ‘sanctification’ of the 30<sup>th</sup> as the New Moon being subject two witnesses’ reports of the time and circumstance of their sighting of the new crescent scrutinized by the court competent to check them, and only accepted if tallying with each other and not contrary to the astronomical prediction, with further proviso of agreement by the court and formal declaration of the ‘sanctification’ before the night set in.<sup>15</sup>

“In the religious calendar, the commencement of the month was determined by observation of the crescent New Moon, and the date of the Passover was tied in with the ripening of the barley. The actual witnessing of the New Moon and observing of the stand of crops in Judea were required fore the functioning of the religious calendar.”<sup>16</sup>

In the early times of our history the solution was found by the following practical procedure: The beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the moon. The new months were sanctified and their beginnings announced by the Sanhedrin.”<sup>17</sup>

The Jews calculated the month according to the phases of the moon, each month consisting of either twenty-nine or thirty days, and beginning with the appearance of the new moon... To supply this want the Sanhedrin sat in the ‘Hall of Polished Stones’ to receive the testimony of the credible witnesses that they had seen the new moon.”<sup>18</sup>

The rationale for the practice of declaring the new month on basis of observation was supposedly found in the midrashic interpretation of verse, “‘Hahodesh ha-zeh lakhem rosh hodashim’ (Ex. 12:2). It was understood to mean that God showed Moses the ‘new moon’ in the sky (Ha-hodesh hazeh=this ‘new moon’) and told him that, in the future, that would be the signal to declare a new month). Lakhem rosh hodashim=((shall be) for you (the basis for determining) the beginning of months.)”<sup>19</sup> The midrashic interpretation of Ex. 12:2 has God telling Moses a new moon signaled the start of the month, which is what the word month means in Hebrew, and

13 Freedman, David, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, A-C, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 810

14 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3 Calendar, p. 502

15 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Calendar, Vol. 5, C-Dh, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 1972, p. 50

16 *Calendar, Ancient and Religious calendar systems* from the Britannica CD-rom.

17 Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, p. 1

18 Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple: Its service and ministry*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p. 156

19 *Ibid*, p. 9



He showed Moses how to determine what a new moon was. “The phasis (young moon) (*ed. note*, first crescent), unlike the new moon (*ed. note*, conjunction) does not occur at a predetermined time since it is dependent on atmospheric conditions as well as on the acuteness of vision of observers on the ground. Some may see it earlier and some later, while still others may not be able to see it at all until the following evening. The only thing that is definite is that it cannot be seen until after sunset, when the sky becomes dark enough for the thin crescent to stand out against the sky. By then, with the coming of evening, a new day begins, at least one day later than that of the conjunction.”<sup>20</sup>

During the second temple period, the appearance of the first crescent would be reported by witnesses to the Sanhedrin. “Then those beginnings of the months (Rosh Hodesh) were sanctified and announced by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified that they had seen the new crescent and after their testimony had been thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation and duly accepted.”<sup>21</sup> The new moon was then set aside as a holiday by the Sanhedrin.<sup>22</sup> The witnesses had to be heard before the afternoon sacrifices or the following day would be declared the start of the new month. According to the Mishnah and a vast array of scholars, this is how the start of months was determined at the time of Jesus the Christ. Jesus came to set many things straight, yet He never mentions the calendar when He was correcting the Pharisees. No one can prove from scripture that at the time of Jesus the start of the month was based on the observation of the crescent moon. However all of the evidence shows that is how it was done and no reputable scholar contends otherwise.

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20 Ibid, p. 9

21 Ibid p. 7

22 Ibid, p. 7

## Scriptural Proof the New Moon is the First Crescent?

Some in the churches of God have tried to prove that scripture does indeed define what the new moon is. They play the typical COG etymological game with the words *hodesh* and its root *hadash* trying defining the new moon as the first crescent. They are correct that *hodesh* is Hebrew for new month and *hadash* means to renew.<sup>1</sup> To point out that the new moon is a renewed moon makes sense, but is certainly not definitive proof of what the observed new moon was and is. What some COG teachers do is to take it a step further and show *hadash* can also be the verb for polishing a sword.<sup>2</sup> Those who play this game write that swords during the second temple time frame were scimitars, which are shaped like a crescent. This line of reasoning

is presented as proof that the new moon is the first crescent. Although I believe the new moon is first crescent, I do not believe using the definition of the word *hadash* as proof that the new moon the word *hodesh*, was the crescent moon is sound logic or good doctrine.

To counter the historical evidence that the new moon was the first crescent other COG “scholars” have observed the crescent was often used as a pagan symbol. Their contention is since the pagans believe the new moon is the first crescent, than the new moon can not be the first crescent.<sup>3</sup> This argument is even more unsound than then those who use attempt to use *hadash* to prove the new moon is the first crescent.

As for the crescent being a pagan symbol, this author will point out many professing Christians idolize Mary above Christ in a systematic way in the Catholic Church, a practice that is unbiblical. However, these same people claim Jesus was the Messiah. Should we reject Jesus being the Messiah just because of these wrong or pagan practices? Buddhists believe in re-incarnation, yet they also believe murder is wrong. Would the teachers who state we are supposed to reject all pagan teachings have us believe it is okay to murder? The Babylonians believed in a worldwide flood, depicted in the epic of Gilgamesh, yet they did not believe in Noah nor the Hebrew scriptures. Since the Babylonians believed in a worldwide flood, should we edit the story of Noah out of scripture? This type of logic is beyond flawed, but sadly, some have actually embraced this as real scholarship. This author does not accept the practice of disproving a doctrine with character assassination. All Christians should examine the facts from scripture and external sources if required to determine what God wants us to

1 Hodesh or chodesh is coded to Strong’s number 2320. It literally means new moon, which is the new month. Chadash is coded to Strong’s number 2318.

2 John Trescost, among others, has used the definition of Gesenius as proof. Gesenius, H.W.F., Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament., Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1975 p. 263

3 Russell, James, *Prove All Things, Faint Crescent: New Moon or Pagan Symbol*, Vol 4, issue 1, 1996, pp. 10-12

do and we should not care if our religious practices match or do not match other group's observances. Calling people pagans and stating Christians are worshipping another God if they believe the month starts with the first crescent is not accurate or charitable.<sup>4</sup>

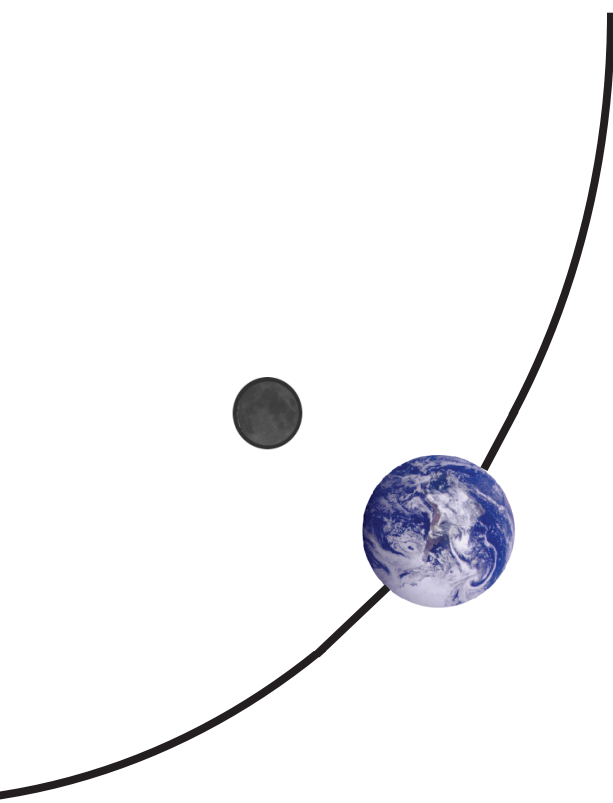
The overwhelming abundance of evidence is that the first visible crescent was used to start the month in the time of Christ. The overwhelming abundance of evidence shows that the new moon should be defined as the first crescent. This is the problem many critics of using the first visible crescent have no real answer for except to wave their arms around and try to convince followers all of the scholars in the world are corrupt and don't possess the holy spirit, which somehow these "teachers" supposedly have in abundance. This is not how Christian teachers should teach and Christians should not allow their leaders to get away with such teachings.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 4

## Chapter 10 | New Moon as Conjunction 49

# The New Moon as Conjunction



Although the overwhelming abundance of evidence is that the new moon is the first visible crescent moon, this author understands the seductive argument that the conjunction or the dark moon is the new moon. My wife and I observed the new moon as the conjunction for over 2 years when we first rejected the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative because of its rules of postponement. Determining rather the conjunction or the first visible crescent is the new moon is a major problem because these two possible starting points for the month have a time differential of at least sixteen hours, mandating they be on different days.

Why did I accept the definition of the new moon being the conjunction? Doing my initial research into the calendar used at the time of Jesus, I discovered that all of the historical evidence pointed to the new moon being the first crescent. However, whenever I looked at any current calendar the conjunction is listed as being astronomical new moon. At one point I thought the symmetry of the full moon being equidistant between the conjunctions was a Godly pattern. Ps. 81 was essential in this faulty definition of what the new moon was for me. I believed the full moon was 14.75 days away from the conjunction, which both started and ended the month. If the conjunction, which is the astronomical new moon, were 14.75 days before and after the time the moon became full, the argument for the new moon being the conjunction might have more validity. However, I had not yet examined all the astronomical evidence and when it was presented to me at a calendar conference that was held here in New England I realized my presupposed symmetry did not exist. I change my views on what the new moon was within minutes. As stated earlier, the Earth is orbiting the sun in an elliptical orbit and the moon is also orbiting the earth in an elliptical orbit that is not in the same plane as the Earth-Sun system. The moon can be 100 percent full as little as 13.8 days after the conjunction to as much as 15.8 days after the conjunction. The fact that there is no precise symmetry between the earth's and the moon's orbit not only allowed me to see why the crescent was the new moon, but also gave me a much more in-depth look at how God works with man as I write in my paper *God is not the author of confusion, but he is the author of chaos*.<sup>1</sup>

As will be shown later, Psalms 81 has no bearing on the calendar and neither does the full moon. Those who teach that the scriptural new moon is the conjunction have rejected the vast majority of scholarship and replaced it with their own Talmud, most likely to create a doctrinal distinctive in an attempt to lure uninformed Christians to follow the leader rather than following God. The fact that such doctrinal teachings permeate a lot of the churches of God shows just how bad a job the teachers in the churches of God did in making dis-

<sup>1</sup> This paper can be downloaded from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

principles. There is no scriptural evidence to support any definition of the new moon. History and scholarship agree that the first crescent was used as the new moon throughout the entire world that used luni-solar calendars. There is no symmetry that exists between the conjunction and the full moon. Thus there is no evidence to support using the conjunction as the scriptural new moon.

## Chapter 11 | The Full Moon and the Calendar 51

# The Role of the Full Moon in the Scriptural Calendar

### Psalms 81:3

The only place the full moon is mentioned in conjunction with any of God's annual feasts is in Ps. 81:3. Psalms 81:3 states, "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day."<sup>1</sup> However, in the JPS and other modern versions this verse is rendered, "Blow the horn at the new moon, at the full moon for our feast-day."<sup>2</sup> This song is instructing Israel to blow the horn every new moon<sup>3</sup> and at the time frame of the full moons on the feast days of Unleavened Bread, during Abib and during the Feast of Tabernacles, during Tishri. The full moon is only mentioned in two other verses, depending upon

the translation, and these references are simply to when the moon is full.<sup>4</sup> *Kese'*, the Hebrew word translated as full moon generally refers to royal or divine thrones, a place of honor.<sup>5</sup> It appears *kese'* was translated as full moon because that is when the moon is at its greatest splendor, its most radiant. Psalms 81 does not insinuate that the first full moon must be 15 days after the new moon and those who attempt to define the new moon as being 15 days before the first full moon are subverting the meaning of *kese'* and using same fallacious logic of the calculated calendar by counting backwards, as will be shown.

Can any of the two or three days of the full moon fulfill Ps. 81:3? After all, under certain circumstances the moon might not reach 100 percent fullness until the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month if the conjunction is used as the first day of the month. However, the moon can also reach 100 percent fullness just 14 days after the conjunction. So there can be no repeatable pattern of time between the new moon, whatever it is defined as, and the first night the moon is full.

The new moon is the sole starting point for the month in scripture. And the full moon has no bearing on what the new moon is or when to start the annual feasts according to scripture. The bible gives no direct or indirect admonitions about the full moon being used to

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1 Ps. 81:3

2 Ps. 81:3 JPS

3 Num. 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I *am* the LORD your God.

4 Job 26:9 He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it.

Prov. 7:20 He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon."

5 Harris, R. Laird, Archer, Gleason, and Waltke, Bruce, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, Vol. 1, 1006-kese', p. 448

BDB, 3677, p. 490b



determine anything about the annual sabbaths. Psalms 81 is a song. The theme of this song is to remember the yearly feasts with joyous music and these feasts occur when the moon is full.

There is no doubt the AV translation of psalm 81 leaves something to be desired, but even in the King James version this psalm of Asaph is clearly exhorting Israel to follow their God because He was the one who led them out of Egypt. There is also no doubt that God led his people out of Egypt during the month of Abib, not the month of Tishri. This is made a little clearer in the NIV (a text that has many problems), NRSV, or the Tanakh, which is quoted below.

Sing joyously to God, our strength;  
 raise a shout for the God of Jacob  
 Take up the song,  
 sound the timbrel  
 the melodious lyre and harp  
 Blow the horn on the new moon,  
 On the full moon for our feast day.  
 For it is a law for Israel,  
 a ruling of the God of Jacob  
 He imposed it as a decree upon Joseph  
 when he went forth from the land of Egypt;  
 I heard a language that I knew not.  
 I relieved his shoulder from the burden  
 his hands were freed from the basket.  
 In distress you called and I rescued you;  
 I answered you from the secret place of thunder  
 I tested you at Meribah<sup>6</sup>

This wonderful psalm of salvation, a common theme throughout the psalms and prophets, shows us that God released Israel from their bondage in Egypt. When he released them from Egypt, he decreed a law to take up musical instruments, to sing and shout for joy for what God had done for them, during the feasts.

Matthew Henry writes, “This was a statute for Israel, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony (v.5), a standing traditional evidence, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers. When God went out against the land of Egypt, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go, then he ordained solemn feast-days to be observed by a statute forever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which, perhaps is meant by the solemn-feast-day.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 81:2-8, Tanakh, JPS

<sup>7</sup> Henry, Matthew from the *Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985, pp. 1097-8

Adam Clarke writes, “The psalm may have been used in celebrating the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of Tishri, the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the same month, the creation of the world, the Feasts of the New Moons, and the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt—to all which circumstance it appears to refer... The feast of the new moon was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet.”<sup>8</sup>

There is evidence that psalm 81 was written for and about Israel’s release from Egypt. There is also textual evidence it was written for the month of Tishri and was only harkening back to the wonderful days of Abib when God freed Israel. Either way, the law and the ordinance that was declared in Ps. 81 was to sing a joyful song to the God of redemption on the feast days. Psalm 81 is examined in greater detail in the appendix on the Christian Biblical Church of God’s calendar paper and later in this book. However, the contention that Ps. 81 mandates that the full moon has any bearing on the calendar is simple not correct.

### Using the Full Moon to calculate the New Moon?

The NIV or JPS translation of Ps. 81 makes clear the meaning of this verse is simply to blow the trumpet and people should sing at the new moon and at the annual holy feasts of unleavened bread and tabernacles. Therefore any full moon seems adequate to fulfill Ps. 81, not the very first one that is visible. Ps. 81 is not a theological lesson about the calendar. This is not meant to denigrate the importance of Psalms as scripture, but we should not miss the point that Psalms were meant to be sung. There are many scriptures about the new moons that can and should be used in a theological study of the calendar, but trying to use Ps. 81 as proof that the full moon has bearing on the calendar, and even more ludicrously that you should count backwards from the first full moon to determine what the new moon should be, is simply wrong. Jason Churchill gives an accurate appraisal of someone who was actually computing a calendar based on the full moon, but counting backwards 15 days, just as the calculated Jewish calendar counts backwards 177 days.

If you are indeed beginning your months with the day on which the conjunction occurs, then as I have shown above, your calendar cannot possibly have the 15th day coincide with the full moon consistently, because of the considerable month to month variation in the period between conjunction and astronomical full moon. On the other hand, if you work retroactively, as you have described, and use the full moon as your benchmark, then the first day of your months cannot possibly coincide with the conjunction consistently. The astronomical facts show that what you describe is impossible!

Aside from the fact that your method doesn’t work, there is certainly no biblical, historical, or any other basis for the full-moon method you describe for calendar determination.

It is true that, because the moon appears to be fully illuminated for nearly 3 whole evenings around the time of the astronomical full moon. Therefore, regardless of how you define the new moon, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month will usually correspond to a moon that appears to be full to the eye. However, the argument that the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month can correspond to the astronomical full moon is not only astronomi-

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<sup>8</sup> Clarke, Adam, from the *Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985, pp. 1097-8

cally incorrect, it is based on faulty biblical exegesis. The argument relies entirely on a misunderstanding of a very ambiguous passage, Psalms 81:3.

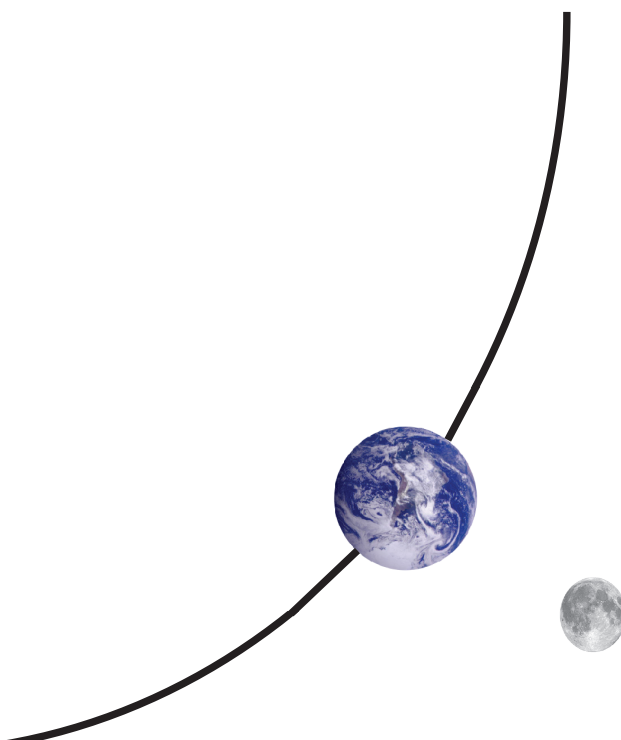
The idea that the 1st day of the Feast of Tabernacles coincides precisely with the astronomical full moon is just another Church of God calendar myth, one that can be shown to defy those rules of astronomy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Churchill, Jason, Posted on the RCG forum in approximately 1997

## Chapter 12 | Full Moon as New Moon? 55

### The New Moon as Full Moon?



This author has chosen to include the crazy idea that the new moon is actually the first full moon as an example of how far afield Christians can go when they reject the simple explanations of scripture in favor of following some self-deluded leader who casually rejects scholarship for personal opinion. Although some have tried to use Psalms 81:3 in a misguided effort of endorsing the conjunction as the new moon, recent “scholarship” (I use the word in great derision in this instance) has tried to use this verse to define the new moon as the full moon. The King James translation of Ps 81:3 states, “Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.”<sup>1</sup> The Meridian teachers<sup>2</sup> have used the King James and some other translations that insert a comma rather than the word ‘and’ between the new and

full moon. These teachers, who have no understanding of the Hebrew and have chosen to create a personal translation of Psalm 81 to define the new moon as the full moon. This interpretation is not only erroneous, but is unbiblical.

First, historical and traditional records show the new moon was the first crescent. It can be argued, although not successfully, that because the crescent and conjunction happen within a day of each other, the conjunction might have been observed. However, the full moon is two weeks removed from the crescent or conjunction. Jesus the Messiah kept the feasts at same time as the rest of Israel. When confronted about the fact that this bizarre interpretation makes no sense because Jesus never kept the new moon as the full moon, nor did he correct those who practiced a completely different time, the Meridian teacher this author was talking to responded Jesus winked at the practice of the new moon as the first crescent because the nation of Israel had lost the correct new moon while in the Babylonian captivity. He stated this was analogous to the way Jesus winked at the synagogue system.<sup>3</sup> I can only assume that this teacher was misquoting Acts 17:30, which states, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”<sup>4</sup> Of

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1 Psalms 81:3, KJV

2 A group of people in Meridian, Miss stood up to the changes in the WCG. I admired them for the way they did this. However, their belief that the WCG is the temple of God and that they must follow an evil leader is unbiblical. One of their two leaders has issued many prophecies with specific times lines, none of which have come to pass. These false prophecies and false teachers are addressed in another paper.

3 This confrontation took place at a mutual friend’s house with one of the leading meridians in our area. He could not see how this eisegesis of the scripture was so inaccurate that it painted our savior as a sinner, thus disannulling his role as messiah.

4 Acts 17:30-1 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

course, Acts 17:30 states God used to wink at ignorance, but does not do so any longer. The contexts of Acts 17 is Paul preaching to the Athenians on Mars hill, who had never heard of Jesus the Christ or probably God the father. Paul is teaching them that they may not have heard of God before, but now that they had, God would be judging them from that time forward. This verse should not nor can it be applied to Jews, who had the holy scriptures and who had been worked with by God for a millennia and a half.

The justification of those of the Meridian mind-set for Christ not keeping the new moon as the full moon is their belief that the entire synagogue system was unbiblical, yet Christ did not correct those who were part of the synagogue system. These Meridian teachers quote Deut. 12:31, “You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.”<sup>5</sup> This author contends those who hold this interpretation do not understand Deut. 12:31. The Meridians contend the synagogue system was equivalent to the high places God condemns throughout the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> They do not seem to realize if Jesus the Christ met at and worshiped in high places that were condemned by God, than he sinned. And there can be no mistake that Jesus the Messiah occasionally lead and actively took part in the worship service at the synagogue on numerous occasions.<sup>7</sup> However, the Meridians can’t admit their view of the synagogue system is in error because of their myth that the WorldWide Church of God is God’s temple on earth, thus worship anywhere but at the temple, the Worldwide Church of God, is sinful.<sup>8</sup> The Meridians contend Jesus did not really take part in this system; instead he visited the synagogue in the same way he went to visit prostitutes and publicans.

However, Jesus corrected the prostitutes and publicans who were sinning and showed them the path to follow towards God.<sup>9</sup> Although the Pharisees accused him of being a gluttonous wine bibber<sup>10</sup> and being illegitimate,<sup>11</sup> they did not accuse him of sinning with these publicans and prostitutes. There is a large difference between his visits with prostitutes and tax collectors and his actively leading synagogue services. So if the synagogue system was sinful,

5 Deut. 12:31 Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

6 Lev. 26:30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

Num. 33:52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places:

7 Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

8 This long conversation was quite painful to me because I saw a fellow Christian being sucked into a belief that has no biblical basis and whose heretical teachings by men who have already been proven to be false prophets.

9 As an example, John 8:1-11. Christ ends by telling the women taken in adultery to go and sin no more.

10 Matt. 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Luke 7:34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

11 John 8:41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

then Jesus was and is a sinner because he was a leader at some synagogue services, thus he is not qualified to be the messiah if the Meridians logic is carried to its fruition. This is the kind of scholarship and scholars that depicts the new moon as being the full moon.

To convolute the issue even further, these Meridians teach we should not change to keeping the full moon at this time because God had not yet restored all things, implying that He is somehow still winking. They are actually teaching if you know to do righteousness, but your teachers have not allowed you to do it, then you should continue in your unrighteousness. This is the essence of Gnosticism. However, since God is no longer winking at error, those who believe the new moon is the full moon, yet do not practice their beliefs, show their lack of conviction, thus bringing judgment upon themselves.<sup>12</sup> The Meridians are not being consistent, but since this movement is founded upon a set of false prophecies and belief that Christians must follow the government of a church no matter what, this should not be surprising.

Christians looking at the non-uniformity that might result from not following the calculated Jewish calendar point at this type of scholarship and suggest we are better off following the tradition of the calculated Jewish calendar rather than allow such errant, ignorant and fallacious scholarship into our midst. What they don't seem to realize is this kind of scholarship already is in their midst and what fellow Christians should be doing is preparing their brothers and sisters to deal with this type of garbage rather than leaving them as unprotected and uneducated children.<sup>13</sup> The problems with the calculated Jewish calendar are so obvious most church of God teachers dance around the questions rather than answering them because they realize truthful answers would discredit their tradition of accepting the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative. When teachers will not answer questions, Christians look else where for the answers. Christians should be very careful about scrutinizing every teacher and everything that is taught.<sup>14</sup> It has also shown that once people believe the Jews are liars and that tradition and history have no place in biblical exegesis, that Christians can and often do distort scripture beyond recognition.<sup>15</sup>

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12 1 Pet. 4:17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

13 Heb. 5:10-4 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

14 Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.


Rev. 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

15 I realize Christianity is filled with leaders twisting scripture to create distinctive doctrines to create a following. I realize this is very common among liberal, critical scholars who do not believe in the sanctity of scripture. But it surprised me that good, warm, common people, which is how the Meridians are usually known, could create such a warped view of scripture and God's judgment. I suppose it comes about from continuing to follow known false prophets.



Tradition and history are tools, but they should never take the place of scripture, as the Talmud often does in Judaism. Unfortunately many Christians have substituted tradition for scripture and the price of this practice is placing a barrier between themselves and God so their relationship can not grow. This can be seen by Christian who substitute Sunday for the Sabbath and Easter for Passover. Although the barrier of false tradition in Sabbath keeping, holy day keeping churches may appear lower, it is still a barrier that God wants removed when it goes against scripture. And this barrier is often higher than even mistaken worship because of the hate of anti-Semitism that is at its core.

### Seasons



A month is intercalated when the annual feasts would not be in their season. What does being in its season really mean? Unleavened bread is often referred to as the “spring” feast, while the feasts of Tabernacles, Atonement, and Trumpets are referred to as the “fall” feasts by the churches of God. This nomenclature is inaccurate not only because the feasts do not occur at this time in the southern hemisphere, which will be dealt with later, but also because the concept of four seasons is extra-biblical. Although the word fall appears 252 times in the KJV and spring appears 23 times, these words are only used as verbs that connote an action, like falling down or springing into action. They never refer to a

season. There is no Hebrew equivalent to the fall and spring seasons in scripture. There are two seasonal periods mentioned in scripture, summer and winter. This is because there are only two seasons in Israel, just as there are only two seasons in California and other semi-tropical locations. A brief listing of scriptures should suffice to prove this point.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.<sup>1</sup>

Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.<sup>2</sup>

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over *and* gone;<sup>3</sup>

They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.<sup>4</sup>

And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.<sup>5</sup>

And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.<sup>6</sup>

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.<sup>7</sup>

As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Gen 8:22

2 Ps 74:17

3 Song 2:11

4 Is. 18:6

5 Amos 3:15

6 Zech 14:8

7 Jer. 8:20

8 Prov. 26:1

## Winter and Summer

Winter is when it is cold and rainy. Summer is when it is hot and time to plant and then gather the harvest. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has studied how time was measured in the bible or even to those who have visited the Middle East today. In our precise, technological western world, we are driven by time, but the people of biblical times were driven by events. When did summer start? When it began to get hot and the crops began to grow. When did summer stop and winter begin? When the harvest was in and it began to get cold and rainy.

## The Tekufoth

However, determining the start of the season was essential in God's calendar because the "spring" and "fall" festivals must occur in their appointed times. The "spring" festival began 15 days after the new moon at the end of winter. The "fall" festivals began six and a half months later at the new moon. Although the equinoxes play only a peripheral role in the calculated Jewish calendar, Spier defines the two solstices and the two equinoxes as *tekufoth* (תְּכֻפּוֹת) in his treatise on the calendar.<sup>9</sup> Many who have rejected the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative have grasped onto the idea that the equinoxes should be intimately involved in the observed calendar because Hebrew word *tekufoth* (תְּכֻפּוֹת) is used in Exodus 34:22. There is no doubt *tekufoth* has come to be defined as the two solstices and the two equinoxes over time, but definitions of words change over time. Just 50 years ago, a gay man was someone who was happy, not a homosexual. If we read a manuscript from 50 years ago where a man is described as being gay as he is walking and whistling down the street returning to his love it is important to realize the intent of the author was to depict someone who was happily returning to the woman in his life, not the man in his life. If we use our current definition for gay, we would draw a completely inaccurate picture of this scene.

We should examine scripture to see if it can help us define what *tekufoth* meant in biblical times, just as we should examine it to help us determine what the definition of season is in scripture. The four places where *tekufoth* is used in the Old Testament are listed below:

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end (*tekufoth*)<sup>10</sup>

Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about (*tekufoth*) after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.<sup>11</sup>

And it came to pass at the end of the year (*tekufoth*), that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes

<sup>9</sup> Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, p. 223

<sup>10</sup> Exod. 34:22

<sup>11</sup> 1Sam. 1:20

of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.<sup>12</sup>

His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit (*tekufoth*) unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.<sup>13</sup>

*Tekufoth* (תְּכֻפּוֹת) is defined as coming around or a circuit of time or space.<sup>14</sup> The *tekufoth* refers to a revolution or circuit of time in Ps. 19 and in the story of Hannah conceiving Samuel in 1 Samuel 1. It also means a complete circuit of the year or a finished circuit of the sun.<sup>15</sup> Far too many from the church of God tradition who have rejected the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative have placed great emphasis upon the equinox because of their misunderstanding of the word *tekufoth* in Exodus 34:22. These teachers believe that some event has to occur after some equinox without realizing *tekufoth* does not refer to the equinox in scripture as Nehemiah Gordon, a Jewish Karaite scholar writes.

Being misled by the Post-Biblical Hebrew meaning of Tekufah, some have interpreted ‘circuit of the year’ anachronistically to refer to the Autumnal Equinox (it is doubtful whether the ancient Israelites even knew of the equinox and they certainly had no way of calculating when it would be). This anachronistic reading leads to the suggestion of fixing the beginning of the year so that Sukkot (The Feast of Ingathering) falls out at the time of the Autumnal Equinox. However, a closer investigation shows that ‘circuit of the year’ has nothing to do with the equinox. The list of Pilgrimage-Feasts also appears in a parallel passage in Ex 23:16 which describes Sukkot as follows:

“And the Feast of Ingathering at the going out of the year (Tzet HaShannah), when you have gathered in your work from the field.”

Exodus 34 is actually an almost verbatim paraphrase of Exodus 23 and it is important to compare and contrast these two passages; the differences are often very enlightening. Comparing Ex 34:22 and Ex 23:16 it is clear that the “going out of the year” and the “circuit of the year” refer to the same time. The “going out/ circuit” of the year is described in Ex 23:16 as “when you have gathered in your work from the field”. This agricultural ingathering is also described in Dt. 16:13: ‘You shall keep the Feast of Booths for seven days, when you have gathered in from your threshing floors and from your wine presses.’

The Feast of Booths/ Ingathering is described as the ‘going out of the year’ because it takes place at the end of the yearly agricultural cycle of planting, harvest, threshing, and ingathering. At the same time, Sukkot is described as taking place at the ‘circuit of the year’ because once the agricultural cycle ends it then immediately recommences (making a circuit, returning to the same point in time)

12 2Chr. 24:23

13 Ps. 19:6

14 NAS Hebrew from the computer program Accordance- from an unused word; *a coming round, circuit*:—circuit(1), due(1), turn(2).

15 Strong, James, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Abington Press, Nashville, 1986, Hebrew Chaldee Dictionary, p. 167

Coded to Strong's 8622, tqwphah-a revolution, i.e. (of the sun) course, (of time) lapse:—circuit, come about end.

with the planting of the fields after the first rains (sometimes during or shortly after Sukkot itself).

Tekufah in Psalms 19:7

The term Tekufah (circuit) appears in Psalm 19 in reference to the sun, but here too it has nothing to do with the equinox. Psalm 19 describes the heavens and sun, which from their unique vantage point are witness to all things in creation, and thus (metaphorically) testify to the incomparable glory of God. Verses 5-7 describes the sun:

“(5)... He [YHWH] placed a tent among them [the heavens] for the sun. (6) Which is as a bridegroom going out of his chamber, and which rejoices as a strong man running a race. (7) From the end of the heavens is its [the sun’s] going out and its circuit (Tekufato) is to their [the heavens] ends, and none is hidden from its heat” Verse 6 describes the sun as a bridegroom that bursts forth out of his chamber and as a hero that runs along a path. Verse 7 then describes the “going out” of the sun at one end of the heavens and the “circuit” (Tekufato) of the sun at the other end. Clearly what is being described is the daily path of the sun which rises at one end of the heaven (its going out) and sets at the other end (its return), “and none is hidden from its heat” during the course of the day. What has confused some readers is that the *going out* or *exiting* of the sun refers to *sunrise*, but this unusual terminology is used throughout the Tanach. For example, we read in Judges 5:31: “Thus shall all the enemies of YHWH be destroyed; and all those whom he loves shall be as the going out of the sun (KeTzet HaShemesh) in its might”. (Jud 5:31) Those loyal to YHWH shall shine forth with glory as the “going out of the sun”, that is sunrise. It may seem strange that sunrise is referred to as the “going out” of the sun. After all, in Exodus we saw that the *going out* of the *year* was the *end* of the year, whereas the *going out* of the *sun* is the *beginning* of the day. However, this is consistent with Biblical usage and in fact the common Biblical way of saying sunset is the *coming in* or *entering* of the sun. This is related to the ancient Israelite conception of the sun which at night was thought of as metaphorically dwelling in a celestial chamber (Ps 19:5). At dawn the sun *goes out* of this metaphorical chamber and the earth is lit while at night the sun *comes into* the metaphorical chamber and it is dark. This is also the thought behind the comparison of sunrise to a bridegroom coming forth from his *chamber*. Ps 19:7 refers to the going out of the sun (sunrise) at one end of heaven and its circuit (return to the same place, to its nightly chamber) at the other end, that is sunset (for a similar thought see Ecc 1:5). We see that here too Tekufah (circuit) has nothing to do with the equinox.

Tekufah in 2Chronicles 24:23

As seen above the “Tekufah (circuit) of the year” in Exodus referred to events in the autumn (the time of the *ingathering*). The same expression (circuit of the year) is also used to refer to events which take place in late spring as we see in 2Chr 24:23:

“And it was at the circuit (Tekufah) of the year that the army of Aram went up and they came to Judah and Jerusalem...”

In this instance the “Circuit (Tekufah) of the year” comes in place of the common expression “Return (Teshuvah) of the year” which appears several times in the Tanach as “the time when kings go out [to war]” as in:

“And it was at the return (Teshuvah) of the year, and Ben-Haddad counted Aram and went up to Afek to war with Israel.” (1Ki 20:26).

“And it was at the return (Teshuvah) of the year, at the time the kings go out [to

war] and David sent Yoav... and they smote the Amonites and besieged Rabbah...” (2Sam 11:1)

The time that the kings went out to war was the late spring before the oppressive heat of summer and after the winter rains which made the mud roads in the Land of Israel impassable. We see here that Tekufah (circuit) of the year is used interchangeably with the more common Teshuvah (return) of the year. Whenever this annual set time for kings to go out to war comes around it is a “circuit of the year”, returning to the same point in time as last year.

Tekufah in 1Samuel 1:20

The term Tekufah (circuit) also appears in 1Sam 1:20 which says:

“And it was at the circuits (Tekufot) of the days, and Hannah conceived and bore a son...”

Here the “circuits” of the days refers to “the same time the following year” [or possibly to the completion of the term of pregnancy?]. It is worth noting that Tekufah is plural in 1Sam 1:20 as tekufot ‘circuits’. If we apply the anachronistic meaning of Tekufah as equinox then we get the absurd translation: ‘And it was at the equinoxes of the days, and Hanah conceived and bore a son...’ This emphasizes how important it is to understand Scripture in its historical and linguistic context. None of the four appearances of Tekufah in the Hebrew Scripture have anything to do with the equinox. Instead, this term is used in Biblical Hebrew in its primary sense of a ‘circuit’, that is a return to the same point in space or time. Only in Post-Biblical Hebrew did Tekufah come to mean “equinox” and to read this meaning into the Tanach creates an anachronism.”<sup>16</sup>

It appears many church of God teachers have never read Karaite or other scholarly writings on the *tekufoth* or the season of abib or the new moon, but they should have. These errant teachers have stated that the equinox is an essential component in any observed calendar without any real scriptural backing because there is none. Some have stated that Passover must occur after the spring equinox. Some have even gone as far as stating that the first of abib must occur after the spring equinox. Some have even gone to Exodus 34:22 and written the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles must start after the fall equinox. These teachers often write something like, “Scripture states the tekufoth is essential to the calendar and the tekufoth is the equinox, so follow our Talmud on our calendar.” Unfortunately many in the churches of God prefer bombastic scholars preaching their own personal Talmud over true Christianity which would reject absolute falsehoods and then work together with other Christians who differ with them on the grey areas.

Does the equinox have an effect on when the feasts should be kept? The obvious answer has to be yes. We know that seasonal variations are tied to the rotation of the Earth around the sun and the equinoxes are two delineating points along that orbit because day and night are the same length on these two days. But does scripture indicate that the equinoxes are the controlling factor for starting the early summer feast? Should the feast of unleavened bread start on the 15<sup>th</sup> day after the new moon closest to the equinox and if so, can the Passover occur

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib\\_and\\_tekufah.shtml](http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib_and_tekufah.shtml)

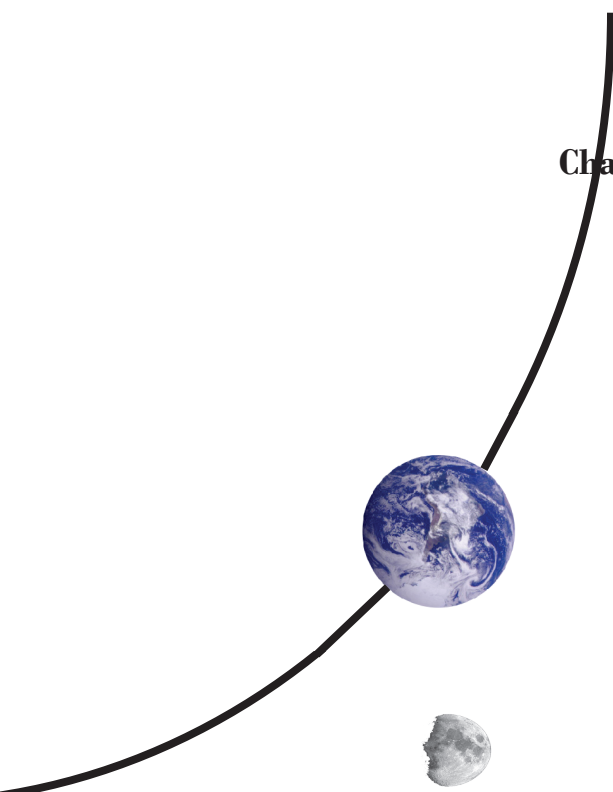


before the equinox? Or should Unleavened bread start 15 days after the new moon following the equinox? Some church of God teachers choose one or the other. There is no indication in scripture that the start of the feast of Unleavened Bread is related to the equinox. However, these arguments have to be examined because so many authors have fallen into this trap.

The next two chapters of this book deal with the hypothesis that the equinox is essential to the observed calendar, with one group stating the year must start with the new moon after the vernal equinox while another states the new year must start with the new moon nearest the vernal equinox.

Chapter 14 | New Moon after the Vernal Equinox 65

## Starting the New Year with the New Moon after the Vernal Equinox



An argument has been made by Herb Solinsky that the *tekufoth* mentioned in Exodus 34:22 is the equinox. Herb has devoted many years to the study of the calendar and should be credited with re-opening the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar in the mid-eighties in the churches of God. However, Mr. Solinsky's dependence on the equinox as the sole mitigating factor on when to start the feast cycle is in error. A complete exegesis of Mr. Solinsky's theory can be found in the Nickels-Solinsky appendix of this book.

Mr. Solinsky's very firm belief is that Genesis 1:14 defines the equinox as the start of the year. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven

to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:"<sup>1</sup> This verse should leave no doubt that somehow the sun, moon and stars in the sky have an effect on the earth. We know the sun divides day from night. We know the moon was appointed for the seasons.<sup>2</sup> All three are used to mark time, allowing the tracking of years, days, and the timing of God's feasts. However, it is quite a stretch to combine Ex. 12:2 with Ex. 34:22 and Gen. 1:14 to create the following translation of Ex. 12:2, as Mr. Solinsky has done. "This (visible) new crescent (which is on or after the first day of the vernal equinox, is) chief of (visible) new crescents to you; it (is) first among (visible) new crescents of the year to you."<sup>3</sup> In large part Mr. Solinsky's beliefs seem to stem from his statement that, "I do not believe God would have barley control the calendar."<sup>4</sup> This suggests Mr. Solinsky prefers rigid, exacting Talmud's to the uncertainty of the way God operates. Mr. Solinsky's belief about the barley's relationship to the calendar is his personal bias and this error caused him to substitute the equinox for the still quite voice of God telling us it when the year starts.

Mr. Solinsky describes possible methods to calculate when the equinox would be. They are all complex and require a great deal of patience and calculation. They are described in detail in the Nickels-Solinsky appendix of this book, but since Mr. Solinsky does not apply these methods himself, nor has he ever done so, this author feels safe in stating they are far less accurate than Mr. Solinsky's computer. There should be no doubt that the ancients knew the general time of the equinox within a few days. There should also be no doubt that the exact time of the equinox did not matter to them and it is highly unlikely they could have determined the day of the equinox. As will be shown, starting the new year with the new

1 Gen. 1:14

2 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

3 Solinsky, Herbert and Anderson, Robert, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, Version 9/23/82, p. 51

4 Solinsky, Herb, Tape on the calendar that God gave Moses.

moon after the vernal equinox eliminates a number of the problems associated with have the new year start with the new moon closest to the equinox, but has its own set of problems.

Since the equinox is around March 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup>, the new moon after the equinox could occur as late as April 20<sup>th</sup>. Passover and Unleavened bread would be two weeks after this. The wave sheaf offering could be as much as a week later. This would place the wave sheaf offering in the middle of May. However, the barley harvest could not start until the wavesheaf offering.<sup>5</sup> This would be almost two full months after the barley was usually ready to be harvested. Trying to place the equinox into the observed calendar would have severe repercussions on the harvests of the nation of Israel.

This would also place the Feast of Tabernacles in the middle of November. It is true this would be well past the time of the harvest, which would not have been any major issue since the Israelites could have still harvested the “fall” crops. However, placing the Feast of Tabernacles in the cold and rainy season and not having the bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables available to feast on would seem to be counter to the object of this feast. Lev. 23:39 states, “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days.”<sup>6</sup> So the harvest was to be gathered in for this feast, but Deut. 16 shows that this harvest was to be feasted up at Tabernacles. “Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within thy gates.”<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Solinsky’s research was helpful and refreshingly honest compared to other churches of God literature on the calendar, but his personal bias that the new year must start on the new moon after the vernal equinox is in error. What mattered was the agricultural season, which God controlled and blessed according to scripture.<sup>8</sup> Adding the extra-biblical requirement that the new year must start after the spring equinox would have been devastating to the nation of Israel and this author believes a God of love would not have inflicted such punishment upon His people. This requirement would also place the feasts outside of their proper season in the agricultural cycle, thus the requirement that the new year must start with the first new moon after the equinox is also unscriptural and wrong.

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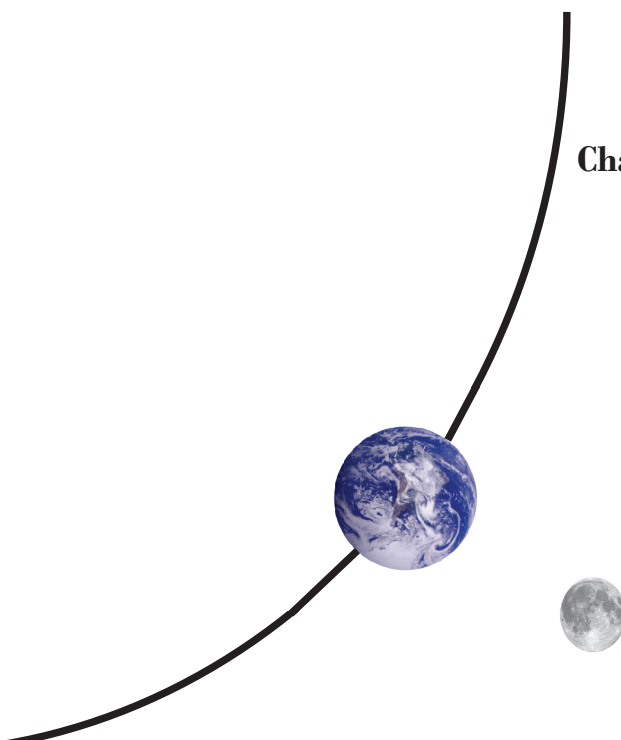
5 Lev. 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

6 Lev. 23:39

7 Deut. 16:13-4

8 Deut. 11:13-14 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

## Starting the New Year with New Moon nearest the Vernal Equinox



There is another school of thought among the churches of God that have rejected the calculated Jewish as authoritative that Unleavened Bread must be kept 15 days after the new moon closest to the vernal equinox, which means the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan must fall after the equinox. At least this rule has some historical precedent and would not place the feasts outside of their normal agricultural framework in the Promised Land. In Palestine, “the leap year was declared in order to prevent the full moon of Nisan, of account of the lateness of the spring, from occurring before the spring equinox (21 March).”<sup>1</sup> Schurer, in his famous *A History of the Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*, agrees. “The rule, according to which it was determined

whether to intercalate or not, was very simple. It required that care should be taken that Passover festival, to be celebrated at the full moon in Nisan (14<sup>th</sup> Nisan), should in any case fall after the vernal equinox, when the sun stood in the sign Aries.”<sup>2</sup> He goes on to state, “If one therefore toward the close of the year noticed that the Passover would fall before the vernal equinox, the intercalation of a month before Nisan would have to be resorted to.”<sup>3</sup>

Although the accepted tradition is that Unleavened Bread should start 15 days after the new moon closest to the vernal equinox,<sup>4</sup> this tradition is by no means unchallenged. “At Antioch from 328 to 342 CE, Passover was celebrated at full moon between 2 March and 30 March. Likewise in Egypt at the beginning of the fourth century, the date of Passover fluctuated between 25 February and 25 March in a common year and between 27 March and 25 April every third year which was a leap year.”<sup>5</sup> There was great upheaval over the calendar because the rabbinical beth-din’s decisions after the fall of the temple, “were discretionary, and days were intercalated as a matter of expediency, for instance to prevent the falling of the Day of Atonement on a Friday or Sunday. Witnesses could be coaxed or coerced, or their testimony appreciated according to the astronomical knowledge of the examiners. No wonder that some calendar decisions of the patriarch and his beth-din provoked the violent opposition of other sages... Yet, the rabbis professed that God Himself was observing the festivals according to the rabbinic calendar.”<sup>6</sup>

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1 Davies, W.D. and Finkelstein, Louis, *The Cambridge History of Judaism, 'Introduction: The Persian Period'* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1984, p. 65

2 Shurer, Emil, *The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, First Division*, Vol. 2 trans. John Macpherson, Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, p. 371

3 Ibid, p. 371

4 Zinberg, *Jewish Calendar Mystery Dispelled* p. 35

5 Cambridge History, p. 67

6 Ibid, p. 65

Many of these controversies and problems are caused by rigidly placing 7 leap years into a 19 year cycle of intercalation, which is known as the metonic cycle. Yet, the “system of intercalation was not fixed even in the second century after Christ. Julius Africanus indeed says that the Jews as well as the Greeks intercalated three months every eight years.”<sup>7</sup> Before any set cycle of intercalation was accepted, scholars seem to agree there was a more primitive calendar that was simply based on having Unleavened Bread start in the right season, at the beginning of summer. “And yet, primitive as this calendar was, it had this great advantage, that serious and persistent inaccuracies, such as in the course of the year inevitably crept into a calendar calculated upon an incorrect basis, were avoided. The complicated later Jewish calendar, calculated upon the nineteen years’ cycle, is said to have been introduced by the patriarch Hillel in the fourth century after Christ. Although this is not witnessed with absolute certainty, it is not improbable.”<sup>8</sup>

There are also major logistical issues involved with requiring the new year to start with the new moon nearest the equinox. Even if ancient Israel cared about the exact day of the equinox, which it appears they did not, they could not have calculated the exact day on which the equinox would occur in advance. There would have been a window of perhaps 3 or 4 or 5 days on which it would have fallen.

The Passover lamb had to be sacrificed at the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Imagining preparing to make the trek to Jerusalem for the Passover not just from Galilee, but from Rome. You get there on the 13<sup>th</sup> or even the 14<sup>th</sup> and after having traveled 60 or 1,000 miles, you are told, sorry, but the equinox has not occurred yet. You are informed that Passover and Unleavened Bread will have to put off for a month. So you would have to wait in Jerusalem for a month rather than return to Rome. If you somehow require that Unleavened Bread start on the new moon nearest the equinox, this scenario not only could have, but would have happened. This is the kind of regulation the Pharisees put in place, not a loving God.

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7 Shurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, p. 369

8 Ibid, p. 372

9 For more details, you can download *Jesus the True Passover* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

## Starting the New Year Counting backward from Tabernacles

Some teachers who have rejected the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative have even taken the absurd measure of determining rather or not the feast of tabernacles starts after the fall equinox because of their interpretation of Exodus 34:22. Mr. Nelte and others teach if the feast of Tabernacles starts before the autumn equinox, we need to count backward, in exactly the same manner the calculated Jewish calendar does, and then choose to intercalate a month. They have rejected a calendar that postpones God's annual feast because of pharisaical rules and then counts backwards in favor of one that uses their pharisaical rules and then counts backwards to fix the start of the year. Tying the feast seasons to the equinox is their attempt to create

a rule so they don't have to depend upon God to let them know when and how to observe His feasts.<sup>1</sup> Just as the Jewish leadership injected their rules of postponement into the calendar, thus distorting God's will, these teachers have injected their rules and have also distorted the calendar.

### Listening to the Still, Quite Voice of God

This author does not believe Jewish leadership under Hillel II deliberately distorted the calendar with postponements to thwart God's will, but instead added those rules to supposedly make God's will clearer and easier to understand. They believed adding postponements was something that God would have wanted, even if they were not in scripture. The teachers of the churches of God who inset their rules about the *tekufoth* are not deliberately trying to distort the calendar to thwart God's will, but instead they added their rules to supposedly make God's will clearer and easier to understand. To reject one set of Talmudic rules only to substitute them with another set is human nature, but God wants us to depend upon Him rather than upon tradition.

The argument about how the equinox affects the timing of the days of Unleavened Bread should be mute among those who reject the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar. There is no scriptural evidence that the equinox had any bearing on the timing of the start of the days of Unleavened Bread. The evidence that the fall equinox has something to do with the timing of the feast of Tabernacles has been shown to be fallacious because of the anachronistic use of the word *tekufoth*. History and tradition agree it is highly unlikely using the equinox as a point of delineation was part of the observed calendar. Instead, it

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

suggests that the use of the equinox in calendar calculations began to be practiced at the same time postponements began to be the foundation of the calculated Jewish calendar, in the time frame of two to three hundred CE.

People want to know the will and voice of God so they can follow His ways, but they often listen in the wrong places. God said to Elijah, “Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”<sup>2</sup> God was the king of Israel until they rejected Him.<sup>3</sup> God also told Israel He would let them know when the year started and they were to proclaim the start to God’s year, but people don’t want to leave God in charge. They prefer unscriptural rules and regulation over listening for the still, quiet voice of God. Given the history of the calculated Jewish calendar with its postponements and set intercalation cycle, this author has to agree with Karaite scholars that scripture dictates the start of the year is solely dependent upon winter changing into summer, but how do we determine this? A starting point may be that we know scripture states that summer starts with the month of Abib, which means green, tender ears (of barley).<sup>4</sup>

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2 1 King 19:11-2

3 1 Sam. 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

4 Strong, word 24, p. 1, from an unused root (meaning to be tender); green, i.e. a young ear of grain; hence, the name of the month Abib or Nisan:—Abib, ear, green ears of corn (not maize).



## The beginning of the year, Abib

### Exodus 12:2

One of the clearest and easiest to understand calendar ordinances listed in scripture is, “This month (*hodesh*) shall be unto you the beginning of months (*hodesh*): it shall be the first month (*hodesh*) of the year to you.”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, every Christian should also know the new year on the calculated Jewish calendar is the first of Tishri, not the first of Abib. Rosh Hashanah, the feast of Trumpets, is the Jewish new year. As Lasker and Lasker stated, the only month that matters is Tishri, not Abib, in the calculated Jewish calendar built upon the rules of postponement because all the rules are computed from the seventh month.<sup>2</sup>

The month of Abib just happens to start 177 days earlier according to the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar.

### A Civil New Year?

To combat the scriptural requirement that Abib 1 is the start of the new year, postponement apologists try to rely on a tradition of Tishri 1 being a supposed civil new year. Thus they create the fallacy of two different new years, one civil and one religious. What they usually don't point out is that the religious new year is dependent upon the civil, thus violating the scriptural statute of Ex. 12:2. What they also don't point out is that the concept of a civil new year is extra-biblical because it is not mentioned in scripture. Some have tried to use the announcement of the year of Jubilee, the year of release in the 50 year cycle, as evidence that there was a civil new year. These apologists have written that the year of Jubilee was announced in the fall, thus there was a civil new year. Yet scripture does not support these apologists' claims. Leviticus 25:8-9 states, “And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.”<sup>3</sup>

The year of Jubilee is indeed announced during the “fall” feast season, but not at the beginning of the month, the first of Tishri. It is announced on atonement, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishri. When asked if this means the civil new year actually starts on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishri, these apologist stated, “Of course not!” These apologists could not and to this day have not produce an answer when asked how an announcement on a day which is not the start of a month

1 Exod. 12:2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

2 Lasker and Lasker, *Behold, a Moon is born! How the Jewish Calendar Works* pp. 10-12

3 Lev. 25:8-9

or a year is proof that some civil new year exists in scripture. And how could an announcement made on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of a month make the first day of that month a new year is obviously a question they will not answer and will instead really on an unscriptural tradition.

The postponement apologists rely on liberal scholarship to support their creation of a civil new year because the term and even the idea of a civil new year being different than the religious new year is not found in scripture unless you plant the idea there. Liberal scholarship believes scripture is a mish mash of legends and good teachings written by men who were not under the inspiration of the creator God. Their belief system states that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, the twelve sons of Jacob were either legend or fiction, that the Passover was a syncretization of an unleavened bread ceremony of pagan farmers in the valley of the Jordan with the sacrifice of a lamb by pagan shepherds in the mountains at the full moon in spring and that miracles are nothing more than metaphors that never really happen.<sup>4</sup> This author rejects the basic tenants of liberal scholarship although I have used their research to find nuggets of insight, but always realizing their bias. Jubilees, the ultimate year of release was announced near the end of the 49<sup>th</sup> year of the 50 year cycle on the Day of Atonement because this was the day on which Israel knew they were reconciled with God.<sup>5</sup> They were reconciled and God announced He was freeing the people from their debts and slavery with the year of Jubilee. Jesus himself said that a major part of his mission was to preach about the about the salvation, the freedom, offered by God that was symbolized by the year of Jubilee.<sup>6</sup> To construe this announcement of God ultimate salvation as a civil new year does a great disservice to God's year of Jubilee

If Exodus 12:2 is to be accepted as authoritative, which this author believes it is, then the idea of a civil new year differing by half a year from Abib 1 is not just extra-biblical, but unbiblical. Tishri 1 is the establish Jewish new year, not Abib 1, in the calculated Jewish calendar. Examine any Gregorian or Jewish calendar and Tishri 1 is clearly listed as the Jewish new year, just as Chinese new year is listed on the Gregorian calendar and the Gregorian new year is listed as Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>. None of these new years, with the exception of Abib 1, are scriptural. The only part that Tishri 1 plays in the scriptural calendar is being the first day of the seventh month, while in the calculated Jewish calendar, it is the pivotal, the chief, the first and the only month that matters. Those who follow the calculated Jewish calendar observe a new year on Tishri 1 and do not observe it on Abib 1, rather they realize it or not, because it is built into the calculated Jewish calendar.

What does scripture mean when it ordains that the year starts with Abib in Exodus 12:2? Exodus 9 helps reveal what the definition of abib is. When God sent the plague of hail, "the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear (*abib*),<sup>7</sup> and the flax was

4 If you need an in-depth look at liberal, also known as critical, scholarship, you can download *Jesus, the True Passover* or *What is Liberal Scholarship* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

5 Lev. 16:30 For on that day shall *the priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that* ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

6 Luke 4:18-9 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

7 Strong, James, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Strong's H24 From an unused root

bolled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.”<sup>8</sup> The hail happened at least a week before the Passover and was perhaps two or three weeks before Passover. We know the Passover sacrifice is on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib. At that time of the plague of hail, the barley and flax were high enough to be destroyed, but the wheat crop was still short enough not to be destroyed by the hail. This scriptural definition also coincides with abib being defined as green, tender ears. “This noun refers to barley that is already ripe, but still soft, the grains of which are eaten either rubbed or roasted...Abib was also the early name (later Nisan) of the first month of the Jewish calendar (the month of Passover). In that month the barley came to ear, but the usual time of harvest was the second month (Iyyar).”<sup>9</sup>

The bible states the first month should be *Abib* and *Abib* should be when the barley is in green ears. We may use the equinoxes and the solstices to mark the start of our seasons and Jewish authorities anachronistically refer to the equinoxes as tekufoth, but none of these practices should have any more affect on the observed calendar than when the Chinese new year is. The new year starts when winter is over and summer has come and the most prominent sign of this is the green ears of barley.

### Seasons-Mow'ed

The *mow'ed*, the time of meeting which is often translated as season, must occur at the proper time according to scripture. Often when we see the word season in the Bible, we naturally think it is referring to four seasons, but that is not the case. Even if the word *mow'ed* only meant seasons, it would only be referring to only two seasons, summer and winter. However *mow'ed* does not mean simply a time of the year between astronomical or agricultural events. It is “a fixed time or season; spec. a festival; conventionally a year; by implication, an assembly (as convened for a definite purpose); technically the congregation; by extension, the place of meeting; also a signal (as appointed beforehand:-appointed (sign, time), place of, solemn) assembly, congregation, (set, solemn) feast, (appointed, due) season.”<sup>10</sup>

*Mow'ed* is translated into English as a variety of words, usually as appointed times or meeting place.<sup>11</sup> Harris et al define *mow'ed* as “a determined time or place without regard to the purpose of the designation. It may be the time for the birth of a child (Gen 17:21, 18:14, 21:2), the coming of a plague (Ex. 9:5), the season of a birds migration (Jer. 8:7), an appointed time (1Sam 13:8, 20:35), the time for a which a vision is intended (Hab. 2:3), the times of the end (Dan. 8:19), or the time for the festival (Lev. 23:2) and solemnities

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(meaning to *be tender*); *green*, that is a young *ear* of grain; hence the name of the month *Abib* or Nisan: - Abib, ear, green ears of corn.

8 Exod. 9:31-2

9 Harris et all, vol. 1, p. 3

10 Strong's, coded to 4150.

11 NAS Hebrew from Accordance- **4150. dEowom moed or moed or moadah** [417b]; from 3259; *appointed time, place, or meeting*:—appointed(3), appointed feast(3), appointed feasts(11), appointed festival(2), appointed meeting place(1), appointed place(1), appointed sign(1), appointed time(21), appointed times(8), appointment(1), assemblies(1), assembly(2), definite time(1), feasts(2), festal(1), fixed festivals(3), meeting(147), meeting place(1), meeting places(1), season(4), seasons(3), set time(1), time(3), times(1), times appointed(1).

(Deut. 31:10). The heavenly bodies are for determining the seasons (Gen 1:14, Ps 104:19). Each festival is a *mow'ed*, but collectively they are the 'feasts of the Lord' (Lev. 23:2, etc.)<sup>12</sup>

The general meaning of *mow'ed* is the proper time or place for something to happen. The rain coming when it helps the crops to grow is at the right *mow'ed*. But *mow'ed* is also the right time and place to meet, like for the annual feasts or to plan a war. The tabernacle was the tent of *mow'ed* or meeting. The annual festival days are the seasons (*mow'ed*), or the times to meet together, of God.

Those who state that for the feasts to occur in their season, they must have an exact relationship with the equinoxes (either the first of *abib* or the Passover occurring after the equinox or more ludicrously, that the feast of Tabernacles must start after the fall equinox) have no biblical foundation for these statements. That is why *mow'ed* can be translated as the Lord's feast, as the appointed time for the feast, or the actual congregating for the feast. By this definition, the "spring", or more appropriately early summer, feast occurs when winter has ended and summer has started. The most obvious sign of this is when the barley crop has met the criteria for the harvest to begin, not at an exact date in March or April.

### When should the Year Begin?

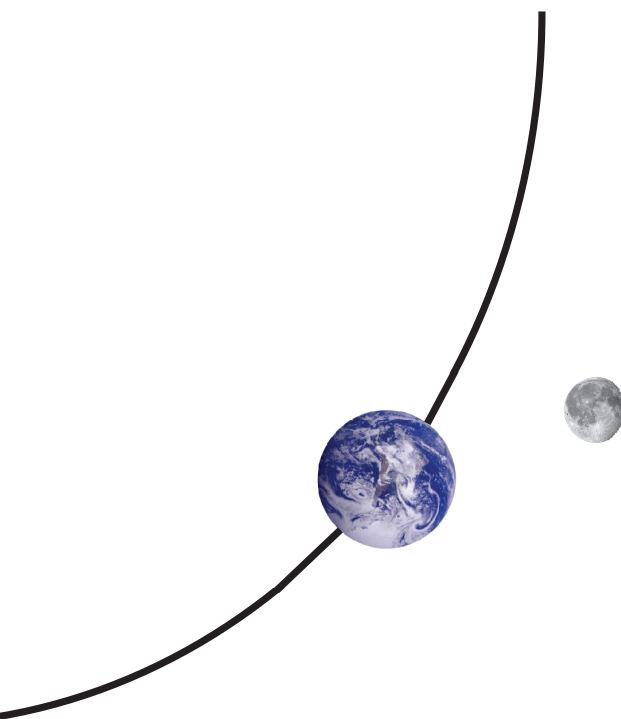
Obviously the year needs to start with Abib one, but how do we determine what Abib 1 is? By choosing the nearest new moon to the spring equinox, as those who kept Passover on March 22, 1997 did, you have the "spring" and "fall" feasts very early. But keeping the Passover on April 21st in 1997 had the "fall" feast days occur very late. If we observe Passover and Unleavened Bread in the month of the first new moon after the equinox, they could fall as late as 42 days after the spring equinox. This would cause the last day of the feast of Tabernacles to be 42 days after the fall equinox, approximately the first of November. This late date would have made it very difficult for a farmer in ancient Israel to plow when he returned to his field after the feast because Israel would be entering the rainy season. To alleviate this problem if the feast did start this late, after the crops had been gathered, the farmers could have plowed before they left for the feast, thus avoiding the rainy season. But if Tabernacles occurred early, then some or all of the "fall" crops would have to be abandoned to worship God. Of course, if Israel kept Abib at the right time, God promised to bless them by having the "fall" harvest and winter rains occurring at optimal times. If God starts summer, as He certainly promised an obedient Israel He would, at the best time, then the feast of Tabernacles will also occur at the optimal time to allow the ingathering of the harvest.

The wavesheaf offering is also performed during the days of Unleavened bread. Another advantage that God built into having the end of winter determine when to intercalate the thirteenth month is the "spring" harvest would be ready to start, thus ensuring there is a sheaf to wave.

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12 Harris et al, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* vol. 1 p. 388-9

## Where is the Start of the Year Determined From?



If the year should start by observing the end of winter, should the beginning of the year be determined locally or at a central point, which was the method used in biblical times when the coming of summer in Jerusalem determined the start of the year? We know that Israel was required to keep the “spring” feast at the beginning of what scripture refers to as summer and the “fall” feasts occurred at the end of summer. There is great symbolism attached to the annual feasts that neither Israel nor we would completely understand if we did not realize that the festivals were tied to the cycle of the harvest in the Promised Land. We know that God planned for the nation of Israel to grow.

God commanded, “For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.”<sup>1</sup> We also know that God allowed people to keep the feasts locally if it was not possible to make the journey to Jerusalem, the place where God placed his name for over a millennia. “When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, God allowed for the feasts to be observed locally. However, the timing of when to keep these feasts was based upon when they were to be kept in Jerusalem. As has been shown throughout this book, the word of when to keep the feasts went forth from Jerusalem. “Only in Palestine was it permitted to compute and proclaim new moon days and embolistic years (*ed. note*-Maimonides used the term embolistic years for years when Adar II was intercalated).<sup>3</sup> It is true that God’s called out people in Rome or Britain may not have had the symbolism of the feast cycle happening at the same time they were observing the feasts. However, one of the purposes of the calendar is set the time for certain events to occur. Scripture states that unleavened bread occurs between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> day of the first month and Trumpets occurred on the 1st day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. Atonement is on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the Feast of Tabernacles starts on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, irrespective of season. The grain may not have been ripened in Britain until a month after it was ripe in Jerusalem. Historically we know that there were not multiple Jewish calendars that were

1 Exod. 34:24 For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

2 Deut. 12:20-1

3 Maimonides, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. 5

synced to the local harvest, but because it was important to meet together at the same time, the people followed the calendar set by the harvest cycle in Jerusalem.

A look at the southern hemisphere helps substantiate the view that the end of winter in Jerusalem should be the gauge to judge intercalation. The “spring” feast occurs during the beginning of winter and the “fall” feasts occur end of winter in the southern hemisphere. This mandates the “spring” and “fall” holy days be out of sync with the harvest in the southern hemisphere. If it were simply the season that determined when the feasts should occur, half the earth would be on another schedule, keeping a different calendar. The 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib in Jerusalem would actually be the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishri in Sydney if the symbolism of the harvest were more important than having a unified celebration of the annual feasts. The idea of two calendars set 6 month out of sync gives rise to innumerable problems. Should the islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, which never have the kind of harvest cycle that occurs in Jerusalem, follow the calendar for Jerusalem time or Sydney time? Should Britain have its own calendar since their grain will ripen a month later than in Jerusalem? Consider the problem of a business man who spends 6 months a year in Sydney and 6 months a year in Jerusalem. He would celebrate one set of feasts twice a year and never celebrate the other feasts. This author contends this is not the Godly thing to do. Asking such open ended question may causes problems with Christians not sure about what to do, but these types of questions were answered when the Messiah walked the Earth. Jerusalem was used to start the month and the year, even if it did present difficulties in both the mechanics and typology of the year for those who were scattered outside of Jerusalem. These types of difficulties mandate that some place must be used as a reference point to determine when the feasts occur. Jerusalem is the obvious spot because of its historical, scriptural and prophetic importance as well as being the reference point at the time of Jesus.

Scripture states, “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”<sup>4</sup> However, this scripture only points out how important Jerusalem will be in the future. What is more important is how important it was in the past. Scripture validates that Jerusalem should be the reference point for the scriptural calendar. Lev. 23:10 states, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest.”<sup>5</sup> The wavesheaf offerings was performed in the land that God gave Israel. It was not to be done in the dessert, in Rome, in Sydney, or in Los Angeles. God granted the rains to bring the barley into abib in Jerusalem at the right time. The feast of Unleavened Bread starts on Abib 15<sup>th</sup> and when the barley is abib for Jerusalem, which is at the heart of the promised land. Therefore God set the time to begin the feasts, the *mow’ed*, the right time to congregate. There is no doubt this is speculation, but given the inherent difficulties of keeping multiple calendars around the world,

4 Isa. 2:3

5 Lev. 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:



the historical precedent of a single calendar based from Jerusalem during the second temple period, and the importance that God places in meeting together, this author believes it is valid speculation.

Proponents of observing the timing of the feasts locally point out the problem that Israel would have had when they kept Passover in the dessert, without sending scouts to Jerusalem to determine if the barley was abib. Although this statement is true, it overlooks that God said when Israel would enter the Promised Land, they would keep the feasts according to the cycle of the harvest. It also ignores that God was in the dessert with Israel, talking face to face with Moses and directly guiding the steps of the people. It also ignores that God said things would change when the people entered the Promised Land.<sup>6</sup> “Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD.”<sup>7</sup>

So when should the feast of Unleavened Bread be celebrated by God’s called out people today? The Karaite Jews have the right idea. The only scriptural indication of when the “spring” feast should occur is the nature of the very month that it falls in, the month of green, tender ears. The Karaites have planted beds of barley in various areas around Jerusalem as well as observing wild and domestic barley throughout Israel. The yearly abib search has revealed there is some variation of when the barley was abib, but in the last decade and a half, there has only been controversy once if the barley was abib or not at the end of Adar. At the end of Adar, if it appears there will be barley for the wavesheaf offering, Adar II is not intercalated. If it is not ripe, Adar II is intercalated, giving the barley another month to ripen.

In an ideal world or a world where people could come to a reasonable understanding of how to intercalate Adar II, the year would start when the barley was abib in Jerusalem. It appears to be the only biblical method of intercalation in scripture and is the easiest way to determine the end of winter and the beginning of summer in Jerusalem. However, we do not live in an ideal world or, sometimes it seems, even a reasonable world. The majority of God’s called out people follow the calculated Jewish calendar with its postponements and 19 year intercalation cycle.

This author also believes a major part of the annual feasts is congregating together, which is also emphasized by the feasts’ name in Hebrew, *mow’ed*. There is an abundance of evidence

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6 Lev. 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

Exod. 34:24 For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

7 Deut. 12:8-11



that postponements are unbiblical, rabbinic traditions which move the annual Sabbaths in exactly the same manner as nominal Christianity moved the weekly Sabbath to Sunday. Therefore, this author believes it is wrong for any of God's called out people to be practicing postponements. However, the intercalation of the leap months is much less clear. For now, this author and his family will continue to follow the calculated Jewish calendar's 19 year intercalation cycle because I believe it is important to meet together with other Christians during these annual feasts. Christians can observe the annual feasts without postponements with those who do keep postponements because the love of God can shine through, as Romans 14 shows. As more and more people who hunger and thirst for righteousness are discovering the error of the calculated Jewish calendar, the feasts are a particularly good place to discuss such topics. However, if a large group of God's people kept the annual feast out of cycle with the calculated Jewish calendar, but in sync with the barley harvest being abib in Israel, my family would probably congregate with them.

Herb Solinsky's dogmatic approach that we must observe the days of Unleavened Bread based upon the first crescent after the spring equinox has no real scriptural merit. This author does not doubt the sincerity of Mr. Solinsky or his followers, a number of which I know personally. However because Herb Solinsky was one of the few brave souls in the churches of God who attempted to deal honestly with the problems of the calculated Jewish calendar, his research has gone largely un-scrutinized. Many apologists for the calculated Jewish calendar have dismissed Mr. Solinsky's research out of hand using the supposed authority of the Pharisees sitting the seat of Moses or warnings of disunity or, if all else failed, invoking the name of Herbert Armstrong. However, a real examination of Mr. Solinsky's work reveals he has stated many times that the ancients knew and could calculate exactly when the spring equinox was. Yet he has never attempted to carry out these calculations.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Solinsky's followers usually observe Unleavened Bread long after the ears of barley were in abib in Israel. But more importantly, they often met for the annual festivals at a different time than most of God's called out people. This author does not wish to sound wishy washy, but given the propensity for bombastic statement of doctrine by supposed teachers in the church of God movement, he hopes little less dogma and a little more love may open Christians eyes to the fact that the calculated Jewish calendar is broken.

Many who know this author would laugh at idea that this author is wishy washy on doctrine. However, scripture defines *mow'ed* as the right time to congregate. Christians today are not meeting at the wrong time as Israel under Jeroboam did. Christians are generally trying to walk the path towards a closer relationship with God. Other Christians, with their weaknesses and frailties can help us with our walk and we can help them, but not if we segregate ourselves over areas that are gray.

This author believes there are black and white issues, like keeping the 10 commandments or not, that will separate people. Those who follow the biblical statute of keeping the seventh day Sabbath holy will have a very hard time worshipping with Sunday keepers because they congregate on different days. This is not to insinuate Christians should not work with

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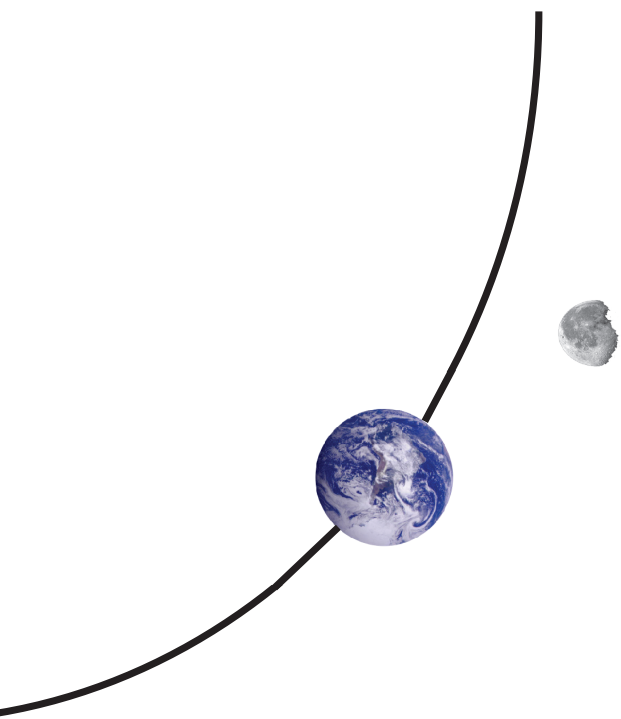
<sup>8</sup> Mr. Solinsky relies on computer calculations and external references to determine when the equinox is. As a truthful man, he freely admits he has never carried out these calculations.

others to do good, including with Buddhists, Baptists, and Bahai. Paul makes clear that Christians can and should compromise on some issues in Romans 14. All Christians will have different lines in the sand. They are going to draw them on a number of different topics. This author has drawn a line in the sand that he and his family will not observe the postponements, but we can meet with people who do on both a weekly and yearly basis. Some, such as Fred Coulter, would call this stance wrong because we are not following what we see as true doctrine at all cost. Others, such as Ron Dart, might contend that none of these calendar issues matters because doctrine separate, while love unites. Mr. Dart is correct that doctrine can separate, but the writings of Paul make it clear that sometimes separation is called for and sometimes it is not. This author is trying to be consistent and walk the straight and narrow path between these two divergent ideas about how doctrine should effect what Christianity is and how Christians should live.

For those who reject the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar, the most obvious place to start the year is Jerusalem and the most obvious time to start the year is the new moon after the end of winter in Jerusalem.



## The Problem of Observation and Tishri One



The record of the second temple is clear that the new moon was determined by observation. Apologists for the calculated Jewish calendar seem to contend that observation of the new moon on Tishri one is and was unpractical because it would be too difficult keep the feast of Trumpets as a feast day under an observed calendar.<sup>1</sup> As is pointed out later in this paper, it appears the standard way of handling this problem in biblical times was to keep the feast of Trumpets as a two day feast.<sup>2</sup> “In the time of the Sanhedrin, when New Moon Days were determined by observation, the rule was as follows: The people in Palestine and in places that could be reached in ample time by messengers of Tishri, celebrated (each of) the holidays one day only;

while those living in more distant places that could be reached in time by messengers of Tishri used to celebrate the holidays for two days, because there were in doubt, inasmuch as they did not know which day the Palestinian court had declared as New Moon Day.”<sup>3</sup> So areas that could not receive the message about when the first visible crescent was seen over Jerusalem kept a tandem feast day. However, areas that could get the message simple observed the feast of Trumpets on the day the new moon was observed.

What about the problem of trying to keep a feast day on the same day the new moon would be declared, especially when the new month might not be declared until noon time of that day because the Sanhedrin might not have met until the morning after the first crescent? As Maimonides writes, “If the court itself observed the new crescent at the end of the 29<sup>th</sup> day before the appearance of a star on the night of the 30<sup>th</sup> days, the court might proclaim Mekuddas (*ed. note*-the new moon), since it was still daytime.”<sup>4</sup> Thus it is likely on what would be expected to be the first of Tishri, extra diligence was paid to observe the new moon and declare it as soon as possible so the nation could prepare. In reality, the observation of the new moon at the very end of the 29<sup>th</sup> day would simple have allowed the 31<sup>st</sup>, which became the second of Tishri, not to be observed as a holy day because the 30<sup>th</sup> would have been observed no matter what if they were prepared to celebrate two days in a row. If the witnesses had not reported that there was new moon by the time of the afternoon of the 30<sup>th</sup> day, even if the moon should have been visible, the first of Tishri would automatically be declared as the being on the 31<sup>st</sup> day.<sup>5</sup>

1 Dart, Ron, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*. Others as well.

2 A thorough examination of 1Sam. 20 shows that this procedure was practiced back to at least the time of Saul, the first king of Israel.

3 Maimonides, Moses, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. 23

4 Maimonides, Moses, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. 9

5 Ibid, p. 11

Even in ancient times when communications were non-existent compared today's standards, the new moon was declared by observation of the first visible crescent over the holy land and that message was communicated to the rest of the world. If this could be done successfully 2,000 years ago, there is no reason in the age of the internet why the same type of notification system cannot be used today. And the Karaites have proven that it can be done in a safe, precise, and timely manner.

### Starting the Month

If the year starts when the barley is in abib in Jerusalem, then Jerusalem should also be used to start each month. The crescent new moon can be physically observed locally, but is that what scripture implies when it states that we should observe the new moon? This author contends it is not for a number of reasons. Choosing Jerusalem as the starting point for the calendar makes us dependent upon either observers reporting when the first visible crescent becomes visible over Jerusalem or we must calculate when the first crescent will most likely be visible. However, this is the historical precedent for how the new moon was proclaimed during scriptural times.

If we ignore the historical precedent of using Jerusalem as the reference point for determining the start of the new month and the new year, there are serious problems with having a unified celebration of God's feasts. It is entirely possible, and in today's technological world, even highly probable, for a person to observe the first visible crescent over Oregon a day before it could be seen over Florida. This actually happened to us when we met Jack Lane and others in Florida for a feast of Tabernacles. The Lane's congregation celebrated the Feast on Trumpets the morning after they saw the first crescent locally. They traveled to Florida, where it would have been impossible to see the first crescent on the same night they observed it in Oregon. If they kept the Feast of Trumpets on their 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishri, which they did, then they had to keep it one full day ahead of those who lived in Florida or Jerusalem. Of course we meet together with no issue, but this type of problem should not be occurring on God's *mow'ed*. All of the arguments about uniformity used to support the calculated Jewish calendar can and should be used to have unity when we congregate on the *mow'ed*, as long as we don't have to give up following scriptural statutes to do it.

God gave us His feast to observe on a regular basis. The historical precedent is to use the area around Jerusalem, the Promised Land, as the starting point of festival observance. Those who are in favor of local observance of the first visible crescent for determining the start of the month ignore these problems. They contend since we keep the weekly Sabbath locally by starting Sabbath observance at the end of Friday, we should also keep the annual feasts by local observance of the crescent new moon. Most of them contend this will prepare us for a time when we will be persecuted and time keeping will be very difficult. Proponents of local observance of the new moon have told me keeping the new moon locally will prepare them for this eventuality. This author prefers to cross that bridge when it comes and instead concentrate on what is the best practice we can follow to allow us to meet together and obey all the biblical ordinances and an observed calendar using Jerusalem as an observation point is the best instrument to allow this to happen.

Some proponents of local observation of the first visible crescent suggest that all Sabbaths, including the weekly Sabbath, are actually observed for 48 hours. They contend that since someone in Hawaii actually starts observing the weekly Sabbath at about the same time someone in Japan is ending their observance of the Sabbath, you can count the Sabbath as being 48 hours long today. This is a really juicy rationalization. It also unnecessarily obfuscates the issue.

God granted us intelligence to make judgments and expects us to make those judgments. If you observed the feast of Trumpets on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of September in Oregon because you observed the first crescent on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup>, but I did not observe it until the 30<sup>th</sup> of September because the new moon was not visible over Boston until the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, we did not celebrate it on the same day. The 29<sup>th</sup> of September is not the same day as the 30<sup>th</sup> of September. One of the main purposes of a calendar, any calendar, is to keep track of elapsed time. The idea that a feast can be celebrated on two consecutive days, yet God sees it as the same day is simply not logical. It is two different days. Also, proponents of local declaration of the new moon overlook the fact that if it is cloudy in Hawaii, then the new moon might not be declared until another 24 hour period has elapsed, thus it is possible that local observance would lead to a 72 hour period that God would have to see as one very long feast day. This is a very large problem for those who wish to practice local observance of the feasts.

Proponents of observing the first crescent locally show that people had up to 10 days to travel to Jerusalem to give corrected information to the Sanhedrin about sighting the first crescent.<sup>6</sup> Although this is very true, it again points out that the area around Jerusalem was used for setting calendar ordinances, not Britain or Rome. Therefore the support for choosing Jerusalem as the starting point for both the month and the year is even stronger.

Any conclusions about when to intercalate Adar II and how to observe the new moon at the start of each month must be made by logic and can only be guided by scripture because the Bible does not state exactly how to intercalate a month in detail. It states that God would expand Israel's borders, but never explains how to observe His feasts or what calendar to follow when there is no place where He is placing His name, as is the case today.

It is a real shame the issue of postponements has not been dealt with more forthrightly by various churches of God because then the gray areas of the calendar could be resolved by attempting to reason together. It is possible to stop following certain portions of the oral law, which the calculated Jewish calendar is part of, and not cause great disunity. The Karaites have set the example of following *solo scriptura*, even when it comes to setting the time to observe the feasts of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Maimonides, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. 15







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# A Gospel of the Calendar?

### Should a Church Emphasize their Calendar over the Gospel of Jesus?

**A**dar II was intercalated at the end of 1997 according to the calculated Jewish calendar. This intercalation split some of God's people apart for the celebration of His feasts. We had friends who decided at the last minute they would keep the feast a month earlier than us in 1997. This was unfortunate for us, although they had a profitable feast. We had other friends who kept the feasts a month earlier than the vast majority of God's called out people in 2000. However, I believe the leadership of the churches of God bares the majority of the responsibility for this separation because they have systematically avoided dealing with the postponements by ratio-

nalizing them away or proclaiming that unity should come above all else. Many people who have discovered how wrong the postponements are now unwilling to work with other Christians in resolving the problem of intercalation and there is no doubt this can be a problem.

Too many people have become associated with a church of God whose main message is that they know what God's true calendar is and nobody else does. The calendar is not the gospel message. Nor should it ever be substituted for that message. Any group or groups preaching the calendar more than any other issue should be approached with great care because the Bible does not specify when and how to intercalate the leap month in great detail. Some have taken advantage of this fact and reverted to techniques learned in the WorldWide Church of God to force their opinion on others, usually with bombastic teaching and not-so-veiled threats.

The errant preaching of the "gospel of the true calendar" is done by first setting the stage. We are threatened, "WE DO NOT have 15 or 20 more years left before the tribulation. The end of this age is now very near"<sup>1</sup> This threat was written more than 16 years ago in 1997. Therefore this prophecy can already be deemed as false. We are then given scripture out of context. "Those who postpone passover in 1997 by one month will find as Hosea stated in verses 6-7 of Chapter 5, 'The (the shepherds) shall go with their flocks and herds (congregations) they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the Lord, for they have begotten pagan children. Now shall a month devour them and their heritage' (Hosea 5:6-7) It behooves you to 'PROVE ALL THINGS' before it is too late."<sup>2</sup> Proving all things is always a good idea, but to do that you have to look at scripture in the context and definitely

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1 Russell, James, *Prove All Things*, Vol. 4 ,issue 2, Feb. 97, p. 1

2 Russell, p. 4-5

reject the teachings of false prophets, which this teacher, Mr. James Russell, has proven to be time and time again.

Finally, the point is driven home by supposedly showing how God is backing up this ‘teachers’ ordinance with signs and wonders. “P.S. POINT TO PONDER! Why was there an eclipse on the first day of the feast of Tabernacles in 1996 (Sept. 27 evening before) and two more will occur in 1997, one on the First day of Unleavened Bread March 23, 1997 and on the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles Sept. 16, 1997. IS GOD TELLING US SOMETHING??”<sup>3</sup> (*ed. note*-All formatting done by the original author).

Statements about the end of the age being right around the corner, even to the point of setting dates, are simply unscriptural and in error. Mr. Russell of the Church of God in Truth follows the long established tradition in the churches of God that if you do not follow what the authority, the one in charge of the supposedly one true church, has to say, God will spit you out of his mouth. These threats are unwarranted when directed towards God’s people. It is unfortunate the students of Herbert W. Armstrong still apply his high pressure techniques in an attempt to try to force people into line rather than convincing them with the Word of God and with love. Both John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ used stinging words against the leadership of Israel that had lead God’s people away from Him, but they both showed love, compassion, and understanding for the people.

Those who cry the end is less than a specified period of time away are advised to re-examine Matt. 24:26<sup>4</sup> and numerous verses talking about false prophets. When verses like Hosea 5:6-7 are used, they should be taken in context. Hosea 5 is a prophecy for the northern tribes of Israel, who in their pride and arrogance had ignored God and his ways for centuries. They were not trying to seek God, but when disaster fell and they tried to seek Him, they were told it would be too late. It is likely the month Hosea is referring to is a religious practice that would destroy the people was referring to Jeroboam’s practice of deliberately keeping the feasts one month late so the people would not journey to Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> This should not be confused with a dispute over the correct way to intercalate the leap month, especially when such disputes leave the two side in agreement more often than not. To juxtapose this prophecy with the turmoil surrendering the intercalation of a month by God’s people who are trying to seek his will is not warranted.

### **Astronomical signs and the Calendar**

The physics of eclipses are quite easy to understand, although the ancients of old were often

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3 Russell, *Prove All Things, Faint Crescent: New Moon or Pagan Symbol*, p. 5

4 Matt. 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

5 1Kgs. 12:28-32 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

alarmed by them.<sup>6</sup> A solar eclipse is caused when the moon passes directly between the earth and sun, as discussed in the section on calendar basics. A lunar eclipse occurs when the moon enters the shadow of the earth. “It has been estimated that the maximum possible number of eclipse per year is 7 (five solar and two lunar, or four solar and three lunar), and the minimum possible is two, (both lunar).”<sup>7</sup> Thus having two lunar eclipses near the annual sabbaths is not only possible, but this pattern will be repeated every 18 years and 11 1/2 days.<sup>8</sup> Thus the signs and wonders extolled by the church of God in Truth were not really truthfully presented.

Also unwarranted is the fuss made about the eclipses of 1996 and 1997. As pointed out in the section of calendar basics, eclipses occur 6 months apart about 2/3’rds of the time. But this is to be expected from a church whose “gospel” message is the calendar. The church of God in Truth is appropriately found at <http://www.postponements.com>.

Mr. Russell also teaches that the new moon is the conjunction and not the first crescent. Their contention is since the pagans believe the new moon is the first crescent, than the new moon cannot be the first crescent.<sup>9</sup> This argument is even more unsound than then those who use attempt to use hadash to prove the new moon is the first crescent.

As for the crescent being a pagan symbol, this author will point out many professing Christians idolize Mary above Christ in a systematic way in the Catholic Church, a practice that is unbiblical. However, these same people claim Jesus was the Messiah. Should we reject Jesus being the Messiah just because of these wrong or pagan practices? Buddhists believe in re-incarnation, yet they also believe murder is wrong. Would the teachers who state we are supposed to reject all pagan teachings have us believe it is okay to murder? The Babylonians believed in a worldwide flood, depicted in the epic of Gilgamesh, yet they did not believe in Noah nor the Hebrew scriptures. Since the Babylonians believed in a worldwide flood, should we edit the story of Noah out of scripture? This type of logic is beyond flawed, but sadly, some have actually embraced this as real scholarship. This author does not accept the practice of disproving a doctrine with character assassination. All Christians should examine the facts from scripture and external sources if required to determine what God wants us to do and we should not care if our religious practices match or do not match other group’s observances. Calling people pagans and stating Christians are worshipping another God if they believe the month starts with the first crescent is not accurate or charitable.

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6 Moore, Patrick, *A Survey of the Moon*, W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 1963, p. 31

7 Ibid, p. 28

8 Ibid, p. 28

9 Russell, James, *Prove All Things, Faint Crescent: New Moon or Pagan Symbol*, Vol 4, issue 1, 1996, pp. 10-12



### The New Moon was observed in Scripture

**G**od informed Israel in Exodus 12:2 that the new moon was used as a demarcation point for the start of the year and explained how months started.<sup>1</sup> Egypt kept a solar calendar. It is possible the children of Abraham had known about a lunar calendar and simply forgotten it or it may be that God is revealing this for the first time. But from that point forward, Israel observed the new moons. The new moons were also celebrated throughout biblical times, together with the weekly Sabbath and annual feasts. They were celebrated at the time of Elisha<sup>2</sup> and by Hezekiah.<sup>3</sup> The biblical practice of observing the new moons was continued by Ezra<sup>4</sup> and Nehemiah.<sup>5</sup> This practice continued in

the time of Christ and the apostles and a calendar including the new moons was observed at Colossae.<sup>6</sup> Scripture states the new moon should be observed and the scriptural pattern shows the new moon should be celebrated by Christians today. However, exactly what this observation and celebration entails, as with other calendar specifics, is not clearly defined in scripture.

How should we observe and celebrate the new moon today? Some Christians believe observing the new moon means going out and looking for the new moon. Some Christians keep the new moon with the same ordinances and regulations as the weekly Sabbath. And yet others celebrate other ways. I have been personally told by many ministers in the church of God tradition that Col. 2:16 does not support celebrating the new moons today because such celebrations were never a part of the traditions of the churches of God, so they are not going to start now. As oxymoronic as it sounds, these same ministers use Col. 2:16 as a proof text that Christians should observe the weekly Sabbath and annual feasts today.

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1 Ex 12:2

2 2Kgs. 4:23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

3 2Chr. 31:3 He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD.

4 Ezra 3:5 And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD.

5 Neh. 10:33 For the showbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

6 Col. 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

**New Moon as Sabbath?**

The proponents of keeping the new moons with the same work restrictions as the weekly Sabbath usually use 1 Samuel 20 and Amos 8 to advance their theological point. 1 Samuel 20 shows David would be missed at a celebration at the king's court on a new moon.<sup>7</sup> And, as stated earlier, there are also a number of verses in the Bible that have sabbaths, new moons, and annual feasts in the same list.<sup>8</sup> All of these verses seem to suggest the new moons were feast days or celebrations, just as the weekly feast, the seventh day Sabbath, and the annual feast were celebrations. Amos 8 even seems to suggest these new moon feasts had ordinances similar to the weekly or annual sabbaths. However, a closer examination of these verses leaves little doubt this is not the case.

**Amos 8**

There was a no buying or selling allowed during the new moon mentioned in Amos 8:5. Although there is no mention of work restrictions, this verse seems to state there were some limitations on what people should do on the day of the new moon. But should we take this one example and use it as a law? Paul wrote it was better not to marry in 1Cor. 7:8,<sup>9</sup> yet we know we must look at what he wrote in context to see what he really meant when he wrote that. Therefore, let us examine Amos 8 in context.

Thus hath the Lord GOD shown unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence. Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?<sup>10</sup>

The Israelites of Amos' time may have made an outward appearance of keeping God's way, often called playing church today, but their hearts were far from God as they cheated and stole at every opportunity. Verses one and two of Amos 8 set the time of year. This new moon was at the time of the harvest of summer fruit. This would have started about a month before the feast of Tabernacles and lasted until the feast of Tabernacles. There is only one new moon during that time, the first of Tishri, the feast of Trumpets.

7 1Sam. 20:5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.

1Sam. 20:18 Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

Amos 8:5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

8 2Kings 4:23, 1Chr. 23:31, 2Chr. 2:4, 8:13, Is. 1:13, 66:23, Ez 45:17, 46:1,3,6, Hosea 2:11, Neh. 10:33, Col. 2:16

9 1Cor. 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

10 Amos 8:1-6

The reader may wonder why Amos would be warning Israel not to buy and sell on the feast of Trumpets, a time that scripture sets aside as special, without any servile work. Thus sellers should not have been selling anyway. This author knows why Amos could have written this about the feast of Trumpets by examining my recent past, back to 1995. My wife and I joined our good friends Leslie and Russell in Puerto Valletta at our last feast of Tabernacles with the WorldWide Church of God. There was a major earthquake on the first day of Tabernacles and all services were cancelled because the building had to be inspected for safety. As we sat around the pool to keep out of the heat of the day, we noticed a large number of members of church members buying and selling on this day, something that would have been unthinkable just 1 year before. I am not referring to buy a drink at the bar, but at calling vendors over off the beach to buy their merchandize. Also an examination of the both the major and minor prophets shows Israel rarely followed God's ways.

Without looking at the context, this author understands how Amos 8 might be construed as an ordinance forbidding commerce on any new moon. However, the context shows that it must be the seventh new moon of the year, the Feast of Trumpets. But even if the new moon in Amos 8 is not the feast of Trumpets, it would be an incredible stretch to state that no servile work could be done on any new moon day. It is possible that Amos 8 is a special new moon ordinance that forbids commerce, but allows other kinds of servile work, like plow fields. One thing we know for certain is that scripture suggests there should be at least two, if not three, verses clearly stating the same thing to set dogma.<sup>11</sup>

A second witness testifying from scripture that the new moon does not have to be observed with the same restrictions as the weekly Sabbath is Neh. 10. The reforms of Ezra and of Nehemiah 200 years after Amos allow us to determine if the new moon has special ordinances, like the forbidding of commerce or servile work, since such statutes are not listed elsewhere in scripture. Nehemiah 10: 31 states, "And *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt."<sup>12</sup> There was to be no buying or selling of goods on any of God's feast days, either the annual feasts nor the weekly Sabbath. The new moon is conspicuously absent from this list and it was not an over site. Nehemiah goes on to write, "Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy *things*, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and *for* all the work of the house of our God."<sup>13</sup>

The Israelites taxed themselves to pay for the services in the temple and Nehemiah expressly mentions paying for the new moon celebrations, yet he did not ban commerce on the new

<sup>11</sup> Deut. 19:5 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

<sup>2</sup> Cor. 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

<sup>12</sup> Neh. 10:31

<sup>13</sup> Neh. 10:32-3



moons. Ezra and Nehemiah were correcting the wrongs listed by Amos that resulted in Israel's captivity. They were teaching the people how to live godly lives. The people were not allowed to buy or sell on the weekly Sabbath nor on the annual feasts,<sup>14</sup> just as Amos mentioned, but the new moon is not on this list. Therefore the most likely explanation of Amos 8 is that the new moon referred to is the feast of Trumpets.

If the new moon of Amos 8 was the feast of Trumpets, as it appears to be, then Israelites in Amos' time were even upset they could not cheat and steal during the times of bounty, the ingathering of the summer harvest during the new moon at the feast of Trumpets. Even if the new moon in Amos 8 is a new moon other than the first of Tishri, the banning of commerce, but not servile work, and the lack of statutes about observing the new moons as feasts means that there is no scriptural evidence that the new moons should be celebrated like a weekly Sabbath or even the like the annual feasts, without servile work.

### **The New Moon as Sabbath? cont.**

Wade Cox and others believe that God's called out people should treat the new moon as equivalent to the weekly Sabbath, especially with its injunction against servile work.<sup>15</sup> Leviticus 23 states, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* my feasts."<sup>16</sup> The new moons are not listed in Leviticus 23 with the feasts of the Lord. Mr. Cox states, "The New Moons are not listed in Leviticus 23 because that is not a complete list of the days of worship of Israel and the Sacred calendar. Numbers 28 and 29 is the only complete list of the days of worship. The Wave Sheaf offering is included in Leviticus 23 even though it is not a Holy Day because it is integral to the Feast of Unleavened Bread and is the primary element of the Harvest of God. The Wave Sheaf offering must be kept as well as the feasts."<sup>17</sup>

This author takes issue with the statement Leviticus 23 does not contain all the feasts of the Lord and that Numbers 28-9 is the only complete list of God's feast days. First, Mr. Cox ignores his own statement that Numbers 28 and 29 are the, "only complete list of the days of worship,"<sup>18</sup> when he adds the wavesheaf to this list feasts, yet the wavesheaf is not mentioned in Numbers 28 or 29. Secondly, Leviticus 23 specifically proclaims the feasts of the God to Israel. The weekly Sabbath is the first feast of the Lord in Leviticus 23. All the annual feasts with all their ordinances are then listed in Lev 23. Although the wave sheaf offering is not a day when servile work was forbidden, thus it is not separate feast. It was, however, an ordinance tied to a feast the entire nation of Israel had to follow. The people could not eat any of that year's grain harvest until the sheaf had been waved.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Neh. 10:31

<sup>15</sup> Wade Cox is the Coordinator General of the Christian Churches of God at <http://www.ccg.org/officers/wade-cox.html>

<sup>16</sup> Lev. 23:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* my feasts.

<sup>17</sup> Cox, Wade, *God's Calendar*, Christian Church of God, p. 6

<sup>18</sup> Cox, Wade, *God's Calendar*, Christian Church of God, p. 6

<sup>19</sup> Lev. 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Not all of these feasts days listed in Lev. 23 were days when no servile could be done. Not only was the wavesheaf day listed, but there are the 5 days between the two holy convocations of both the feasts of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles that are special, but not Sabbath-like. Lev. 23 even ends with, “And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Lev. 23 states it is going to list the feasts of the Lord, it lists them, then it states it has listed them. There is no mention of new moons in Leviticus 23 as a feast or an ordinance of the Lord.

Numbers 28-9, in contrast, is a list of the sacrifices to the Lord, not his feasts. Numbers 28 commences with, “Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.”<sup>21</sup> The very first sacrifice mentioned in Numbers 28 is the daily sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> It would be ludicrous to suggest every day is a feast day and must be treated as a Sabbath, with no servile work. The next sacrifice mentioned in Numbers 28 is the weekly Sabbath.<sup>23</sup> The quantity of sacrifices is mentioned, but the ordinances for the Sabbath are not listed in Numbers 28. After the Sabbath sacrifices, the new moon sacrifice is listed in Numbers 28:11-15.<sup>24</sup> Again, just the quantity of animals, wine, oil, and flour are mentioned. There is no mention of any ordinance, like not performing any servile work. Unlike the weekly seventh day feast or the annual feasts, there are no ordinances about the new moon listed elsewhere in scripture.

This author’s primary hermeneutic is that scripture is a whole. You should combine the sacrifices of Numbers 28 and 29 with the other scripturally mandated ordinances about those days to totally understand how those days were to be observed. The only scripturally mandated daily ordinance of worship was to make a specific set of sacrifices. The only additional ordinance for the new moon was to make additional sacrifices. Numbers 28 and 29 are the sacrifices made to God while Leviticus 23 is a listing of all of the feasts of God, not the other way around as Mr. Cox writes.

Isaiah writes about the new moons in Is. 66:22-3. “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and

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20 Lev. 23:44

21 Num. 28:2

22 Num. 28:3-8

23 Numb. 28:9-10 [This is] the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering. And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour [for] a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof:

24 Numb. 28:11-15 And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot; And three tenth deals of flour [for] a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour [for] a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one ram; And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil [for] a meat offering unto one lamb; [for] a burnt offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD And their drink offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third [part] of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth [part] of an hin unto a lamb: this [is] the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the LORD shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD”.<sup>25</sup> Wade Cox and others have taken this verse and others like it to show the “new moons are seen to rank with the Sabbaths. They take precedence over the Shabbathown or the Feasts and are mentioned in priority and must be kept pure in adherence.”<sup>26</sup> Is. 66:2-3 states from week to week (Sabbath to Sabbath) and month to month (new moon to new moon) the people will come to worship God. Just because new moon and Sabbath are both mentioned in a list does mean they have the same statutes applying to them. Mr. Cox also states, “The sacrifice of the New Moon is in fact greater than that of the Sabbath (Ezek. 46:4, 6).”<sup>27</sup> The Sabbaths, new moons, and feasts may all be grouped together as times of worship in scripture, but it does not mean the new moons had to be observed with the same ordinances the feasts of God had.

The new moon is mentioned eight times in relationship to offerings to God, along with the Sabbaths and festival offerings (1Chron. 23:31, 2Chrn. 8:13, Ezra 3:15, Is. 1:13,14, Ezek 45:17, 46:6, Neh. 10:33) It is also mentioned as a time of worship eight other times (1Sam. 20:5, 18, 2Kings 4:23, Ezek 46:1, 3, Is. 66:23, Hosea 2:11, Col. 2:16). Most students of the bible will recognize Ezekiel 45 because it describes the new temple in new Jerusalem. The temple sacrificial system of Numbers 28-9 is repeated in the 45<sup>th</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> chapters of Ezekiel. The new moon sacrifices are described in Ezek. 46:1-8.<sup>28</sup> There is never any suggestion in Ezekiel or any of these other verses that the new moons should be observed like one of the annual feasts nor like the weekly feast of the Sabbath.

Even if the new moon sacrifices were greater in number than the weekly Sabbath, which Ezekiel does not state, it does not mean the day of the new moon was a day with no servile work. God would have mentioned the new moon as a feast in Lev. 23 if it was a feast, but He did not. The only scriptural evidence is that the new moon was a time of special sacrifices, not a time when no servile work could be done.

Scripture describes how trumpets were blown on the new moon and there was a special

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25 Is. 66:22-3 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD

26 Cox, Wade, *The New Moons in the Restoration*, Study paper 169, 1996 p. 2

27 Ibid

28 Ezek. 46:1-8 Thus saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons. And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. And the meat offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof.

sacrifice as well.<sup>29</sup> But trumpets were blown for many reasons and there were many sacrifices that Israel had to perform.<sup>30</sup> The new moons appear to be a day worship and assembly, as pointed out in 1 Samuel 20:5, Isa. 66:23 and Ezek. 46:1-3.<sup>31</sup> But we know every day was and is a day of worship toward God. There were daily sacrifices<sup>32</sup> and God's true servants took time to worship and commune with God every day.<sup>33</sup> Every day is a day of worship, but every day is not the Sabbath and although the new moon is to be observed, scripture gives no indication they were to be observed like a Sabbath.

Although Wade Cox has done a lot of good research, he has missed the mark on this one. Instead of stating how the new moons were to be observed is not defined in scripture, but they are of great importance, he has used tortured eisegesis of Hebrew to create a definition of the new moon being a time of no servile work.<sup>34</sup> Creating translations and tortured eisegesis seems to be pattern in church of God research, as exemplified by the calendar paper by Fred Coulter's Christian Biblical Church of God.<sup>35</sup>

Stating Numbers 28-9 lists all the feasts or worship days of the Lord and Leviticus 23 does not is simple incorrect. Scripture states Lev. 23 lists the feasts of the Lord and all the ordinances the people were to follow at feast times and Num. 28-9 lists the sacrifices of the Lord that were to be done in the Temple. There is no scriptural evidence the new moons are feasts with Sabbath-like statutes attached to them.

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29 Num. 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

Numbers 28:11

30 Numbers 10:10, Numbers 28-9.

31 1Sam. 20:5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.

Isa. 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

Ezek. 46:1-3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons.


32 Numbers 28:3-8 And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

33 Ps. 55:17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

34 Cox, Wade, *The New Moons in the Restoration*, Study paper 169, 1996

35 Blevins, Dwight and Franklin, Carl, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, Christian Biblical Church of God, March 21, 2000





The second verse that some have attempted to use to show the new moon should be observed like the weekly Sabbath is 1 Samuel 20:5. This verse is used by various factions of the churches of God attempting to prove: the calculated Jewish calendar can be traced back to David's time; an observed calendar was used at David's time; the crescent was the new moon at the time of David; the conjunction was the new moon in David's time; and that Christians should observe the new moon as a Sabbath. If these different teachers can twist and distort 1 Samuel 20 to their various points of view then it almost certainly does not support any of their arguments. It should be understood if so many divergent and contradictory views are supposedly supported by the same scripture, that scripture can't easily or clearly prove any of these issues.

1 Samuel 20 depicts a new moon festival at Saul's court and if David did not show up, he would surely be missed. "And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family."<sup>1</sup>

This author believes there are only four possible explanations for these verses related to the new moon and none of them can be authoritatively proved. The first explanation of 1 Samuel 20 is this new moon is the feast of Trumpets since David states this is a yearly sacrifice and a new moon. This explanation is highly unlikely because it doesn't make sense to have an annual family get together right in the middle of the "fall" harvest, just two weeks before the feast of Tabernacles, when the family would have gotten together in Jerusalem. A second possibility is it was an ordinary new moon during the year when David's family meet together and Saul had his monthly new moon feast. Many families have family reunions. The third explanation is akin to the second. This new moon could have been any new moon and David lied about it being a yearly sacrifice for his family, but there was still a monthly new moon feast in the royal court. We know at least part of the statement was a lie because David was not going to Bethlehem for an annual sacrifice. This explanation also means that typically a new moon was observed in Saul's court with a feast.

It is therefore likely that at the time of Saul and David, every new moon was welcomed in with a feast at the royal court. Keil and Delitzsch write, "His request implies that Saul gave a feast at the new moon, and therefore that the new moon was not merely a religious

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<sup>1</sup> 1Sam. 20:5-6



festival, according to the law in Num. 10:10, Num. 28:11-5, but that it was kept as a civil festival also, and in the latter character for two days.”<sup>2</sup> However, did the celebrating of a civil feast, like celebrating Columbus Day, mean that no normal business could be transacted on the day of the new moon? Did this civil celebration require that no servile work be done? There is no mention of this in scripture. There is no biblical ordinance to observe the new moon by ceasing all servile work. 1 Samuel 20 can be used to show the new moon was observed at the time of Saul and David, but outside of having a feast at the royal court, nothing else can be about new moon observance at that time.

### Other possible implications of 1 Samuel 20

#### New moon as a two day feast

Those who believe in the calculated Jewish calendar or that the new moon is the conjunction, which is calculated, point to verse 5 of 1 Samuel 20 and believe they have found evidence to support their supposition. “Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat.”<sup>3</sup> How did David know tomorrow would be the new moon? Could the new moon have been calculated at the time of 1 Samuel 20? It is possible, but all evidence suggests determination of the new moon was done by observation and not by calculation. So how else could David and Jonathan have known tomorrow would be the new moon unless it was being calculated? Even today observation can often determine that the next day will be either the conjunction or the crescent. So both David and Jonathan could have known that the next day would be either the conjunction or the crescent, especially if it was already the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the month and the new moon had not yet been observed.

Many commentaries also suggest, “apparently Saul held a feast for his court the first two days of every month (cf. Vv. 5, 18f, 24-7. 34); this account suggests that the new moon festival may have been celebrated for two days at certain times in Israel’s history, perhaps because of the difficulty of determining precisely the day of the new moon.”<sup>4</sup> This interpretation seems to be borne out by Josephus. “But on the next day, which was the new moon, the king, when he had purified himself, as the custom was, came to supper; and when there sat by him his son Jonathan on his right hand, and Abner, the captain of his host, on the other hand, he saw David’s seat was empty, but said nothing, supposing that he had not purified himself since he had accompanied with his wife, and so could not be present; but when he saw that he was not there the second day of the month neither, he inquired of his son Jonathan why the son of Jesse did not come to the supper and the feast, neither the day before nor that day.”<sup>5</sup>

Josephus and other commentaries suggest that the new moon feast was always prepared for the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the month and if the new moon was not declared, they did it all over again

<sup>2</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on 1 Samuel* from e-sword

<sup>3</sup> 1Sam. 20:5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.

<sup>4</sup> Bromley, *ISBE*, Vol .3, New Moon, Hartely, J. E. p. 527

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 11, section 9



on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the month. They may have had the feast on the 30<sup>th</sup> even if the 29<sup>th</sup> was declared the new moon. This is important, if true, because 1 Samuel 20 would then reveal absolutely nothing about what the new moon, the event that started the month, was and is. David would have been telling Jonathan the next day was the new moon feast. Of course the two feast days of Saul's court were tied to the new moon, but 1 Samuel 20 could not be used define the new moon because 1 Samuel 20 would be referring the feast of the new moon, not the actual new moon. If Josephus is correct, then the new moon that David was referring to 1 Samuel 20:5 was actually the first day of the two-day new moon feast at the royal court, not the day of the new moon itself. If there usually was a two-day new moon feast due to the uncertainty of which day the new moon occur, then this would rule out the possibility of the a calculated calendar and make it highly unlikely that the new moon was defined as the conjunction.

### **New moon is actually Seen**

The fourth and final possibility for what transpired in 1 Samuel 20 was suggested by Jason Churchill. Jason Churchill writes, "The Jewish Encyclopedia offers a simple explanation for I Samuel 20 that does not demand a fixed calendar. This explanation recognizes the historical evidence that the Jewish Calendar of the Second Temple period was not a fixed calendar (but depended upon the confirmed sighting of the visible crescent moon). Specifically, the Jewish Encyclopedia understands that the New Moon was not officially declared by the Sanhedrin until the MORNING FOLLOWING the sighting. David and Jonathan could have easily known that the New Moon would be officially declared the following morning ("tomorrow") if their conversation took place after sunset, on a night when they the young crescent moon was already clearly visible! This is certainly compatible with David's exclamation, 'BEHOLD the New Moon', since 'behold;' can literally mean 'Look!'"<sup>6</sup>

### **1Samuel 20 does not demand that the new moon can't be the conjunction**

1Samuel 20 is used not only as proof that the calendar was calculated by The Christian Biblical Church of God, but as proof that the new moon is not the conjunction. "So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat."<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew word translated come is *hayah*. As is common with scholarship of many COG studies, Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, "Hay-yah means to rise or appear (see Brown Driver Briggs, p. 225) and is used with this meaning in Genesis 1:5 in reference to the appearing of the evening (erev, or sunset) and the morning (bo'ker, or sunrise) on the first day of creation... The new moon had appeared before King Saul and those who were feasting with him at the palace, and before David, who was hiding in the field. Here is undeniable evidence that the new moon of Scripture is not the astronomical conjunction."<sup>8</sup> This is not undeniable proof that the moon is not the astronomical conjunction, as I show above. It is only a possible explanation, but bombastic theologians must teach their follow-

<sup>6</sup> Churchill, Jason, Comments on the Summary of the Hebrew Calendar—Doctrinal Study Paper, United Church of God, ai, (Feb. 1997), March, 1997, p. 18

<sup>7</sup> 1Sam. 20:24

<sup>8</sup> Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 A.D.*, p. 3

ers they have all the answers and no else does, which is why they use phrases like, “undeniable proof” based upon their personal translation of scripture.

In their appendix A, Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, “In the context of Genesis 1:5, hay-yah has the fundamental meaning ‘to come into being , become.’”<sup>9</sup> Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin use Briggs, Driver and Brown’s commentary as their authority to state hay-yah means arise or appear in Genesis 1:5. Yet they also admit that BDB states hay-yah can be defined as to come into being, become as in Genesis 1:5. Although a conjunction can’t arise, it can come into being as the last light of a waning crescent fades away. I would ask any translator to at least be consistent with their translation of the same word, *hayah*, in the same verse, Genesis 1:5. However, consistency would dictate that they could not dogmatically state that the new moon has to be the first crescent, so rather than go with consistency, they emphasis their dogma. This is terrible scholarship, at best.

Because *hayah* is used 3,540 times in scripture, this author will not list all the alternative translations, but there are many. However, verse 24 of 1Samuel 20 states, “So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come (*hayah*), the king sat him down to eat meat.”<sup>10</sup> Without trying to force verse 24 to define what the new moon is we can see that scripture is stating that the new moon happened, not that it could be seen. And even if *hayah* meant to visually observe, which it almost certainly does not in chapter 20 of 1 Samuel, that does not mean that it was the crescent that was seen. A lack of light could be interpreted as the conjunction and that could be observed as well as a crescent.

It is true that the period of no moon light shining on the earth can be two to three days long, but it is still an observable event. Again, this author believes the first crescent is and always was the new moon because there is so much historical evidence, but realizes that there is absolutely no definitive scriptural evidence to prove this. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin’s paper is examined in great detail in the appendices of this book, but it appears to me to be a quasi-scholarly ruse that depends on errant translations to re-enforce long held stance by leaders in the church of God that the calculated Jewish calendar goes back to Moses.


1 Samuel 20 therefore does not mandate a calculated calendar at the time of David for a large number of reasons. It also does not mandate that the new moon was either the conjunction or the first crescent. This author is not contending that the new moon is not the first crescent, because the historical evidence shows it is and was the first crescent. However, 1 Samuel 20 can’t and should not be used to prove what the new moon is.

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<sup>9</sup> Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 A.D.* p. 33

<sup>10</sup> 1 Sam 20:24

## Observing the New Moon



Although we do not know everything about the new moon from scripture, we do know there are no Sabbath ordinances or restrictions for the new moon in scripture, but scripture states it should be observed. This may sound like a paradox. Not only was it observed as the start of the month, but people gathered together to observe the new moon.<sup>1</sup> The Colossians observed the new moons 20 years after the death of Jesus. Paul tells them that they were not to worry about people judging them for observing the Sabbath, holy days, or the new moon.<sup>2</sup>

We know the new moons were observed with special sacrifices at the temple.<sup>3</sup> However, we no longer offer physical sacrifices. Instead we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God.<sup>4</sup> We offer our prayers as incense to our Creator.<sup>5</sup>

We also gather together to edify each other and praise God.<sup>6</sup> We keep every new moon as a feast, but we do not keep it as a Sabbath.

We have been observing the new moons for over fifteen years. It used to be a time when various branches of the churches of God could come together and celebrate, but that time appears to be past. During this decade and a half, we have learned the new moons are an essential part of God's calendar. They mark the path of the year for us. Along this path, we find the weekly feast, a time of rest and reconciliation with God. We also find God's annual feasts and the plan for mankind that is embedded within them. Observing the new moons keeps us focused on that path. Observing the new moons is even more important for us, in our technological age, than it was for the nation of Israel because we have a tendency to depend on technology and ignore the marvels of nature God has created. When was the last time you knew how many days it was until Passover without looking at a little card in your wallet? If you observed the new moon, you would know when it was.

There is no doubt observing the new moon was a scriptural practice, but it is possible it is one of the practices that was tied to temple observance. However, this author believes observing new moons is an ordinance we should continue. Perhaps we should gather

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 46:1-5, 2Kings 4:23, Is. 1:11-14, 1Sam. 20:5-6

<sup>2</sup> Col. 2:16

<sup>3</sup> Num 28:11-15

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

<sup>6</sup> Hebr. 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

together with God's people and visually observe the new moon, if possible. Having a meal to commemorate the new moon always seems like a good idea. Perhaps we can make it special occasion, like going to a museum or having a picnic in the park with our families, which we have done. When our boys were younger, it was bath night rather than shower night since they loved taking baths rather than showers. We should also give thanks and praise God, just as the Levites did.<sup>7</sup>

There are no specific biblical requirements for Christians to perform at the new moon, such as fasting on the day of Atonement, except to observe it. There is no doubt new moons are important in the scriptural calendar. Scripture also implies the new moons are time of celebration and special worship of God. Individuals and groups of Christians must determine for themselves how they will observe the new moon so that observation is pleasing to God, but this author believes since the new moons were still being celebrated by Christians 20 years after the death of Jesus, we have an example that we should also be celebrating them.

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<sup>7</sup> 1Chr. 23:30-1 And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even; And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD:

## The Standard Argument for the Calculated Jewish calendar

### A Study in Slipshod Scholarship

**F**ar too many Christians are hyper sensitive when a doctrinal distinctive of their favorite teacher is shown to be scholastically and scripturally unsound. There are negative comments in this section of the book. The rest of the major rebuttals have been moved to appendices at the end of this book. However, because the Global study paper exemplified the standard answers given by teachers in the church of God tradition to the problem of the calendar for years, it has been included in the body of this book. It has also been included because it displays the typical slipshod and deceitful quality of scholarship usually employed by

most teachers in the church of God movement. It is not the intent of this book to attack any individual or organization, only the misconceptions around the issue of the calendar and a pattern of terrible teaching that has led disciples of Jesus to become like the disciples of Matthew 23:15 and Hebrews 5:11-15. Therefore the calendar papers published by Global will be given the scholarly treatment it deserves.

It has been made painfully obvious to this author that many members of the church of God have no familiarity with research papers and do the vast majority of their bible study from booklets rather than from scripture. The vast majority also have a favorite teacher or two that is viewed with an uncritical eye, which is quite dangerous to a Christian's spiritual life. Suggestions have been made by various church of God ministers and even by their wives that research like mine should only encompass scripture and should ignore the writings of these church of God ministers and teachers. Of course these ministers do not follow this advice in their writings nor should good scholarship ignore contradictory research. If authors do not comment upon known contradictory research then they are admitting they can't muster a strong enough argument to counter that research. And far too many men sitting in the roles of teacher or elder in the churches of God can't answer theological questions without resorting to their Ambassador College notes or sending the question to headquarters because they have not taken the time to study scripture. Commenting upon others research, even in a negative manner, has at least a 300 year history in scholarly circles. This tradition can even be traced back to Christ, who used negative words to point out the error of man made traditions. This book is simply following the tenants of a scholarly survey of the problem of the calculated Jewish calendar in its entirety.

Raymond McNair, one of these teachers, presents a standard church of God interpretation of the postponements in his articles written for the Global Church News. "The four

postponements that the Jews incorporate in the Jewish calendar were put there for specific purposes—the chief purpose being to avoid certain Sabbath observance problems that otherwise would have resulted when two successive Sabbaths (i.e. tandem Sabbaths) occurred.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. McNair admits these rules of postponement have no biblical basis, unlike the addition of a leap year, when he writes, “the Bible itself says absolutely nothing about postponements.”<sup>2</sup>

### **If God doesn’t condemn it by Name, we should embrace it!**

Mr. McNair correctly states the Jews incorporated the four non-biblical postponements upon which the calculated Jewish calendar is constructed. This author and many other scholars agree. God never revealed anything these postponements according to scripture unless you examine what Jesus said about such traditions in the gospels. The Jews constructed and implemented the postponements between 100 and 350 CE. However, Mr. McNair follows these statements with a rationalization that is totally unbiblical. He states, “So, if God’s Word does not condemn postponements, then who are we to say that the Jews, the custodians of God’s Word and His Calendar, are wrong in including them, especially so, since those postponements enable God’s people to avoid certain problems when the weekly Sabbath immediately precedes or follows an annual Sabbath, thereby producing two back-to-back (tandem) Sabbaths?”<sup>3</sup> First, this statement is only partially accurate. The postponements do much more than eliminate tandem Sabbaths. One the major reasons for the postponements if to forbid the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on a weekly Sabbath so the Jews would be allowed to perform the Lulav ceremony, something they have deemed it too much work to be done on the weekly Sabbath. It is also very interesting that many of the churches of God agree with Mr. McNair when he equates the calculated Jewish calendar with the Holy Scriptures because he has unknowing implied that the oral law and Talmudic statutes have the same authority as scripture because the Jews supposedly are the custodians of His law and His calendar. Mr. McNair would deny that is what he has written, but his logic dictates that this is an accurate statement because the calculated Jewish calendar is part of the oral law and not part of scripture. Mr. McNair’s logic should dictate the entire oral law as authoritative for Christians because the bible does not specifically condemn it. This author does not believe the oral law is sacrosanct nor is it authoritative.

### **Jews as the Custodians of God Word, even though they Reject the New Testament, Can’t count to 50 the right way, and Don’t know when and how to observe the Passover**

Mr. McNair contends the Jews are the custodian’s of God’s word when they are not. At best they are only custodians of the oracles of the Old Testament because they rejected the New Testament at Jamnia. Therefore Mr. McNair’s statement that they are “the custodians of God’s Word,”<sup>4</sup> is not totally accurate. Mr. McNair seems to insinuate that we should not question the Jewish interpretation and practice of the calendar which the Jews claim is

1 McNair, Raymond, Global Church News, *What are the Postponements*, July-August, 1996, p. 19

2 McNair, Raymond, “Global Church News”, *Which Calendar has God authorized*, July-August, 1996, p. 7

3 McNair, *What are the Postponements*, p. 7

4 McNair, *What are the Postponements*, p. 7



not part of the oral law supposedly given at Mt. Sania, but was instead added later. Yet Mr. McNair and the vast majority of the teachers and preachers of the churches of God reject the authority of the Jewish oral law as authoritative, as well they should. It is illogical and inconsistent to say we must unquestioningly follow certain parts of the Jewish oral law, but only the parts of it we want to follow.

Even if the Jews were the custodians of the oracles of the calendar, which they are not, Mr. McNair's suggestion would have us believe that if the Jews converted to Christianity and decided that Christmas and Easter should be on the calendar and observed by all Jews, than Christians must accept these new holidays without question because there is nothing in scripture that explicitly condemns these holidays. The vast majority of postponement apologists would cry foul and state there are actually biblical injunctions about celebrating these days, even if they are not condemned by name in scripture.<sup>5</sup> This is not as far-fetched as it sounds because the vast majority of Messianic Jews do observe Christmas and Easter. Therefore Mr. McNair's argument about excepting things not specifically in scripture is a bogus argument.

The Jews believe they have the same power as the pope does when it comes to determining theological doctrine. However, even if the Sanhedrin decreed that the Sabbath was now on Sunday, observant Jews and Christians should not accept this decree as authoritative because it goes against scripture. Mr. McNair states scripture does not specifically condemn the postponement, but does scripture condemn statutes like the postponements?

Scripture is full of the nation of Israel instituting rules like the postponements and God's condemnation of these statutes. The prophets and even Jesus the Christ said traditions that interfere with the truth of God's word are not to be followed. Our duty, as Christians, is always to question, to find out what God's will is, and lead the holy way of life that He chooses for us. The Jews instituted and codified unbiblical, pharisaical rules about the calendar between 100 and 350 CE. These rules, like other Talmudic rules, should not be

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5 Deut. 12:1-4 These *are* the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. Deut. 12:30-2 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. Although Jer. 10\_1-4 is about decorating idols, it bears uncanny resemblance to decorating a Christmas tree.

Jer. 10:1-4 Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.



followed by Christians because they make, “the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”<sup>6</sup>

God has stated, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”<sup>7</sup> John gives the same admonition to those who have read the Word not to add to or take away anything from the Word.<sup>8</sup> There are no rules of postponement in the bible. The premise for such rules, which prevent two sabbaths from occurring back to back, has no biblical basis and was not practiced at the time of Christ, as a number of Jewish sages within one hundred years of Christ’s crucifixion testify. Every creditable scholar agrees the calendar being used at the time of Christ was based on observation, perhaps with some calculation being used to verify these observations. Postponements are unbiblical because they add to God’s word and teach that God’s feasts can be delayed when they are deemed to be inconvenient. The reader should remember that one of the two reasons the major postponement is in place is because Jewish tradition mandates the waving of willows on the 7th day of Tabernacles is too much work to do on the weekly Sabbath and therefore the annual feast must be delayed. This is definitely a pharisaic statute similar to the ones Jesus condemned and it is simply ignored by Christian teachers who support the calculated Jewish calendar, as does Mr. McNair.

### **Postponement don’t really delay the Holy Days, no matter what the Jews Say**

Raymond McNair wrote in the Global Church News, “The present permanent Jewish calendar employs various postponements—all of which merely delay the commencement of the first day of Tishri, which begins the civil year used in both ancient and modern times. Once Tishri I is established, all of the other months of the Sacred Calendar are easy to calculate. So the postponements merely delay—by either one or two days—the beginning of the first day of Tishri, which is the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year.

In actuality, the postponements don’t really delay the Holy Days themselves, since those days (established by Scripture) are still observed on the same biblically commanded days of the months, according to God’s directions in Leviticus 23.”<sup>9</sup>

Again, the so called civil new year of Tishri 1 is both extra-biblical and unbiblical. It is extra-biblical because it is not mentioned in scripture. It is unbiblical because it defies the scriptural ordinance that Abib 1 is the beginning of the new year. Using Tishri 1 as the date of the new year is equivalent to using Jan. 1 as the civil new year and counting backwards 177 days to establish the religious new year. Such arguments are ludicrous on their face. Because Tishri 1 replaces Abib 1 as the new year on the calculated Jewish calendar, this calendar can’t be scripturally accurate.

Mr. McNair’s logic that shifting the days of the month does not affect the days of the year

<sup>6</sup> Mark 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

<sup>7</sup> Deut. 4:2

<sup>8</sup> Rev. 22:18-9

<sup>9</sup> McNair, Raymond, Global Church News, March-April, 1996, *What are the “Postponement”*, p 6

is deeply offensive and troubling. It is highly unlikely Jeroboam told the northern tribe of Israel that the feast of Tabernacles now occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month. It is far more likely he convinced the people that the southern kingdom did not know how to computer the proper first month and thus the people would have been told they were still keeping the feast of Tabernacles on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month. It is even likely that Josephus' account of 1 Kings 12 verifies that the sin of Jeroboam, along with rank idolatry and changing of the priesthood and place of worship, was done to convince the northern kingdom that the 8<sup>th</sup> month was actually the 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>10</sup> Mr. McNair's logic would have us believe those following Jeroboam had done nothing wrong because they were still keeping the feast of Tabernacles on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month on their calendar, so that should be perfectly alright with God. Yet God condemns the sin of Jeroboam throughout scripture.<sup>11</sup>

This is not meant to imply if you disagree with me on the calendar then you are practicing the sin of Jeroboam. But Mr. McNair's logic is so flawed that it can be used to justify Jeroboam's sin of calendar manipulations for religious reasons even though scripture condemned this sin numerous times. Mr. McNair's rationalization would have us believe that a process that makes sure the Fourth of July always falls on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday so there would always be a three day weekend at the time of the fourth does not change the day that the fourth of July falls on. Even though the fourth of July could never occur on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, Mr. McNair would have us believe the calendar had not been changed because the fourth of July still fell on the fourth of July.

Let's speculate that the manipulation used to never allow the fourth of July to occur on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, just as Tishri one can never occur on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, involved calculating on what day of the week the fourth of July will be at the end of December of the previous year. If the fourth of July fell on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday or

10 *Barnes Notes* on 1 Kings 12:32 from e-sword His object in changing the month from the seventh to the eighth, and yet keeping the day of the month, is not clear. Perhaps it was on account of the later vintage of the more northern regions. It is remarkable that Josephus places the scene in the "seventh" month. He therefore, was not aware that the people of Israel kept the feast of tabernacles a month later than their brethren of Judah

11 1 King 22:52 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:

2 Kings 3:3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

2 Kings 10:29 Howbeit *from* the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit*, the golden calves that *were* in Bethel, and that *were* in Dan.

2 Kings 10:31 But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

2 Kings 13:2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

2 Kings 13:6 Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, *but* walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)

2 Kings 14:24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

2 Kings 15:29 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

2 Kings 15:24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Monday, I do nothing. If the fourth occurs during the middle of the week, I add one, two or three days at the end of December. If I then turn around and suggest I did not really move the day the Fourth of July occurred on because it is still on the fourth of July and all I did was add a couple of days to the end of last year, I should be laughed at. This kind of rationalization should disturb all Christians, especially when it is coming from a man who claims to be a teacher of God. This hypothetical process for moving the day on which the fourth of July normally occurred so it would be more convenient, even though it still occurs on the fourth of July on that calendar, is rank manipulation of the calendar. You can try to justify such manipulation, but to suggest it never occurred is simply in error and the logic used to suggest the calendar was not manipulated totally and completely flawed.

The first rule of postponement is used to move the annual feasts. The second postponement rule of the calculated Jewish calendar makes the calculated Jewish calendar more closely resemble the results of the empirical calendar using observation of the first crescent. The last two postponements are used to correct the anomalies created by the first rule and attempt to maintain a 354 day long year. To state the rules of postponement are not used to move the annual feasts is erroneous. No matter your beliefs on the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar, it should be obvious that the days on which the holy days occur are moved.

### **Raising more questions so We don't to answer any of them**

In *Which Calendar has God Authorized* Mr. McNair states, “Does the biblical New Moon refer to the astronomical New Moon (also called ‘conjunction’-or ‘dark moon’)? Or does the New Moon refer to the new crescent moon, which always lasts ‘a few days’?”<sup>12</sup>

This is not only disingenuous, it is incorrect. The debate to define what the scripturally correct new moon needs to be settled to create a calendar to be used by Christians today, but the vast majority already know it has to be the first crescent. However, Mr. McNair has his facts reversed. The dark moon, which is the period surrounding the exact conjunction, always lasts a few days whereas the first visible crescent can only be on one night. To suggest that the new moon determined by the first crescent could be on a number of days is wrong and appears to be an attempt to build a straw man and spread confusion as a diversion from the truth.

Mr. McNair also states the Bible does not tell us how many days are in a month, yet glosses over the fact that the number of days in a month are ordained by the cycle of the moon.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. McNair states the Bible mentions twelve months, but never a thirteenth, which is correct, but admits there was a thirteenth month used by Israel in the Bible.<sup>14</sup> He goes on to state, “And since the Bible doesn't even specify this intercalary month, it certainly does not say when to add it!”<sup>15</sup> This statement is made even though he earlier commented the lunar year must be harmonized with the solar year if we are to follow the biblical admonition

<sup>12</sup> McNair, Raymond, Global Church News, March-April, 1996, *Which Calendar has God Authorized*, p. 3

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 3

Esth. 3:7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

<sup>15</sup> McNair, Raymond, Global Church News, March-April, 1996, *Which Calendar has God Authorized*, p. 3

that the “spring” and “fall” feasts must occur in the “spring” and “fall”.<sup>16</sup> A month must be intercalated when Unleavened Bread would no longer be in the summer, but would be in the winter. It is not proper to ignore the clear biblical admonition that a month needs to be intercalated, even if the timing of this intercalation is not directly found in scripture, especially when there is so much historical evidence that intercalation was done at the end of Adar. Again, Mr. McNair and other apologists for the calculated Jewish calendar state since every last detail of the calendar is not in the bible, let’s follow the rules of the calculated Jewish bible because they already have all their rules. It never seems to occur to them that God deliberately left the exact rules for a calendar out of the bible and only put in general guidelines to make sure we stayed close to Him. God did not give the people a king because He wanted to be their king, yet the people insisted on a king because they did not like trying to stay close enough to God so they could hear His still, quite voice about anything.

The fourth problem Mr. McNair brings up is although, “scripture plainly reveals that the sacred year must begin around the time we call the vernal equinox [Heb. tekufah] (Ex. 12:2; 23:16; 34:22), it ‘does not give exact instructions.’”<sup>17</sup> Scripture does reveal that the sacred year must begin around the time of the vernal equinox, but Mr. McNair’s understanding that the *tekufoth* is the same as the vernal equinox is not correct, we have shown earlier. The fact that the start of the year was left indeterminate appears to be part of the mechanics of the calendar, probably because it was yet another lesson for the nation of Israel to learn so they would be totally dependent upon God. God would let Israel know when the year started when He sent summer to the land of Palestine.

### **Intercalation of a Leap Year is not a Postponement**

The fifth problem Mr. McNair sees is the most “insurmountable of all the problems facing those who would rely solely on the Bible to construct a sacred calendar is the undeniable fact that the lunar and solar years cannot be precisely aligned—a biblical requirement!—without periodically adjusting, or ‘postponing’ the beginning of certain months and years. The calendar must also be adjusted by one or two days under certain conditions. Otherwise, the lunar and solar years would eventually diverge.”<sup>18</sup>

and

“Those who object to these ‘postponements’ need to realize that it is utterly impossible for any luni-solar calendar to be devised that does not require various adjustments or postponements!”<sup>19</sup>

These statements are misleading and simply incorrect as Karaite Judaism has demonstrated for over a millennia. The harmonization of the lunar and solar calendar is done by intercalating a leap month. To refer to process of intercalation as a postponement when the four postponements, or *dehioth*, are a completely different process is disingenuous and misleading. There comes a point when obfuscation of a subject is nothing more than lying and Mr.

16 Ibid, p. 3

17 Ibid, p. 3

18 Ibid, p. 5

19 Ibid, p. 7

McNair breaches that line with this argument. As for a day or two having to be adjusted to keep the lunar and solar calendar from diverging, this is only under the calculated calendar with a rule of postponement designed to prevent tandem sabbaths and other rules that try to maintain a year that is exactly 354 days long. This is not true of a calendar whose rules are based upon observation or perhaps based on calculation or even a calendar based on some combination of calculation and observation so long as it does not prevent tandem sabbaths by delaying the annual feasts. Of course, the length of the calendar year would not always be exactly 354 days, just as it is not under the calculated Jewish calendar.

According to Spier, “Dehiah 1 mainly fulfills the following three religious requirements: Yom Kippur (Tishri 10) shall not occur on the day before or after the Sabbath and Hoshana Rabba (Tishri 21) shall not occur on the Sabbath. In order to make the Dehioth 1 and 2 possible, the calendar has established an axiom which determines the length of the years, and which accomplishes the balancing of the solar with the lunar years according to the rule of intercalation. Dehioth 3 and 4 are mathematical consequences of this axiom.”<sup>20</sup> Spier states one or two days have to be adjusted in the calculated Jewish calendar because of the anomalies created in attempting to stop back to back sabbaths and attempting to limit the year to exactly 354 days. Mr. McNair is wrong and his own sources, his references, re-enforce this.

Mr. McNair practices a repeatable pattern of misinformation. This author has only chosen a few of the most egregious examples. Mr. McNair asks, “Did the Jewish priests have the authority to delay (postpone) the beginning of the year by a whole month?”<sup>21</sup> He proceeds to quote Spier on how the *Sod Haifub*, the Sanhedrin’s Calendar Council, intercalated a thirteenth month to allow Abib to fall in the “spring”. Yet this is a biblical requirement, not a postponement. The use of the term postponement for the intercalation of a month is technically inaccurate and was probably done to sow seeds of confusion so Christians won’t examine this issue for themselves. The Calendar Council did not delay or postpone the start of the month by one or two days to prevent tandem sabbaths. Under Jewish law they had the authority to pronounce the new months and the new years. They could technically delay the start of the new year by a month by intercalating the leap month. This was not truly a delay. It is simply putting the proper number of days in a year to allow the feasts to fall in the proper season. Delaying the first day of March by a day almost every four years by inserting a 29<sup>th</sup> day in February does not postpone the Gregorian year by a day. It simply places the day that has already accumulated in its right position. To label a leap day or leap month as a postponement (*dehioth*) is wrong and most likely deliberately misleading, as is the pattern in most church of God literature on theological issues that have no basis in scripture.

### **Don’t Look at Pentecost, it doesn’t Count**

Mr. McNair discusses the problem of postponements and a Sunday Pentecost on page twenty of his article. He states,

Doesn’t the fact that tandem Sabbaths occur annually at Pentecost (which is

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<sup>20</sup> Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, p. 219

<sup>21</sup> McNair, *Calendar*, p. 15



always preceded by the weekly Sabbath) prove that we don't need to be concerned about having Sabbaths back-to-back?

We must remember that during most of the history of mankind, the masses lived in an agriculturally based society, and did not have modern electrical appliances, running water, refrigeration, etc. Consequently, they could not have prepared food and kept it for several days without it spoiling.

The four postponements in the Jewish calendar reduce the "tandem Sabbath" problem to a bare minimum [*ed. note*-Only the first rule of postponement does this.

The rest are needed to repair the damage done to the calendar by the first rule].

They were never intended to totally prevent, but merely to minimize the number of tandem Sabbaths that could occur in any one year! Therefore the Jewish religious authorities deliberately included the postponements.

Now, there are modern 'Pharisees' who think it was not proper for the Jewish religious authorities to include any postponements in the calendar; but they utterly fail to understand that God is far more concerned with the avoidance of undue human hardship on His Sabbaths (Mark 2:27-28), than in making sure the Jews always observe the beginning of their months precisely on the very day on which the new crescent moon first appears!<sup>22</sup>

It is ironic Mr. McNair uses human reasoning to determine it would be an undue hardship to have two sabbaths in a row because there is no biblical basis for this statement. He states people had no way of preparing or keeping food for several days. It is not several that we are concerned with, but two, at most. So the question has to be asked what did the people do during the year when crops were not in season? What did they do to prepare food on the weekly sabbath? The answer is quite simple. They ate cold food. They did it almost all the time. They also ate preserved food for most of the year. It is also ironic that Mr. McNair states, "God is far more concerned with the avoidance of undue human hardship on His Sabbaths"<sup>23</sup> than on keeping the feasts as they are outlined in the bible because he believes God ordained a tandem sabbath every year with a Sunday Pentecost. This is the type of logic that can and has been used by the Worldwide Church of God during its religious upheaval during the 1990's when it stated if the seventh day Sabbath was a burden, then it was okay to move it or observe it as you like. The tandem sabbaths at Pentecost could not to be an undue hardship for God's people because scripture demands it be kept, yet Mr. McNair seems to believe having tandem Sabbaths later in the year, when crops would be in abundance appears to be a different matter. The "fall" feasts are at a time of plenty. There was plenty of fresh food at just the time when it was needed, when there is a possibility of having up to 3 tandem Sabbath in a three week period, at the "fall" festivals. God plans for everything. It is also ironic Mr. McNair states it was the Jewish religious authorities that deliberately included postponements. I concur with this statement completely. However, there is no godly, scriptural principle to back up these rules of postponement. As shown earlier, the Mishnah and the Talmud clearly show Judaism allowed tandem Sabbaths with Atonement 100 years after Christ's crucifixion and they were not considered an undue hardship then.<sup>24</sup> This is apparently because the Jewish sages had not finished their rules on what

<sup>22</sup> McNair, Raymond, *Postponements*, p. 20

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 20

<sup>24</sup> Epstein, I, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud*, Vol. 4 Menahoth Tract 100b, Kerithoth tract 19a, Vol. 1 Shabbath, Tract 19a, Soncino Press, London, 1938

could and could not be done on a Sabbath. Apparently when they were done formulating these rules to put barriers around the Sabbath, they decided having tandem Sabbaths would be onerous, so they added more rules about tandem Sabbaths. When you begin to add your own Talmud to the Sabbath, there is apparently no end to doing the supposed good that these rules are supposed to bring. Therefore Mr. McNair's suggestion that postponements were inserted to prevent hardship is accurate, but that hardship did not come about because people did not have electricity or running water. It came about because of Sabbath *halacha*, a tradition of putting barriers around God's law that is unbiblical for a number of reasons.

### **If you disagree with us, You are a Pharisee**

Mr. McNair also states anyone who disagrees with his interpretation is a Pharisee, yet was it not the Pharisees that were condemned by Christ for adding to the scripture, making it of no avail? Mr. McNair also states the postponements were never meant to totally prevent tandem sabbaths, only to minimize them. This is a strange thing to write given there is no biblical evidence for any postponement and according to Mr. McNair, no real evidence of how to construct the calendar, so how does he determine what the supposedly godly purpose of the postponements are? Not from Scripture. And apparently not from some of the very sources he quotes. Spier and Bunaby disagree with Mr. McNair's assessment, as I have stated above. Mr. McNair lists no source for his belief two tandem sabbaths in the "spring" are all right, but three in the "fall" are too many.

The Pharisees insisted that Pentecost should be celebrated on Sivan 6 instead of Sunday. This stance agrees perfectly with their calculated Jewish calendar, which does everything possible to prevent tandem Sabbaths. A Sivan 6 Pentecost is a calendrical argument, no matter how much church of God teachers state it is only a matter of biblical interpretation. The bet-din, the calendar court, appears to have done everything in their power to end tandem sabbaths and their creative interpretation that the word *shabbat* in Leviticus 23:15-6, which is translated as the seventh day Sabbath every place else in scripture, should actually be the an annual feast, a *shabbathon*, thus placing Pentecost on Sivan 6 rather than Sunday was simply another step in this process.<sup>25</sup> The tandem Sabbaths of Pentecost are examined in detail in the appendices of this book. At least the Pharisaic interpretation of Pentecost being on Sivan 6 is consistent with the construction of the calculated Jewish calendar. The Karaites observe Pentecost on Sunday, seven weeks after the days of the Unleavened Bread, because they attempt to follow the ideal of *solo scriptura*, an ideal not embraced by the Talmudic observant Jews of today.

The Jews have decreed that tandem Sabbaths are undesirable and have manipulated the calculated Jewish calendar to eliminate as many of them as they can. But the practice of eliminating tandem sabbaths is not only extra-biblical, but unbiblical. However, at least the Jews are consistent with the practices, something the vast majority of the churches of God are not because they observe a Sunday Pentecost rather than a Sivan 6 Pentecost. But consider-  
 25 Lev. 23:15-6 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath (*shabbot*), from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths (*shabbot*) shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath (*shabbot*) shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.



ing the vast majority of the members of the churches of God observed a Monday Pentecost for decades because they claimed the Jews did not even understand how to count to fifty, this should not be surprising.

**Don't believe History or Scholars, believe us about the calendar Jesus Observed**

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Mr. McNair's papers is his closing paragraphs.

God's people ought to use the calendar that He caused the Jews to preserve for the benefit of all who wish to obey Him and keep His commanded Festivals. That was basically the same calendar used by Christ and His disciples in New Testament times!<sup>26</sup> and

When we consider all the scriptures pertaining to the calendar, it becomes clear that God's people ought to follow the example of Jesus Christ and His New Testament Church by using the Jewish calendar (Rom. 3:2)—rather than groping around trying to devise their own unauthorized calendars!<sup>27</sup>

As a teacher and preacher Mr. McNair should have known the calendar used in Christ's time does not resemble the current calculated Jewish Calendar and he probably did. His sources, like Spier, are crystal clear on this fact, yet Mr. McNair follows the standard operating procedure for most church of God teachers by ignoring, distorting and even being dishonest about what their sources have actually written. The current Jewish calendar is calculated using an average of the moon's conjunction as its starting point with a number of mathematical rules used to determine when the first of Tishri should be to prevent tandem Sabbaths, to make sure the Lulav ceremony does not occur on the weekly Sabbath, and to keep the length of the year close to 354 days long. The current calculated Jewish calendar starts the year with the month of Tishri and counts backward 177 days, which it ordains to be the first of Abib. The calendar at the time of Christ was empirical, based on the first visible crescent, often called the young moon, with calculations possibly being used to check the veracity of the testimony of witnesses. That calendar used the month of Abib, also called Nisan, to be the beginning of months, as Ex. 12:2 dictates. The Lulav ceremony could be observed on the weekly Sabbath during the time of Jesus. There were also biblical and empirical rules governing how intercalation of the leap month was performed at the time of Christ. Intercalation was not set in a strict metonic cycle as it is in the current Jewish calendar. Therefore Mr. McNair is either hideously misinformed or being outright deceitful when he writes that today's calculated Jewish calendar is, "basically the same calendar used by Christ and His disciples in New Testament times!"<sup>28</sup> Also, Mr. McNair's suggestion that any other calendar than the one used by the Jews today would be unauthorized implies that only the calculated Jewish calendar was authorized by God. How can this be when the calendar so was different in the time of Jesus?

The premise of this book agrees with Mr. McNair's statement that Christians should be using a calendar that at least resembles the calendar our Savior used. However the cal-

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26 McNair, *Calendar*, p. 18

27 McNair, *Postponements*, p. 21

28 McNair, *Calendar*, p. 18

culated Jewish calendar does not fit that requirement because of the postponement that prevents tandem Sabbaths and prevents the Lulav ceremony from being performed on the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles. This book has been written in the hope God's called out people, Christians with the indwelling of the holy spirit, can work together to re-establish a calendar like the one used by Jesus while he walked this earth, or at least a semblance of it. The Karaite Jews have already done this.

However this author is not hopeful this will happen because apparently the weight of Herbert Armstrong's words still resonate on the issue of the calendar throughout the churches of God. Mr. McNair quotes Herbert Armstrong as writing in 1940, "In conclusion, unless God has preserved His Sacred Calendar through the Jews, then we do not know how to figure Passover or any of the Holy Days this year. For there is no authority for any other way. There is no Bible authority whatsoever for figuring the first day of the first month from the new moon nearest the spring equinox."<sup>29</sup> This was to be the stance of the Global Church of God and is the stance of most of the churches of God today. However, is it the stance of the Jewish leadership they must follow the calendar statutes instituted by Hillel II? It might surprise many to find out it is not. This fact is clearly delineated in Spier, yet it has been ignored by vast majority of the COG's that have examined this issue.

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<sup>29</sup> McNair, *Calendar*, p. 4

### The Scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees

The Karaite Jews have suggested a possible foundation for a scriptural calendar. This book has attempted to point out certain questions about the calendar that can't be answered by scripture alone. These questions, rather than being dealt with in an honest manner, have been manipulated by most of the major offshoots of the WCG to maintain their tradition of following the calculated Jewish calendar, just as Herbert Armstrong did.

Some make arguments about the growth of the World Wide church of God while it followed the calculated Jewish calendar and others state that not following the calculated Jewish calendar would lead to disunity. Most

of those making this type of argument gloss over the fact they do not accept the Jewish interpretation of the timing of Pentecost or the timing of Passover or how to celebrate Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, and do not perform Lulav ceremony, which should be important since it was included in the rules of postponement in the calculated Jewish calendar. The list of theological issues where the churches of God differ with rabbinic Judaism is long and diverse, yet apparently the calculated Jewish calendar is sacrosanct to most.

Scholars, historians and theologians agree that the origins of the traditional calculated Jewish calendar can be traced back 1600 to 1800 years ago and not before. This author contends the ordinances of the traditional calculated Jewish calendar go against biblical ordinances, just as other portions of *halacha* which forbade Sabbath healings,<sup>1</sup> required washings,<sup>2</sup> and invoked the name of God to allow children to neglect their Godly duty to take care of their parents are also unscriptural.<sup>3</sup> The leaders and teachers who embrace the

1 Matt. 12:10-4 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

2 Matt. 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Mark 7:3-4 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

3 Matt. 15:1-6 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him

calculated Jewish calendar point out Jesus never assailed the scribes, Pharisees, or Sadducees for the way they kept the calendar and ignore the fact that virtually every respected theologian and historian in the world believes the Jews followed a significantly different calendar at the time of Christ then they follow now. Although this point can be debated, it is likely the Jews kept a Sunday Pentecost at the time of Christ because that is when the Sadducees, who controlled the temple, are recording as observing a Sunday Pentecost.

Although Jesus constantly condemned the religious leadership of the Jews during his time on earth, he did not attack that mechanics of temple worship, like the timing of Pentecost and Passover, except for the way that same Jewish leadership corrupted that worship with greed.<sup>4</sup> This author believes Jesus the Christ did not attack the calendar observed by the nation of Israel at his time because that calendar was not unscriptural, but as has been pointed out, that calendar is very different from the calculated Jewish calendar. This book's stance on the calendar and the timing of the annual feasts is not only accurate and based in scripture, but is also consistent. The Jews believe they used an observed calendar, likely kept a Sunday Pentecost, and a late 14<sup>th</sup> Passover at the time of Jesus. This book is simply trying to reconstruct and follow the calendar Jesus observed.

What do we know about the scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees? It may surprise many to learn the Pharisees were very popular with the Jews of Palestine.<sup>5</sup> The Pharisees focused on the traditions of God while the Sadducees were seen as traitors to Israel whose moral character was lower than Bill Clinton's, if Josephus is to be believed, but of course Josephus was a Pharisee. An examination of the gospels does not paint a pretty picture of these men. Jesus called them vipers,<sup>6</sup> blind leaders,<sup>7</sup> hypocrites that had beautiful exteriors, but were rotten on the inside.<sup>8</sup> They accused our messiah of being sent by the devil.<sup>9</sup> When Jesus performed miracles, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes plotted to kill him.<sup>10</sup> He told his disciples if their righteousness did not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, they would not enter the kingdom of God.<sup>11</sup> These men were murderers and liars.<sup>12</sup>

Christ warned his disciples not to follow the doctrine (teachings) of the Pharisees, which were hypocritical and placed traditions above scripture.<sup>13</sup> The Pharisees and the scribes taught the

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die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

4 Matt. 21:12-3 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

5 Reicke, Bo, trans. by Green, David, *The New Testament Era, The world of the bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1964, p. 152-161

6 Matt 3:7

7 Matt. 15:12

8 Matt 23:27

9 Mark 3:22

10 Matt 12.14

11 Matt. 5:20

12 Luke 23:10-23

13 Luke 12:1

doctrines of men rather than the doctrines of God,<sup>14</sup> making “the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”<sup>15</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees also transgressed the commandments of God with their traditions.<sup>16</sup>

### The Oracles of God

Christ did not give the Pharisees, Sadducees or scribes high marks, in either character or dogma. John the Baptist and Jesus grouped both the Sadducees and Pharisees together as vipers.<sup>17</sup> Yet certain theologians use Romans 3:2 and Matt 23:2 to justify following the traditions of Pharisees and Sadducees. Romans 3:2 states the Jews were given the oracles of God.<sup>18</sup> This obviously refers to the fact that the Jews were entrusted with the inspired scriptures of the Old Testament, but some contend it also includes “God’s sacred calendar.” Logion, the Greek word for oracle, is used 22 times in the Septuagint. It is used “for oracular sayings (Num. 24:4, 16), individual sayings (Isa. 28:13), and the commandments (Duet. 33:9), but frequently as a general statement about the word of God.”<sup>19</sup> Robertson writes, “logion is a little word (diminutive of logos). Common in the old Greek, LXX, Philo, in ecclesiastical writers for saying of Christ, Papias (for instance) saying that Matthew wrote in Hebrew (Aramaic) ‘Logia of Jesus.’ ... The Greeks used it of the ‘oracles’ or brief sayings from Delphi.”<sup>20</sup>

Logion (logia) is used 4 times in the New Testament. The first usage is Stephen’s sermon of Acts 7, where he states, “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles (*logia*) to give unto us: To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt.”<sup>21</sup>

Acts 7 is Stephen’s summary of how Israel would not follow the lively oracles of God throughout its history. It seems impossible that Stephen, one of the 7 of Acts 6, would have embraced the *halacha* that Jesus had so thoroughly condemned. It would also seem to be absurd that Stephen was chastising Israel for not keeping the calendar. The most likely living

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14 Mark 7:5-7

15 Mark 7:13

16 Matt 15:3, Mark 7:9

17 Matt. 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Matt. 16:1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

Matt. 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matt. 16:11-2 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

18 Rom. 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

19 Brown, Colin, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3, Regency Reference Library, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986 p. 1118

20 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 3, The Acts of the Apostles, Baker House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1960, p. 91

21 Acts 7:38-9, KJV

oracles Israel did not keep would have been the Torah, the written Word of God, especially since Stephen continued his chastisement of Israel by relating the story of the golden calf.

The next usage of *logion* is in Heb. 5:12. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God (logiwn tou qeou); and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”<sup>22</sup>

“The readers of Heb. 5:12 are rebuked for needing instructions in ‘the first principles of God’s word [archarchβ twn logiwn tou qeou],’ which evidently implies a failure to grasp not only the OT revelation but the Word of God in Jesus Christ, for ‘in these last days’ God ‘has spoken to us by a son’ (Heb. 1:2).”<sup>23</sup> *Logion* refers to the principles or rules of God, as revealed in the OT and in his son, our Christ according to Hebrews 5. Paul tells the Hebrews they have become too dull to understand the things of God. It is very unlikely he is talking about the calendar. It is far more likely he is talking about scripture, which is designed to make us wise unto salvation and lead us from milk to meat.<sup>24</sup> It is highly unlikely the study of the calendar can do this. However, those who contend that the calendar is part of the oracles of God would have to believe the study that Hebrews 5 is referring to is the study of the calendar, which their logic would dictate can make God’s called out people wise and lead them to salvation. So Hebrews 5:12 does not support the calculated Jewish calendar being part of the oracles of God.

Thirdly, in 1Pet. 4:11 “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God (logiwn tou qeou); if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”<sup>25</sup>

“In the context of an exhortation to employ gifts for one another ‘as good stewards of God’s varied grace’ (1 Pet. 4:10), Peter urges: ‘whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God’ (v. 11). Here *logia theou*, which is used elsewhere to describe the oracles of God in the OT and in Heb. 5:12 of Jesus Christ, is used of charismatic utterance...Hence, the speaker is urged not to give his own opinions or be motivated by self-esteem but to speak what is given to him as God’s word to the glory of God.”<sup>26</sup> There can be no doubt Peter is writing about the word of God, both flesh and bone and written, when he uses the word Greek word *logion*. *Logion* refers to the word of God, the Torah, not the calendar or any other part of the any oral law. There is little doubt that 1 Peter 4:11, when viewed in context with Act 7:38-9 and Heb. 5:12, shows that *logion* is scripture and not oral law, including any calendar.

The final usage of *logion* is in Romans 3:2. “Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God (logiwn tou qeou).”<sup>27</sup> Romans 3:2 and its refer-

22 Heb. 5:12, KJV

23 Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 1118

24 2Tim. 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Hebr. 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

25 1Pet 4:11 KJV

26 Brown, p. 1118

27 Rom. 3:2 KJV



ence to the word of God is often quoted to supposedly show the calendar was given to the Jews, along with the holy scriptures. The phrase τον λογον του θεου (the word of God) is used 42 times in the New Testament. The phrase λογον του θεου (word of God) is used an additional two times. Hebrews 6:5 states, “And have tasted the good word of God (λογον του θεου), and the powers of the world to come”<sup>28</sup> and Luke 4:4 states, “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (λογον του θεου).”<sup>29</sup> The phrase word of God is also used 4 times in the Old Testament.<sup>30</sup> These six verses, in addition to the 42 times the phrase ‘the word of God’ is used, re-emphasizes that the word of God (ton logon tou qeou) is either Holy Scripture or God communicating by speaking directly to an individual. It is not, nor can it be, exegesis of scripture, which the Talmud, at its most trustworthy, can only be. It can’t be some oral law that was not included in scripture, as apologist for the calculated Jewish calendar contend.

When read in context, the meaning of Romans 3:2 is quite different from the eisegesis of those who push for the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar. “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?”<sup>31</sup>

Again, if the verse is taken in context, rather than taken out of context, Romans 3:2 is talking about what a blessing scripture, the word of God, is and is not the referring to the calendar of some talmud. Was Paul stating in Romans 3 that some did not believe in the calendar, which made the faith of God without effect? Of course not. Paul is referring to scripture and what it reveals, not some secret knowledge. The oracles of God are his Word with His law and His way of life revealed therein. The suggestion that Romans 3 shows the transmission of some secret oral law limited to only a select few implies Gnostic thinking, which is the teaching being embraced by those who preach that the calculated Jewish calendar is somehow God’s sacred calendar.<sup>32</sup>

Does God operate in secret, deliberately deny knowledge of His ways to all but a select few, or has He revealed His way in His scriptures? God does have His secrets, but He tells His servants these secrets in his word. “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and

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28 Hebr. 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

29 Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

30 1Sam. 9:27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.

1Kgs. 12:22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

1Chr. 17:3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

Prov. 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

31 Rom. 3:1-3

32 Embracing the calculated Jewish calendar as God’s sacred calendar, passed down from one set of priest to another, even though those priests deny such knowledge was passed down, is rank Gnosticism. However, the Jews and Christians who used the calculated Jewish calendar and accept its authority knowing it was not the same calendar used during the second temple period are not accepting rank Gnosticism.



he will show them his covenant.”<sup>33</sup> What is this secret knowledge? “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever.”<sup>34</sup>

God tells us everything we need to know to follow his will. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”<sup>35</sup> God wants us to obey his law, which is His manifest will. He does not hide things in secret or only give them to a select few of his chosen people. If we have God’s holy spirit, we are His chosen people. He will reveal his truth to us through his word, not through tradition that violates the principles revealed in his word.<sup>36</sup>

### Following those in the Seat of Moses

The other verse often used by apologist for the calculated Jewish calendar is, although they ignore this verse when it comes to Pentecost timing, Passover timing and other theological issues, Matthew 23:2. Matt. 23:2-3 states, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”<sup>37</sup> Whether the Pharisees usurped this authority or not is of no importance to this paper, although it does appear they placed themselves in this role.<sup>38</sup> Christ said they sat in Moses’ seat. But what else did Christ say about these men in the following verses?

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.<sup>39</sup>

These men laid burdens on the people while exulting themselves. They were the leaders of the people, but thought of themselves as masters. They loved to put on a show of religion,

33 Ps. 25:14

34 Rom. 16:25-7

35 Deut. 29:29 Also Isa. 45:19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Isa. 48:16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his spirit, hath sent me.

Matt. 13:35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

36 John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

37 Matt 23:2-3. KJV

38 Morgan, G Campbell, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1983, p. 191

39 Matt. 23:5-10

but would not practice true religion and most probably did not know what it was.<sup>40</sup> These men were more worried about tradition and having their flock follow them than they were about following God. When many of them faced the first real trial of their lives, that of the Messiah was telling them their practices were wrong and performing miracles to back up his accusation, they refused to see they were wrong. There is none so blind as he who will not see. It appears this ministerial class was spoiled and regarded themselves with higher esteem than they should have. Unfortunately many Christians are familiar with this type of leadership, the type of leadership that would preach abject heresy rather than lose their cushy jobs, thus failing the first real test of their lives. This is not the scriptural descriptions of true teachers of God.

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.<sup>41</sup>

Christ tells his disciples that his leaders were to be servants. He depicts the Pharisees as an example of what not to be. There were busy looking after themselves and advancing their careers, all the while teaching people that traditions were more important than the word of God because the traditions somehow showed more of God's will than His word. Their example of how to act towards their fellow man and towards God actually kept their disciples from coming to a relationship with God.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.<sup>42</sup>

The Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious leaders of Christ's time, thought nothing of using and abusing the helpless for their own gain. It could be a widow in need or a new convert to the faith. How could Christ have ordered his apostles to follow after such men, when he gives them such scathing condemnation? The vast majority of scholarly works explained Matthew 23:3 the same way. They all stressed the word "therefore" in verse 3 because Christ could not have been telling them to follow all the teaching of the Pharisees after castigating them and their teachings in so many ways. Adam Clarke puts it this way: "All therefore, whatsoever. That is, all those things which they read out of the law and prophets, and all things which they teach consistently with them. This must be our Lord's meaning. He could not have desired them to do everything without restriction which the Jewish doctors taught, because he himself warns His disciples against their false teaching, and testifies that they had made the word of God of none effect by their traditions."<sup>43</sup>

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40 James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

41 Matt. 23:11-13

42 Matt. 23:14-5

43 Clarke, Adam, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1983, p. 191

Matthew Henry is also very succinct in the meaning of Matthew 23:3. “As far they sit in Moses’ seat, that is, read and preach the law that was given by Moses, so far you must hear-ken to them. Now Christ would have the people to make use of the helps He gave them for the understanding of the scripture, and do accordingly. As long as their comments did illustrate the text, did make plain, and not make void, the commandments of God; so far they must be observed and obeyed. We must not think the worse of good truths for their being preached by bad ministers; nor of good laws for their being executed by bad magistrates. Though it is most desirable to have our food brought by angels, yet, if God send it to us by ravens, if it be good and wholesome, we must take it, and thank God for it.”<sup>44</sup>

The standard understanding of Matthew 23 is that Christ instructed his disciples they were to follow the scribes and Pharisees when these leaders of Israel followed God. He did not say to follow men, but he said to follow their leadership when they were following God and then emphasizes throughout the rest of Matthew 23 not to follow them when they were wrong. Scripture must be our guide, although God uses men to help us with our understanding of God’s word. Christ’ words rang true with a 20th century teacher who said, “Follow me as I follow God. If I or anyone teach anything different, you should leave and follow God.”<sup>45</sup>

There remains one very important question most people do not examine when they look at Matthew 23:2. What is Moses’ seat? It has been assumed this was a position of power, but is there biblical support as to what this seat was and what power it imparted? This author suggests there is.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.<sup>46</sup>

When people had matters they could not handle, they came to Moses’ seat and he judged their problems and taught them why God would judge that way. Moses’ seat was a seat of judgment. It was like going to court to settle a difference between two plaintiff’s who could not work out the issue on their own. Therefore Matthew 23:2 is likely stating if the people went to the Pharisees for a judgment, they were supposed to listen to that judgment, just like abiding by the decision of judge, even if the that decision was perverted by a bad judge. But as Christ goes on to show in the rest of Matthew 23, his followers were not supposed to follow the teachings of these men. This is also likely reason Paul wrote that Christians should not put themselves in a position where men like the Pharisees could judge them.<sup>47</sup>

44 Henry, Matthew, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1983, p. 191

45 I have heard Herbert Armstrong say this on old tapes many times and I know many people who heard him say it in person. It is as true today about religious leaders as it was 50, 500, or 5000 years ago.

46 Ex. 18:13-6, KJV

47 1 Cor. 6:1-6 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be

**Following the Pharisees or the Sadducees**

The judges or saviors of Israel had authority to free Israel from their various oppressors for over 300 years. Would you have gone to Samson for moral advice, especially about women? This author hopes not, but Samson still had authority from God to do his job. And if you asked for his judgment, you were bound to follow it. Peter even tells us to follow the authority of worldly leaders. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”<sup>48</sup> We are to follow leaders in their areas of authority, as long as what they teach or tell us to do is not ungodly. “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”<sup>49</sup> Jesus was teaching his disciples in Matt. 23 that they were to follow the leaders in Israel in the areas they had authority, even if it meant giving up some actions or freedoms. This did not include religious ordinances, as Jesus made clear with multiple healings on the Sabbath,<sup>50</sup> when he taught that we should not follow the washing rituals of the Pharisees,<sup>51</sup> and when he and his disciples ate barley they plucked from the corners of the field on the Sabbath.<sup>52</sup>

In a vain attempt to avoid Jesus’ castigation of the Pharisees throughout scripture, it has been suggested the Sadducees, who were mostly of the priestly line, were responsible for the keeping of the calendar. However Matthew 23:2 supposedly only authorizes us to follow the teachings of the scribes and the Pharisees who sat in Moses seat to follow the calculated Jewish calendar. This is a contradiction in logic. Trying to show the validity of the calculated Jewish calendar by saying the Pharisees were given power by God, then turning around and stating it was the Sadducees, those of line of Aaron, who supposedly had some secret knowledge, or gnosis, of God’s calendar, is a non sequitur. This teaching also shown for the fraud it truly is because Matthew 16 groups the doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees as something Jesus’ disciples were told not to follow.<sup>53</sup>

It is true the Levitical priesthood that controlled many of the functions of the Sanhedrin were mostly Sadducees and not Pharisees. Even if the Sadducees were responsible for the secession of some secret knowledge of the sacred calendar, which has no support from the Bible or history, this secession of gnosis would have stopped by the middle of the second century, at the latest. Most of the priests who were supposedly responsible for keeping the calendar and other secret knowledge were martyred in 70 CE when Jerusalem fell. Even the remnants of Jerusalem were totally destroyed by the Romans sixty years later during the Bar

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judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

48 1Peter 2:13-15

49 Acts 5:29

50 Matt 12:10-15, Luke 14:1-6, John 9:1-34

51 Matt 23:25-6, Matt 15:1-9

52 Matt 12:1-8

53 Matt. 16:1-6, KJV

Kochba war (132-5 CE). How anyone can teach that a priesthood managed to maintain a complex, gnostic artifact like the calculated Jewish calendar while also teaching this same priesthood supposedly lacked even the rudimentary knowledge of how to properly prepare or even know the proper time for the Passover sacrifice is beyond my understanding. It is sad that Christians can't or won't see this incredible contradiction of logic. If the Sadducean priesthood's forefathers were so surprised at discovering the knowledge of the weekly and annual sabbaths as a whole during the time of Josiah, which 2 Kings 22 clearly shows, how could they have managed to pass down a secret as complex as the calculated Jewish Calendar?<sup>54</sup> The obvious answer is they did not, yet some wish to cling to the tradition and false gnostic ideas rather than admit past errors and move forward.

After the destruction of the temple, Judaism had to reform knowing there would be no temple and Jews would not even be allowed in the city walls of Jerusalem. The rebuilding of Judaism took place at Jamnia. This conference spelled the death blow of the Sadducees and their remnants were absorbed by the Pharisees.<sup>55</sup> Thus it is very unlikely that the Sadducees ever had any secret knowledge and it is even more doubtful it was intact when Hillel II (Hillel I is perhaps the most famous Pharisee of them all) released his calendar because the Sadducees no longer existed as a party or a power. It is also interesting that the Sadducees, the keepers of the oral law supposedly given to Aaron, did not believe in the oral law.<sup>56</sup>

However, if we have to follow the Jewish leadership on the very technical, extra-biblical knowledge of the calendar, then this author contends we must also follow them on their knowledge of the Passover and Pentecost if we are to be intellectually honest and consistent. Anyone who urges the acceptance of the Jewish authorities in following the calculated Jewish calendar, yet disavows this same authority when it comes to the timing of the original Passover and Pentecost is being intellectually dishonest. As for me and my house, we will follow scripture, which clearly shows the Jews are right about when and where the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed<sup>57</sup> and that agrees that Pentecost, which is tandem to the weekly Sabbath of Saturday and Sunday seven weeks after the days of Unleavened Bread is what the Sadducees followed and the Karaites continue to follow and what Jesus observed when he walked the earth.

God does not work with his followers by revealing Gnostic wisdom to a few. Instead He opens their minds to the simplicity that is inherent with Him and in his word. Suggesting a complex oral law, which included the calculated Jewish calendar, was faithfully passed down for multiple generations reeks of Gnosticism and is simply not true.

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54 2Chron. 35

55 Finkel, Asher, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Yavneh's liturgy and early Christianity*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Spring 1981, pp. 231-50

56 Reicke, Bo, *The New Testament Era: The world of the Bible from 500 B.C. to A.D. 100*, Translated by David E. Green, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Penn., 1968, p. 154-5

Bromley, G.W. ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 4: Q-Z*, Moulder, W. J., Sadducees Eerdmans, Grand Rapid, Michigan, 1998, p. 279

57 *Jesus the True Passover* can be downloaded at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>



**Exodus 12:2**

The foundations of the calculated Jewish calendar, based on starting the year with Tishri 1 and postponing the start of the year and months for convenience and *halacha* traditions, including the Lulav ceremony, goes against biblical principles. Scripture mandates the first month of the be Abib. “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ‘This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:’”<sup>1</sup> The new year starts with

Abib, not Tishri nor January.

Those who support the calculated Jewish calendar believe Exodus 12:2 is which supposedly where God gave both Moses and Aaron the oral law, supposedly including “God’s sacred calendar.”<sup>2</sup> The Misrashic explanation of Ex. 12:2 has God pointing to the crescent new moon in the heaven and telling Moses and Aaron, “When you see this, declare a new moon.”<sup>3</sup> Although the Bible implies the month start the new moon, the Kariaties write, “This Rabbinic fairy-tale highlights an important point, namely that the Bible never comes out and says we should determine the beginning of months with the new moon. The reason for this is that the term “month” (Hodesh) itself implies that the month begins with the crescent new moon.”<sup>4</sup>

The complete rules for constructing a calendar are not listed in scripture. Because of this, many of the leaders of the churches of God state we must follow the tradition of the calculated Jewish calendar. Some authors would disagree with my contention that God gave only a broad outline of the calendar in scripture and state God has given His people all the information they need in the Bible and we can ignore all of the traditions about the calendar.<sup>5</sup> To add to the complexity of the problem, there are even some theologians who claim Israel had multiple calendars, some of which were purely solar, like the calendar of Jubilees.<sup>6</sup> The scholars who believe in multiple calendars all appear to be in liberal, critical camp who

1 Ex. 12:1-3

2 Lasker and Lasker, *Behold, a Moon is born! How the Jewish Calendar Works*, p. 6-8

3 [www.karaite-korner.org/new\\_moon.shtml](http://www.karaite-korner.org/new_moon.shtml), The New moon in the Hebrew Bible, p. 1

4 Ibid

5 Solinsky, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, for example

6 Beckwith, R.T., *The earliest Enoch literature and its Calendar: Marks of their origin, date and motivation*, p 385-90

do not believe in the sanctity of the Bible.<sup>7</sup> Their arguments are dealt with by Beckwith and others.<sup>8</sup> Although this author believes there are some undefined areas of the calendar in scripture, Ex. 12:2 is clear that the first and chief month of the year, the month from which the year is “calculated,” is Abib, which is also called Nisan in scripture.

### The Calendar at the Time of Jesus

Jesus is the example to be followed in everything for Christians. The goal of every Christian should be to live a holy life as Jesus lived his. Of course, we will come up far short. “An understanding of the calendar in biblical times is very important for serious biblical study. The calendar is used to organize and refer to those aspects of life that were important to the communities that used them. This is especially true of matters pertaining to the cult, more specifically worship.”<sup>9</sup> The biblical calendar, just like other calendars, was used to keep track of years. For example, “And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.”<sup>10</sup> 1Kgs. 6:38 makes mention of the eleventh year of construction of the temple.<sup>11</sup> The calendar was used by Israel to plan for the future and mark the past, just as we use our calendar today. But it was also used to keep God’s feasts at the right time. Scripture states;

These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.”<sup>12</sup>

Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.<sup>13</sup>

Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.<sup>14</sup>

But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.<sup>16</sup>

7 A detailed explanation of this liberal, critical scholarship is detailed in my Passover book. For those who are familiar with current theological scholarship, I am referring the Wellhausenian document theory, which I consider to be untrue heresy.

8 Beckwith, Roger T., *Cautionary notes on the Use of Calendars and Astronomy to determine the Chronology of the Passion*

9 Morgan, D.F., Calendar, Bromiley, G.W., ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1:A-D*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1979, p. 574

10 Ex. 40:17

11 1Kings 6:38 And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which [is] the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.

12 Lev. 23:4 These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. 13 Num. 9:2 Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.

14 Num. 28:2 Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.

15 Deut. 16:6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

16 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.



God specifies in scripture that the annual feasts had to occur at the right season of the year. We have already established a very clear foundational principle of the scriptural calendar is that Abib must be the first month of the year and it must be in the right season, just after the end of winter. The year was divided into 12 months. “The Old Testament uses three different systems of nomenclature in referring to months: Canaanite, numerical, and Babylonian....In each of the three systems a twelve-month schema is presupposed and the months are counted from the spring. In addition, the lunisolar character of the year and the means by which the months are calculated or reckoned are clear.”<sup>17</sup> The twenty-fifth chapter of Kings confirms that there were twelve months in a year, as does Jeremiah and Ezekiel.<sup>18</sup> The book of Esther equates the twelfth month with the month of Adar four times.<sup>19</sup> However, the dual biblical requirements of twelve months in a year and that the feasts occur in the proper season require a leap month to be added. It should be remembered that intercalating a leap month is not adding a month, just as having a Feb. 29<sup>th</sup> every four years (well, almost every four years) is not adding a day. It is simply placing accumulated time where it belongs. Just as adding February 29 almost every 4 years makes that year a leap year, adding a month to the scriptural luni-solar calendar every couple of years makes that year a leap year.

There can also be little doubt there was a thirteenth month added. It is the only possible way to reconcile the lunar and solar cycles governing the scriptural calendar. However, the Bible simply does not state, “You shall add a thirteenth month.” There is no clear instance of a thirteen month being added in scripture. Commentaries and papers suggest that a study of the first eight chapters of Ezekiel reveals a thirteenth month in scripture.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps this is true, but it is not obvious to me. This author concedes that intercalation of the thirteenth month is extra-biblical because it is not explicitly stated in scripture, but it is not unbiblical because it does not violate any biblical rules or principles. Most scholars agree intercalation

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<sup>17</sup> Morgan, D.F., *Calendar*, p. 575

<sup>18</sup> 2Kgs. 25:27 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; Jer. 52:31 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, Ezek. 32:1 And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

<sup>19</sup> Esth. 3:7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

Esth. 3:13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Esth. 8:12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

Esth. 9:1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

<sup>20</sup> UCG study paper, p. 7

of the thirteenth month is the only way to fulfill the biblical requirement of having Unleavened Bread occur at the right time of the solar year, the time of the green ears of barley.

Was a leap year always a requirement? Scripture states there were twelve months in a year. Although the Bible does not list exactly how many days are in a month, it does yield some information about the number of days per month. 2Kgs. 25:27 states, “And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison”.<sup>21</sup> So the twelfth month had at least 27 days in it. The story of Noah suggests months had thirty days before the flood.<sup>22</sup> Months may or may not have normally been 30 days long in the ancient past. Scripture depicts all of the months during Noah’s flood in Genesis 7 and 8 as being 30 days long. However this may simply be a remnant of the lack of visibility of the moon during the flood. However, we know for certain that the orbit of the earth around the moon takes a period of approximately 29.5 days currently and has for recorded history.

Instead of adding a leap month, couldn’t we just make certain months longer? The answer has to be no, just as we cannot make a certain days 6 hours longer every year because days cannot be shortened or lengthened. A day is one rotation of the earth and it can be nothing else. The months of the biblical calendar follow the lunar cycle just as days follow the rotation of the earth and Gregorian years follow the solar cycle. A month is one orbit of the moon around the earth in the biblical calendar and it can be nothing else. There is no way to add over 11 days a year to one month or even a number of months and still have them be months. The current calculated Jewish calendar has either 29 or 30 days in every month and months based on the lunar cycle can only be 29 or 30 days long. The lunar month can therefore only be 29 or 30 days long.<sup>23</sup>

The scriptural calendar starts with the month of Abib. Abib must occur at the end of winter. The year is 12 months long, but there must be a leap month added when Abib would occur in winter because there would be no barley for the wavesheaf offering. Each month is started with the new moon. Although it may be lacking detail, this is the outline for the calendar according to scripture.

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21 Num. 11:19-21 2Kgs. 25:27 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison;

22 Genesis 7:11 states that the fountains of the deep broke open on the 17th day of the second month. Genesis 8:3-4 state that on the 17th day of the 7th month, the ark came to rest after 150 days. This suggests that either the months were 30 days long before the flood or that because of the obscured visibility that may have been caused by all the rain, the month was calculated to be 30 days long by Noah.

23 Maimonides, Moses, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, trans. by Gandz, Solomon, with Julian Oberman and Otto Neugebauer, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 2, Yale University Press, New Haven Conn, 1956, pp. 3-4

### What's wrong with the calculated Jewish calendar?

Today's calculated Jewish calendar uses an approximated average of conjunction of the moon as its starting point. This approximation, known as the molad, has nothing to do with any visible astronomical phenomena. The molad with the rules of postponements actually defines the new moon as the conjunction, the visible first crescent and the day after the first crescent. This trinity is as unscriptural as is its more famous cousin. A set of mathematical rules designed to facilitate Jewish Sabbath *halacha* governs the mechanics of this calendar. The main purpose of these rules is to prevent tandem Sabbaths and to make sure the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast of Tabernacles does not fall on a weekly Sabbath to facilitate the Lulav ceremony.

This calendar was first released into the public domain about 1600 years ago when the Jewish authorities were being terribly persecuted. This calendar and the rules governing it are significantly different than the calendar used at the time of Christ according to these same Jewish authorities.

### The Postponements

Ex. 12:1-3 clearly states that Abib is to be the first, the chief month. However, it is not in the calculated Jewish calendar. "In course of time Tishri 1 was universally observed as the beginning of the year, although Nisan was still called the first month."<sup>1</sup> Tishri 1 one is the Jewish new year, the month from which the calendar starts. However, "The year begins on Tishri 1 which is rarely the day of the molad, as there are four obstacles or considerations, called dehiyyot, fixing the first day of the month (rosh hodesh)."<sup>2</sup> The postponements are the crux of the problem with the calculated Jewish calendar.

The second postponement artificially delays the start of the day from noon. If the new moon were the conjunction, which it has never been historically, then this postponement also delays the start of the month for non-biblical reasons. If the beginning of the month were to be delayed for some scriptural reason, like, "The moon and stars to rule by night,"<sup>3</sup> or because God, "appointed the moon for seasons,"<sup>4</sup> then the postponement should be at sunset, or perhaps an approximation of sunset, like 6 p.m. Therefore this postponement is not only extra-biblical, but unbiblical.

The first and major postponement delays the declaration of the day of molad as the day of

1 Lundman, Isaac, Ed, *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, Baal-Canada, 1940, Calendar, p. 632

2 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Calendar, Vol. 5, C-Dh, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 1972, p. 44

3 Ps. 136:9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

4 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

the new moon if the first of Tishri would have occurred on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday. The postponement on Wednesday or Friday is to prevent the day of Atonement from falling on a Friday or Sunday. The rules of Sabbath *halacha* would make such tandem Sabbaths a burden, thus they are not allowed to occur under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. The first of Tishri is not allowed to occur on a Sunday to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles, called *hoshana rabbah*, from occurring on the a weekly Sabbath because the lulav ceremony requires the ritual waving of the willows, which is also not allowed to occur on the weekly Sabbath under the rules of Sabbath *halacha* because such waving is considered work.

Rather than change the rules of *halacha*, the rabbis apparently changed the calendar because they deemed *halacha* was more important than following the clear calendrical scripture that makes Abib 1 the start of the year. The rabbis' *halacha* rules apparently caused them to change the definition of the new moon from being an astronomical event, almost certainly the first visible crescent seen over Jerusalem, too being an obscure, mathematical equation. They abandoned a calendar they had observed for at least the written history of Israel even though their new calendar violated scripture because God's ways conflicted with *halacha* and because they were forbidden to enter Jerusalem. They apparently took this opportunity to imprint the calendar with their traditions. The postponements are the type of rules that caused the Messiah to state, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."<sup>5</sup>

Not only are postponements against the ordinances of God, there should be no doubt that these rules go back less than 1,800 years. This may seem like a very long time, but history records that Judaism reformed itself after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The religion now practiced by the Jewish people is very different than the religion practiced at the time of Jesus the Christ with the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. Many of current practices of Judaism are correct, like the observing the weekly Sabbath, their reverence towards the one true God, the emphasis on love and charity, all gleaned from the pages of God's manual of life, the Torah. However, given that one of the major tenets of Judaism is that Jesus was not the messiah, Christians should examine each facet of the Jewish religion that they either have or are thinking about amalgamating it into their belief system. One of those facets has been the calculated Jewish calendar, which the vast majority of its proponents continue to say is the sacred calendar that was given to Moses by God, which is simply in error.

### No Hidden clauses in God's Covenant

The idea that some kind of secret knowledge passed on from priest to priest is inconsistent with the Biblical narrative for four major reasons. The first reason is numerous instances of Israel finding the book of the covenant in the temple after forgetting about it for generations.<sup>6</sup> The entirety of the nation of Israel had to discover anew what the covenant was

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

<sup>6</sup> 2Chron 29-30, 2Chron 34, especially 2Chr. 34:15-6 And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

and the only resources for that rediscovery were God's word and His spirit. Even those who support the calculated Jewish calendar acknowledge there are no hints of anything like postponements in the Bible. The idea that some sect could keep the knowledge of a calendar while not even keeping the knowledge of the Torah or the existence of the weekly and annual feasts of God is not logical nor is it substantiated by scriptural accounts.

Scripture itself gives us the second reason that there was no secret knowledge of some mythical sacred calendar from God not written in the Torah being passed onto a small subset of Israelites. It states, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD."<sup>7</sup>

Moses was told to read all the words of the covenant to the people. "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient."<sup>8</sup> This covenant, read from the book of the covenant, was taught to all the people, as Deut. 4:12-14 states. "And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it."<sup>9</sup>

Moses taught the entire nation of Israel God's laws, statutes and judgments so they knew about the covenant they were entering. He wrote these teachings down in the Pentateuch. It could be argued many Israelites did not understand the entire covenant and this author would agree with that statement. Just as when we enter into a marriage covenant, we do not realize all that it entails, but we know love, honor, and obey is the foundation of that covenant. Christians today do not know all the requirements of the covenant they enter into with God either, but God tells all of His called out people all they need to know to begin following the covenant in his word. As time passes and the relationship between the individual and God grows, so does the prospective of the covenant. But the binding contract of the covenant is the bible and it does not include secret riders that only a select few are allowed to know and understand.

Although all of Israel may not have understood the entire covenant, there is scriptural evidence that they were supposed to learn it and live it as they walked down the path of life. But all of Israel knew the basis of their contract with God before they agreed to the contract. We can't ignore all the verses where God informs Moses and Aaron to communicate the covenant to the nation of Israel. The people needed to be told how to follow God and the Pentateuch is that basis.

<sup>7</sup> Exod. 19:5-8

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 24:7

<sup>9</sup> Deut. 4:12-14



One of the starting points of the covenant between Israel and God was the gathering of the lambs on the tenth day of the first month in Egypt. The nation of Israel needed to know when to bring in the lambs under the covenant. The idea that this contract was given as two parts to two distinct entities within the nation of Israel is not found in the Pentateuch. Also, the entire idea of secret knowledge needed to truly follow God is usually defined as Gnosticism and scripture reveals God's true servants fighting against Gnostic teachings. God's revelation in the Pentateuch is that the first month of the year is Nisan or Abib, two different names for the same month, not Tishri.

The third major reason for rejecting the premise of the calculated Jewish calendar being secretly passed down by a succession of priests is theological consistency. This reason cannot and should not be applied to Jews or those of the church of God who practice a late 14<sup>th</sup> Passover and a Sivan 6 Pentecost (although this author practices a late 14<sup>th</sup> Passover, he does not follow a Sivan 6 Pentecost). These Christians and Jews believe the leadership of the Jews supposedly have the authority to proclaim and change the Jewish calendar to match *halacha*, even if these changes are unscriptural. However, those who practice an early 14<sup>th</sup> Passover, or a Sunday or Monday Pentecost or reject Jewish interpretation of scripture as authoritative are not being theologically consistent in their observances and statutes. If you believe that the Jews have the wrong date for these observances because the Jews lost the timing for Passover and/or Pentecost, it is inconsistent to claim this same leadership managed to keep track of the secret knowledge of the calendar.

### ***Sola Scriptura* versus Church Authority**

The fourth major reason for not accepting the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative for observing the annual feasts (*mow'ed*) is consistency of authority. An example of this consistency of authority not being followed is found in the Protestant churches of the world which do not keep a seventh day Sabbath. These churches do not accept the authority of the Pope or the Catholic church and state they believe in and practice *sola scriptura*, yet the vast majority of these churches have accepted Sunday rather than seventh day Sabbath because of the changes codified by the Catholic church at the council of Nicea in 325 CE. Within a generation of the Catholic church changing the Sabbath to the "eighth day", better known as Sunday or the first day of the week, rabbinic leaders changed the mechanics of the calendar upon which they base their days of special worship. As the Catholic church has pointed out, since the Protestants say they rely on scripture only, they are being inconsistent in their practice by accepting a Sunday Sabbath because the only reason it was changed was by the authority of the Pope which these Protestant churches reject. In like manner, the rabbinic Jewish religion is consistent in their religious practices, like the Catholic church, because they believe their religious leaders, exemplified by Hillel II, had the right to change the calendar with extra-biblical and unbiblical statutes. This practice is not pleasing to God, but at least God it is consistent.

The Karaite sect of Judaism does not accept rabbinic authority, much as the Protestants say they reject Papal authority. The Karaites reject the calculated Jewish calendar and a Sivan 6 Pentecost because they defy scriptural ordinances and statutes. It is not consistent for the



churches of God to accept the authority of Jewish leadership on the topic of the calendar when these interpretations defy biblical injunctions, but ignore this authority in other areas, like the timing of Pentecost, Passover, and the lulav ceremony at the feast of Tabernacles just because it is inconvenient because it goes against their current tradition. This is especially true when the Jewish authorities, supposedly in charge of the calendar, write the calendar in use at the time of Christ is not the same as the calendar they use today. Of course the Jews have no problems with this, just as the Catholic church has no problem with a Sunday sabbath, but those who have cast off the traditions of leaders in favor of only scripture for the setting of doctrine do have a major problem with such actions and such logic.

The Protestants claim there are scriptural reasons for keeping a Sunday Sabbath, but honest protestant scholars know these excuses are flimsy and none of them are scriptural correct. They simple do not have the faith in God to accept scriptural ordinances over man-made traditions or they, like the Jews in many of their practices, value tradition above scripture. The Karaite sect of the Judaism appears to be more honest with their quest for scriptural truth, using only scripture as the basis for doctrine as they have broken away from Rabbinical Judaism, than the Protestants were in their break with the Catholic church. This is a lesson the churches of God could and should learn.

### **Problems creating a scriptural calendar**

Is there enough biblical information to construct a calendar? The two major stumbling blocks to constructing a calendar from the information in the Bible are: the lack of a scriptural definition of a new moon, and exactly how the leap month is to be intercalated so that the annual feasts occur in their correct season.

The Mishnic interpretation of a new moon has been the first cusp of the young moon shining through the night sky over Jerusalem. This is also the historical interpretation of what a new moon is. Although the most likely definition of the new moon is the first visible crescent, it is by no means dogmatic, but most probable. The Rudd household will observe the first crescent as the new moon for now because that is what it has been historically.

The Rudd household kept the conjunction as the new moon for over two years because we thought the first crescent did not follow a symmetrical pattern with the full moon. However, because of the elliptical orbit of both the earth and the moon, it is not possible to have a full moon occur exactly half way between two new moons, not matter what the definition of a new moon is, with any regularity. It is possible for the first sighting of a young moon, the first crescent, to be only thirteen days before the moon appears full. However, it is possible for the full moon to be only thirteen days after the molad as well.

The understanding that the full moon of Ps. 81 is the exact astronomical full moon and that the feast of Tabernacles must occur on the astronomical full moon with some relationship to the autumn equinox presents a problem of astronomy, theology and history. An even stranger calendar, also based upon an exegesis of Ps. 81, is one where the full moon is actually the new moon exist in church of God circles. This proposed calendar shows just how far people can wonder from the truth with a false understand of one scripture. Not

only does the idea of the full moon being the new moon defy history, tradition, and astronomy, it makes Jesus the Messiah a sinner by observing all the annual feasts two weeks off. This type of argument is fodder for the churches of God who will not deal honestly with the problems inherent in the calculated Jewish calendar. If the men who sit in the role of leaders were actually leading people to the truth of the bible such strange ideas should never have been able to take root.

Some have stated and written that there is no precisely defined calendar in scripture, which is true. They then go on and boldly state since there is no calendar precisely defined in scripture, we should keep following the calculated Jewish calendar because it allows us to meet together.<sup>10</sup> What they conveniently leave out of their argument is that their logic applies to all of the feasts of God, not just the annual feasts, but the weekly feast, the seventh day Sabbath.<sup>11</sup>

Most Christians set aside Sunday as the Sabbath and not Saturday, so by far and away the largest number of Christians congregate together on what they believe is the first of God's feasts, the Sabbath, on Sunday. Many of these Sunday observant Christians would not consider changing when they congregate because of tradition and because they see logistical issues with observing a seventh day Sabbath. They point out not all Sabbath keepers observe the Sabbath at the same time, with some starting the Sabbath at sunset and others starting it at dark and some follow the example of the Jews, who start Sabbath observance 18 minutes before sunset and end it after dark. They point out this disparity of views in the Sabbath community and state since Sabbath keepers can't agree on when the Sabbath starts, how do they know they wouldn't just be going from doing one set of wrong things to doing another set of wrong things.

What is the biblical definition of when the day ends? It ends at erev or evening. This is not a specific time, no matter what some church of God teachers teach. God did not see fit to give an exact definition to that time, erev, in scripture. Scripture cannot be used to support any of the above times precisely as being erev because scripture has examples of erev being anywhere from mid-afternoon to being very dark. The one thing scripture can do is show which definitions of erev are wrong and there is only one that is definitely wrong, which is the standard Jewish practice of defining Sabbath as starting 18 minutes before sunset and ending when there are three stars in the sky because it may not be dark enough to be night if you see only two stars. Scripture clearly defines the Sabbath as a day, thus it must start and end at the same time frame. Therefore, although God did not precisely define when the Sabbath started and ended, He still gave biblical guidelines that the Sabbath was a day long and listed a number of things you were not supposed to do on that day and things you were supposed to do, but left a lot of gray area in between. That is the way God operated in defining His feast of the weekly Sabbath and it should be no surprise that is how He

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10Dewey, Pam, *Why I use the Standard Calendar to determine yearly Feast days*. You can download this article in its entirety from <http://www.thejournal.org/issues/issue62/dewey.htm>

11 Lev. 23:2-3 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

defined His calendar, although this lack of preciseness is something the churches of God apparently cannot abide, just as the pharisees could not abide how the supposed lack of guidance God gave on what to do and not do on the seventh day Sabbath.

### Creating a Scriptural Calendar

The new moon is the start of the month. Not only does the Hebrew word for new moon mean month, but Numbers 29:6 shows that the offering for the new moon had to occur on the first day of the month. God created, “The moon and stars to rule by night.”<sup>12</sup> He also, “appointed the moon for seasons.”<sup>13</sup> If the new moon is not visible before sunrise, the next night, when the new moon is visible, must start the new month. The second rule of postponement, which arbitrarily chooses noon as the cut off point rather than sunrise, is just as unbiblical as the first rule, which prevent tandem sabbaths with atonement and prevents the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on the weekly sabbath so the Jews can waive the willows in the Lulav ceremony without doing what they consider to much work on the Sabbath.

The exact determination of the start of the seasons, the *mow'ed*, what constitutes a tekufoth, and how the tekufoth should be applied to the annual sabbaths is the second controversial and contentious issue. Some believe the first full moon after the beginning of spring, as determined by the spring equinox, mandates the start of the year. Others believe the new moon nearest the equinox must be used to determine the start of the year. The calculated Jewish calendar does not follow either of these rules because it intercalates the leap month according to a mathematical algorithm that matches the solar year to the lunar year in a 19 year time cycle. The contention of this book is that God's people were expected to show judgement in determining when to intercalate Adar II, with the growing season being the most important factor to consider. The only scriptural definition of tekufoth is as a cycle, not a specific point on that cycle, like an equinox. The most likely explanation is that God would have wanted us to follow the KISS (keep it simple, stupid) process.<sup>14</sup> Using the barley growing season in Jerusalem as the starting point for intercalation is the simplest method for adding a leap month. Owing to the diversity of opinion and scholarship on what a new moon is and when to intercalate Adar II, these two points are somewhat debatable. For now, the Rudd household keep the first crescent over Jerusalem as the new moon. We believe the first month should coincide with the barley being in abib, but will not rule out keeping the annual feasts to coincide with the 19 time cycle of calculated Jewish calendar instead if this point is in question, as stated in the body of this book.

Because the solar and the lunar year can be so precisely reconciled every 19 year period, it is almost certain that 7 months would be intercalated during a nineteen year period. This would likely lead to at least 2 intercalations being different from the rest. There is nothing wrong with that. However fixing the intercalations as the current calculated Jewish calendar does usually makes 2 of the intercalations seem out of season. Although there does appear

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12 Ps. 136:9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

13 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

14 An expression from my friend Dick that I feel connotes how Christians should handle most problems.

to be a 19 year time cycle, if we follow the growing seasons in Israel as the start of the year, this author is fairly certain there will still be 7 leap years ever 19 years.

The Jewish calendar now in use can be modified by the Sanhedrin. There has even been talk of the current Sanhedrin altering the intercalations in the 19 year time cycle. “If the average length of the solar year in the present Jewish calendar exceeds this by approximately  $6 \frac{2}{3}$  min., this discrepancy was left out of account as it was assumed that the cumulative effect would remain negligible over a long period at the end of which the present system (*ed. note*-the present system is the calculated Jewish calendar) was expected to be replaced again by a system based on true values more akin to the earlier Jewish calendar in which New Moons (days of the phasis) and intercalations were proclaimed on the basis of both observation and calculation.”<sup>15</sup>

However, the Sanhedrin’s decisions are no longer binding on Christians and were not 1600 years ago when the calculated Jewish calendar was made the standard by Hillel II. The priesthood of the order of Melchisedec now bears that responsibility. However, they are not allowed to make arbitrary decisions, just as the Levitical priests could not. They must seek God’s will, His law, His truth, and proclaim it at all costs. However they cannot make new laws if they don’t like the old ones, which Jewish *halacha* often does.

The calculated Jewish calendar’s rules of postponement have been instituted to prevent Atonement from being tandem with the weekly Sabbath and to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on a weekly Sabbath so the Jews can waive the willows during the seventh day of tabernacles at the lulav ceremony. The prevention of tandem sabbaths causes anomalies in the calendar, so there are more rules to correct these anomalies. The justification for the prevention of tandem sabbaths is the inconvenience and hardship supposedly caused by having two sabbaths in a row. However, there is no indication God has ever given authority to anyone to change his ordinances to prevent what man sees as an inconvenience or a hardship, especially when it is man-made *halacha* that causes these inconveniences. As most Christians who have observed a Sunday Pentecost can attest, two sabbaths in a row were and are not an inconvenience and are considered by many to be a blessing, a blessing the rules of postponement are designed to stop. This author believes the Pharisaic or rabbinic interpretation of Pentecost being Sivan 6 was instituted to minimize tandem Sabbaths in the summer and to obfuscate that God mandated a tandem Sabbath every year.

The argument has been made that without a preparation day, food could not be properly prepared for tandem sabbaths. However, this ignores the clear instructions in the Bible not to add or take away from the things of God and ignores the fact that food would have been plentiful in the “fall” holy day season. The rationalization of supposedly undue hardship caused by tandem sabbaths must be examined in light of all the facts. Life in an agricultural society is very different than from our technological one. However, there were many ways to preserve food. People were allowed to work to prepare food on the annual sabbaths, except for Atonement.<sup>16</sup> The people also usually ate cold meals on the Sabbath, so

<sup>15</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Calendar, Vol. 5, C-Dh, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 1972, p. 48

<sup>16</sup> Exod. 12:16 And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

preparation could have easily been done 2 or 3 days in advance. Any inconvenience caused by tandem sabbaths can be traced to pharisaical rules of food preparation on the Sabbath. Instead of changing these rules of *halacha*, it appears the Pharisees changed the rules of the calendar. This would be in harmony with the pharisaical pattern depicted in the New Testament that Jesus the Messiah condemned.

Tandem sabbaths would also have given the nation of Israel a two day weekend when they were used to working 6 days a week. We know how we look forward to three day weekends. Wouldn't it be logical that they would have looked forward to having two consecutive days off to commune with God and be with their extended family? It seems to be, dare we speculate, pharisaical to deny God' called out people this opportunity. It sounds akin to those who state taking a whole day off, God's Holy Sabbath, to commune with God and rest, is a burden. God does not impose heavy burdens on his people, yet we know He even requires us to fast on occasion and set aside the Sabbath for rest and to draw near to Him. He wants us to devote time to Him and a long weekend seems to be a very efficient way of building a relationship with God and family.

There is no biblical admonition nor principle to prevent tandem sabbaths. The Jewish sages around the time of Christ gave ordinances for Atonement being tandem with a weekly Sabbath.<sup>17</sup> The Word of God is specific, stating we should not add to nor take away from what God has told us to do. We know the Pharisees in the time of Christ had a proclivity to add to and take away from the Word and Jesus chastised them for this practice. The Sadducees ceased to exist after the second century of the common era. Therefore it was the Pharisees, and in particular Hillel II, who released the calculated Jewish calendar to replace the one used during the time of Jesus. The Jews believe the Sanhedrin has the authority to change the calendar to match Torah and astronomy. Are we, the people of God, going to say we do not have the authority to recreate a calendar that does not break scriptural ordinances?

Many churches of God contend the Saducean and Pharisaical dispute over the timing of Pentecost was a matter of biblical interpretation. The facts reveal the Pharisees pushed for a date of Pentecost that would minimize tandem sabbaths at the feast of weeks while the Sadducees preferred not to twist the meaning of the word sabbath in Lev 23:15 to prevent tandem sabbaths. Far from being a matter of biblical interpretation, the issue of the timing of Pentecost revolved around the issue of tandem Sabbaths and *halacha*. The Pharisees won the war over Pentecost by 200 CE because the Sadducees no longer existed. It appears they finished their attempts to eliminate tandem sabbaths over the next 200 years. It is ironic the churches of God, for the most part, support the Saducean position on Pentecost without realizing or admitting this weakens their stance on the calculated Jewish calendar.

God gave his church a number of commissions. We are to make disciples of all nations,<sup>18</sup> to worship him in spirit and in truth,<sup>19</sup> and to help those who need help.<sup>20</sup> There are two very

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17 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 4 MenahothTract 100b*, Kerithoth tract 19a, Vol1. 1 Shabbath, Tract 19a, Soncino Press, London, 1938

18 Matt 28:19

19 John 4:23-4

20 James 1:27



important aspects of this commission that relate to the question of the calendar. The first is Matt. 28:20. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>21</sup> As has been shown in the book Christ observed a very different than the one currently being used by the Judaism. Some have written that Rom. 3:2 depicts God giving control of the calendar to Israel and that Matt. 23:2-3 supposedly concurs. These statements have been shown to be erroneous assumptions, but even if by some stretch of imagination this was true at the time of Christ, this definitely would have changed when the priesthood transferred from the Levites to the order of Melchisedec. Since we have been ordered by our Savior to observe all things He commanded us, we must strive to do just that. This has to include the calendar because it is necessary to properly worship God on His annual feasts. We must use a calendar similar to the one Jesus used when He was on the earth if we are to follow this admonition and His example. He is still here to guide us in spirit and in truth. If we ask and are willing to follow, He will lead us down the path to Him and the Father, but we will have to listen for His still, quite voice.

The church also has a responsibility to follow the will of God and not substitute the will of men in its place. As has been pointed out by many recently, an alternative translation of Matt. 16:19 states what God has bound in heaven, we must bind on earth and what God has loosed in heaven, we must loose here on earth.<sup>22</sup> I believe this is a valid translation if it is referring to the ordinances of God, but if it is talking about gray areas of the law, then the traditional translation is just as valid. How to intercalate a month fits into this gray area. However, postponing the start of the month to prevent tandem Sabbaths or to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from falling on the weekly Sabbath so the Jews can waive the willows does not. With either interpretation of Matt. 16:19, important issues like the law of God and the way we worship Him, including His annual feasts, are not under the authority of men. God wants us to follow His will and His ways, not those of men, because His ways are perfect, right, and just. The church, His called out ones, should determine His will in all things and follow it, including setting a calendar that allows the annual feasts to fall in their appointed seasons, in the times appointed by God and not by man. This job requires study, prayer, and the holy spirit because it is part of our putting on Christ.

A calendar combining observation and calculation, like the one used during the time of Christ or a purely calculated calendar, does not require any rules of postponement to align the lunar and solar cycles. The only reason the third and fourth rules of postponement are required is because the first one, in an attempt to stop tandem sabbaths, alters the astronomical balance of the year and tries to limit the calendar to exactly 354 days, although it fails to do even that.

The final argument will have to be, as it usually is in religious arguments, one of author-

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen., KJV

<sup>22</sup> Green, Jay P., *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, Vol. 4*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1985, p. 48 Matt. 16:19 And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. And whatever you bind on earth shall occur, having already been bound in Heaven. And whatever you may loose on the earth shall be, having been already loosed in Heaven.



ity. The standard church of God argument is that the Jews supposedly preserved the sacred calendar and sit in Moses' seat, so we must follow them. Yet these same churches of God teach we should not follow the Jews with the timing of Passover or Pentecost and most of them used to believe the Jews could not even count to 50 properly. The excuse given for this hypocrisy is that the churches of God can understand scripture better than the Jews, so we don't have to follow them when there are in error, but we must follow them in areas that are not in scripture. This inconsistency of logic is usually augmented by the authority of the church, often dependent upon the authority of some apostle.

There are reasons to follow the nineteen year intercalation cycle of the calculated Jewish calendar rather than the barley being in abib. Reserving large meeting places only 6 months in advance could be difficult. Perhaps following the 19 year intercalation pattern is justified because authorities deem that meeting together is more important than the possible schisms that would occur with any major change. But unless the leaders in the churches of God are honest with their scholarship, something they seem to be loath to do because of the possible controversies, disunity and loss of control that might ensue, this discussion will never take place. When this pattern of deliberate obfuscation and terrible, misleading scholarship about the calculated Jewish calendar that follows the pattern of Gaon, where lying is better than admitting your opponent has a valid point, is exposed and no longer permitted by God's called out people, then the issue of the calendar, along with other issues, can be dealt with. When the leaders of the churches of God determine that doing the best you can to follow the word of God, even if you are not 100 percent certain of what to do, is better than doing something they know defies the will and the word of God, but is a long held tradition, then this issue can be dealt with. Until then those following the calculated Jewish calendar are following the leadership of these men and the traditions of the Pharisees while ignoring clear scriptural principles.

Perhaps some day holy day, Sabbath observant Christians can meet together in a Sanhedrin to actually discuss and work out the details of a calendar that could be more universally accepted than the calculated Jewish calendar. There is historical precedent in the Acts 15 for this kind of meeting. However, at this point in time, I hold very little hope for this type of meeting to occur given the selfishness and lust for control shown by the current crop of leaders in the churches of God, a trait they seemed to have learned and been chosen for at Ambassador College. Perhaps once this generation has died in the wilderness, God can call us together to prepare to cross the Jordan in mass and enjoy the rest He has set aside for us.

The calendar is a small theological issue, but the way this issue is dealt with is of paramount importance in determining how Christians are going to walk with God. Some have chosen to mislead and lie about this issue, which shows where they are in their walk with God. Others have repeated false scholarship they learned forty years before and never bothered to truly examine, which shows where they are in their walk with God. Others have said it is a waste of time to examine this issue showing how they value tradition over their walk with God. Still others believe the calculated Jewish calendar is wrong, but continue to practice it because they don't want to promote confusion over what they see as a small issue. Is this how we are working to follow in the footsteps of Jesus? If He gives us an easy step, like not

postponing his annual feasts because of Pharisaic *halacha* traditions, and we can't take it, how are we going to continue on our journey down the narrow path to God and living our lives like Christ?

The current calculated Jewish calendar has no way to define the new moon other than as a complex mathematical construct. Once the definition of the new moon is agreed on, and as the Karaite Jews have shown, this should be the first crescent over Jerusalem, then we simply count days. This author believes it would be possible to have a fixed calendar based on the first crescent over Jerusalem. There is also nothing wrong with an observed calendar based on when the first crescent over Jerusalem.

The exact pattern of intercalation is also not a major issue for this author, as this book has shown. History shows it was determined by the beginning of summer in the Promised Land. The most prevalent sign that summer has come was the barley being abib (green and tender), but setting a fixed cycle to approximate that is simple extra-biblical, not unbiblical. But to postpone God's appointed assemblies is wrong. The calculated Jewish calendar does postpone God's annual feasts by one or two days, thus it must be rejected.

Although the calendar is a peripheral issue in comparison to loving God and our neighbor, it is important because it directly affects the way we worship God. There are those who have said attacking the postponements makes me a new Pharisee, but if the rules of postponement are unscriptural then we should not be observing them. God never, in any way, suggests any of His appointed times, rather they be weekly or yearly, be delayed for any reason. Yet that is precisely what the rules of postponement do. The Pharisees followed the traditions of the fathers rather than looking at the Word of God and following what it said. They instituted their rules in an attempt to follow God as they thought best, but instead they jettisoned judgement, mercy and faith. Would those who write two sabbaths in a row be an undue burden on God's people, either today or in the past, also write the weekly sabbath is a burden? Many have in recent years.

The calendar should not be a divisive issue, although it often is because a scriptural calendar is different than what has been observed in the recent past and does not have the same rigid pharisaical rules that the calculated Jewish calendar has, something that far too many Christians are far too comfortable with. Arguments have been made that Christ is not the author of confusion, so he could not be authoring this calendar dispute.<sup>23</sup> It appears the Pharisees used the same kind of argument against Jesus' teachings. It is also a fact that God constantly sent the nation of Israel, his holy people, into captivity, causing great confusion. He sent prophets to correct the leadership of Israel, who usually accused the prophets of causing confusion. God has scattered His church in times past and in the present, again causing great confusion. He sent Israel into captivity and scattered his church to cure their confusion about who He is and to bring his people back to Him.

As I write in appendix C of this book, Mrs. Dewey's article shows that she has chosen to

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23 1Cor 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. To get a true understanding of what this verse is saying you can download [God is not the author of confusion, but he is the author of chaos](http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org) from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

use the calculated Jewish calendar with its postponements because she does not believe the churches of God could work together to keep a calendar without postponements. This author agrees that the idea of various factions of the churches of God being willing to give up power and work together is probably still a dream. But as Jefferson Smith said in *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, “I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine. All you people don’t know about lost causes. Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for, and he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them: Because of one plain simple rule: Love thy neighbor. And in this world today, full of hatred, a man who knows that one rule has a great trust. You know that rule, Mr. Paine. And I loved you for it just as my father did, and you know that you fight for the lost causes harder than for any others. Yes, you even *die* for them.”<sup>24</sup>

This author does not intend on dying for the battle of the calendar. But the old generation is dying in the wilderness. The new generation is coming and the promise of entering God’s rest with unity and not necessarily uniformity is possible, but only if we are willing to give up old practices and traditions that we know are against scriptural principles, even if we are not 100% sure of what we will do instead. Attempting to do what is right rather than doing something you know is wrong is how godly judgment is developed.

The bible does not precisely define a calendar, but instead gives a broad outline of the calendar. If you had a large group of baptists in Baltimore change from observing Sunday as the Sabbath to observing Saturday as the Sabbath and at the same time began observing the annual feasts according the Gregorian calendar, which actually happened, how could you convince them they were keeping the feasts at the wrong time? Some in the churches of God might suggest we shouldn’t bother them. Let them find their own path because we are not our brothers keeper. If they were consistent, the vast majority of the churches of God could not turn to scripture to show these people where they are mistaken because they keep insisting in the study papers and their teachings there is not enough precise detail in the bible to define a calendar. Perhaps you could point out that most feast keeper meet at another time of the year and it was important that these groups meet together. What if the people in Baltimore suggested the other groups switch to the Gregorian calendar since that was the most widely used calendar in the world? So maybe to convince this group of people in Baltimore you have to go to the basic outline given for a calendar in scripture is to show them that the Gregorian calendar does not meet the criteria listed in scripture for a calendar. What would you do if the people in Baltimore came back and said you were right. The Gregorian calendar does not meet the basic criteria for a calendar according the scripture. Neither does the Islamic calendar. Neither does the Chinese calendar. However, neither does the calculated Jewish calendar.

We have been given the choice of two houses. One house looks fine and comfortable on the outside while the other gives us some hesitation. When we go inside, the comfortable house still looks comfortable while the other house appears to need some work. But then we examine the foundations. The comfortable house is built on a rotten foundation. This foundation was obviously built with many mechanical deficiencies, breaking the rules of

<sup>24</sup> Capra, Frank, *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, A filibuster delivered by Jimmy Stewart’s character.

how a foundation should be done, even if the workmen managed to patch it together so a house could be built on top of it. We examine the other foundation and their workmen were apparently not as skillful as in the first house, but they stuck to the basics and it would take a bomb to dislodge this foundation. Do you choose the house with the bad foundation, not knowing how long it will last, simply because you don't have to do any work on the that house at this time or do you choose the house with the sound foundation that needs some work? God answered that question a long time ago. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."<sup>25</sup> There is still work to be done, but the rest of God awaits us. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."<sup>26</sup>

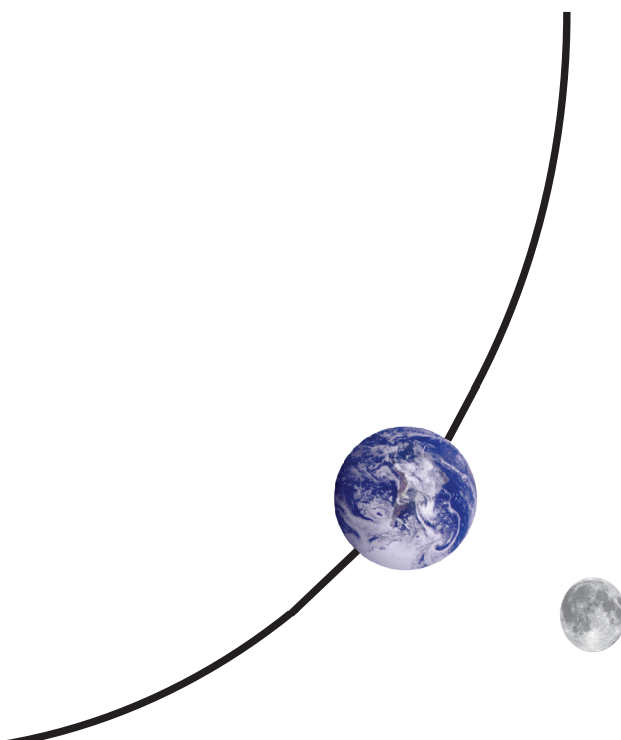
The process of growth can be messy and confusing. At first parents must feed their child. But as time progresses and the child grows, the parents must allow a child to feed itself. When this happens, food will wind up everywhere at first. Does this mean the parent should never allow this kind of confusion and continue to feed the child forever? Apparently that is the stance of most in the churches of God when they claim God does not allow confusion. This should not be surprising, given their teaching methods and results. However, if we continue to grow, that confusion will result in our growth towards a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God. Of course the alternative is to continue to be spoon feed milk, but this author hopes the meaty years are yet to come.

This author kept the annual feasts for over 20 years with postponements and believes God recognizes that worship because His spirit had not succeeded in convicting me the postponements were wrong. This is always true of all His people, those who have His spirit indwelling, when they are trying to follow the path He sets before them. God has convicted me of the truth that the calculated Jewish calendar is not correct or I would not be sharing it with others in this book. Less than two decade ago, I studied these postponements in great detail, yet it never occurred to me they might be ungodly. It is my hope God will use this book to convict you of this truth. But I sincerely believe God will bring all of us out of error into truth when He deems it the right time. Until then, we must all practice Christian love for our fellow man and especially for fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what their stance is on controversial doctrines like the calendar. The sheep on the right hand of Christ in Matthew 25 practiced love because it had become inculcated into them. The goats on the left hand believed they were serving God, both doctrinally and with their actions, but they missed the weightier matters of the law, especially love. May we all show love to one another and let the spirit guide us so we can met at the right hand of Christ on the day of judgement. May we all also find the truth of God to help us in our walk with Him and with our fellow Christians.

<sup>25</sup> Deut. 30:19

<sup>26</sup> Heb. 4:7-11

## A Possible Date for the Crucifixion of Jesus the Christ



The timing of the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ is one of the most striking examples of the difficulty in trying to determine the start of the month or year according to the Gregorian calendar during the Second Temple period. There are theories supporting dates for the crucifixion for every year from 26 to 36 CE. However, most scholars place the highest probability of the crucifixion occurring in 30 or 33 CE. This is based on the probably mistaken assumption the crucifixion occurred on a Friday. Although the exact timing of the crucifixion is dealt with in detail in *Jesus, the True Passover*, a brief summary of those results is useful when looking at the history of calendar used by the nation of Israel.

Harold Hoehner's work on the chronological aspects of Jesus' birth, life, and death are recognized as a standard reference source for this area of research. His research on the birth of Christ agrees with the majority of Christian and Jewish scholarship that places the birth of Jesus in 4 BCE. He places the beginning of Christ's ministry in 29 CE, in large part because of his belief that Christ was crucified on a Friday in 33 CE. Mr. Hoehner's does outline the more probably, in both this author's and many other scholars opinion, possibility that Jesus started his ministry around 27 CE. Given the fact that John's chronology carefully depicts Jesus' earthly ministry as lasting three and a half years, Jesus' crucifixion would have likely taken place between 29 and 33 CE. The goal of this appendix is to show that the date Jesus' crucifixion in any of these years can't be exactly reconciled to the Gregorian calendar because Israel used an observed calendar during Jesus' lifetime.

Scripture states Jesus Christ was laid in the tomb on a preparation day, just before a Sabbath. Jesus was crucified on a preparation day, but it was a special preparation day. "The Jews, therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." The women who had watched the crucifixion went with Joseph, who had claimed Jesus' body, to the tomb and saw where Jesus' body was laid. Mark writes "And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him."

Therefore, one of the two possible scenarios has the women waiting until after the Sabbath had passed to buy the spices because it would have been very difficult to purchase them after three o'clock, the time of Christ's death, because shops would have been closed because of the approaching Sabbath. It would have been nearly impossible for the women to have purchased them earlier because the trial and crucifixion were so fast and scripture



portrays them as being in shock as they watched the crucifixion. The ceremonial sacrifice of lambs for Passover at approximately three p.m. would have complicated the problem of finding a shop that would be open to sell such spices. Yet Luke states “And they [the women] returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.” Although it is possible the women purchased the spices just before Jesus was laid in the tomb, while it was still the preparation day, these events strongly suggest the crucifixion was not on Friday. The likeliest explanation is that the high Sabbath of John 19:13 is not the weekly Sabbath, but the first day of Unleavened Bread, which occurred on a Thursday or a Friday. A literal translation of Matthew 28:1 is “after the sabbaths,” in the plural, which suggests there were two sabbaths occurring during time frame between the crucifixion and the resurrection.

The tradition of Good Friday/Easter Sunday does not fit the chronology of a harmonization of Mark and John as well as discounting Matthew 12:40. The only sign Jesus said He would give to the people was “just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Because nights were mentioned with days in Matthew 12:40, they cannot be considered idioms, as when Jews say just one day. Scroggie contends the most likely chronology has to be Christ was crucified on Wednesday and placed in the tomb a little before sunset. Thursday was an annual feast day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. On Friday the women bought and prepared the spices. They rested on Saturday and left for the tomb before sunrise on Sunday.

Hoehner argues a Wednesday crucifixion/ Saturday resurrection is not a feasible scenario. He suggests Matthew 12:40 is not a valid test because everyone supposedly knows Jews reckoned any part of the day as whole day. Hoehner listed Gen 42:17; 1 Kings 20:29; 2 Chron 10:5; Esther 4:16; and 1 Sam 30:12 to support his conclusion. None of these scriptures lends any credence to Hoehner’s argument. An examination of two examples should suffice to show point. A more detailed examination can be found in *Jesus the True Passover*.<sup>1</sup> The reader can verify all of Hoehner’s other verses fit the same pattern.

Gen. 42:17-8 states, “And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God.” This has nothing to do with counting parts of three days as three whole days. Joseph was in the ward three days. It never states he left or did anything else except speak on the third day. This is supposed to support Hoehner’s claim that a night and a day are the same as day, yet this verse has no bearing on counting three days and three nights.

Esther 4:16 states, “Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” Esther 5:1 depicts Esther going to see the King on the third day, yet scripture never insinuates that the fast had been broken, as Hoehner suggests. Jesus, our older brother and savior continued in his forty day fast as he faced the Satan. It just makes sense

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<sup>1</sup>*Jesus the True Passover* can be downloaded from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>



the Esther also continued her fast as she faced her largest trial. The other verses continue in the same vein, but it is interesting to note Hoehner never mentions Jonah 1:17.

A second argument made against a Wednesday crucifixion is it supposedly would have required a resurrection before 6 P.M. on Saturday. The two scriptures given as proof against a Saturday evening resurrection are Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:2. These two scriptures state certain actions took place on the first day of the week, but they have nothing to do with the resurrection of Christ. Simply because the majority of Christians in today's society nominally keep Sunday as a type of Sabbath does not suggest Christ rose on Sunday morning. There are numerous instances of the early church observing a seventh day Sabbath.

Scroggie argues there were just too many things to be done between Christ's death at three and the sealing of the tomb at six. He lists seventeen things that have to be taken care of. Hoehner simply states if many people helped, everything could have been taken care of. Given the number of task, the speed and shock associated with the crucifixion and the small number of followers at the crucifixion, this is highly unlikely. The tasks needing to be finished included, but are not limited to: asking for Christ's body; taking Christ's body from the cross and transporting it to the tomb; and buying and preparing spices for embalming the body. Christ's trial, crucifixion, and death all occurred in less than 24 hours. His disciples had fled. The women watched the grisly death by crucifixion in shock and dismay. It must also be remembered all of Jerusalem would have been preparing for the High Sabbath, less than three hours away. It is highly unlikely the small group of followers left after Jesus' death could have accomplished everything that had to be done in less than three hours.

The fourth, and perhaps most convincing point, against a Wednesday crucifixion is Jesus' entering Jerusalem with the waving of Palms in John 12. Many have assumed that this was Nisan 10. If the crucifixion was on Wednesday the fourteenth, the tenth would have been a Sabbath. The Pharisee's would have derided the people for waving palm branches and Christ for riding on an animal on the Sabbath. Since they didn't, it may be assumed Jesus did not ride in on a Sabbath.

An examination of John 12 shows Christ arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover, which John clearly refers to as the start of the days of Unleavened Bread, for a meal in his honor. This would have been the evening portion of the day six days before Passover, on the 9th of Nisan. The King James version states, "On the next day," Jesus went into Jerusalem. The literal translation is, "On the morrow, coming to the Feast, hearing that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem, a great crowd took palm branches and went out to a meeting with him."<sup>2</sup> So the morning after Jesus had his meal in Bethany, on the morrow after that meal, Christ rode into Jerusalem. This was most likely Friday, the ninth of Nisan, the day light portion of the day, six days before the Passover. Rather than being an obstacle to a Wednesday crucifixion, John 12 fits the scenario very nicely.

Fixing a possible day for the crucifixion as Wednesday is simply the first step in trying to

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<sup>2</sup>John 12:13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

find the year in which the crucifixion occurred. Humphreys and Waddington had done the most exhaustive computer study of when the crescent of the new moon would become visible against the background sky in Jerusalem between 26 and 36 CE. Their work was ground breaking 30 years ago, but with the advancement in computer technology, their analysis can be easily replicated with today's computers.

Their results are listed in table five. The two main uncertainties in their study were: if and when a cloudy sky occurred, and when an intercalary year was added, two uncertainties introduced by the observed calendar.

Although the date of the astronomical new moon used by Humphreys and Waddington is accurate in this author's opinion, their deduced date for Nisan 14 is questionable, especially in 30 CE. They footnote table five with, "\*In each of these cases it not impossible, but highly improbable, that 14 Nisan would have occurred on the previous day."<sup>3</sup>

Table Five-Humphreys and Waddington's table for the possible dates of Jesus' Crucifixion

year (CE) conjunction	Date of conjunction	time of of Nisan 14	deduced date	day of week
26	April 6	6:40	April 21	Sunday
27	March 26	20:05	April 10	Thursday
28	March 15	2:30	March 30	Tuesday
29	April 2	19:40	April 18	Monday*
30	March 22	19:55	April 7	Friday*
31	March 12	0:25	March 27	Tuesday
32	March 29	22:10	April 13	Sunday*
33	March 19	12:45	April 3	Friday
34	March 9	5:25	March 24	Wednesday
35	March 28	6:10	April 12	Tuesday
36	March 16	17:50	March 31	Saturday

For the purposes of this paper, only the years 29-31 will be reconstructed from Humphreys and Waddington's work in table five. These are the most likely years for the date of the crucifixion given the other information that is available about Jesus' birth and life, which is examined in detail in *Jesus the True Passover*. There were a number of steps and assumptions used to create table six. The first step was to find the exact date of the conjunction over Jerusalem in the years in question. This was done by using an internet link to do astronomical correlations. The time was then converted to Jerusalem time, which is approximately 2 hours east of meridian time. 18 hours were added to the conjunction to determine when the first possible visible crescent could be observed over Jerusalem. This time was then compared to sunset in Jerusalem. Because history records that intercalation was done when the season changed and not with a set pattern, there are two possible dates for Abib 1 listed for each year. The date listed is the day of the first visible crescent, which would have been observed at sunset the evening before.

<sup>3</sup>Humphreys, Colin J. and Waddington, W. G. *The Date of the Crucifixion*, Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation 37 (March 1985)

Table Six-Timing of the New Moon during the possible years for the crucifixion of Jesus

Year (CE)	Date and time of conjunction	Day of conjunction	deduced date of first visible crescent	date of Nisan 14	day of week of Nisan 14
29	March 4 3:03	Friday	March 6	March 19	Saturday
29	April 2 19:40	Saturday	April 4	April 17	Sunday
30	March 22 19:57	Wednesday	March 24	April 6	Thursday
30	April 21 11:45	Friday	April 23	May 6	Saturday
31	March 12 0:31	Sunday	March 14	March 27	Monday*
31	April 10 3:44	Tuesday	April 12	April 25	Wednesday

The dates of 30 and 33 CE stand out in Humphreys and Waddington's deduced dates, almost certainly because they believed it was important that the 14th of Nisan occur on a Friday. However the new moon would have been 22 hours old on the evening of Wednesday, March 24th in 30 CE. Again, there is no ways we can know for certain the crescent was visible because of the possibility of clouds. However, the conjunction on Feb. 21st in 30 CE occurred at approximately 4:30 am Jerusalem time, making it impossible to see the new crescent at sunset on 21st. The moon would have been 40 hours old at sunset on the 22nd, and again ignoring the possibility of cloud cover, it would have been visible, making February 23rd the first of Adar. If February 23rd was the first of Adar, which is the most likely scenario, the next first crescent seen would have been on March 24th, thirty days after the last visible crescent. It is impossible to have 31 days in a month with the lunar calendar, so if the new moon were sighted on the evening of February 22nd in 30 CE, which it almost certainly was, then it would be impossible to have the first day of the month occur on March 25th, which is the only way that the 14th would have occurred on a Friday in 30 CE. Therefore the idea of the crucifixion occurring on a Friday in 30 CE is incredibly unlikely given the astronomical data.

Examining the chronology available, this author is now convinced the two most viable dates for the crucifixion were Thursday, April 6, 30 CE and Wednesday, April 25th, 31 CE.

Although the preponderance of scholars who point to 30 CE as the date of the crucifixion state that Nisan 14 was on a Friday that year, the astronomical evidence strongly suggests otherwise. It is possible that it could have been cloudy on the evening of April 5th in 30 CE, but this is generally not the case in Palestine at the start of summer, near the time of the vernal equinox. So if Christ was crucified in 30, he was removed from the cross shortly before the start of a tandem Sabbath.

If Jesus was crucified in 31, the year could have started in either the middle of March or the middle of April. If it did start in the middle of April, which would allow it to be easily reconciled with one of the two possible biblical scenarios of the crucifixion, then it shows that the 19 year intercalation period that is observed today was not being observed at the time of Christ, which is universally acknowledged among scholars. It also shows that the new year started with the new moon after the equinox that year, placing in question the Jewish tradition that the new moon nearest the vernal equinox must be used to start the new year.

Therefore the most likely dates for the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ were a Thursday in 30 CE or a Wednesday in 31 CE. This author understands that Mr. Humphreys has issued a follow up to his ground breaking work and this author will soon be updating this article with this information.

## Why CEM Uses the Hebrew Calendar?

**R**on Dart's *Why We Use the Hebrew Calendar* is very different from most of the papers written about the calendar by various leaders of the churches of God. It is not a study paper, nor does it pretend to be one. Mr. Dart's assessment of the calendar avoids examining the calculated Jewish calendar, the observed calendar of the Second Temple period or calendar scriptures. Instead Mr. Dart examines various ancient civilizations and the calendars they used. He then insinuates that God used a calendar that the ancient nation of Israel was already using, into which He slid His feast days, although Mr. Dart never presents any proof for his hypothesis, a pattern Mr. Dart often follows when dealing with troubling theological issues that might require changing traditional observances and practices. The most probably reason for Mr. Dart's approach is that he is a good enough scholar to realize Jewish leaders dramatically changed the mechanics of the calendar, and thus changed the days on which the feasts were observed, between 100 and 350 CE. Since they changed the calendar so drastically and because Mr. Dart believes we should follow these pharisaic rules, he apparently needed a mechanism to make these changes palatable. Thus Mr. Dart's hypothesis is that it is the Jews calendar and they can change it in whatever manner they see fit and God will honor those changes and shift His feast days at their beckoning. This author believes Mr. Dart likely discovered and borrowed the design of his hypothesis from Mr. Kenneth Herrmann's various articles on the calendar because of their close resemblance of their arguments. Mr. Dart's conclusion agrees with Mr. Herrmann that the only valid answer to the question of whether to follow the calculated Jewish calendar or not is to follow authority and tradition.

### Ancient Civilizations and Ancient Calendars

Mr. Dart writes about calendars, "Nothing God gave to man has been used so consistently for the purpose He intended. Every civilization of man has used the sun, the moon, or both for the demarcation of time."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Dart gives a very good presentation of why man used calendars and how certain events, like the return of animals to hunt or the proper time to sow seeds, were predicted by calendars.<sup>2</sup> He even contends, "Some form of calendar is the sure mark of civilization."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Dart writes, "Even if he lost ever thing else God gave him, it is inconceivable that intelligent man - in the space of a lifetime living and working in the out of doors - would not come to know intimately the cycles of the sun, moon, and stars."<sup>4</sup> Mr. Dart makes this generic statement hoping no one will point out the nation is Israel even lost track of the 7th day Sabbath while in Egypt and something that happens every 7 days is a lot harder to lose track of than the orbits of moons and stars. Mr. Dart also does not take into account how the habitation of people can change their view of the calendar. The Islamic calendar does not intercalate a month because there was no need for Bedou-

1 Dart, Ronald, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 1 from the internet, [www.abcog.org/calendar.htm](http://www.abcog.org/calendar.htm). Therefore not all page numbers will match a standard printout.

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

ins in the desert to try to keep Ramadan occurring at the same general time because their surroundings did not change during the course of the year and their religious practice of Ramadan did not dictate such intercalation. Natives of California or Israel would only use two seasons on their calendar while New Englanders would use four. The Egyptians used a purely solar calendar because they depended upon the Nile to set their seasons. Therefore how they used the sun, moon and stars to determine time would vary drastically depending upon their location.

Mr. Dart goes on to write, “He would be able to pass on to his children and grandchildren the exact location of sunset on the longest and shortest days of the year. Early on he would have figured out that the sun made that cycle regardless of what his priest said or did.”<sup>5</sup> Mr. Dart insinuates that determining the equinoxes and solstices were not only possible, but important for civilizations that existed two or three millennia ago and this is simply not the case. “It is doubtful whether the ancient Israelites even knew of the equinox and they certainly had no way of calculating when it would be.”<sup>5</sup> Not only could they not calculate it exactly, but the Israelites and other ancient civilizations did not care about the equinoxes because their life revolved around the moon and the seasons, not the equinoxes.

As a former boy scout and someone who was raised in farm country, I always paid attention to the moon and the season, like winter or summer. This is the pattern followed by most farmers. The moon and the weather conditions were always the guide for planting and reaping with the new and full moon being far more important than the vernal equinox for plantings as an examination of *The Farmer’s Almanac* will verify.

While all of Mr. Dart’s information about various calendars around the world might be true, it has nothing to do with the calendar in scripture. Mr. Dart presents the information as if it has something to do with the calculated Jewish calendar, but never tries to justify his hypothesis, only using it try to obfuscate the issue. It would seem if you are trying to determine what kind of calendar Israel used and if we should be using the calculated Jewish calendar, you would want to give a history of that calendar, as was done in this book. Instead Mr. Dart relates how the American Indians counted moons.<sup>6</sup> He also points out that the Islamic calendar is purely lunar and that a year also has to take into account the course of the Earth around the sun.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Dart even describes Mr. Solinsky’s approach of placing two sticks in the ground to determine the solstices and equinoxes.<sup>8</sup> “We could put a stick in the ground at the observation point and then place another stick in the ground on a direct line with the sun when it rises. We could do this every day, and in the space of one year, we would have an arc of sticks that shows the exact point of sunrise on every day of the year. The northernmost stick would designate the day of the summer solstice and the southernmost stick the winter solstice. The stick in the middle of the line would designate the equinox.”<sup>9</sup>

5 [http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib\\_and\\_tekufah.shtml](http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib_and_tekufah.shtml)

6 Dart, Ronald, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, “One of the simplest approaches is simply to count the moons. The American Indians did it this way.”

7 Ibid

8 Ibid

9 Ibid



As is pointed out in great detail in the appendix on Herb Solinsky's work, determining the solstices in this manner is quite feasible if you are not worried about precision. Using this method you could determine when the equinox was one or two or three day after the equinox. However, there is great difficulty in precisely determining the equinoxes by this or by any other observational method. Therefore, Mr. Dart's thesis is totally incorrect when he writes, "So far, this is a piece of cake."<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Dart's solution to someone moving the sticks used to determine the solstices is to bring up Stonehenge. "It is plain that they were taking great pains to observe and predict the movement of the sun and moon. Stonehenge may or may not have been a place of worship, but it was certainly an observatory from which a calendar was devised."<sup>11</sup> Mr. Dart is correct that Stonehenge was probably used in astronomy, but it is more probably used as a place of worship, but these facts have nothing to do with the scriptural calendar. The authorities who Mr. Dart apparently agrees with on the date of the creation of Stonehenge state, "that the structure was a temple dedicated to the worship of the sun, and he assigns it to the end of the Neolithic period (2000 to 1800 B.C.)."<sup>12</sup> Stonehenge was apparently created to worship the sun and stars. Therefore it is not surprising it can be used to devise a calendar. There is nothing like Stonehenge in Israel. Even the pyramids of Egypt were probably used for some kind of calendar, but Israel had nothing like them either because scripture outlawed these types of high places, so it is likely they did not use this kind of calendar. Perhaps they did not use this kind of calendar device because of scriptural ordinances like Deut. 4:19 and Isa. 47:13, which forbid the worshipping of the sun and stars.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps they did not use these kinds of devices because they had other means for determining a calendar, like the planting season, as determined by the weather, and the cycle of the moon, which are the factors scripture and history depict being used for Israel's calendar. Again, this speculation may be interesting, but has nothing to do with scripture or the calendar Israel used. However, Mr. Dart obviously believes it has a great deal to do with the calendar that is outlined in scripture for Israel because of the amount of space he devotes to this argument in his paper on why he uses the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Dart notes, "There are two very important observations about Stonehenge. One is that a calendar based on the sun and the moon was one of the earliest achievements of civilized man. The other is the heroic efforts these people made to create and preserve their calendar."<sup>14</sup> No matter how spectacular an accomplishment Stonehenge was or what its real purpose might have been really has nothing to do the scriptural calendar. Although Stonehenge almost certainly had something to with studying the sun and stars, it was probably used as

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Munro, Robert, *Stonehenge*, The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition, Volume 25, Shuvalov to Subliminal self, The Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, New York, N.Y., 1911, p. 962

<sup>13</sup> Deut. 4:19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

Isa. 47:13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

<sup>14</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 3

sepulchers.<sup>15</sup> “Nor would this by any means militate against its use as temple for consecrating the dead, or for sun-worship, or any other religious purpose.”<sup>16</sup> Stonehenge’s use in pagan rituals is as certain as its use as a calendar and its primary use was almost certainly as a temple. Therefore, “the heroic efforts these people made,”<sup>17</sup> were to preserve their temple and their religion, of which the worship of the moon and stars and thus a calendar, was only a part. Most scholars believe because there was so much effort put into marking the moon and stars that the religion of the makers of Stonehenge revolved around the moon and stars. Scripture is pretty clear about this type of religious practice and its practitioners. “And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.”<sup>18</sup> Although Mr. Dart is not suggesting we should worship the stars, he seems to be suggesting that we should study and observe these people who did worship the stars to determine if we should use the calculated Jewish calendar. Outside of deliberate obfuscation, this argument makes no sense to me

There is little doubt Stonehenge was used as both a temple for the pagan worship of the stars and as a calendar, although it must be remembered, “the many attempts, both by excavations and speculative writings, to elucidate the history of this unique monument, the archaeological data available are insufficient to decide definitely between the conflicting opinions held with regard to the date of its construction and the purpose for which it was originally intended.”<sup>19</sup> No matter what its true purpose was, Stonehenge has nothing to do with the historical calendar Israel kept, except to suggest that perhaps these man-made devices used in the pagan worship of the stars has something to do with the validity of the scriptural calendar, which Mr. Dart has not proven and which is likely in error. Any temple that was used for sun worship would have nothing to do with the calendar God ordered Israel to use.

Mr. Dart’s whirlwind tour of the calendars of the ancient world goes from the American Indians to the Islamic calendar to Stonehenge to Mesopotamia.<sup>20</sup> He states, “The land is dotted with the remains of ancient towers. From the tops of these towers, the horizon could be marked with the location of the winter and summer solstice.”<sup>21</sup> Mr. Dart may speculate that Stonehenge and ancient high places were used to calculate some kind of calendar, but one thing that is certain is these high places were used in the religious practices that God abhorred. “And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.”<sup>22</sup> A quick study of high places in scripture, which is what Mr. Dart has described, shows there was nothing the Israelites should have learned from them nor should the Israelites have had such high

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15 Munro, Robert, *Stonehenge*, p. 962

16 Munro, Robert, *Stonehenge*,

17 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 3

18 Deut. 4:19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to **worship** them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

19 Munro, Robert, *Stonehenge*, p. 962

20 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 3

21 Ibid

22 Lev. 26:30

places. Even if these towers were used in time keeping, they would have been used to locate the solstices because it is far easier to locate them than the equinoxes and even then they would have been very imprecise.

Mr. Dart writes, "The people of Erech in Mesopotamia invented writing and evidence of calendars was found in the ruins along with the earliest writings of man."<sup>23</sup> Although this statement is most probably true, because there is some debate about exactly when and how writing was invented, it has nothing to do with the scriptural requirements of the calendar. Mr. Dart also writes nothing about the calendars of the Erech except that they exist.

Mr. Dart's expose on the calendars of the ancient world seems to be designed to show they existed. And they did. But what does that have to do with why Christians should observe the calculated Jewish calendar with its pharisaical rules of postponements? Outside of obfuscating the issue, this author has no idea.

### A Look at Scripture

Mr. Dart begins his examination of scripture with, "It seems that Noah used 30 day months. A true lunar month would have alternated between 29 and 30 days, but there is probably no special significance in this. During this period of time, Noah may simply have been unable to observe the moon and so adopted a 30 day month. This would have required some adjustment once they left the ark and were once again able to see the moon, but then only Noah's family had reason to concern themselves with it."<sup>24</sup> Mr. Dart suggests that Noah adapted the calendar when the moon could not be seen. He has assumed that Noah kept a lunar calendar and has assumed Noah adapted it while on the ark, although one of the problems that always has to be dealt with in a calendar based on lunar observation is poor visibility from time to time. Therefore if Noah did keep a lunar calendar, which is likely, but unprovable, he probably had already dealt with poor visibility before.

Mr. Dart's writes, "There is no reason to doubt that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had a 12 month lunar calendar that was periodically adjusted for the movement of the seasons. They came from a civilization with a calendar like that."<sup>25</sup> This is probably true, but is not certain. Today, the people of that area keep a calendar with 12 lunar months that is not adjusted. There is no intercalation. There are also historical records of people of that time keeping a totally solar calendar, like the Egyptians.<sup>26</sup> Although Mr. Dart's speculation about the calendar Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob observed is unprovable, it is probably accurate. However, this is not the calendar the nation of Israel was following under their Egyptian taskmasters nor when they left Egypt because they had forgotten about the way of their ancestors during the captivity.

There is no definitive proof the nation of Israel kept the purely solar calendar of Egypt while there were in captivity, but it is highly unlikely the Egyptians would let their slaves keep anything else. Since there is no doubt the Israelites did not remember the Sabbath,

<sup>23</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

<sup>24</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

<sup>25</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

<sup>26</sup> Morgan, D.F., Calendar, Bromley, G.W. ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 1: A-D*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998, p. 575

which came every 7 days, it is very likely they did not know any calendar except the Egyptian calendar, whose months resemble the Gregorian calendar and are not synchronized with the cycle of the moon.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Mr. Dart is speculating when he writes, “So when God later spoke to the children of Israel and said, ‘This month shall be unto you the beginning of months’ (Exodus 12:2), they did not have to ask, ‘Lord, what is a month?’ Their people had used a calendar system from time immemorial.”<sup>28</sup> Mr. Dart has presented absolutely no proof for his speculation. The nation of Israel did not remember the Sabbath nor did it even know the name of their God. Although Ur probably kept a lunar calendar, unless God instructed Israel otherwise, the start of a month would have been the start of an Egyptian month, which was always 30 days long and part of a completely solar calendar.

The lunar nature of the calendar that is recorded in scripture in Exodus 12:2 and elsewhere and the fact that the lunar cycle has controlled the Hebrew calendar for over three millennia raises a serious question about why the new moon is stressed in scripture. Israel lacked knowledge of anything except Egyptian ways after 400 years of captivity and given the solar nature of the Egyptian calendar, which ignored the role of the moon, it is highly likely God’s stressing of the role of the new moon was instructional on how to use His calendar. Exodus 12:2 depicts God instructing Israel to use lunar calendar rather than starting the months the Egyptian way with their solar calendar, a fact Mr. Dart either was ignorant of or totally ignored. This matches the pattern found in the rest of scripture as God reveals His ways to His called out people incrementally so they can take baby steps towards God. Mr. Dart is simply wrong when he suggests that God did not reveal a new, at least new for the captive Israelites, way and a Godly way to keep time in Exodus 12:2.

Although it is possible that the nation of Israel would have understood what God was telling them, it is far more likely that Moses, who was talking face to face with God, understood what God meant when God stated, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”<sup>29</sup> Moses probably relayed what the people should do about this Godly statute, as he did with almost all of God’s ways.<sup>30</sup> If Israel could not remember the seventh day Sabbath during their captivity, it is highly unlikely they remembered some calendar that was different than the totally solar calendar of the Egyptians.

Mr. Dart correctly writes, “But when God gave this instruction, He did not say ‘month’ or even ‘moon.’ He used the Hebrew word for ‘new moon.’ Used throughout the Old Testament, it identified the starting point for the Hebrew month. In fact, nearly all the ancient civilizations used the new moon rather than the full moon for the beginning of the month.”<sup>31</sup> So Mr. Dart writes that God gave instructions how to start the month, with the new moon used as the starting point of the month, yet spends most of the rest of his paper ignoring this fact because it destroys his thesis that God supposedly used a calendar Israel

27 Exodus 16 is the story of God teaching the nation of Israel about the seventh day Sabbath.

28 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 4

29 Exod. 12:2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

30 Exod. 18:15-6 And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

31 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

created to “slide” the feast days into, which erroneously leads to the conclusion we should use the calculated Jewish calendar, that the Mr. Dart and I both agree was created between 100 and 350 CE.

### The New Moon

Mr. Dart writes about the new moon that, “logic falls out quickly in favor of the observation of the first sliver of the crescent moon, but what if we can't see it?”<sup>32</sup> Mr. Dart's statement seems to suggest that Israel created a calendar and choose to use the first crescent as the new moon, even though Mr. Dart himself wrote that God was the one who taught Israel what the new moon was.<sup>33</sup> Mr. Dart's suggestion again insinuates that it was the nation of Israel's logic that chose the first visible crescent as the new moon. Mr. Dart wrote that Ex. 12:2 depicts God telling Israel about the new moon, but because God chose to give an outline rather than a talmud for His nation to follow, Mr. Dart insinuates the outline was not really godly instruction. Just one of the many sources that are cited in the body of this book writes, “The lunar month was taken uniformly throughout the ANE and Mediterranean (by Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Arabs, and Greeks) to begin with the sighting of the first visible crescent. Only the Egyptians (and later the Romans) did not confirm, but instead disregarded the irregular natural time indications in favor of regular arbitrary measures, such as the fixed 30-day month or the 365-day year.”<sup>34</sup> As for the problem of observing the new moon if it was overcast, there is a large body of evidence that the Sanhedrin declared the new moon under a set of rules. “Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all Talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its ‘proper time’ for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”<sup>35</sup> So the new moon has historically been was the first visible crescent throughout the Middle East and throughout the history of Israel, with the likely exception of their slavery in Egypt. Mr. Dart's suggestion that logic has something to do with defining the new moon as the first visible crescent is misleading because it is not logic. Historically almost every nation used the visible first crescent to start their months, with the exception of Egypt, from which God freed Israel so they could begin to walk in His ways and serve Him. God Himself taught Israel that the first visible crescent is the new moon.

Mr. Dart goes from asking how to determine the start of the month if the first visible crescent can't be seen by writing, “the ancients learned very early how to calculate the conjunction (that is, the precise moment when the moon passes between the earth and the sun as they both pass through the heavens). This moment, sometimes visible as a solar eclipse, the

32 Ibid

33 Ibid But when God gave this instruction, He did not say ‘month’ or even ‘moon.’ He used the Hebrew word for ‘new moon.’

34 Freedman, David, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, A-C*, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 810

35 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. xxviii



Hebrews called the ‘molad.’”<sup>36</sup> Although Mr. Dart’s speculation about when the ancients learned to calculate the conjunction may or may not apply to the nation of Israel, but his quote of Burnaby errantly equates the conjunction with the molad. Under the calculated Jewish calendar that Mr. Dart uses, the molad is the mean average of the conjunction.<sup>37</sup> This mathematical function has very little to do with either the actual conjunction or the first visible crescent, as is shown in the body of this book. Mr. Dart’s supposition also completely skirts the issue of how a new moon was determined, suggesting that the calculation of the molad, which Mr. Dart mistakenly writes is the conjunction, had something to do with the new moon, yet he never presents any evidence to support his hypothesis. Innuendo does not make speculation into fact. And in this case, it is simply wrong.

Mr. Dart asks, “Having this piece of information, the Molad, what were they to do about the ‘new moon’? Was it the day when the conjunction took place or the day after? Sometimes they could see the first crescent of the moon on the day of the conjunction and sometimes not - even in clear weather. It varied with the weather, the time of day of the conjunction, the time of sunset, the relative position of the sun and moon and the location of the observer.”<sup>38</sup> Mr. Dart is usually a very good and careful scholar, but he is in error here for a number of reasons. The first error is that historically the calculations used by the priests were only used to verify the veracity of the witnesses of the first visible crescent. The conjunction had no direct bearing on determining the start of the month, which was always done by sighting the first visible crescent. The conjunction also has no direct bearing on the start of the month as proclaimed under the calculated Jewish calendar, which depends upon the molad.

The second error in Mr. Dart’s statement is that the first crescent could be seen on the day of the conjunction. The crescent new moon could never be seen on the day of the conjunction. The first visible crescent is not visible until 16 to 20 hours after the conjunction, even if the conjunction occurs at the start of the day, the phasis of the moon (the first visible crescent) could not be visible until the start of the next day, just after sunset.

The third error in this statement is that Mr. Dart implies there is some kind of variability in crescent visibility that does not exist. There is variability in the timing of the conjunction, which can occur 2/3’s of a day before or after its mathematical average, the molad. There can be some variability in sighting the crescent, depending on the time of year and eye sight of the individuals doing the sighting. However, that variability is only when the first possible sighting of the visible crescent occurs in the time frame of 16 to 20 hours, but always after sunset, after the conjunction in clear weather. The first crescent will not be visible if the conjunction has occurred less than 14 hours before moonrise and it will be visible if the rising phasis moon occurs more than 20 hours after the conjunction if the observer has good eyesight and the weather is clear. It is not a difficult and unknown thing.

The fourth error is Mr. Dart’s supposition that the nation of Israel used either the conjunction or the molad to determine the start of the month as the calculated Jewish calendar

<sup>36</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5 from S. B. Burnaby, *Elements of the Jewish and Muhammadan Calendars* London: George Bell & Sons, 1901, p. 40:

<sup>38</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 5



does. He never attempts to prove his supposition, choosing instead to imply that somehow the conjunction and the first visible crescent have something to do with, "this piece of information, the Molad."<sup>39</sup> The conjunction and the first visible crescent are both astronomical events, but the molad is not and was never intended to be an astronomical event because it is a mathematical average of the conjunction that is used in the calculated Jewish calendar. As I show in the body of this book Mr. Dart's misleading supposition is in error.

The fifth and most egregious error made by Mr. Dart is presenting his hypothesis that Israel created their own calendar as fact when he presented no evidence to support this supposition. This is known as circular logic. Mr. Dart states over and over how civilizations created their calendars. He then states over and over again from different angles how Israel might have created their own calendar. Then he takes it one step further by simply accepting as fact that Israel did create their own calendar. Mr. Dart should know that many civilizations have also created their own laws. Are we to take Mr. Dart's logical supposition one step further and hypothesis that Israel also created their own laws and that God did not really give them to the Israelites as scripture states? This author does not believe Mr. Dart was suggesting that God was not the law giver, but his fallacious logic, if followed to its logical conclusion, would inevitably led to Israel not just creating its own calendar, but also its own laws because scripture depicts God giving the basis of both to Israel. Mr. Dart's logistical errors are so convoluted that it should not be acceptable to anyone, yet many of Mr. Dart's acolytes have accepted this logic as gospel. And Mr. Dart pattern of scholarship on the calendar is to present errant suppositions as possibilities and they to define these possibilities as facts.

### **The Scriptural Calendar**

Mr. Dart speculates on how a calendar built upon observation of the first visible crescent would function. "It would not be very difficult to design a system for determining the new moons. All we need is a set of rules. The first rule could be that the day of the new moon is the first day the new crescent is visible right after sunset. This has a lot of appeal. But we do have to allow for problems. What do we do if it is cloudy? That is not terribly difficult. Since months can only be 29 or 30 days long, we can simply alternate when we can't see the moon. If last month was 30 days long, we'll just make this one 29. This will work fine most of the time, provided that we are all in the same location."<sup>40</sup> Anyone who has done even a cursory study of the calendar during the second temple period would concur this was the basis of the calendar used at the time of Jesus. However, Mr. Dart's thesis has been phrased in a manner to make it appear that the mechanics of the calendar are Mr. Dart's, and by extension Israel's, own clever invention. Again, Mr. Dart has insinuated the nation of Israel created its own calendar without any input or guidance from God. God lead Israel through the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai and gave them His law. He walked with Israel for 40 years and the people that entered the Promised Land did follow God all the days of their lives.<sup>41</sup> They were Israel's greatest generation because they were the only generation to

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Joshua 24:31 And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he

accomplish this feat. If Mr. Dart has studied the mechanics of the calendar practiced during the second temple period, which I believe he has, then this statement's implication is misleading and designed to obfuscate the fact that the calendar Mr. Dart supposedly cleverly created is actually the calendar Jesus observed while he was on the earth. Hopefully, it was not designed so that Mr. Dart's followers would dismiss those who quote the above rules as being the historically and biblically accurate account of the calendar during the second temple period, but it most likely was because that is Mr. Dart's modus operandi when other Christians disagree with his view of a theological issue.

Mr. Dart brings up the problem of who has the authority to define a location for observation of the first visible crescent, a problem that did not exist in the time of Jesus because Jerusalem was the location of the temple and the center of Judaism. Jews were scattered around a half of the world, which was all of the known world, at a time when communications were very primitive and limited, yet Jerusalem was used for determining the start of the year and the start of each month. The Jews of 2,000 years ago apparently had no significant problem doing this. Mr. Dart writes, "If it is cloudy here and clear a thousand miles from here, we might often declare the new moon on different days. I suppose this could be acceptable if we don't all have to be together on everything. If I could calculate the conjunction, and if it were up to me, I might simply declare that the day of the conjunction was the day of the new moon - no adjustments, no confusion. My problem is that I have no authority for one system over the other. The rules are easy to write - the problem is, who writes the rules?"<sup>42</sup>

Although Mr. Dart seems to bring up a valid issue on what the new moon is, he has done it in a manner to suggest that anyone who questions the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar has no authority to do so. He suggests that the definition of the new moon is somehow a new problem when there is a great deal of historical precedence on the mechanics of the calendar at the time of Jesus showing the scriptural new moon is the first crescent over Jerusalem. These mechanics were unchanged for at least 500 years prior to Jesus and were still being practiced more than half a century after his death. These rules were based on observation of the first visible crescent over Jerusalem. Mr. Dart's suggestion that he has no authority use one set of rules over another suggests that he can't practice Christian judgment and discernment with this problem nor can other Christians. Although there is a great deal of evidence to support using the first visible crescent as the new moon, this author believes that God's people could modify this to be some kind of calculated first crescent. God apparently left some leeway in the calendrical system for His called out people to decide.<sup>43</sup> But Christians can't and shouldn't ignore the fact that of the calculated Jewish calendar is unbiblical because it breaks a number of scriptural ordinances including Exodus 12:2 by redefining the new moon to be a mathematical expression that has no physical relationship to the conjunction or the first crescent. Mr. Dart seems to suggest it is better not to challenge the tradition of the calculated Jewish calendar, no matter its origins or implications or what scripture states.

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had done for Israel.

<sup>42</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 5

<sup>43</sup> Matt. 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mr. Dart supports the premise that we do not have the authority to remove unscriptural elements of the calendar and attempt to follow the few scriptural rules outlined for the calendar when he writes, "Naturally, we would expect to turn to the Bible to see what the law told Israel to do. The problem is that the law didn't tell them. While there are plenty of indirect calendar references in the law, instructions about the calendar itself are almost non-existent. In fact the only explicit instruction about the calendar is Exodus 12:2, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.'"<sup>44</sup>

This is the point that Mr. Dart has been building to. He has looked at the calendars of Islam, Mesopotamia, native American's, Noah, and Stonehenge. When Mr. Dart does arrive at the scriptural calendar, he correctly states that only verse on the calendar that is as clearly defined as the 10 commandments in scripture is Exodus 12:2. Yet he discounts this biblical statement as unimportant because the calculated Jewish calendar, which he supports, does not follow this scriptural requirement. The beginning of months on the calculated Jewish calendar is the month of Tishri, not Abib. Mr. Dart also ignores that scripture that defines the beginning of each month must be a new moon, even if it does not define what the new moon is because every nation on earth that we have records for at that time, with the exception of Egypt, defined a new moon as the first visible crescent. However, the very verse that Mr. Dart quotes as being the only authoritative verse on the calendar in the bible, Exodus 12:2 also dictates that the new moon must be an object in the heavens that can be repeatedly proclaimed as the new moon, rather it is the conjunction or the first crescent. The calculated Jewish calendar also breaks this rule, although Mr. Dart seems to ignore this apparently because it is an inconvenient scriptural fact that disagrees with his stance on the calculated Jewish calendar. He also ignores what he states are many indirect references to the calendar. This author's philosophy is Christians should examine all these indirect references because they are in the word of God rather than to ignore them, but this author's philosophy apparently does not match Mr. Dart's when it comes to an examination of the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Dart writes, "It may be hard to believe, but everything else we know about the calendar we know from inference or from tradition."<sup>45</sup> This is not true because as this book has shown the number of days in a month can be found in scripture. The number of days in a week can be found in scripture. The number of months in a year can be found in scripture, including the mandate for a 13<sup>th</sup> month, even if how that month is intercalated is not explicitly defined. Even if Mr. Dart's statement were true, it would suggest that it is only by inference that we know that Saturday is the Sabbath. After all, we know the Sabbath is the seventh day from scripture and we know on the Gregorian calendar that Saturday is the seventh day of the week, but Saturday is never listed in scripture as the Sabbath. We must infer it. We also know that Jesus kept the seventh day as the Sabbath. But that was 2,000 years ago. It could be possible the Jews have the wrong day as the Sabbath because God has not directly talked to man as He talked to Moses for two millennia. Yet we take it on faith that Saturday is the Sabbath, but it is not blind faith because we have a great deal of evidence to support the fact that Saturday is the Sabbath because there has been no controversy about the day of the

<sup>44</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 5

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p 5-6

weekly Sabbath being changed. There is no evidence to suggest the Jews lost the timing of this weekly feast.

If we follow Mr. Dart's logic we can also only infer that baptism means immersion because the Hebrew and Greek words for baptism mean to immerse. Of course the largest Christian sect, the Roman Catholic church does not practice baptism by immersion. However, we infer that baptism means complete immersion from the definition of the word. We can also infer the calendar used in Christ's time was based on observation, in which postponement of the annual feasts was not possible. There is a great deal of evidence to show that this calendar was changed between 100 and 350 CE. However, Mr. Dart's speculation seems to be that any doctrine that is inferred from scripture, that is not as clearly defined as the 10 commandments, either because the words have been translated from another language or because the basis of these doctrines were so obvious that the authors of scripture did not define them as our western mind would like, can be ignored. His suggestion seems to be we should ignore history and tradition when they disagree with our theological stance. This author's belief is that we must use all the tools that God has placed at our disposal to help us walk towards Him and His way of life. If we ignore obviously errant religious practices because we are afraid of the non-uniformity it might introduce, then we will never reach the unity that God desires for us.<sup>46</sup>

### **Misdirection ala Kenneth Herrmann**

At this point in his treatise Mr. Dart begins to ask questions as if they did not have scriptural answers when they usually do. Mr. Dart follows the church of God tradition of derision, obfuscation and misdirection when dealing with stubborn facts does not match what the teacher wants to accomplish. Mr. Dart attempts to build his case by writing,

For example, how can you tell from the text just quoted which month was the first month? What time of year was it? Jewish tradition tells us it was in the spring, but the only help we get from the Bible is the name of the month: 'And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place; there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came yet out in the month Abib' (Exodus 13:3,4).

And so we know the Hebrew name of the month Abib. And we know that Abib means, 'green ears.' From other scriptures we learn that the green ears in question were barley, so we infer that the month Abib is the month when there are green ears of barley in the field.

All this is very clever of us, but it is curious that something so important was left to inference instead of being stated. Instructions for sacrifices are laid out in excruciating detail.<sup>47</sup>

Mr. Dart's clever statement is actually not so clever. Mr. Dart suggests that it is nothing but Jewish tradition that has the days of Unleavened Bread start in the "spring". His logic would also imply that it is simply tradition that January is always in winter. Of course Janu-

<sup>46</sup> To read more about this, you can download *God is not the author of confusion, but he is the author of chaos* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

<sup>47</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 6

ary is summer in Australia. But we know that when Julius Caesar laid out the rules for the Julian calendar, upon which the Gregorian calendar is built, that January was in winter. He did not have to write down that it would always be in winter because it was part of the mechanics of his calendar.

The instructions for the sacrifices were laid out in excruciating detail because the nation of Israel needed the details to know what to do. This detailed explanation suggests the sacrificial system was something that was unknown to them. However, when God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery,"<sup>48</sup> He did not say you shall not commit adultery with your neighbor's wife or your wife's sister or with your daughter or with a prostitute, etc. A simple thou shalt not commit adultery was clear enough for them. It would appear that scripture was clear enough on the issue of the calendar for the nation of Israel to know when and how to kill the right sacrifice to honor God where He would place his name.

Mr. Dart's suggestion that God wanted the nation of Israel to practice judgment in determining when the month of Abib started is true. God's plan for mankind, according to scripture, included them learning to exercising righteous judgment. However, this judgment was supposed to be based on God's rules. Mr. Dart seems to suggest if Israel wanted to start the month of Abib in July or January, like when the Gregorian calendar starts the year, they would simply be exercising their judgment. Again, this is correct, but their judgment would not be righteous, Godly, or correct because they would be ignoring God's basic rules listed in scripture.

Mr. Dart also chooses to ignore the biblical requirement that the annual feasts have to fall in their season. Exactly what this means is detailed in the body of this book, but when taken as a whole, scripture does define how the month of Abib must fall in its season. Leviticus 23 not only mandate that there be green ears of barley for the wavesheaf offering,<sup>49</sup> but that the people could not eat of the new grain until this sacrifice had been made, which is a stubborn little fact that Mr. Dart chooses to ignore.<sup>50</sup> Mr. Dart ignores that the feast of Tabernacles, which must start on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, six months after the feast of Unleavened Bread, has to be at the time of the ingathering of the crops in the Promised Land, thus outlawing January 1 as a possible date for the new year.<sup>51</sup> There is a great deal of scriptural evidence that ties the annual feasts of God to the agricultural cycle of Palestine. Mr. Dart's suggestion that we must infer this, that somehow the bible is not clear, ignores how time is dealt with in scripture. He also seems to believe because certain words have definitions as certain things in the Hebrew language, these definitions can somehow be discounted as vague and inferred. Mr. Dart discounts the meaning of the word abib

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48 Exod. 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery

49 Lev. 23:15-6 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

50 Lev. 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

51 Lev. 23:34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD.



from scripture because it has been translated from Hebrew. Mr. Dart seems to suggest that we should place no weight on the fact that the God of Creation defined Himself as YHVH, I am that I am or the eternal one. After all, we have to translate this word as well.

There are those who have discovered the annual holy days in scripture, but did not understand these biblical definitions. There are Christian sects that have kept the seven days of Unleavened bread starting on Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> of the Gregorian calendar, the fifteenth day of the first month by their understanding. Mr. Dart seems to contend that we have nothing but tradition to turn too to convince these people that they are observing God's feasts at the wrong time of year. Perhaps we could convince these people they should accept the Jewish leadership's authority on calendar issues, but then how should we respond to a question about accepting this same authority for the timing of Pentecost? There is even less scriptural information about the correct day to keep Pentecost then there is on how a calendar should be constructed, yet Mr. Dart believes we should defy the Jewish authorities on the day to keep Pentecost. Outside of saying something like, "Don't worry, we have studied this and we know when to follow tradition and when not to because that is the way we have done it for 60 years," I don't see a real answer. Mr. Dart's reliance of discounting the beliefs of others who disagree with him is a long held tradition in the churches of God and Mr. Dart does it better than most.

Using Mr. Dart's line of reasoning, we could contend that it would be very clever of us to state that baptism needs to be done by immersion. We could contend that it would be very clever of us to define grace is a freely given gift of God. We could contend that it would be very clever of us to infer that Saturday was the Sabbath using Mr. Dart's logic. Of course, by suggesting these are clever assumptions, I am discounting that these are not scripturally based or accurate, when of course they are. This is Mr. Dart's pattern of scholarship on theological issues that he has no desire to deal with because they threaten the traditions of his church.

Mr. Dart's paper apparently follows this clever pattern when theological issue arises that can't be easily dispelled by scripture because he does not exercise the bombastic authority of most of his peers. When these questions arise, the leaders of the churches of God usually resort to sowing the seeds of confusion rather than using judgment and exegesis of scripture to answer the question because they don't like the answers they would get, just as the Protestant churches don't like the answer they get when looking for scriptural support for observance of a Sunday Sabbath. Scripture depicts a pattern of God's called out people using His word and His spirit to discern righteousness and reach a judgment, but far too often the nation of Israel ignored God's word and His spirit in making their judgments. They valued tradition and comfort over righteousness and seeking God's will. Mr. Dart writes, "Why were the instructions for the calendar not done the same way? Naming a month after green ears of barley is better than nothing, but it leaves a lot of unanswered questions. What if the ears are not green until the last day of the month? How would you have known to make that month Abib? Okay, we can decide that the month following the onset of green ears is Abib. But what if the ears turn green on the second day of the new moon? Will they still be green the following month? If not, how could it be the month of green ears? The ears will often be green in two consecutive months. Which is Abib?"<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 6



The pattern of obfuscation inherent in Mr. Dart's writings is maddening. This book goes into great detail about how to determine if the barley is in abib. The Karaites have this listed on their website.<sup>53</sup> Mr. Dart should be aware that the Jews could not harvest the barley until the wave sheaf offering was performed in the middle of the month of Abib. Would Mr. Dart have the nation of Israel wait an extra month and ignore God's changing of the seasons? Mr. Dart's errant suggestion, one of many is that farmers wouldn't be able to judge when their crops would be ready to harvest by examining the plants a few weeks before harvest time. These insinuation appear to be nothing more than Mr. Dart's attempts at FUD (Fear, uncertainty and doubt).<sup>54</sup>

Mr. Dart seems to take the Pharisaical approach that we can't let people make judgments, especially in grey areas, because they might be wrong. The Pharisees took the approach that they were the teachers who both asked and answered the questions to maintain their traditions, even if their traditions were unscriptural and detested by God.<sup>55</sup> Jesus said of the Pharisees, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."<sup>56</sup> Scripture shows a pattern of God wanting His called out people to grow in grace and knowledge so they can exercise judgment.<sup>57</sup> Mr. Dart statements and writings suggest Christians either cannot or should not show judgment about how to follow God's ways, especially when "the elders" have already erected their traditions and where such judgments would cause non-uniformity.

The reader may wish to examine Mr. Kenneth Herrmann's answers to questions on the calendar in the Ritenbaugh and Nelte appendix of this book to see how this pattern, which Mr. Dart clearly follows here, has become inculcated down through the years in the churches of God. Of course the answer to Mr. Dart's question is that any decent farmer can tell how ripe the fruit of the crop is by looking at the plant. Farmers would not be so naïve as to be unable to discern the state of ripeness of their fruit until it was actually ripe. The Karaites and others have no real issues making that discernment today, but Mr. Dart continues with FUD because it serves his purpose. Mr. Dart's suggestion seems to be that if we are not 100% sure about how else we would do something, even if we know what we are doing is incorrect, we should not change our practices until we are 100% sure. I have no doubt that if we change something without being 100% sure that what we are changing to

53 <http://www.Karaite-korner.org>

54 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear,\\_uncertainty\\_and\\_doubt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear,_uncertainty_and_doubt)- **Fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD)** is a tactic used in [sales](#), [marketing](#), [public relations](#),<sup>[1][2]</sup> [politics](#) and [propaganda](#). FUD is generally a strategic attempt to influence public perception by disseminating negative and dubious/false information designed to undermine the credibility of their beliefs.

55 Matthew 23 shows God's view of those who uphold tradition at the expense of Godly judgement

56 Luke 11:52

57 2 Cor. 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Matt. 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

we will occasionally be mistaken. However, it is far better to occasionally be mistaken trying to follow God's ways than to consciously ignore His ways and constantly be in error.

After planting these seeds of confusion about using the Hebrew word *abib* to help define the month of *Abib*, Mr. Dart writes, "The Bible does not explain and we seem to be left to figure out for ourselves how to do it. And yet this decision is critical, because the month of *Abib* is the beginning of the religious year (the civil year seems to have begun in the autumn)."<sup>58</sup>

After assailing critics who do not support the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar because not every detail of the calendar is in the bible, Mr. Dart suggest there was civil year in the autumn, yet he gives no biblical support for this hypothesis. Even Mr. Dart had written, "In fact the only explicit instruction about the calendar is Exodus 12:2, 'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.'"<sup>59</sup> If you can't be right, at least be consistent. If not, then hypocrisy will abound. The month Israel came out of Egypt was *Abib*.<sup>60</sup> Scripture depicts the year starting with *Abib*. Yet Mr. Dart nonchalantly tries to justify how the calculated Jewish calendar ignores Exodus 12:2 and starts the year in the fall, on the first of *Tishri*. As this book points out in detail, the fact that the year of Jubilee was announced in the "fall," before it came into effect at the start of the next year, on the feast of Atonement, the 10<sup>th</sup> day of *Tishri*, does not support the contention that the Jews had a civil new year unless you are a liberal scholar who believes the Jews were simply syncretizing two calendars, just like they supposedly syncretized two religions. The idea of a Jewish new year on the first of *Tishri* is nothing more than a tradition, which as Jesus himself pointed out, many were not only extra biblical, but also unbiblical.<sup>61</sup>

### Determining the Calendar on Our Own?

Mr. Dart's suggestion that we are left on our own to figure out for ourselves how to determine the start of the year can only be made if all of the indirect scriptures about the calendar are ignored, something that Mr. Dart does in his paper. Also Mr. Dart seems to state that we can't use judgment to determine certain theological questions because God has only listed an outline of how to handle these problems. This is not the biblical approach to solving problems, as is shown in this book. Lev. 23, Ex. 23:16 and Ex. 34:22 are guidance from God how the year should start. These verses clearly tie the cycle of the year to the cycle of harvest in the land of Palestine. Thus, Mr. Dart's contention that the bible simply gives us no guidance on when to start the year if we depend on the barley being *abib* also is simply in error. Lev. 23:10-11 state that there must be a sheaf of *abib* barley to wave at the time of the days of Unleavened Bread. Of course Mr. Dart can and has contended that there is no direct link between the days of Unleavened Bread and the wavesheaf offering in scripture. Mr. Dart's logic is only correct if we combine not studying other scriptures with also ignoring clear tradition. The crop of barley could not be used and probably could not be har-

<sup>58</sup> Dart, p. 6

<sup>59</sup> Dart, p. 5

<sup>60</sup> Exod. 13:4 This day came ye out in the month *Abib*.

<sup>61</sup> Matt. 15:3, 6 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?...And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

vested until the wavesheaf had been made.<sup>62</sup> God promised that if the people followed Him the feast of Tabernacles, which started 6 months after the feast of Unleavened Bread, would occur after the harvest.<sup>63</sup> Why should we not put together scriptures that have direct bearing on a doctrine, as long as we examine them in context? Why can we not use the meaning of Hebrew words to set doctrine? Why can we not use clear, unquestioned traditions to supplement our understanding? Mr. Dart's spreading of FUD suggest he believes we can't use these things when they disagree with traditional statutes and ordinances of his church group, but apparently we can use these things when they support current traditions.

Mr. Dart begins his examination of how the mechanics of the Jewish calendar operated in the past with, "So, when the lunar year had fallen about 30 days short, they simply added a 13th month to keep the Passover in the Spring. Talmudic sources tell us that the calendar committee did not rely solely on calculation but on observation as well."<sup>64</sup> The implications of this statement is incorrect. As this book shows, calculations were used only to verify the testimony of witnesses about the new moon. There were no calculations involved with intercalation of the new year. The start of the month and the start of the year were done by observation, not by calculation. Mr. Dart has again obfuscated the issue by misstating the facts. As Mr. Dart writes, "They added a 13th month 'when the barley in the field had not yet ripened, when the fruit on the trees had not grown properly, when the winter rains had not stopped, when the roads for Passover pilgrims had not dried up and when the young pigeons had not become fledged' (Arthur Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, p. 1)."<sup>65</sup> There is no hint of any calculation mentioned here. The thirteenth month was intercalated if the Sanhedrin observed that it was still winter. Observed, not calculated.

Mr. Dart goes from quoting Spier that the standard, accepted method of starting the year and intercalating the leap month was by observation to erroneously writing, "Reason suggests that they rarely had to fall back on observation to announce a leap year. Observation could confirm, but it came too late to predict."<sup>66</sup> Mr. Dart's so-called reasoning is nothing more than speculation that is not borne out by the Spier and Burnaby, the two sources that Mr. Dart has quoted in his paper. The Sanhedrin did not use calculation on how to intercalate the new year. Instead they used observation. So Mr. Dart has again sadly misstated the facts and is wrong! He has also ignored that the scholarly sources he has chosen to support his hypothesis actually repudiate it. Again it appears Mr. Dart's paper has been designed lend support to the using the calculated Jewish calendar while excluding opposing scholarship and scripture. The Talmudic sources that Mr. Dart refers too also clearly state that calculation was not used to determine the start of year. As Maimonides writes in his summary of the Talmudic references to the calendar, "Thou, however, discerning scholar, must

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62 Lev. 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

63 Lev. 26:3-4 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

64 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 6

65 Ibid

66 Ibid

affirm that observation had been a fundamental principle of our religion.”<sup>67</sup> It is true that Maimonides was referring to starting the month by observation, but all historical sources confirm the entire calendar was controlled by observation. Therefore Mr. Dart’s speculative “reasoning” that Israel used calculation to determine the start of year because of problems he sees with an observed calendar are incorrect if his own sources are to be believed.<sup>68</sup> Therefore Mr. Dart’s speculation that Israel, “rarely had to fall back on observation to announce a leap year,”<sup>69</sup> is erroneous. Mr. Dart mounds speculation upon error upon deception to obfuscate rather than answer questions about the calculated Jewish calendar from scripture.

### The Presumption of a Calendar?

Mr. Dart writes that the nation of Israel did not have a law with the all the mechanics of the calendar listed in scripture, which is true.<sup>69</sup> However, Israel did have an outline for a calendar just like they had an outline for the holy life they were supposed to lead. God gives outlines, not talmuds because He created us to learn righteousness and judgement, something Mr. Dart has stressed in Christian living sermons, but which he often disavows in theological discussions. Mr. Dart writes, “In fact, they found nothing at all about calendar adjustments, leap years, 13<sup>th</sup> months, conjunctions or new crescents.”<sup>70</sup> Again this statement is misleading in so many ways. Because the feasts were tied to the harvest cycle in the Promised Land, as is clearly and repeatedly shown in scripture, some type of calendar adjustment for a 13<sup>th</sup> month is mandated by scripture. As this book has shown, the Islamic calendar is the same as the observed calendar practiced during the second temple period, except it does not intercalate a 13<sup>th</sup> month. This causes a server drift in the seasons, which scripture does not allow. So although scripture does not ordain exactly how to intercalate a 13<sup>th</sup> month, it still ordains it.

Mr. Dart misleadingly writes that scripture does not include conjunctions or first crescent, which it doesn’t explicitly, but Mr. Dart apparently deliberately leaves out how there are numerous instances of the new moon in scripture and how it is related to the calendar. The start of the month was determined by the new moon according the scripture and according to Mr. Dart.<sup>71</sup> Mr. Dart’s research revealed that, “nearly all the ancient civilizations used the new moon rather than the full moon for the beginning of the month.”<sup>72</sup> The new moon was the first crescent throughout the entirety Middle East.<sup>73</sup>

67 Maimonides, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. liii-liv

68 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 6- If they could not predict, how could pilgrims know when to leave home to arrive in time for the festival season. The determination of the calendar had serious practical considerations as well as religious implications.

69 Ibid

70 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 7

71 Dart, p *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*; age 4, But when God gave this instruction, He did not say “month” or even “moon”. He used the Hebrew word for “new moon.” Used throughout the Old Testament, it identified the starting point for the Hebrew month. In fact, nearly all the ancient civilizations used the new moon rather than the full moon for the beginning of the month.

72 Ibid

73 Freedman, David, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, A-C*, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 810-The lunar month was taken uniformly throughout the ANE and Mediterranean (by Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Arabs, and Greeks) to begin with the sighting of the first visible crescent.

Mr. Dart's type of logic is used by many Christians to assail Sabbath observance by stating there is no specific command to keep the Sabbath in the New Testament. Jesus' and Paul's custom of attending the synagogue are ignored, as is the rest of scripture.<sup>74</sup> Since there is no specific command to keep the seventh day Sabbath in the New Testament, and if you exclude and manipulate the scriptures you don't like in both the OT and the NT, there is no definitive support for seventh day Sabbath observance for Christians, then these people reason this command has been done away with. Therefore it is not surprising that Mr. Dart writes, "The children of Israel found in the law a *presumption* of a calendar and the sanctification of certain days in that calendar. We do not know whether God revealed it to them, or whether they had to figure it out for themselves. All we have is the calendar tradition they have preserved for us along with the sacred Scriptures."<sup>75</sup>

Mr. Dart lumps the sacred scripture revealed by God, the Old Testament, with the calculated Jewish calendar, which became part of the "oral law" after the fall of the temple, much of which Jesus assailed. Mr. Dart was also wrong when he wrote that there is a presumption of a calendar because there is more than a presumption. There are basic ordinances that show when the months start, when the year starts and the mandate for a leap months to be added to keep God's feasts in their season. Mr. Dart wrote he does not know if God revealed a calendar to Israel, yet from this point forward in his paper he assumes God did not reveal a calendar to them. Basing doctrine on assumptions that you acknowledge are very uncertain does not seem wise to me, especially when there is so much scriptural evidence against Mr. Dart's hypothesis, as this book points out and which Mr. Dart goes to great length to avoid examining.

God revealed when the seventh day was and that it was the weekly Sabbath.<sup>76</sup> God had to show the Israelites what a week was and Exodus 12:2 strongly suggests he showed them what a month was as they were preparing to leave Egypt. Egypt's purely solar calendar used a different set of months calculated differently than a calendar with months starting on the new moon. Mr. Dart's presumption of a calendar appears to be incorrect and it is certainly unprovable. It also contradicts the scriptural method God used to teach His ways to Israel. There is historical and scriptural evidence to support that God revealed the calendar the same way He revealed the frame work for the His statutes and judgments.

Mr. Dart's assumption also ignores that the feast days were tied to the harvest cycle, yet these feasts were revealed 40 years before the first harvest in the Promised Land. God revealed the week and the month and how the year was tied to the harvest cycle of the

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Only the Egyptians (and later the Romans) did not confirm, but instead disregarded the irregular natural time indications in favor of regular arbitrary measures, such as the fixed 30-day month or the 365-day year.  
74 Matt. 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

Mark 2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Luke 6:5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

75 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 7

76 The story of the manna in Exodus 16 shows the Sabbath was the third lesson that God taught Israel. The first was that YHVH was God and the second was that Israel should thank God for what He had done for them with the Passover (For more information, you can download *Jesus the True Passover* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>)



Promised Land in scripture. God either did this on the way Sinai, during the 40 years in the wilderness or when He lead Israel into the Promised Land. This is speculation, but it is at least as valid as Mr. Dart's speculation that God did not give Israel any knowledge of a calendar and has significantly more scriptural backing than Mr. Dart's hypothesis.

Mr. Dart's hypothesis implies that God's method of revealing Himself to Israel was not to show them how His ways were different and what Israel had to change, but that God used Israel's ways to reveal Himself to them. This is the same premise used by those who support the idea that God used the Saturnalia, which is now observed as Christmas, to reveal Himself to Christians. This premise seems to fly in the face that Christians should not be mixing the religion of the one true God with pagan practices. It is true that God has worked with His called out people by letting them have control over their physical environment, like letting Israel have a king. But this pattern does not carry over into the spiritual. God set out His laws and understandings and told the Israelites to choose His ways, which were life.<sup>77</sup> God did not say pick and choose what you want to do and we will negotiate the rest. God told Israel they had to change and do things His way. That is what repentance is about.

There should be no doubt that the Egyptian captivity greatly affected Israel's knowledge and relationship with God. They did not trust God on their journey out of Egypt, even after seeing the miracle of the ten plagues. Even after seeing the parting of the Red Sea, they built a golden calf, a very Egyptian thing to do, at the first opportunity.<sup>78</sup> This is not a people that were close to God or His ways. The Egyptian calendar was totally solar at the time of the Exodus. Therefore it is highly likely that Israel had to have the lunar calendar revealed to them by God, which verses like Ex. 12:2, Ex. 23:16, Ex. 34:22 and many others show.<sup>79</sup> Scripture simply does not agree with Mr. Dart's premise that God used a calendar that the nation of Israel created nor does it agree with his final conclusion that God can use any calendar to reveal His ways to mankind.

The nation of Israel followed God's ways at various times in their history, from the time of Moses and Joshua through the judges to kings like David, Josiah, and Hezekiah and leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah. Mr. Dart chooses to ignore this scriptural history when he insinuates that the people had to figure out the calendar for themselves. God was working with Israel and during these periods of righteous leadership, Israel actually worked with God. If Mr. Dart's suggestion is true, it implies that any calendar that Israel created would be just

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77 Deut. 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

78 Ex. 32:1,4 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him: 'Up, make us a god who shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him....And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said: 'This is thy god, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

79 Ex. 12:2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Ex. 23:16 and the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou sowest in the field; and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year, when thou gatherest in thy labours out of the field.

Ex. 34:22-3 And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.



fine. Again, if true, this logic would suggest that it would be perfectly alright to keep the feast of Unleavened Bread on January 15<sup>th</sup> and the feast of Tabernacles starting on July 15<sup>th</sup>, since most of the world does follow the Gregorian calendar and Mr. Dart suggests that God's people figured out the calendar for themselves. Of course Mr. Dart premise is we should not chose any other calendar than the one endorsed by Judaism, but his logic suggests we can.

Mr. Dart suggests that God somehow slide his feast days into Israel's calendar, so what would be wrong with sliding them into the calendar we keep today? Mr. Dart contends that we do not have the authority to do that, but he contends the Jews did and do. After all, Mr. Dart errant hypothesis is that Israel created its own calendar apart from God's instructions, just as the nations around Israel. He should know they changed this calendar drastically between 100 and 350 CE. It appears Mr. Dart has created his erroneous hypothesis to deal with this fact while ignoring the basics of the calendar revealed in scripture. Mr. Dart's logic mandates if the Jewish leadership dramatically changed their calendar again, as they did in the third and fourth centuries CE, it would be all right with God and that Christians would need to follow that calendar, not matter what its ordinances were. Mr. Dart contention seems to be that scripture has no real bearing on the calendar because it is supposedly so unclear. This logic is faulty because there are scriptural ordinances that could make such changes unbiblical and these same ordinances make the changes made to the Jewish calendar over a millennia and a half ago unbiblical. Mr. Dart also seems to suggest that the calendar tradition that is preserved by the Jews is as valid as the scriptures they preserved. Scripture is God breathed and unchanging and since Mr. Dart contends there is not enough information in scripture to create a calendar he should not be equating the validity of scripture to that of the calculated Jewish calendar.

### **The Authority of the Jewish Leadership**

Mr. Dart follows the common pattern of apologist for the calculated Jewish calendar when he examines Romans 3. This verse is examined in detail in the body of this book, but Paul is referring to scripture, not some oral law in Romans 3.<sup>80</sup> However, Mr. Dart writes, "The Jews retained an oral law besides the written laws we find in the Bible and the oral law included a calendar system into which God placed all the holy days of the sacred year."<sup>81</sup> Again Mr. Dart equates the oral law, the tradition of the elders, with the Old Testament. Paul loved the law of God, but came to find the oral law repugnant.<sup>82</sup> However, even this oral law does not suggest that God placed his holy days into some calendar that Jews already possessed as Mr. Dart erroneously theorizes. The Mishnah and the Talmud depict God revealing a calendar in Exodus 12:2 and then shows how the Jewish leadership changed away from an observed calendar to a calculated one after the destruction of the temple.

Mr. Dart suggestion that the nation of Israel somehow created a calendar and that God

80 Rom. 3:1-2 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?

Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

81 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 7

82 Gal. 3:21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. Acts 15:10

did not care about the mechanics of this calendar is not even borne out in the oral law. But when Mr. Dart writes that God supposedly placed the holy days into this calendar that was created without the inspiration of God, he has created a fairy tale that is not substantiated by other scholars nor by scripture. God inspired the writers of scripture to pen His ordinances and His laws and He also inspired them to understand what these laws meant. One of the main missions His son had was to expound these laws and ordinances that the nation of Israel had changed over time under the pretext of an oral law that actually superseded Torah. This author, as well as the Karaites and the Sadducees, who were the priesthood that would have been responsible for keeping some kind of secret oral law, believe that the oral law was a Pharisaic invention that was not authoritative or scriptural.

### The Calculated Jewish Calendar

Mr. Dart correctly outlines how the 7<sup>th</sup> month is the only month that matters in the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar. He also correctly details the mechanics of that calendar for the first 7 months of its year. He also mentions that the calculated Jewish calendar starts on the first day of the civil new year.<sup>83</sup> However, he leaves out three significant facts. The first is that there is no civil new year in scripture. The second is that the civil new year, the first day of Tishri, actually is the new year under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar, not the first of Abib. Every Gregorian or Jewish calendar has the first of Tishri listed as the Jewish new year because it is. Yet Mr. Dart wrote, “In fact the only explicit instruction about the calendar is Exodus 12:2, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”<sup>84</sup> Scripture states, “This day came ye out in the month Abib.”<sup>85</sup> Therefore the calculated Jewish calendar does not follow the one clear rule, that the year start in abib, that Mr. Dart finds in scripture about the calendar. The third fact that he overlooks is the reason for, “having two consecutive 30 day months from time to time,”<sup>75</sup> is to limit the year to 353 to 355 days, an extra-biblical concept, but not an unbiblical one.

Mr. Dart writes, “The objections to the Jewish custom come in two forms: one argues that any postponement from the conjunction is wrong and the other argues that only the observed new crescent can start a month. But we recall at this point that the Bible does not define a new moon either way. If it did, I suppose there would be no argument.”<sup>86</sup> Again Mr. Dart’s writings appear designed to obfuscate the issue rather than shed light on it. Mr. Dart has taken the one major argument against the calculated Jewish calendar, that it postpones the start of the month from the day of the molad of Tishri to fulfill the requirements of Jewish *halacha*, which includes postponing the annual feast days if the Lulav ceremony, the waving of the branches, if the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles occurs on a weekly Sabbath, and inappropriately present it as two objections. What is so devastatingly wrong about Mr. Dart’s distinction is it implies the faction of those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative is actually two factions, one that rejects postponement and

83 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 7

84 Ibid, p. 5

85 Exod. 13:4 This day came ye out in the month Abib.

86 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 7

the other does not. This is completely false. Those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar reject it because of its postponements. The disagreement between these two factions is the definition of the new moon. The calculated Jewish calendar rejects the notion that the month must start on the new moon because it starts its month on the day of the conjunction, the day of the first crescent, and the even the day after the first crescent was visible, depending upon halacha to determine what the new moon should be designated as, which is unscriptural.

Mr. Dart's implication that the belief that the sighting of crescent moon over Jerusalem starts the month is a postponement is simple wrong. It also ignores the preponderance of evidence that the new moon was the first crescent. It ignores that the calendar used during the second temple period was based on observation, not calculation. It ignores that the first day of the calculated Jewish calendar is the first day of Tishri, the so-called civil new year, not the first day of the month of Abib. This may seem oxymoronic because Abib is called the first month on the calculated Jewish calendar, but the first of Abib depends on the first of Tishri, not the other way around. Tishri 1 is the new year in the calculated Jewish calendar in form, function, and even name.

Mr. Dart is also mistaken when he confuses the molad with the conjunction when he writes, "In calculating the new moon of the Feast of Trumpets, the pivotal point of the Jewish year, the rules proclaim the new moon on the day of the conjunction with some exceptions."<sup>87</sup> This is not accurate. The conjunction has nothing to do with the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar. What the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar proclaim is that the year will start on the molad, not the conjunction, unless it is postponed because of Jewish *halacha*. This may seem like a small point, but because the molad is a mathematical creation that does not follow any set astronomical pattern, it is important. Mr. Dart goes on to write, "For example, if the conjunction occurs after noon, the official new moon is 'postponed' to the following day. In fact, the first new crescent will almost certainly be observed the following day. This rule generally satisfies those who want the month to begin with the observed new crescent."<sup>88</sup>

This second rule of postponement does delay the start of the day if the molad occurs after noon, not the conjunction, which is Mr. Dart's first mistake. The second error in this statement is if the conjunction (Mr. Dart should have written molad) occurs after noon, the first visible crescent will never be visible the evening after this postponement is applied. The third error is trying to relate the molad to the appearance of the crescent. Although there is a direct correlation between the conjunction and the first visible crescent, neither can be directly correlated to the molad, the foundation of the month in the calculated Jewish calendar. Therefore, it is true if the molad, not the conjunction, occurs after noon; the declaration of the new moon is postponed until the next day according to the calculated Jewish calendar. This happens approximately 50 percent of the time. 10 percent of the time the day proclaimed to be the new moon by the calculated Jewish calendar will be two days after the conjunction and one day after the first crescent, as it was in the year 2000. This means

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 7

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 7

that the new moon is proclaimed on the day of the molad approximately 40 percent of the time. Mr. Dart seems to contend because the calculated Jewish calendar proclaims the first day of the month of Tishri to be on the same day the first visible crescent can be seen over Jerusalem 50 percent of the time, then it actually matches the first crescent. Not only does he ignore the other 50 percent of the time, but he also ignores all the other months of the year, which as he states, do not matter with the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. Would Mr. Dart contend that starting Sabbath services at 5 p.m. and ending them at 7 p.m. on Saturday would generally satisfy those who wish to hold Sabbath service on the 7th day because they actually occurred on the Sabbath 50 % of the time? Mr. Dart's logic suggests if Christians wanted to observe the seventh day Sabbath meet on Saturday 50 percent of the time, while meeting on Friday 40% of the time and on Sunday 10% of the time, they should generally be satisfied that they were meeting together on the Sabbath. Mr. Dart's logic is simply illogical and totally flawed.

Mr. Dart continues his examination of postponements, a word he carefully avoids using, when he writes, "But there is another rule they find more troubling. When the conjunction occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, the official new moon (and the Feast of Trumpets) is postponed to the following day for religious reasons. The religious requirements are that the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) must not fall on the day before or after a Sabbath, and the day before the Last Great Day of the autumn feast cannot fall on a Sabbath."<sup>89</sup> Mr. Dart has neglected to mention some vital information. According to Spier, one of Mr. Dart's sources, "Dehiah 1 mainly fulfills the following three religious requirements: Yom Kippur (Tishri 10) shall not occur on the day before or after the Sabbath and Hoshana Rabba (Tishri 21) shall not occur on the Sabbath. In order to make the Dehioth 1 and 2 possible, the calendar has established an axiom which determines the length of the years, and which accomplishes the balancing of the solar with the lunar years according to the rule of intercalation. Dehioth 3 and 4 are mathematical consequences of this axiom."<sup>90</sup>

The reason for the Sunday portion of the major postponement, which does not allow Hoshana Rabba (Tishri 21) to occur on the weekly Sabbath is so the willows can be ritually waved about the sukkot. The rabbis ruled that this waving and walking was too much work to be allowed on the weekly Sabbath. Mr. Dart should know that his statement is not totally accurate because it leaves out this important piece of information his own sources clearly state. This author believes Mr. Dart excluded this portion of the dehioth 1 to avoid having to answer the question if it is so important to postpone the annual feast, shouldn't we also be performing the Lulav ceremony? Mr. Dart's propensity for not giving straight answers to straight questions would probably become obvious to many of his followers if he presented the real reasons for dehioth, or postponement, one.

Mr. Dart asks, "can 'religious requirements' take precedence over the law? In some cases, yes. When the Pharisees challenged Jesus and His disciples over Sabbath observance, He asked them, "Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the

<sup>89</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 7-8

<sup>90</sup> Spier, *The Comprehensive Jewish calendar*, p. 219

temple *profane the Sabbath and are blameless?* (Matthew 12:5).<sup>91</sup> Mr. Dart is apparently contending that the sacrificial system God gave to Israel was in conflict with the religious ordinance of Sabbath observance. Mr. Dart writes, “In other words, the priest had to carry on the work of the sacrificial system even on the Sabbath day. This created a conflict between the sacrificial law (which required sacrifices every day) and the Sabbath (which required that no work be done).”<sup>92</sup> Mr. Dart is actually contending that God gave Israel conflicting ordinances and is actually suggesting that God ordered the priests to sin on the Sabbath, but that somehow they were not guilty of sin because of some vague religious ordinances instead of pointing out that Jesus’s statement was to show the Pharisees did not understand God’s Sabbath ordinances.

The suggestion the God ordered a group of his people to sin on the Sabbath, but that somehow serving God cancels out this sin is ridiculous. Mr. Dart’s suggestion that religious requirements sometimes take precedence over the law is how the Pharisees explained the work required by the priests on the Sabbath. “There were many things, which, according to the Jewish canons, the priests might do on the sabbath day; particularly they might slay the sacrifice: it was a rule with them, *תבש תא הַשְׁחַחֵשׁ הַתְּחַד*, “that slaying drives away the sabbath”.<sup>93</sup> This pharisaical approach to the Sabbath completely misses the point of what the Sabbath is and how we should approach the law of God. The priests performed servile work on the Sabbath by offering the sacrifices, which would have profaned the Sabbath if someone other than the priests did it for reasons other than specified in scripture. Jesus’ was teaching the Pharisees and his disciples that we must use righteous judgment as we follow God’s law. Of course Jesus was not saying to ignore scripture, but to use judgment, mercy and faith as we walk down the straight, but narrow path, that leads to God.

Jesus’ argument with the Pharisees in Matthew 12 revolved around their Sabbath ordinances, their *halacha*, which they supposedly gleaned from the oral law. When the Pharisees saw Jesus and the disciples eating grain on the Sabbath, they said, “Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.”<sup>83</sup> Of course we know that what they did was lawful according to scripture, but was unlawful according to Jewish *halacha*. Jesus actually pointed to David eating the shewbread as being okay because he and his men were hungry. Jesus pointed out that these Pharisees did not understand the Sabbath. Their ordinances did not use reason or judgment or mercy, but insisted only their understanding of the letter of the law mattered. They built fences around the law, which actually obfuscated the law. Jesus was not stating the sacrificial law took precedence over the 10 commandments, but that the work done by the priests in the temple on the Sabbath was actually perfectly acceptable on the Sabbath and not considered servile work at all. After all, God gave both the law of the Sabbath and set up the sacrificial system. God did not give laws that conflicted with each other. Instead, if these laws seem to conflict, this author contends that we have simply misunderstood these laws. Just as when scripture seems to conflict, we do not have the correct understanding of scripture. Jesus brought up a point that conflicted with *halacha*, but obviously not with scripture, because that is not possible.<sup>94</sup>

91 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 8

92 Dart, p. 8

93 Gill, *commentary on Matthew 12:5* from e-sword

94 John 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;



Mr. Dart writes, “We would normally assume that when laws come into conflict the lesser laws would give way to the greater. There can be no greater law than the Ten Commandments and yet the sacrificial law superseded even the Sabbath.”<sup>95</sup> This statement is beyond misleading and illogical. It is absurdly false. Instead of superseding the 10 commandments, I contend that the sacrificial system supplemented them. Mr. Dart contends that there was no sin involved when the priests did their work on the Sabbath and I agree. However he wants to use a false definition of Sabbath to support his calendar thesis, something the Pharisees did and would have approved of. He goes on to write, “The priesthood had special responsibilities on the holydays and the new moons, so it would not be surprising if they should take those duties into account when working out their calendar rules - especially when the law gave them no specific instructions to the contrary.”<sup>96</sup> This is the point Mr. Dart has been building to. If the sacrificial system superseded the 10 commandments, then surely it superseded any calendar, especially one that the priesthood supposedly created on their own, in a vacuum from God’s word. Mr. Dart’s paper now presupposes this priesthood created the calendar as proven fact, an erroneous assumption Mr. Dart never proved.

Did the calendar rules, the four *dehioth* or postponements even affect the priest and their duties? Delaying a feast day to prevent tandem Sabbaths did not affect the priesthood in any way because they were bound by God to do the sacrifices and they did not sin with the work they performed. However, the part of postponement one to prevent the seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles from occurring on a weekly Sabbath would have affected the priests since the priests went around the alter waving the willows seven times on that day. Does the idea of postponing the day of God’s feast because walking around the alter seven times while waving willows sound like something God would ordain or something the Pharisees would create to put boundaries around the law, thus making the law of no effect? Mark answers that question for us. “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.”<sup>97</sup>

Mr. Dart’s supposition that there were no calendrical ordinances in the law is erroneous, as has been shown. The Jewish leadership did create a calendar themselves and used some of Mr. Dart’s logic, but this calendar was created by the Pharisees with rules of *halacha*, which superseded scriptural ordinances more than 100 years after Jesus was crucified. This calendar is the calculated Jewish calendar.

It is probably true that the nation of Israel created a set of rules to help govern the mechanics of the observed calendar of the second temple period. However, these rules were designed to help define the sign posts of the beginning of the year and how to deal with occasional visibility problems with the first crescent moon. These rules tried to clarify how to interpret the signs that God sent Israel in the form of weather. These rules were extra-biblical, but they were not unbiblical because they did not violate scriptural ordinances. Unfortunately the rules created by the Rabbis, the rules that govern the mechanics of calculated Jewish calendar, are unbiblical. The temple, and with it, the sacrificial system, was destroyed before the rules of

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95 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 8

96 Ibid, p. 8

97 Mark 7:14



the calculated Jewish calendar began to be instituted. The rules for the calculated Jewish calendar were created to fulfill the requirements of Sabbath *halacha*, the type of rules that Jesus condemned in Matthew 12. It appears Mr. Dart created his errant hypothesis that the work done by sacrificing an animal in the temple somehow “superseded even the Sabbath,”<sup>88</sup> was done to justify the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar without having to justify them from scripture.

Mr. Dart goes on to write, “Since the Day of Atonement is a fast day, it should not be surprising if steps were taken to avoid it falling before or after a Sabbath day. One can, of course, argue to the contrary but *there is no Biblical authority that prevents the rules of the calendar from being written this way.*”<sup>98</sup> This statement is misleading and inaccurate for five reasons. The first is that Mr. Dart attempted to tie the sacrifices in the temple to calendar rules with errant logic and fallacious reasoning because the postponements have no effect on the work of the priests.<sup>99</sup> Therefore Mr. Dart’s lead-in premise does not support his contention that the steps were taken to somehow prevent tandem Sabbaths affect the priesthood. Thus Mr. Dart’s support of man-made pharisaical rules in the calculated Jewish calendar is actually support for pharisaical fences of the type Jesus vociferously condemned.

The second error in Mr. Dart’s statement is a lack of consistency in biblical authority when it comes to the calendar. Mr. Dart is aware that the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities believe that there no evidence that would define evening as a specific point in time. They believe that *erev*, the Hebrew word for evening, is so generic a time frame that they must start Sabbath at eighteen minutes before Friday sunset, but end it only when there are three stars in sky Saturday evening. The Jewish leadership does this to build a wall around the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week and an integral part of the calendar, so they will supposedly not defame it. This author agrees with the Jewish definition of *erev*, but disagrees with the practice of making the Sabbath a 26 hour day. Christians should do their best to keep the Sabbath holy, but the Sabbath can’t be a 26 hour day.

Mr. Dart’s churches and his current organization calendrical practice is that the day starts and ends at sunset. Therefore Mr. Dart apparently believes he has the authority to rewrite some of the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar, but not others even though he contends no one has the authority to do anything but observe the calculated Jewish calendar. If Mr. Dart were consistent in his belief that neither he nor any one has the authority to change the calendar, then he would also teach that the weekly Sabbath starts at slightly before sunset on Friday, but does not end till there are three stars in the sky Saturday evening.

The third reason Mr. Dart’s statement is not accurate is because Mr. Dart has ignored the Sunday postponement, which is in place so the Jews can perform the Lulav ceremony. Jewish *halacha* states this would be work if it were performed on the weekly Sabbath. There is a great deal of scripture in which Jesus chastises the leaders of Israel for these types of rules. Mr. Dart has not dealt with this religious ordinance in his paper. If Mr. Dart believes he really does not have the authority to challenge how the calendar rules are written, then

<sup>98</sup> Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 9

<sup>99</sup> Matt. 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

he should be practicing all of the calendar rules, which including performing the Lulav ceremony on the seventh day of Tabernacles. If it is important enough to postpone a feast day, then it should be important enough to perform at CEM's feast of tabernacles ceremonies, but of course it is not because that is not part of Mr. Dart's traditions.

The fourth reason this statement is not accurate is because the calculated Jewish calendar ignores the one scripture on the calendar that Ron Dart contends is clear, Exodus 12:2. Therefore there is scriptural evidence, even by Mr. Dart's definition of evidence, which would not allow the calendar rules to be written the way the rules for the current calculated Jewish calendar are.

The fifth reason this statement is in error is the very logic upon which it is based is faulty. Christians should examine scripture to determine what is righteous and what is unrighteous, not what is the most they can get away with. Mr. Dart has disparaged certain calendrical scriptures as being unclear. He has ignored clear tradition about what the new moon is. He has overlooked that the Sunday postponement is in place to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on weekly Sabbath so the Lulav ceremony can take performed the way the Jews deem is correct. He has ignored that the calculated Jewish calendar starts in the fall, using Tishri rather than during Abib. Yet he has the audacity to write that there is no biblical authority to prevent the calendar rules from being written in this fashion. As a scientist, I know that if you throw out all the data you don't like, you will get the result you want. It won't be accurate, but it is still a result.

Mr. Dart writes, "Does all this seem confusing to you? Never mind, it seems confusing to a lot of people."<sup>100</sup> Mr. Dart's contention seems to be don't worry, be happy. The universe is a confusing place. Just ignore any problems that might be brought up about the calculated Jewish calendar because Mr. Dart has supposedly shown there are problems with any calendar and that the nation of Israel probably created their own calendar any way. His premise seems to be that God will work with any calendar and any rules the Jews come up with. However, scripture clearly states Jeroboam's changing of the calendar for his religious reasons was a terrible sin.<sup>101</sup> Mr. Dart's message seems to be don't worry your pretty little heads over these kinds of issues. Let us take care of that for you.

Mr. Dart speculates, "But suppose it was not God's intent to impose a new calendar system, but to reveal to Israel where, in *their* calendar system, His holydays were to fall? He does not tell them what constitutes a new month, how many days there are in a month, how many months in a year, or how to adapt the lunar calendar to the solar year. Presumably, they already knew how to do that. Other peoples of the time knew, so there is no reason to suppose the Hebrews did not."<sup>102</sup>

Again Mr. Dart speculated that God did not reveal a calendar to Israel. Again his conclusion seems to be God will use any calendar man devises. He contends God did not define

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100 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

101 1 Kings 14:16 And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he hath sinned, and wherewith he hath made Israel to sin.' JPS

102 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 9

what a new month was. This is incorrect. Even Mr. Dart writes God, “used the Hebrew word for ‘new moon.’ Used throughout the Old Testament, it identified the starting point for the Hebrew month.”<sup>103</sup> It is true that there is no definitive scriptural definition of the new moon, but it is highly likely neither God nor Moses felt the need to define it because the first crescent was universally accepted as the new moon throughout the middle east. As this book has pointed out, scripture does have an outline of a calendar, like stating there were 12 months in a year. The only point of Mr. Dart’s statement that is even partially correct is that there is no direct scriptural guidance on how to adjust, or intercalate, a leap month to reconcile a lunar calendar with a solar year. But scripture dictates that Israel had to perform the intercalation.

Mr. Dart is either dreadfully ill informed about Egypt at the time of the Exodus or he has used his logic of obfuscation again when he writes, “Other peoples of the time knew, so there is no reason to suppose the Hebrews did not.”<sup>104</sup> Egypt did not depend on the rains because it had the Nile. Its calendar was fairly unique, along with Rome’s, because it was a purely solar calendar. This was fine for Egypt and its slaves, but the calendar that the Israelites had used for centuries of slavery would not serve them well in the wilderness nor in the Promised Land. Therefore Mr. Dart’s hypothesis that God used some calendar system Israel created or used in Egypt is erroneous because the luni-solar calendar of Israel is incompatible with the solar calendar of Egypt.

If Mr. Dart’s speculation is true, which it is not, then does that mean that Jews have the right to change the calendar as they see fit? That seems to be Mr. Dart’s stance, although he never clearly states it. Mr. Dart speculates God choose to use some calendar the Jew’s made up when then left Egypt and because he seems to believe it is alright for their calculated Jewish calendar to ignore Exodus 12:2, the one scripture that even Mr. Dart wrote has direct bearing on the calendar. Does today’s Jewish leadership have the right to state that they are tired of being out of step with the rest of the world and they are going to adopt the Gregorian calendar, so that from this time forward, January 1<sup>st</sup> is the beginning of the new year? If the answer is yes, then there is no need to worry about how any calendar is constructed and there is no need to worry about when we worship God because he has left that up to us. There are many Christian religions that contend this is the case. However the conclusion of this book shows that Mr. Dart is incorrect.

If, on the other hand, we cannot make up any calendar rules we want, then there has to be some scriptural guidelines we must follow. Scripture shows that God’s method of teaching Israel His ways was not to take what they had done and reveal Himself through that. He did not like the fact that Israel decided to make a golden calf as a physical representation of Him, but Mr. Dart’s logic would have God using this idol to reveal Himself to Israel. After all, that is the way it was done in Egypt. This whole line of reasoning is in error if this author has any understanding of scripture.

Mr. Dart calendar hypothesis implies there in no authority to invalidate portions of the oral law that deal with the calendar, yet he invalidates other portions of the oral law. If Mr. Dart’s

103 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 5

104 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 9

hypothesis that God used a calendar that the nation of Israel created is correct, which it is not, then even the Jews may not have the right to change the calendar in any way they see fit because God supposedly revealed, “to Israel where, in *their* calendar system, His holydays were to fall.”<sup>105</sup> Mr. Dart’s logic should make it incumbent upon us to determine if they did change the way the calendar was constructed after God supposedly placed his Holy days on their calendar. Otherwise, we should be observing Pentecost on Sivan 6, observing the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av as a fast day, and waving the willows on the seventh day of Tabernacles as part of the Lulav ceremony, all of which are part of the oral law directly relating to the calendar. Although Mr. Dart does not advance the concept the calculated Jewish calendar being some sacred calendar of God, he has advanced the idea that we must follow it anyway because of all the FUD and obfuscation he has spread with his hypothesis on the calendar.

### **Making Things Holy-The Concept of Holy Time**

Mr. Dart brings up the concept of Holy time. “The Sabbath day is said to be ‘holy time’ as are all the annual holydays.”<sup>106</sup> Mr. Dart points out since the world is now a much smaller place in our technological age, we are far more aware that although people may be performing certain actions at exactly the same moment, they would not be performing them at exactly the same time because time is dependent upon the rotation of astronomical objects and man-made lines. This statement is factual and correct.

Mr. Dart’s point seems to be that because we are more technologically advanced, our concept of both holy and time need to change. Mr. Dart writes, “Therefore the concept of holy time’ is probably misleading, especially pertaining to the annual holydays. The presumption is that the time when the earth reaches a certain point in its orbit around the sun is holy.”<sup>107</sup> Again Mr. Dart makes a presumption, but presents no scriptural support for that presumption. Part of Mr. Dart’s presumption is that we should lump the weekly and annual feasts together as holy time, as we should. But Mr. Dart then tries to differentiate the weekly feast, the seventh day Sabbath, from the annual feasts, most probably because he does not want his followers to realize his logic, presumptions and hypothesis effect all the feasts of God, including the weekly Sabbath. When Mr. Dart writes we do not understand the entire concept of holy time, this includes the weekly Sabbath.

Mr. Dart can presume and hypothesize about the Stonehenge and native Americans calendar’s as much as he wishes, but a teacher of God should always match their theological presumptions with scripture, something Mr. Dart strenuously avoided doing in his paper to justify using the calculated Jewish calendar. This book has presented a generic examination of how the nation of Israel and scripture viewed time. To determine how scripture would define something like “holy time”, this author suggests we use scripture and not supposition nor logic in an attempt to avoid scriptural definitions, as Mr. Dart has done.

How does scripture define holy or holiness? Just as elections have consequences, words have meanings, even if Mr. Dart goes out of his way to obfuscate this fact. The Hebrew word for

105 Ibid

106 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 9

107 Ibid

holy is *kodesh*, Strong's number 6944. The standard definition of holy (*kodesh*) is something or someone that has been consecrated or set apart.<sup>108</sup> Below are just a few of the 377 verses in the Old Testament that help define the term holy.

And in the first day *there shall be* an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save *that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.<sup>109</sup>

And he said unto them, This *is that* which the LORD hath said, To morrow *is* the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake *that* which ye will bake *to day*, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.<sup>110</sup>

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.<sup>111</sup>

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.<sup>112</sup>

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.<sup>113</sup>

In the first day *shall be* an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work *therein*.<sup>114</sup>

And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.<sup>115</sup>

Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the LORD, after your weeks *be out*, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.<sup>116</sup>

And in the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.<sup>117</sup>

And ye shall have on the tenth *day* of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work *therein*.<sup>118</sup>

And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days.<sup>119</sup>

The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath

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108 Kodesh, Strong's H6944, from e-sword- From [H6942](#); a *sacred* place or thing; rarely abstractly *sanctity*: - consecrated (thing), dedicated (thing), hallowed (thing), holiness, (X most) holy (X day, portion, thing), saint, sanctuary.

109 Ex. 12:16

110 Ex. 16:23

111 Ex. 19:6

112 Ex. 20:3

113 Ex. 31:15-6

114 Num. 28:18

115 Num. 28:25

116 Num. 28:26

117 Num. 29:1

118 Num. 29:7

119 Num. 29:12

sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.<sup>120</sup>

And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance: but the *other* holy *offerings* sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided *them* speedily among all the people.<sup>121</sup>

And Nehemiah, which *is* the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day *is* holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this* day *is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day *is* holy; neither be ye grieved.<sup>122</sup>

And *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.<sup>123</sup>

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.<sup>124</sup>

I *am* the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King.<sup>125</sup>

Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.<sup>126</sup>

Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.<sup>127</sup>

Holy is something that God has set apart. Man cannot make anything holy. Only God can do that. God informs His called out people about times that are set apart. “It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”<sup>128</sup> Mr. Dart’s presumption is that although the annual feast days are holy time, God’s view of our observance of them is somehow different from the weekly Sabbath. His presumption is also remarkably similar to the logic used by the Worldwide Church of God when they were laying the groundwork to eliminate Sabbath observance.

Mr. Dart gives an example that was obviously designed to raise questions without turning to scripture for answers “Suppose that just after sunset when the Sabbath has begun, you decide to telephone your mother, who lives a continent away from you. It is three hours earlier there, yet you both still converse in the same moment in time. For you, it is the Sabbath, but not for her.”<sup>98</sup> This statement is correct because Genesis 1:14 shows how God wanted physical human beings to determine time. “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for sea-

120 Deut. 28:8

121 2 Chron. 35:13

122 Neh. 8:9-11

123 Neh. 10:31

124 Is. 11:9

125 Is. 43:15

126 Ez. 7:24

127 Ez. 22:8

128 Lev. 23:42



sons, and for days, and years.<sup>129</sup> The Holy Scripture that God gave us as a guidebook of life states that it would be the Sabbath for one party and not for the other. This should be no big deal, but Mr. Dart's view of holy time is obviously designed to introduce FUD and obfuscate the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar. Your neighbor may be a Sunday Sabbath observant Christian. If it is the end of the seventh day and you walk out and converse with your neighbor, your Sabbath is ending and his is beginning. The whole point of us being God's handy work is how we walk with God. It is not about how our neighbor walks with God or how our relatives that live half way around the world walk with God. God made us physical, but our walk with God must be spiritual and we must use the judgement he gave us to do this.

Mr. Dart explains his supposition about holy time when he writes, "The earth is not always at sunset when it reaches this special place. For the time to be holy, the rotation of the earth on its axis and the revolution of the earth around the sun would have to be synchronous. That is, the sun should always be setting as the earth comes to the place in its orbit that corresponds to the beginning of holy time. It is not."<sup>130</sup> What special place is Mr. Dart referring to? The historical precedent was to use the area of the Promised Land, and particularly Jerusalem, as a reference point. That is what was done when Jesus walked the Earth and every line of scripture in the New Testament bears witness that Jesus did not just use, but followed the observed calendar of the second temple period.

Mr. Dart is trying to make it appear that God's feasts are somehow designed for God and not for man when he tries to focus his reader's attention on some imaginary reference point while ignoring the glaring deficiencies of the calculated Jewish calendar. This approach is similar to what Israel did when they tried to "buy off" God with sacrifices rather than seeking to obey him.<sup>131</sup> Jesus came to correct this perception. Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."<sup>132</sup> In Mr. Dart's example about the phone call, the Sabbath came for each party when the physical constraints that God put in place informed them that the Sabbath had started. God created these constraints when he created us as physical human beings and the Holy Scriptures are God's revelation to man about how to deal with these constraints, even if Mr. Dart apparently does not embrace these constraints.

Mr. Dart's attempt at creating an artificial place in time and space outside of the physical constraints that God created for us ignores the clear biblical instruction that the day starts at even.<sup>133</sup> The Sabbath starts at even at the end of the sixth day. The feast of Atonement starts at even at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.<sup>134</sup> God made us physical and it was good, just the way God wanted it.<sup>135</sup> Therefore we are supposed to use the judgment God gave us

129 Gen. 1:14

130 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 9

131 For more information on this point, you can download How God works with Man from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

132 Mark 2:27

133 Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

134 Lev. 23:32 It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

135 Gen. 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening

and realize that the Sabbath is from even to even where we are. If we are traveling on a plane flying through time zones, we know that the time from one sunset to the next could be 26 or 28 or 32 hours, depending on the speed of the plane. Astronauts orbit the Earth every 90 minutes. Mr. Dart's either/or logic does not take into account that what matters is how a physical mankind is interacting with a spiritual father and creator, most likely because this would make its mankind responsibility to try to follow God's will where ever they are and whenever they do something. Mr. Dart's is simply attempting to make the scriptural statutes about when to observe God's feasts more complex and plant seeds of confusion in his paper because he does not want to answer the questions about how the calculated Jewish calendar violates the very basic tenants of a scriptural calendar. His attempt to relate God's feast and Sabbaths to a special spot on the rotation of the earth ignores the role of the week, which God had to reveal to the nation of Israel in Exodus 16 and the role of the new moon in starting the month, which God revealed in Exodus 12:2.

### Making Things Holy

Mr. Dart writes that God makes things holy by His presence.<sup>136</sup> It is true that the ground at the burning bush, the tabernacle and the temple were made holy when God entered them.<sup>137</sup> Mr. Dart writes, "Both the Tabernacle and the Temple were built by human hands. True, God gave them specifications, but it was left to them to build."<sup>138</sup> Mr. Dart may gloss over this fact, but scripture shows it is of paramount importance for us realize God designed the tabernacle and the temple and he even designated how it was to be built.<sup>139</sup> He did not give Israel the freedom to even His dwelling place as they saw fit. But that temple became anathema to God. The nation of Israel became convinced that it was the temple that was holy. They trusted, "in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these."<sup>140</sup> Israel at the time of Jeremiah didn't try to seek God's ways, but substituted the outward mechanics of God's religion for his way of life. God said,

For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and

and the morning were the sixth day.

136 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 10 "We know that God inspired the craftsmen, but we still have to guess what certain parts of it looked like. As long as the Temple was a building built by craftsmen, it was only a building. It was when God entered it that it became holy."

137 Ex. 3:5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

138 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 10

139 1 Kings 6 shows how detailed God's instruction were, even down to building the temple without any hammering noises, 1 Kings 6:7 And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

140 Jer. 7:4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.

stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.<sup>141</sup>

God designed the temple. He inspired its builders. He gave the rules on how it was to be built. His glory existed in the temple. Yet when the Israelites had the audacity to use this temple to avoid seeking God and His ways, God destroyed it. Yet Mr. Dart would have us believe God will use man made devices like the calculated Jewish calendar even if they defy the basic tenants of scripture. This is not logical. This is not consistent with scripture. This supposition is just plain wrong.

Although God used the temple, when the nation of Israel began to misuse it, He destroyed it and started anew. God has a tendency to destroy anything that stands between Him and his people. He also has a tendency to destroy vain traditions, like Sabbath *halacha*, various levels of swearing to confirm the truthfulness of statements,<sup>142</sup> and even creating a religious ordinance so children could avoid taking care of their parents.<sup>143</sup>

Mr. Dart's supposition is that God can use unrighteous traditions and make them holy. Mr. Dart writes, "In the same way, the rules of the calendar were written by men."<sup>144</sup> Earlier in his paper Mr. Dart wrote, "We do not know whether God revealed it (*ed. note*-the calendar) to them, or whether they had to figure it out for themselves."<sup>145</sup> However, after much strained and errant logic and supposition that Mr. Dart does not even attempt to support with scripture, Mr. Dart's hypothesis that the rules of the calendar were written by man are now supposed to be gospel fact. Mr. Dart's hypothesis has supposedly been bolstered by examining Stonehenge, the calendar of Islam, Mesopotamia, and Native Americans while ignoring almost all scriptural references as unsubstantiated tradition. The supposition that God took the calendar that Israel created and supposedly because it was created by man, man had the power to set certain days apart as holy is quite disturbing to me, not only because it is not accurate, nor because no proof has been presented that this happened, but because of the precedent that would be set. This is exactly the same logic used in accepting Christmas and Easter as valid days for Christians to worship on.

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141 Jer. 7:5-11

142 Matt. 23:16-22 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

143 Matt. 15:3-9 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

144 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* page 10

145 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 7

The man made holidays of Christmas and Easter existed long before the Messiah was born. The Catholic church maintained that God could take these days and make them days of worship for Christians. True, these holidays were not forbidden by name in scripture, but this practice violates scriptural ordinances. But the Catholic church maintained it had the power to understand God's will on Earth, that it deemed God could use pagan holidays as holy days, and had the authority to make these changes. The Jewish leaders also contend they have the authority to postpone God's annual feasts in exactly the same fashion. This is not the pattern of scripture.<sup>146</sup> Yet Mr. Dart seems to contend God approved of these types of actions. Again, this book disagrees with this premise. God's pattern was when He destroyed His temple and destroy the bronze serpent He order created because they were being worship.<sup>147</sup> If God destroys holy things when they go were being used in an unrighteous manner, it seems inconceivable He would simply changes pagan holidays, which He told His called out people to avoid, into holydays. It seems inconceivable God would give basic calendar statures, like Ex. 12:2 and then ignore them to use a man-made calendar that defies these statutes.

Mr. Dart also has not attempted to justify how Israel miraculously created a lunar calendar without guidance from God when all they knew was Egyptians ways, which included a purely solar calendar. Mr. Dart's speculation suggests Israel remembered some calendar from the time of Abraham, but this seems impossible given that they did not remember the Sabbath and thought they could worship God by building a golden calf to honor Him, as the Egyptians would have.

Mr. Dart asks, "Did God give specifications for the calendar like He gave specifications for the temple? We don't know."<sup>148</sup> Mr. Dart has chosen to ignore what scripture does state about the calendar. Then he insinuates that we don't know what God specified about the calendar. Mr. Dart continues, "We don't know whether Israel's calendar was an old calendar appropriated by God or a new calendar revealed by God. What we do know is that the calendar became authoritative when God proclaimed certain days in it as His festivals."<sup>149</sup> Again Mr. Dart lists no scriptural justification for stating that the calendar became authoritative when God told the leaders of Israel to proclaim or announce His feasts. God said, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* my feasts."<sup>150</sup> As is covered in the body of this book God gave leaders of Israel the power to announce His feasts, not to create them or change them.

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146 In 90 scriptures God states he detests that Israel worshiped at the high places where pagans used to worship.

147 2Kgs. 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

148 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 10

149 Ibid

150 Lev. 23:2

### God Honors Israel's Calendar?

Mr. Dart's supposition that God built His calendar into a pre-existing, man-made calendar not only has no support, but suggests that man can tell God how He should be worshipped. This author strongly disagrees. Sunday is not the Sabbath, no matter how many good people worship God on that day. January 1 is not the beginning of the scriptural year, no matter how many good people believe it is. Neither is Tishri 1.

Mr. Dart contends that the 70 elders that God sanctified in numbers 11 were, "the basis of the later Sanhedrin."<sup>151</sup> This is true, but he also contends the Sanhedrin was, "charged with the responsibility of administering the law of God. We don't know what they did about the calendar, but we do know that the rules and observations of the calendar were, in the days of Jesus' ministry, in the hands of the Sanhedrin. We also know that in spite of all the issues where Jesus opposed the Jewish leadership, He never argued with them about the calendar."<sup>152</sup>

This statement is erroneous and misleading for a number of reasons. The 70 elders of Numbers 11 were men who Moses knew were, "the elders of the people, and officers over them."<sup>118</sup> These were the leaders of the people. God sanctified them with the holy spirit so they could guide the people.<sup>153</sup> They had God actively working in their lives to help them guide the people. Although the Sanhedrin may have tried to emulate this Godly system of leadership, they failed because they would not allow God to lead them, as the Messiah points out many, many times. Therefore the supposition that the Sanhedrin had the same type of Godly authority as the 70 elders of Numbers 11 is in error. The Sanhedrin resembled the 70 elders of Israel picked by Moses and ordained by God about as much as the Congress of the United States does.

Mr. Dart states that Sanhedrin was charged with administering the laws of God. As E.P. Sanders points out in a number of his books, this supposition is simply not true.<sup>154</sup> The Sanhedrin really had no real power in most matters. In the few matters in which they did exercise power, that power was delegated from human authorities. This author has found no scriptural evidence the Sanhedrin ever received any authority from God, outside of the authority he gives Kings and other government officials.<sup>155</sup>

Also in error is the statement, "We don't know what they did about the calendar"<sup>156</sup> The Mishnah and the Talmud are very clear that the calendar used at the time of Jesus was based upon observation of the first crescent over Jerusalem to start the month and that winter had to be over at the end of a 12 month year or the Sanhedrin would intercalate a leap month, as I show in the body of this book. Scholars are agreed this is the calendar used at the time of Jesus. Mr. Dart contention that Jesus never argued with the Jewish leadership about the

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151 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 10

152 Ibid

153 Num. 11:25

154 Sanders, E.P., *Jesus and Judaism*.

155 1Pet. 2:13-4 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

156 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 10



calendar is true, but he ignores the fact that the calendar used at the time of Jesus is very different from the calculated Jewish calendar used today. Mr. Dart is therefore incorrect when he writes, “we don’t know what they did about the calendar,”<sup>157</sup> because we do.

Mr. Dart writes, “It is important for us to understand that, from the beginning, there was an authoritative judiciary in Israel charged with the responsibility of deciding points of law for the people. This system is described in Deuteronomy 17:8-13. When one of these courts rendered a decision, it was as binding as any law given by God Himself - even to the extent of exacting the death penalty. What they bound on earth, was bound in heaven.”<sup>158</sup>

Before commenting on this statement, we should examine Deuteronomy 17:8-13 in more detail.

Deut. 17:8-9 states, “If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment.”<sup>159</sup>

According to scripture the Levites, not the Sanhedrin, acted as the judges in cases where people could not agree on the right way to solve a problem

Deut. 17:10-11 continues, “And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.”<sup>160</sup>

The Levites were not just supposed to decide how to solve problems, but they were to teach the people from the law what they were to do. Once the people had been taught this lesson, they were to follow it.

Of course the question is, what law was taught? What law was used to render the proper judgment? Deut. 17:19 states, “And it shall be with him (referring to the king), and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.”<sup>161</sup> So the Levites, acting as judges, were to use the law of God to render judgments. Were these judgments binding? Of course they were, just as judgments by the courts in America are binding today. Were these judgments binding upon God? The Old Testament never suggests the Levites were given this privilege, although the Jewish leadership has claimed this kind of authority throughout history. “The rabbis professed that God Himself was observing the festivals according to the rabbinical calendar.”<sup>162</sup> This author contends that God deliberately left some gray areas

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157 Ibid

158 Ibid

159 Deut. 17:8-9

160 Deut. 17:10-11

161 Deut. 17:19

162 Davies, W.D. and Finkelstein, Louis, *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 1 Introduction; the*



in the law over which He actually gave Levites authority. But the Levites did not have the power to render false judgments or change God's laws.

This author worked at a Jewish country club in Ohio in his middle to late teens. He stuffed escargot into their shells. He served shrimp cocktails. But the most amazing thing he saw was "kosher" pork brought in for a bar mitzvah. A reformed rabbi had actually blessed these pork loins with Hebrew prayer and declared them kosher. God simply never gave anyone that kind of power.

God says about the two sons of Eli, "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD."<sup>163</sup> These were two Levites who gave judgments that were not in accordance with the law of God. God took action against these priests because of their false judgments.<sup>164</sup> He did not honor their judgment as binding. Jesus' numerous confrontations with the Jewish leadership of his time also show that God did not believe their judgments were binding if they tried to supersede and disannul scripture.<sup>165</sup>

Is Mr. Dart's statement about how the laws were enforced by an authoritative judiciary true and is it scriptural? At times throughout the history of second temple period of Israel, the Sanhedrin did exercise this authority over the nation of Israel.<sup>166</sup> However, this is the same corrupt body that decided it was better that Jesus die than that they should give up their power and their religious traditions.<sup>167</sup> It was this body that ordered the disciples to stop preaching that Jesus was the Christ.<sup>168</sup> It is the equivalent of this body that today, as one of its main tenets of faith, denies Jesus was the messiah. The Sanhedrin may have had this kind of authority under Jewish law, but scripture never gave them the right to make these kinds of decisions. It only gave the Levites the power to judge under and teach God's laws. So although it may be true that Judaism recognized the Sanhedrin as authoritative, this authority is not now, and never was, binding when it is in error and Christians should not accept such erroneous judgments as binding. As Peter answered to the high priest, "We ought to obey God rather than men."<sup>169</sup> As I show in the body of this book, Christ castigated these men, but he did state that they were to be followed in their areas of authority.<sup>170</sup> The nation of Israel was also to follow the sons of Eli in their areas of authority, but it was not to follow their pattern of life or religious practices. Christ could not have meant for his disciples to follow the Jewish leadership in all their religious teachings, not just because of his castiga-

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*Persian period* London:Cambridge University Press 1984., p. 65

163 1Sam. 2:17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

164 1 Sam. 4:11

165 Matthew 23 is dealt with in the body of this book

166 Sander, E.P. *Jesus and Judaism*

167 John 18:14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

168 Acts 5:28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

169 Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

170 Matt. 23:2-3 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

tion of them, their way of life, and their religious practices,<sup>171</sup> but because the main tenet of these men's religion today is that Jesus is not the Christ. Using the authority of Christ's word to support the erroneous and unbiblical judgments rendered by men who deny Jesus is the messiah surely cannot be correct. It is definitely not logical.

However, Mr. Dart writes, "In spite of their hypocrisy, they did have authority from God. The calendar is a good example of that authority."<sup>172</sup> The supposition that the Levites had authority to change the calendar is not only unprovable and illogical, but as I show in the body of this book, it is not correct. The Levites only had the power to announce God's ways, not to change them.

Under the constitution of the United States, the congress was supposed to write the laws and the courts were supposed to apply these laws, interpret the gray areas and even determine if they needed to be changed because they violated the law of the land, the U.S. constitution. But they were not given the power to write the laws. It is true many judges in the U.S. have violated this principle and created laws with judicial trickery. However, just because some judges have violated the letter and spirit of the constitution does not mean they have the right to do that. In like manner, the Sanhedrin also created laws that went against the law of the land, the Torah. Just because they put those laws into effect does not mean God gave them that right. However, Mr. Dart is contending He did.

Mr. Dart goes on to write, "This is not to say that their authority extended into the established church of Jesus Christ. That authority, Jesus explicitly granted to the apostles."<sup>173</sup> Mr. Dart contends that the Apostles had the authority to bind and loose on Earth, and God would honor their decision. He contends, "Like the Sanhedrin, the apostles were granted the authority to make decisions within the law. They did not have the authority to go beyond the law. Like the Sanhedrin, they received the Holy Spirit to guide them."<sup>174</sup> The Sanhedrin did not receive the holy spirit to guide them. It was the 70 elders that received the holy spirit. Those 70 elders were never recognized as a law making body in scripture. The Levites, who were given the authority of the judicial branch of government, were never given the power to make or change laws. God maintained control of the law making powers in the nation of Israel. Mr. Dart would have us believe that God honored the Sanhedrin's decisions unless it disagreed with some of the decisions of the church. Of course Mr. Dart's caveat is that neither the disciples nor the Sanhedrin could go beyond the authority of the law. This statement is correct. However Mr. Dart's support of the calculated Jewish calendar is not consistent with this assertion because the Jewish leadership did go beyond the law by Mr. Dart's own definition when they deemed that Tishri 1 was and is the start of the new year, not Abib 1, in the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Dart goes from his treatise on authority to writing, "From ancient times, the Sanhedrin had the authority to make the rules and observations that sanctified the Hebrew calendar. Jesus and the apostles seem to have accepted their authority in this area. While there is

171 The entirety of Matt. 23 is a scathing attack on all facets of these men.

172 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 11

173 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 11

174 Ibid

ample evidence that the early Christians kept the holydays, there is no hint in the New Testament that they ever attempted to sanctify a calendar apart from the Jewish calendar.”<sup>175</sup>

This statement is misleading and inaccurate for a number of reasons. Mr. Dart gives no evidence that, “From ancient times, the Sanhedrin had the authority to make the rules and observations that sanctified the Hebrew calendar.”<sup>176</sup> Again, Mr. Dart has tried to present his hypothesis as fact, yet he has not produced any scriptural or historical evidence to validate this hypothesis. Since Mr. Dart has not presented any real evidence to support his hypothesis, we must deem that his hypothesis is incorrect since it disagrees with experts like Maimonides.

Mr. Dart is correct that Jesus and the disciples followed the calendar as proclaimed by the Sanhedrin. But as anyone who has done even a cursory study on the calendar of the second temple period should be aware, the records show that the Sanhedrin used a set of rules based on observation to proclaim the calendar. They could not change these rules or proclaim the new moon to be some other day than the first crescent when the crescent was visible. “Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all Talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its “proper time” for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”<sup>177</sup> Therefore Jesus followed the proclamations of the Sanhedrin about the observed calendar, similar to the one proclaimed by the Karaites today. This author contends that if the Sanhedrin had changed the calendar to resemble the current calculated Jewish calendar, Jesus would have denounced it as thoroughly as he did the rest of their Sabbath *halacha* because this Sabbath *halacha* is what shapes the current calculated Jewish calendar and places it outside of the law of God. Of course this is speculation, but at least this speculation has scriptural support because of the way Jesus assailed so many aspects of the Pharisees *halacha* while he walked the earth while Mr. Dart's speculation God used any calendar the Jews created and put His holy days into it has not historical or scriptural support.

Mr. Dart writes, “Prediction, in the final analysis is the work of the calendar. Most holyday keeping Christian groups, with a few exceptions, have accepted that calendar as the basis for their religious year.”<sup>178</sup> Mr. Dart may believe that the work of the calendar is prediction, but that is only a part of its role for a Christian. The calendar is used to let us know when God ordains the annual feasts. He freed us and we should celebrate that freedom as He ordains, not as we chose. This author contends Christians cannot substitute Sunday for the seventh day Sabbath, nor can they substitute Christmas and Easter for the annual feasts if they have been called by God.

Mr. Dart believes, “While a church organization could conceivably write their own rules for the calendar, it seems entirely unnecessary and it would surely be divisive. Historically, the

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175 Ibid

176 Ibid

177 Maimonides, *Sanctification of the New Moon*, p. xxviii

178 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 11

ministry in our faith have discussed the matter and have concluded that it is best for us to use the Hebrew calendar in determining the dates for the festivals of God.”<sup>179</sup>

Historically, the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God followed whatever theological doctrine Herbert Armstrong practiced. Historically, this ministry followed a calendar that starts the new year on Tishri 1, not Abib 1; thus they ignored the one verse that Mr. Dart contends is a clear scriptural ordinance on the calendar. Yet Mr. Dart believes it is unnecessary to change anything because, “it would surely be divisive.”<sup>180</sup>

Sometimes following God’s ways can be divisive. It was Jesus who said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”<sup>181</sup> If there is some point in our religious practice that clearly violates scripture, it is necessary to change that practice, even if it does cause some disunity.

As Mr. Dart knows, the ministers of the churches of God believed the Jews could not correctly count to 50 and mistakenly kept a Monday Pentecost for a quarter of a century. When these same ministers decided the Jews could count to 50, they change the day to observe Pentecost of Sunday, even though it was disruptive. For over a quarter of century the ministry of the World Wide Church of God taught if you were divorced and remarried and then came into the church, you had to divorce your second spouse and either stay unmarried or return to your first spouse, even though this directly violated scriptural ordinances.<sup>182</sup> Changing this abominable religious practice proved to be very disruptive. When Mr. Dart left the World Wide Church of God, his new church studied the timing of the Passover and realize the church of God was wrong when they taught the Jews could not tell the end of the day from the beginning and changed their understanding about when the Passover lamb was sacrificed in Egypt even though this was disruptive. Mr. Dart’s reasoning about why we should use the calculated Jewish calendar would also suggest Christians should be keeping a Monday Pentecost, accept a massive error on the timing of Passover and continue to defy scripture by teaching people their past sins were not forgiven when they repented and were baptized into the church of God.

As the Worldwide church of God prepared to cease Sabbath observance and start Sunday worship, the minister who came to the Boston area in 1995 stressed over and over again, if God was not with his church now, He never was. His belief was that it was more important to stay

<sup>179</sup> Dart, p. 12

<sup>180</sup> Dart, p. 12

<sup>181</sup> Matt. 10:34-8

<sup>182</sup> Deut. 24:3-4 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

with the church where God had placed you, the WorldWide Church of God, than to examine and follow scripture. His belief seemed to be that the doctrine of the Government of God on Earth superseded all other doctrines. His belief was that the ministry was properly trained and being lead by God and the people should follow their teachings, even if the people believed these teachings were unscriptural and even if they believed they were heretical. This author disagreed with Dan Bera then and now. Mr. Darts call to the authority of the ministry of the churches of God rather than upon word of God is just as troubling as Mr. Bera's.

Just because the vast majority of the churches of God have traditionally followed the calculated Jewish calendar does not make it correct. It also does not make it wrong. What matters is how does the calculated Jewish calendar compare to scripture? What matters is did the descendants of the Pharisees change the calendar a millennia and a half ago, as depicted in history and by today's Jewish authorities, just as they changed many ordinances of God, because their traditions were more important than the will of God? What matters is do the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar violate scriptural ordinances.

Mr. Dart writes, "Perhaps the most important thing to remember when one considers abandoning the published Hebrew calendar is that we have no *Biblical* authority for any other system. We could claim ecclesiastical authority, but then we are still no better off than the Hebrews."<sup>183</sup> However didn't Mr. Dart write, "This is not to say that their authority extended into the established church of Jesus Christ. That authority, Jesus explicitly granted to the apostles."<sup>184</sup> So, the church has ecclesiastical authority according to Mr. Dart, except, of course, when he deems it does not.

Mr. Dart's conclusion is, "In the absence of divine authority on the matter, it seems wise to use our ecclesiastical authority to affirm the traditional use of Hebrew calendar. It is the only common ground the separate holyday keeping churches are likely to find."<sup>185</sup> Again the appeal is to ecclesiastical authority. Again the appeal is to uniformity. There is no appeal to righteous nor holiness nor to unity of spirit.

Mr. Dart ignored the basis of the calculated Jewish calendar in his paper and instead relies on the authority of elders, the ministry that was ordained by Herbert Armstrong, for his policy of acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative. His goal is to allow people to meet together on the annual feasts. This seems to ignore the 50 to 54 weekly Sabbaths a year where God's people meet together, even with different calendar interpretations. It also ignores that different calendar interpretations can still allow God's people to meet together during most of the annual feasts, especially if the spring feast is also observed.

Mr. Dart contends if we change the calendar rules, it will leave us no better off than the Jews. A small sect of Judaism, the Karaites, disagrees with Mr. Dart. They are trying to determine the correct way to live life based on scripture, not on tradition. They have been trying to do this for over a millennia. They believe it is better use judgment and try to build

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183 Dart, *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 12

184 Ibid

185 Ibid



a Godly calendar, even if all the rules for that calendar are not completely spelled out in scripture, then to continue in an error that violates scripture. They have the right idea

Mr. Dart did not even try to use scripture to support the current calculated Jewish calendar, probably because he is too good a scholar try to use scripture to support this pharisaical invention. This is refreshing. Mr. Dart presents his speculation that God simply slide the annual feast days into the calendar used by the Jews as fact, a supposition that although novel, is quite disturbing because of its lack of historical, scholarly or scriptural support. We all make such suppositions. This author assumes Mr. Dart simply did not know the fact that Egypt used a purely solar calendar at the time of the Exodus, which obviously collapses his whole theory, but it is possible this was just another inconvenient fact Mr. Dart obfuscated.

Rather than justify his usage of the calculated Jewish calendar with scripture, Mr. Dart simply attempts to weaken the case of those wish to follow the scriptural ordinances about the calendar with innuendo, errant logic, errant facts and with misleading statements.

Mr. Dart's pattern is quite clear, as I show below.

We have no record of when man first noticed this...it is not inconceivable that... Early on he would have figured out.<sup>186</sup>

If we were to tackle this problem, we would first have to choose... We could put a stick... We could do this... No one knows who they were... Stonehenge may or may not have been a place of worship... We cannot be certain... This might have resulted... Having no doubt noticed<sup>151</sup>

Whoever these people were... so it seems they made their months 29 and 30 days long... the horizon could be marked... It seems that Noah used 30 day months... Noah may simply have been.<sup>187</sup>

There is no reason to doubt that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had a 12 month lunar calendar... What, for example, constituted the "new moon"?... Having this piece of information, the Molad, what were they to do about the "new moon"?<sup>188</sup>

It would not be very difficult to design... The first rule could be... What do we do if... If I could calculate the conjunction, and if it were up to me, I might simply... Naturally, we would expect... For example, how can you tell from the text just quoted which month was the first month? What time of year was it?... So we infer... All this is very clever of us... Why were the instructions for the calendar not done the same way?... What if the ears are not green until the last day of the month? How would you have known... But what if... Will they still be... If not, how could it... Which is Abib?... we seem to be left to figure out for ourselves.<sup>189</sup>

The leap years were reasonably predictable... Early on they noticed... Reason suggests that... If they could not predict, how could... Where did they find all this in the law?... The children of Israel found in the law a *presumption*... We do not know whether God revealed it to them, or whether they had to figure it out for themselves... Paul may have been talking about.<sup>190</sup>

If it did, I suppose... This rule generally satisfies... But can "religious require-

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186 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar* p. 2

187 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 3

188 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 4

189 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 5

190 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*. p. 6



ments” take precedence over the law?... We would normally assume... so it would not be surprising if... It is easy to see... it should not be surprising.<sup>191</sup>

We don't know with any precision... They seem to have... It was no great trick. They just changed the observation point... Does all this seem confusing to you?...

But suppose it was not God's intent... Presumably, they already knew... so there is no reason to suppose... Suppose that just after... How then can the Sabbath be 'holy time'?... The presumption is that... The astronomer will see.<sup>192</sup>

What does it take to make a day holy?... True, God gave them specifications, but it was left to them to build... but we still have to guess what certain parts of it looked like... In the same way... They are, in a sense... Did God give specifications for the calendar like He gave specifications for the temple? We don't know... We don't know whether Israel's calendar was.<sup>193</sup>

We don't know what they did about the calendar... Jesus and the apostles seem.<sup>194</sup>

We can infer, nevertheless... it seems wise to use our ecclesiastical authority.<sup>195</sup>

After all of these inferences and possibilities and “we cannot know”, Mr. Dart states, “After all, it was that calendar system into which God placed his days - his memorials.”<sup>196</sup> Mr. Dart never proves or even attempts to prove this hypothesis. Mr. Dart clearly ignored the fact that calculated Jewish calendar starts in Tishri rather than in Abib, even though he acknowledges that he believes Exodus 12:2 clearly states Abib should be the first month of the year. Mr. Dart's endorsement of the idea of a civil new year, a completely extra-biblical, and if Exodus 12:2 is as clear scripture on the calendar as Mr. Dart claims, an unbiblical idea, is also a great weakness in his argument. Mr. Dart also ignores that the reason for the Sunday postponement is so the Jews can wave the willows at the Lulav ceremony on the seventh day of Tabernacles. He also obfuscate the fact that the calendar of the second temple period was done by observation with many misleading and sometime erroneous statements.

If Mr. Dart had simply written his dissertation about the calendars of Stonehenge, the calendar of Islam, Mesopotamia, and native Americans and then followed that dissertation with his belief that we should follow the authority of Jews because anything else would cause disunity, this author would have disagreed with Mr. Dart, but would not have written this appendix. Mr. Dart's attempt to discredit those who believe the calculated Jewish calendar breaks scriptural rules, without even examining these scriptures or the historical calendar that Christ observed should not be acceptable to Christians who believe the Word of God is a manual of life. Mr. Dart's attempt to plant seeds of confusion while ignoring serious biblical questions about what one of the lesser doctrines of scripture is not acceptable to me, although historically, the ministry of the churches of God have followed this pattern.

The readers and supporters of Ron Dart's stance on acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative for Christians should make no mistake that his support for the calculated Jewish calendar is based upon the authority of the church to chose which Jewish

191 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 7

192 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 8

193 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 9

194 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 10

195 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 11

196 Dart *Why we use the Hebrew calendar*, p. 11

doctrines it will follow and which it will ignore. There should also be no misunderstanding that the logic he uses to support the calculated Jewish calendar could just as easily be used to support keeping Christmas and Easter because he concentrates on the mechanics and end result of the practice while ignoring scripture. Of course, the conclusion of Mr. Dart's argument would not work with Christmas and Easter because their introduction into the religious observances of the churches of God would cause disunity.

Mr. Dart contends that the disunity that would be introduced in examining the calendar would be counterproductive, even if the calculated Jewish calendar violated scriptural principles. His argument is based upon ecclesiastical authority. Mr. Dart's appeal to tradition over scriptural discussion on his tape *Working for Unity* follows the same pattern. He has stated that one of the first issues that had to be dealt with when the Church of God International broke away from the Worldwide Church of God was the calculated Jewish calendar. Obviously a number of the leaders of this breakaway group saw serious problems with the calculated Jewish calendar, probably the same ones brought up in the book. Mr. Dart contended that bringing up such issues would be divisive and CGI continued to follow the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Dart is at least consistent in his theological belief that unity and tradition are more important than in depth exegesis of the bible for answers to today's troubling issues.

This is somewhat understandable given the terrible scholarship and anti-Semitic bias of many who do not support the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative. However, rather than worry about what errant teachers might accomplish if the problems inherent in the calculated Jewish calendar are dealt with in an honest and open manner, this author worries about trying to follow scripture and counts on God and unity of spirit to lead His people into truth. Rather than worrying about doctrine separating, and there is no doubt the that the doctrine causing the largest amount of separation in the churches of God for Christians in general is the seventh day Sabbath, but this separation seems to be what God demands in His covenant. Not that we separate from His other children, but that we separate from their false doctrine that the Sabbath is the eighth day and not the seventh. This author's concentration on trying to follow the way of Jesus and hopes he can grow close enough to Him that he can follow Paul's admonition, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."<sup>197</sup>

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197 1Tim. 6:11-2

## Fear of non-uniformity versus Unity in Christ

Pam Dewey has one of the larger and more useful web ministries presented by the many of the churches of God and has been associated with Ron Dart and CEM<sup>1</sup> for decades. You can examine her main site at <http://Youall.com>. She is also a teacher and speaker. This author believes she is one of the brighter minds in the churches of God.

Pam Dewey has been passively involved with the “calendar wars” for a couple of decades. Pam stance is that she does not follow or observe the calculated Jewish calendar. She uses it. I shared much of the original research for this book with Pam in the late 90’s. Throughout our correspondence, she was helpful, friendly and insightful. She was familiar with and agreed with much of the research we shared, but her conclusion about what to do with this information is quite different from this author’s.

In an article published in *The Journal*,<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Dewey wrote:

But on the Likeminds forum recently a participant asked a pointed question of some of us who do happen to use the modern Hebrew calendar to decide when to observe the holy days.

I believed his question to be sincere and not just looking to pick a fight. I knew he had come to different conclusions from mine on these matters long ago, but I respect his diligence and zeal as he attempted to understand how best to serve God.

I also appreciate his attempt not to let his calendar convictions separate him from brethren who look at matters differently.

So I decided to post an answer to his question.<sup>3</sup>

This author was that participant. Pam gave me permission to publish her article in this book a decade ago and here is the promised response.

Mrs. Dewey wrote, “It might help to understand that most of us who prefer not to change have no desire to convince you that you should keep any particular calendar. We have merely chosen our own course and are willing to explain why.”<sup>4</sup> This may be Mrs. Dewey’s stance, but it is not the stance of the vast majority of the teachers and preachers in the churches of God. Mrs. Dewey is also underestimating her influence with a large number of Christians.

### Problems with those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar

Mrs. Dewey describes the problems she has with most of those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar and begin to preach the gospel of the calendar. She writes, “Their concept seems to be that they have appointments to keep between themselves, as individuals, and God. Thus, if they can’t figure out what calendar He uses, they will miss those appointments and make God mad.”<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Dewey has greatly simplified the issue, but sadly far too many who reject the cal-

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1 Information on CEM can be found at <http://www.borntowin.net/>

2 Dewey, Pam, *Why I use the Standard Calendar to determine yearly Feast days*. You can download this article in its entirety from <http://www.thejournal.org/issues/issue62/dewey.html>

3 Dewey on the calendar

4 Dewey on the calendar

5 Dewey on the calendar

culated Jewish calendar probably do feel God would be upset if they did something incorrectly rather than focusing on the fact that He is proud of us when we attempt to do something right, even if we fail, rather than continue to follow a path that we know is wrong.

However, Mrs. Dewey is somewhat unjustifiably insulting when she writes, “This must surely include the assumption that God foreordained an exact set of dates for all eternity from the foundation of the world upon which He was willing to meet with those who worship Him. And, as time moved forward, He showed up on those exact dates willing to accept worship.”<sup>6</sup> This statement is designed to make those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar because of its unscriptural use of postponements seem somewhat crazy by insinuating something none of them believe. This author has found no one who believes God set the dates of worship from eternity. You can and should worship God every day of the year. However, scripture is clear that God set aside physical days as holy feasts to be celebrated by His physical children. What this author and others who reject the calculated Jewish calendar believe is that God set a framework for a calendar in scripture to help us celebrate these feasts and the calculated Jewish calendar violates this very basic framework.

### **The Old Covenant was not with Individuals?**

Mrs. Dewey lists a number of errors she has found in the logic of those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Dewey writes, “First, I see no indication in Scripture that the holy days as instituted at Sinai were to be kept ‘between an individual and God.’ They were commanded assemblies. They were a corporate (relating to a unified body of individuals) observance. They were times when the whole nation got together.”<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Dewey is correct that the annual feast days were ordained by God as a time to gather together, but this author rejects the premise that God’s covenant ever excluded an individual covenant. The corporate observance that Jeroboam foisted upon the Northern Kingdom still had an individual component. It was up to the individual if they were going to follow the religious leadership of the Northern Kingdom in its error or if they were going to stand up for God’s ways.

Mrs. Dewey writes, “Another set of assumptions I believe to be in error regards the purpose of the days for Christians. In ancient Israel the average individual Israelite did not have an individually separate covenant with God; the covenant was with the nation.”<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Dewey’s view of the nation of Israel’s covenant with God being vastly different from the covenant Christians have with God today is a premise that this author completely rejects. Although the nation of Israel did have a covenant with God, each individual was also supposed to have a covenant with God. The book of Deuteronomy was a Suzerain covenant with the nation of Israel, but it also commanded each Israelite to also have a covenant with God, although most of them did not.

God wrote, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach

<sup>6</sup> Dewey on the calendar

<sup>7</sup> Dewey on the calendar

<sup>8</sup> Dewey on the calendar

them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>9</sup> Each family was supposed to follow God’s ways and teach it to their children. This was supposed to also be an individual covenant and Mrs. Dewey is in error when she teaches that the old covenant was not supposed to be a covenant between individuals and God.<sup>10</sup> It is true most Israelites were not in an individual covenant with God, even if that is what God wanted. But how many people who call themselves Christians today are also not in an individual covenant with God?

Mrs. Dewey writes about the individual under the old covenant, “He could be ‘cut off’ from his people for various reasons under the law, and those would, in essence, cut him off from God. He did not have the personal freedom to perform ritual sacrifices, including the Atonement sacrifices. He was dependent on the intermediation of the priest, for he had no access to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. Keeping the appointments of the holy days was extremely important, because they were the times God came down close to the nation.”<sup>11</sup>

Although what Mrs. Dewey writes is correct, it is incomplete. Can Christians be cut off for violating God’s laws today? Paul wrote they not only could be, but should be under certain circumstances. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”<sup>12</sup> Do Christians have the personal freedom to perform the atonement sacrifice for themselves? Of course not and they never did. God performed the atonement sacrifice for us with the crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah.<sup>13</sup> No one, including the priesthood had access to the holy of holies except the high priest under the Old Covenant and then just once a year. The priesthood of the line of Levi was replaced with the priesthood of the line of Melchisedec, but neither was supposed to serve as some kind of intermediary between God and man. Their role was as teacher of God’s ways. Mrs. Dewey’s belief that the Old Covenant was dramatically different from the New Covenant, a theological view known as dispensationalism, and her belief that the way God works with mankind is also totally different is something this author and many scholars reject.

Mrs. Dewey expresses this view of dispensationalism when she writes, “Speaking as a Christian, for me this has all changed. The veil is rent; the priesthood has been changed; I have access, 24-7-365, into the Holy of Holies.”<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt the veil was rent by the sacrifice of Jesus and this instituted the long awaited New Covenant when the gentiles could be grafted in.<sup>15</sup> However, Mrs. Dewey writes that the only place an Israelite could go to worship God was at the temple. “Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is with

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9 Deut 6:4-7

10 For more information on this, you can download How does God work with Mankind from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

11 Dewey on the calendar

12 1 Cor. 5:11

13 To see how Jesus fulfilled not just the role of the Passover, but also the role of the of the atonement sacrifice, you can download The Forgiveness of God from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

14 Dewey on the calendar

15 Rom. 11:17-21

me and in me at all times. I don't have to wait for Him to show up to an appointment. I don't have to go to the temple in Jerusalem, at only the appointed times, to worship God. I worship Him in spirit and in truth at all times."<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy states the nation of Israel was to worship God as they walked in their way. As for a central place of worship of God, Isaiah writes that under the New Covenant people will still come to God's temple to worship him.<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Dewey's supposition that the Israelites could not worship God at any place other than the temple under the Old Covenant is wrong. They could only offer sacrifices at the temple, but they not only could, but were supposed to worship God even if they could not get to the temple.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Dewey seems to believe that the nation of Israel, rather than being an kingdom of priests and kings as God intended,<sup>19</sup> were actually supposed to be afraid they might make some kind of mistake in their "ritualistic approach to worship."<sup>20</sup> This is not what God intended as the story of the prophets makes clear.

### **Christians Worship God all the Time, but Israel Couldn't?**

Mrs. Dewey writes that the justification for her use of the calculated Jewish calendar is, "for me of the purpose of the holy days is not to individually worship God and come into His presence. I worship Him all the time, and He is ever present with me. The purpose of the holy-day times is to be with His people--whom I really can't be with all the time."<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Dewey suggests this is somehow completely different for the Israelites under the Old Covenant. She has presented her reason why the Old Covenant was not just inferior, but did not have an individual component of worship nor was it supposed to involve a personal relationship with God, but Mrs. Dewey's mistaken beliefs have clouded her judgment on this issue. Mrs. Dewey also seems to have over looked that God lists the weekly Sabbath and the annual "holy days" as His feasts in Lev. 23.<sup>22</sup> Therefore Mrs. Dewey's distinction that the annual feasts, the holy days, are so different from the weekly feast, the Sabbath, may have some basis in practicality, but this distinction is one of Mrs. Dewey's and not one of scripture because scripture lists them as all being feasts, each with its own unique ordinances.

Mrs. Dewey writes, "The holy days are for corporate (relating to a unified body of individuals) worship, in which we raise our voices together. They are for edifying and building up one another so we may reach out to a dying world with hope. They are to bind us together

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16 Dewey on the calendar

17 Is. 66:23

18 Deut. 12:21 If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

19 Ex. 19:6

20 Dewey on the calendar wrote, "To try to go back and superimpose upon this reality the kind of ritualistic approach to worship that fears to make a mistake in "timing" seems to me to reject the reality of the New Covenant."

21 Dewey on the calendar

22 Lev. 23:2-3 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: The appointed seasons of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons.

Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of work; it is a sabbath unto the LORD in all your dwellings.



in love as a family.”<sup>23</sup> Everything that Mrs. Dewey writes here is correct, but it is incomplete. All of the edification and binding together in love that Mrs. Dewey has described can and often is done by Christians who go on a retreat. These retreats are often for long weekends, but sometimes can go for a week or longer. Are the holy days nothing more than then an extended retreat for Christians? This author believes the churches of God have concentrated on the following the law of God and supposedly doing the work of God at the expense of love and discipleship and growing together in unity and retreats to build these interpersonal relationships would help. However, the holy days are more than a retreat. They are a time God has set aside for us, just as He set aside the weekly feast of the 7th day Sabbath as a time for us, and we cannot substitute a week long retreat in July for the feast of Tabernacles, which is something that the World Wide church of God attempted to do in the late 90’s. Mrs. Dewey’s down playing of the role that worship and obedience to God plays in the observation of the holy days is something this author disagrees with.

Mrs. Dewey writes about the holy days, “So how should we decide when to come together? Historically, for most of 2,000 years, the Jews have maintained their unity throughout the world with their calendar. It has served as an agreed-upon standard that allows for all of them to plan to be together for times of corporate worship.”<sup>24</sup> Although this statement is true, Mrs. Dewey does not mention this calendar was changed dramatically about 1600 years ago. She also does not mention that coming together meant meeting together at synagogue in your local town because for the vast majority of that 2,000 years there were no pilgrimages at the time of the annual feasts.

Mrs. Dewey writes, “Most of the Christian groups of the past 100-plus years who decided that the holy days of Leviticus were relevant to Christians (there were quite a number outside the Worldwide Church of God) have chosen to adopt the Hebrew calendar for the very reasons I just gave here: It has a track record of bringing people together; it allows for planning.”<sup>25</sup> Again Mrs. Dewey is correct, but is tradition and convenience a reason for following God and His ways? Many Sabbath keeping Christians found that Sunday was much more convenient for planning and allowing Christians to gather together in the 90’s and stopped observing the Sabbath. This author contends the kind of control the World Wide Church of God had over its membership was never intended by God and the use of the calculated Jewish calendar is simply a symptom that control is very hard to give up.

### **If Only there were Uniformity, We could Change**

Mrs. Dewey writes, “I am convinced that most people who feel like I do would be happy to make a change regarding the calendar if all the people proposing change would come up with the same alternative.” Mrs. Dewey is obviously correct, but does not write that the vast majority of the churches of God would disagree with her stance on the calculated Jewish calendar. Most of the churches of God would not change to an alternative because they have invested

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23 Dewey on the calendar

24 Dewey on the calendar

25 Dewey on the calendar

too much into the defense of the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative and as the past 20 years has shown, it is highly unlikely they would give up that kind of control.

Mrs. Dewey writes, “For instance, if the only complaint anyone had was that we ought to dump the postponements, and all could agree that was the only change that should be made, I would be happy to make that change.... Thus we have at least a dozen differing propositions, proposed equally and equally adamantly by equally adamant folks... Given the assumptions I share with you here--about my meeting with God all the time and don't need an appointment to get in to see Him but I believe He wants me to use the yearly cycle of the holy days to draw closer to other people--what should I do when I view these dozen distinct options?”<sup>26</sup>

The problem this author has with Mrs. Dewey's presentation is that her logic dictates that the most important thing about the holy days, by far and away, is getting together with other people. While this author agrees with her that is the most important thing about the holy days, this author believes God has set all of His feasts for this purpose, including the weekly feast, the seventh day Sabbath.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Dewey's logic could suggest that since I can worship God all time, I should also be free to choose to meet with other Christians and rest on Sunday rather than the Sabbath. Mrs. Dewey states that the feasts, which have to include the weekly feast, are not an appointment to meet with God, but to meet with other Christians. This author believes it has to be both.

### **Problems keeping all of God's Feasts Today, Including the Weekly Sabbath**

Mrs. Dewey points out a number of valid issues with trying to seek a biblical based calendar rather than one based upon pharisaical postponements. However, many of these arguments are also arguments to continue worship God on Sunday rather than the seventh day Sabbath. After all, most Christians do set aside Sunday as the Sabbath and not Saturday, so by far and away the largest number of Christians congregate together on what they believe is the first of God's feasts, the Sabbath, on Sunday. Also, not all Sabbath keepers observe the Sabbath at the same time, with some starting the Sabbath at sunset and others starting it at dark and some follow the example of the Jews, who start before sunset and end after dark. What is the biblical definition of when the day ends? It ends at *erev* or evening. This is not a specific time, no matter what some church of God teachers teach. God did not see fit to give an exact definition to the time frame *erev* in scripture. Scripture cannot be used to support any of the above times precisely as being *erev* because scripture has examples of *erev* being anywhere from mid-afternoon to being very dark. The one thing scripture can do is show which definitions of *erev* are wrong and there is one that is definitely wrong. The standard Jewish practice of defining Sabbath as starting 18 minutes before sunset and ending it when there are three stars in the sky because it may not be dark enough if you see only two stars. Scripture clearly defines the Sabbath as a day, thus it must start and end at

<sup>26</sup> Dewey on the calendar

<sup>27</sup> Lev. 23:2-3 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these *are* my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: it *is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

the same time. Therefore, although God did not precisely define when the Sabbath started and ended, He still gave biblical guidelines that the Sabbath was a day long and listed a number of things you were not supposed to do on that day and things you were supposed to do, but left a lot of gray area in between. That is the way God operated on defining His Sabbath and it should be no surprise that is how He defined His calendar, although this lack of preciseness is something the churches of God apparently cannot abide, just as the pharisees could not abide supposed lack of guidance God gave on what to do and not do on the seventh day Sabbath.

There are also issues about what work is allowed on the Sabbath and what is not because servile work is not explicitly defined. Some believe Sabbath keepers can be policeman, doctors, nurses and fireman because if they have to work on the Sabbath, their work is helping the ox in a ditch while other Sabbath keepers believe such professions must be avoided. Very conservative Sabbath keepers believe you cannot turn on appliances during the Sabbath while others believe you can. Simply because there are valid disagreements in the Sabbath keeping communities around the world about the Sabbath does not mean you should observe a Sunday Sabbath just because the vast majority of Christians do. Yet Mrs. Dewey's logic could also support keeping a Sunday rather than a seventh day Sabbath.

Mrs. Dewey attempts to bring humor, but instead is quite derogatory when she suggests those who believe God gave the basic outlines of a calendar in the bible, outlines that the calculated Jewish calendar does not follow, and expected us to look to Him for guidance in the details each year are equivalent to parents who raise their children without guidance and then punish them when they do something wrong.<sup>28</sup> If I tell my children to go out and play in the yard and be nice to each other, but I do not tell them specifically what to do, have I given them no guidance? I did not tell them exactly what to do because I want them to learn to play together. I gave them some freedom to learn to do just that. Just because I did not tell them not to play in the road, but stay in the yard this time, does it mean I have not given the guidance they need not to play in the road? Of course not. Giving guidance should be exactly that, giving guidance, not micromanaging every aspect. Unfortunately far too many Christians are far more comfortable with a Talmud of detailed do's and don'ts than with a God who gave general outlines for living according His scriptures because He wanted us to grow in grace, knowledge and judgment.

Mrs. Dewey logic, when applied to the annual feast in general rather than the calendar used to determine those feast, could be equivalent to stating that we should give up observation

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28 Mrs. Dewey writes, "One last assumption before I answer this question: I believe that if God wanted me to keep an exact date for the holy days He would not play peekaboo with me and make me try to guess which of the many variations has His imprimatur as the One True Calendar. I didn't raise my own child either of these ways:

- "Guess what I expect from you, and if you don't guess right you get a smack."
- "Guess where I hid your baby bottle, and if you don't guess right you don't get the bottle."

If the holy days are a blessing from God--which I believe they are--then I do not believe He would insist that I must keep them by some system that He refused to state clearly in the Bible."

of the holy days all together because they were to be celebrated where God placed His name according to scripture. Even a cursory study of scripture should show the reader that the place where God placed His name is where the sacrifices were to be performed. Those who extrapolate Matthew 18:20 to support the idea that God places His name where ever two or three Christians are gathered simply do not understand what scripture states about where God placed His name.<sup>29</sup> God first placed His name at the tabernacle in Shiloh and later at the temple in Jerusalem. However, today there are no more sacrifices, no more temple and thus there is nothing that exactly or even closely matches the scriptural description of how God's called out people are to celebrate these the annual feasts. Both Jews and Christians must use scripture and their God given judgment to try to follow God's ways in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but Mrs. Dewey logic could be used to suggest that since God has not given all the details in scripture about what we should observe the annual feasts today, then he has left us without guidance. Mrs. Dewey's logic would suggest we have nothing at our disposal to help us with this dilemma because God has not given us much detail on how to observe His feasts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If the church of God Seventh Day had followed Mrs. Dewey's line of reasoning, and there were a number of ministers at their conference that wanted to enforce this line of reasoning, then the church of God Seventh Day would have officially outlawed the keeping of the annual feasts rather than allow those who felt compelled to observe them the freedom to observe them.<sup>30</sup> This author is not suggesting Mrs. Dewey would ever suggest abandoning observance of the feasts of God that are outlined in Leviticus 23. He is simply rejecting her line of reasoning for continuing to use the calculated Jewish calendar by showing how that line of reasoning is incorrect.

### **Displeasing God versus Attempting to Please Him**

Mrs. Dewey explains that main reason she embraces the use of the calculated Jewish calendar. "Even if I believed I must tremblingly approach only one point in time for an observance, else I will displease God, I fail to see how leaving one system that has imperfections and jumping to one of the dozen or more alternatives with their imperfections would assure me of pleasing God more. If there is that one perfect time, then only one--or none--of those dozen or more can have it correct. The rest are as wrong as the Hebrew calendar, whether they are a day off or a month off. If God will show up on only one specific day, then a miss is a good as a mile."<sup>31</sup>

Mrs. Dewey is afraid of the non-uniformity that would be introduced by giving up the calculated Jewish calendar with its pharisaical postponements. This author understands her concerns, especially given the lack of love and understanding displayed throughout the churches of God, but this author believes Christians should be seeking the unity of God and take the chance that we can grow into mature Christians during this chaotic process.

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<sup>29</sup> Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

<sup>30</sup> Although this conference took place in 2011, those who wanted to follow the scriptural statutes of observing the annual feasts spent years working to allow their acceptance in the church of God seventh day.

<sup>31</sup> Dewey on the calendar

This author knows that God is not the author of confusion, but He is the author of chaos.<sup>32</sup> The fear of change and the chaos it introduces can actually inhibit our growth as Christians and definitely does not enhance it.

Mrs. Dewey writes, “I didn’t come to these assumptions, nor the conclusions I’ve drawn from them, lightly, nor without much prayer and many years of careful consideration of the calendar issues. As I’ve mentioned before, I was studying calendar issues before calendar issues were cool in the wider COG circles.”<sup>33</sup> This author truly respects Mrs. Dewey as a Christian, a teacher and as a servant of God. But times have changed. There is no doubt that changing from the calculated Jewish calendar to an observed calendar similar to what the Karaite Jews use will cause some confusion and some division, but it was God that introduced a major point of division into the largest of the churches of God in the mid-90’s because His people needed to stop worshipping the church and start worshipping Him. This destroyed much of the control of the so-called “government of God on Earth,” which was far more divisive than almost anything else, which this author believes includes not follow the calculated Jewish calendar. Being freed of the yoke of the so-called government of god allowed many Christians to move dramatically closer to God. Unfortunately the majority missed this yoke just the Israelites missed the leeks and cucumbers of Egypt and they returned to their metaphorical task masters to escape the chaos of freedom.<sup>34</sup>

Mrs. Dewey wrote, “I have no problem with those whose assumptions are different from mine in this matter. I respect their conclusions that apply to themselves. I wouldn’t want anyone to go against his conscience in this or any other issue. Each of us is accountable to God for walking in the light he has on any subject.”<sup>35</sup> This is why Pam Dewey is a true teacher of God in this author’s opinion. She sees the problems with the postponements and has not glossed over them. Her premise seems to be the non-uniformity that would be introduced by not using the calculated Jewish calendar would be worse than using it with all of its unbiblical flaws. She may well be right. The churches of God may well resemble the Hebrews that Paul wrote to at the end of Hebrews 5.<sup>36</sup> Again times have changed and this author believes it might just be possible that the unity that could come about when rejecting the postponements is worth the risk of non-uniformity. Mrs. Dewey does not

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32 You can download a paper of this title that explains how God uses chaos to help Christians mature at <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

33 Dewey on the calendar

34 Num. 11:5-6 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

35 Dewey on the calendar

36 Heb. 5: 11-4 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.



### Possible Solutions

Mrs. Dewey lists a number of possible solutions to having various people with different ideas about which calendar to use, which include a calendar conference and even casting of lots, which might include a coin flip. She writes, “What’s wrong with this supposed solution? Although flipping a coin--which is much the same idea as casting lots--may be a way to settle disagreements such as what time to have services or who gets to speak at a gathering, I do not believe this is a useful way to settle the matter of calendars.”<sup>37</sup> This author could not agree with Mrs. Dewey any more. Think of a church thrown into non-uniformity because a large chunk of them have discovered the Sabbath is on the seventh day and not on the eighth day (a Sunday Sabbath is often called the eighth day in Catholic and some Protestant theology). If either side suggested that a coin flip should settle which day the group would observe as the Sabbath to maintain uniformity, it would destroy unity because a large percentage of the people would be doing something that is against their conscience.

Mrs. Dewey details the shortcomings of the idea of some kind of calendar Sanhedrin to settle the issue of the calendar. She lists many of the issues discussed in detail in this book and relates how various factions with various views on various portions of various calendars could not agree. This, of course, should surprise no one given the propensity for dogmatic stances in the sacred names and churches of God groups. She even pointed to a calendar conference she attended where she heard a 6 hour talk by Herb Solinsky which convinced no one to change their mind.

This author also attended a calendar conference in 1997 with about 30 people from the New England area who all agreed we could no longer use a calendar built upon pharisaical rules that literally postponed the days of the annual feasts. This author had done much of the research on the calendar that was used during the second temple period which is in this book, but had not yet completed studying the astronomical implication of the earth-moon orbital system. The Rudd household was keeping the astronomical new moon, which is the conjunction, as the new moon. When this author was shown the earth-moon orbit was not symmetrical as he had imagined, this author changed his practice and belief to match that of the vast majority of historical research he had done. In a matter of minutes I changed from using a calendar based on the conjunction to one based on observation of the first crescent of Jerusalem. Although this kind of change is highly unlikely to occur in large factions of the churches of God, it is entirely possible this type of change could occur in waves throughout the church if teachers simply pointed out the problems with the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar rather than either ignoring them or trying to hide these deficiencies.

Mrs. Dewey writes, “When you and your friends and brethren can come to an agreement that allows you to gather in peace on what you agree to be the correct dates (whatever that means), then there is no problem for you, even if the decision you come to is shown someday to be just as incorrect as the Hebrew calendar with its postponements.”<sup>38</sup> This author kept a calendar that was incorrect when he used the conjunction as the new moon

<sup>37</sup> Dewey on the calendar

<sup>38</sup> Dewey on the calendar



rather than the first crescent, but this was not as bad as following the calculated Jewish calendar with postponements because, although I had chosen the wrong definition of the new moon, I was at least trying to find God's path rather than continuing on a path that embraced the very things Jesus condemned in the Pharisees. Repentance does not mean being perfect going forward, but instead means abandoning the mistakes of the past.

### Why Christians Should use the calculated Jewish calendar

Mrs. Dewey writes, "Now can you understand why many of us have decided to stick with the standard Hebrew calendar, especially since God has not revealed a clear, definitive alternative? The Hebrew calendar, from my perspective, leads to the most productive situation. It will allow me, for instance, to meet on the same days with close to 1,000 people in Destin this fall for the Feast of Tabernacles, where I will see many Internet friends and have a great time worshiping and rejoicing with them before God."<sup>39</sup> This author also believes it is important to gather together with others on the annual feast days and has done so for a decade and a half while not using the calculated Jewish calendar with its postponements. We often observe the first and last days of those feasts, where servile work is forbidden, a day later than many of those around us, but we often find a small group of people who have also rejected the postponements at these gatherings and often spend the last day of the feast with likeminded people. This has caused no issues that this author is aware of.

Mrs. Dewey does not believe the calculated Jewish calendar is some kind of sacred calendar given to us by God. This author has talked and corresponded with Mrs. Dewey and knows she sees the same flaws that this author sees in the calculated Jewish calendar. Unlike those who embrace the concept of the calculated Jewish calendar being authoritative, Mrs. Dewey is being completely consistent when she uses the calculated Jewish calendar to set the days of the annual feast while not observing all of the feasts listed on that calendar, like a Sivan 6 Pentecost.

Mrs. Dewey writes,

I use the modern Hebrew calendar to decide when to observe the holy days. I accept for sake of communal observance the dates on that calendar on which to start the months. I don't 'follow' the Hebrew calendar. I 'use' its most basic form, which sets the beginnings of months, to help me act on the biblical statements about the holy days.

The issue of the timing of Pentecost is no problem for me. Pentecost is one of the events scattered across the base of the calendar. I happen to believe that the Bible is clear on counting it, thus I can use the calendar to count it myself. I cannot dogmatically account for why the Jews have chosen to count from the first day of Unleavened Bread to get to a Sivan 6 Pentecost because I find the text clear that one needs a 'morrow after the seventh Sabbath' (Leviticus 23:6) as part of the equation.<sup>40</sup>

This author tries to live by the Russell Hilburn rule. Russell always used to say, "If you can't be right, at least be consistent."<sup>41</sup> The vast majority of teachers in the churches of God movement could not abide this rule because it would require them to change certain traditions

39 Dewey on the calendar

40 Dewey on the calendar

41 Russell, we miss you and Leslie. Your friendship in the mid-90's will always be treasured by the Rudd household.

or dogmas, which would likely cost them followers and money, which is anathema to them. However, Mrs. Dewey does not fall into this trap, likely because she does not depend upon brothers and sisters in Christ to pay her salary. Although this author disagrees with Mrs. Dewey stance on the calendar, he respects her consistency.

Mrs. Dewey also rejects that idea that Romans 3:1-2 somehow makes the calculated Jewish calendar an oracle of God.<sup>42</sup> She writes, “we use it because we have not seen one clear alternative that is obviously a perfect calendar upon which all holy-daykeepers can agree and that has God’s endorsement. Until we do, we see no persuasive reason we should withdraw ourselves from large numbers of our brothers and sisters and go off and try to keep a supposed perfect calendar with just our family or a handful of others who happen to agree on some calendar variation.”<sup>43</sup>

This author and his household use the observed calendar for exactly the same purposes Mrs. Dewey does. We have meet together at the same site as the Deweys 3 times in the last dozen years. It is actually very easy to reject the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar and meet with people who have not taken that step yet. And when we believe the intercalation of the leap month is different than that ordained by the metonic cycle of the calculated Jewish calendar, we are left with the option of trying to meet together with people who share our view of the intercalation cycle or change our intercalation to match that of the calculated Jewish calendar. The Rudd household uses the Godly judgment given to us to determine the course to follow because we know and believe that intercalation was always supposed to be a matter of judgment, which can vary, but postponing God’s annual feasts by a day or two is just plain wrong for us.

Mrs. Dewey finishes her article by writing, “I wrote this article because I believe it useful for those embroiled in calendar controversies to understand that it is possible for others--even those who follow the Hebrew calendar--to understand the issues yet conclude that the use of the Hebrew calendar is a godly choice.”<sup>44</sup> Mrs. Dewey’s article shows that she has chosen to use the calculated Jewish calendar with its postponements because she does not believe the churches of God could work together to keep a calendar without postponements. This author agrees that the idea of various factions of the churches of God being willing to give up power and work together is probably still a dream. But as Jefferson Smith said in *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, “I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine. All you people don’t know about lost causes. Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for, and he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them: Because of one plain simple rule: Love thy neighbor. And in this world today, full of hatred, a man who knows that one rule has a great trust. You know that rule, Mr. Paine. And I loved you for it just as my father did, and you know that you fight for the lost causes harder than for any others. Yes, you even *die* for them.”<sup>45</sup>

42 Dewey on the calendar, George and I use the Hebrew calendar not because we believe it is endorsed by the biblical statement that the Jews have the oracles of God (Romans 3:1-2). We believe that statement to refer to the preservation of the text of the Old Testament.

43 Dewey on the calendar

44 Dewey on the calendar

45 Capra, Frank, *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, A filibuster delivered by Jimmy Stewart’s character.

### God wants us to Find Rest and Unity in His Ways

This author does not intend on dying for the battle of the calendar. But the old generation is dying in the wilderness. The new generation is coming and the promise of entering God's rest with unity and not necessarily uniformity is possible, but only if we are willing to give up old practices and traditions that we know are against scriptural principles, even if we are not 100% sure of what we will do instead. Attempting to do what is right rather than doing something you know is wrong is how godly judgment is developed and what repentance is all about.

We have been given the choice of two houses. One house looks fine and comfortable on the outside while the other gives us some hesitation. When we go inside, the comfortable house still looks comfortable while the other house appears to need some work. But then we examine the foundations. The comfortable house is built on a rotten foundation. This foundation was obviously built with many mechanical deficiencies, breaking the rules of how a foundation should be done, even if the work men managed to patch it together so a house could be built on top of it. We examine the other foundation and their workmen were apparently not as skillful as the first house, but they stuck to the basics and it would take a bomb to dislodge this foundation. Do you choose the house with the bad foundation, not knowing how long it will last, simply because you don't have to do any work on the that house at this time or do you choose the house with the sound foundation that needs some work? God answered that question a long time ago. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."<sup>46</sup> There is still work to be done, but the rest of God awaits us. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."<sup>47</sup>

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46 Deut. 30:19

47 Heb. 4:7-11



## Obfuscation of the Question of the calculated Jewish calendar

### UCG's Introductory Statement on the Calendar

In the late 90's, the United Church of God, AIA issued a study paper on the question of the calendar. Unbeknownst to this author, Jason Churchill and Frank Nelte were also writing their rebuttals of the United paper. Although we approached the issue of UCGaia's scholarship from different angles and with different emphasis, we all noted the same pattern. UCG's paper is deceptive, misleading, evasive, lacking in logic, and built upon an improbable and incorrect premise. Its most egregious error is that its conclusion's are simply incorrect even if you accept their manipulation of John 7-9 as factually correct, which it is not. This appendix

includes Jason's and Frank's research. This appendix also includes an examination of remarks made by Leon Walker, the former head of the doctrinal committee of United.

Before UCG,aia issued its calendar paper, their doctrinal committee released a preliminary statement on the calendar.<sup>1</sup> Part of it states, "For individuals or groups to accept some Jewish concepts regarding the calendar and reject others (when none are found directly in Scripture) is contradictory."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this statement is incorrect for a number of reasons. The most obvious error in United's statement is their belief that there are no calendrical concepts to be found directly in the Bible. Even they write, "The Bible clearly indicates that there were the components of a calendar in existence almost from the beginning: hours, days, months, seasons, and years are all mentioned. These are the essential elements of any calendar."<sup>3</sup> Some calendrical concepts also found in scripture include: the first month of the year for Israel must be during the beginning of the barley harvest or what we call spring; that there are over 28 days in at least some of the months; that the feasts must occur in their season; that there are normally 12 months in a year; that the calendar is directly dependent upon the new moon with the first day of the month occurring on the day of the new moon. United's premise in their original statement and in Leon Walker's later statement that there are no calendrical concepts found directly in scripture is erroneous and, as quoted, disputed by their own study paper. Their disparaging remarks about being able to find calendrical concepts in scripture have apparently been designed to allow them to overlook these scriptural concepts in their studies.

Another problem with the United Church of God's statement is they hold contradictory

1 Franks, Jim, McNair, Burk, Nathan, Peter, Walker, Leon, and Ward, Donald, Doctrinal statement adopted by the council of elders, Hebrew calendar

2 UCG statement on the Calendar, copied from the internet, so page numbers may not match exactly. p. 2

3 Ibid, p. 2

concepts and practices in their acceptance of some Jewish concepts regarding the calendar and rejection of others, yet criticize others for supposedly following this same practice. As my book recounts a portion of the first postponement, the one that prevents the seventh day of Tabernacles from falling on the weekly Sabbath is there so the Lulav ceremony will not fall on the weekly Sabbath, yet UCG,ia rejects the Lulav ceremony (the ceremonial circling of the sukkot and waving the willow branches). They also reject a Sivan 6 Pentecost and currently observe a Sunday Pentecost, although most of them had previously observed a Monday Pentecost because they believed the Jews did not know how to count to 50. The vast majority of the ministers in United also teach that the Jews don't understand scripture well enough to know when the Passover was sacrificed in Egypt. They attempt to obfuscate the postponement for the Lulav ceremony when they write, "If the first of Tishri were observed on a Sunday, then the first day of the Feast would be on a Sunday and also the Last Great Day. Three out of the four fall Holy Days would be back-to-back with the Sabbath."<sup>4</sup> This is the result of not allowing the first of Tishri to occur on a Sunday, and is probably one of the reasons for this postponement, although it is never mentioned by authorities on the calculated Jewish calendar. The reason for the Sunday portion of the first postponement is because the part of Lulav ceremony where the willows are waved was deemed to be work; therefore it could not be allowed to occur on the weekly Sabbath according to rabbinical authority.

The real reason for Sunday portion of the first postponement, along with the other postponements, must be listed if an honest appraisal of the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar are to be made. After all, United agrees there is no scriptural evidence for an injunction against tandem sabbaths and this author and others contend such injunctions violate biblical principles. However, United choose not examine the postponements of the calculated Jewish calendar in either their preliminary statement on the calendar, nor in Leon Walker's official statement on the calendar.<sup>5</sup> United did list the postponements in their discredited study paper on the calendar, but have carefully avoiding mentioning them in their current statements on the calendar. United also avoids the fact that the calculated Jewish calendar prevents the ninth of Av, a fast day for Jews in remembrance of the destruction of the temple, which occurred two generations after the death of Jesus, from being tandem with a weekly Sabbath. United simply waves its theological arms in the air and states the pharisaical, rabbinic interpretation placing Pentecost on Sivan 6 has nothing to do with the calendar supposedly just like the ninth of Av not being tandem to the weekly Sabbath has nothing to do with the calendar. It is simply inconsistent and illogical to so thoroughly embrace the calculated Jewish calendar and then reject the how the holy days were calculated on this calendar. A Sivan 6 Pentecost was apparently instituted by the Pharisees to reduce the number of tandem Sabbaths in the "spring", just as postponements eliminate tandem sabbaths in the "fall". UCG endorses tandem Sabbaths with a Sunday Pentecost, so they know and believe there is scriptural evidence for tandem sabbaths.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*, United News, September 2000. Downloaded from the UCG web site, [ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html). The article is listed at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html>. Given the nature of the download and the shortness of the article, no page numbers will be listed.



The UCG also brings up Herbert Armstrong's letter of 1940 in their statement, but they fail, as does GCG (the former Global Church of God), to realize the implications that at the time of this letter Mr. Armstrong believed in a Monday Pentecost. The belief in either a Sivan 6 or a Monday Pentecost helps alleviate the contradiction between the rules of postponement and the tandem Sabbath created by a Sunday Pentecost. United's initial statement and subsequent study paper simply glosses over a Sunday Pentecost by saying it is allowed by the rules of postponement without writing the rabbinical authorities always keep Pentecost on Sivan 6 today, thus preventing a tandem sabbath over eighty percent of the time.<sup>6</sup> This is inconsistent because United embraces the supposed Sadducean and current Karaite timing of Pentecost. Unlike the churches of God in general, the Jewish authorities at least realize consistency is important when dealing with calendrical issues.

### **Absolutely No Rules for the Calendar in the Bible, sort of**

The UCG states, "One of the rules of postponement, therefore, prevents the significant difficulties that would arise from back-to-back Sabbaths in the fall Holy Day season. Although back-to-back Sabbaths can occur in the spring, they do not create a significant hardship, by virtue of taking place only once or twice in a two-month period."<sup>7</sup> There is no biblical justification presented for this belief by UCG because none exists. Instead, as Leon Walker writes, they, "are left to their own human reasoning in determining precisely,"<sup>8</sup> why tandem Sabbaths are okay in the spring, but not in the fall. UCG rationalizes that it is okay to have tandem sabbaths once or twice in a two month period while glossing over the fact that they believe God mandates a tandem Sabbath in the middle of summer, but write that somehow God would not want it three times because of some hardship that supposedly would ensue. This rationalization, this use of human reasoning to attempt to explain away a clear contradiction, ignores that tandem Sabbaths in the early summer at the feast of Unleavened bread would have occurred before the crops could begin to be harvested. God even forbade people from eating of the new crop of barley until after the wavesheaf offering,<sup>9</sup> thus forcing the people to live on winter stores until a possible tandem Sabbath had passed. Proponents of the calculated Jewish calendar know that God did not believe this was a hardship because it is mandated by scripture.<sup>10</sup> Yet, when there was an abundance of food, during the ingathering of the fall harvest, around Tishri 1, tandem sabbaths are supposedly a hardship for God's called out people, according to proponents of the calculated Jewish calendar. This reasoning is not logical consistent nor is it correct.

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6 UCG *summary of the Hebrew Calendar*; Doctrinal study paper, Jan. 1997, p. 2 "The date for the observance of Pentecost is really not a calendar issue, even though some have confused it as such."

7 UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 4

8 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*, United News, September 2000. Downloaded from the UCG web site, [ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html). The article is listed at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html>. Given the nature of the download and the shortness of the article, no page numbers will be listed.

9 Lev. 23:14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

10 Lev. 23:15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:

The UCG also stated there are no biblical definitions for the new moon or the vernal equinox and equates this with there being no rules of postponement in the Bible.<sup>11</sup> It is true that the vernal equinox is not a scriptural concept. United's statement that there are no definitive scriptural definitions of the new moon is also correct. However, UCG's equating of postponements with the lack of an exact definition of the new moon is disingenuous. The new moon is scriptural. The idea of a new moon being an astronomical event is scriptural. The idea that the time around the equinox has to have some bearing on the calendar because the calendar revolves around the harvest seasons is scriptural. However, anything like the idea of postponements is not only extra-biblical, outside of the bible altogether, but they are also unbiblical, as is shown in this book. God revealed to Moses what the first month should be and what the first day of the month of Abib was in Exodus 12.<sup>12</sup> However, there is nothing about the rules of postponement or anything like them in scripture. There is no indication God ever suggested to His people they delay His appointed times, rather they be weekly or annual feasts.

### **The Calendar Serves the Holy Days by Postponing Them?**

In their statement, the doctrinal committee writes (*ed. note*-the numbers have been added):

(1) Without these postponement rules, the Jewish calendar would be in a perpetual state of confusion. (2) Great difficulties would occur between the Sabbath and the Holy Days. (3) The lengths of years would be irregular. (4) Calendar reformers would be tempted to tamper with this calendar more often. (5) But all this is avoided by four very simple and easily applied postponement rules. (6) Instead of the festivals being subordinate to the Jewish calendar, the latter serves the Holy Days.<sup>13</sup>

A point by point answer to this statement follows.

1. The majority of the leadership of Sabbath keeping, holy day keeping churches are agreed that any change, not just calendrical change, would cause non-uniformity and chaos and they don't know how to deal with chaos. They prefer to misquote Jude three about contending, "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"<sup>14</sup> so they don't have justify their theology by scriptural methods.<sup>15</sup> History verifies that a calendar that combined observation with verification by calculation that could not include postponements was extant for over 500 years during the second temple period. This was the calendar used at the time of Jesus the Messiah. The leadership of Israel during the second temple period seemed to be able to handle the supposed confusion of an observed calendar. Continuing to follow a practice, a tradition, if it is acknowledged as incorrect simple because you do not have a Talmud of some kind to tell you what to

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11 UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 4

12 Exodus 12:1-3

13 UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 4

14 Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

15 Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

2Tim. 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

do instead is pharisaic. The Pharisees raised the same objections to Jesus' attacks on errant traditions.<sup>16</sup> Thus this argument is based on United's inability to teach Christian concepts.

2. What difficulties would or did occur because of tandem Sabbaths? Difficulties arise only if rabbinical *halacha* practices are observed, something the vast majority of Christians realize is not scripturally correct nor do they practice these restrictive statutes.

3. UCG is correct that the length of the years would be irregular without the calculated Jewish calendar because they are irregular now under the calculated Jewish calendar. Therefore this argument is extraneous.

4. UCG is correct that if the calculated Jewish calendar were no longer authoritative, then calendar reformers would be more visible and harder to deal with. They would be more tempted to espouse their ideas on what calendar should replace the calculated Jewish calendar and people would be more easily persuaded by their views, especially because of the leaders of the churches of God have used obfuscation for years on the issue of the calendar. The tone and tenor of this statement makes it quite clear the UCG is not prepared to lead a church under possible doctrinal chaos. They were not able to lead when the WCG was in doctrinal chaos about something as basic as the seventh day Sabbath and it appears to they have done everything possible to avoid dealing with doctrinal questions that might cause confusion or disunity since they left WCG. The split of UCG at the beginning of 2011 emphasized the correctness of this observation.

5. The postponement rules are simple and easy to apply? Arbitrarily choosing noon as important, which the second postponement does, when scripture states the moon, which can only be seen after sunset when it is new, was designed to control the times of congregating is not simple or easy if you depend on scripture.<sup>17</sup> Postponement three states when the molad Tishri of a common years falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 am, i.e., 3d 9h 204p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to a Wednesday, and, because of Dehiah 1, it is postponed to a Thursday. The fourth rule states when, in a common year succeeding a leap year, the molad Tishri occurs on Monday morning 589 parts after 9 am, i.e., 2d 15h 589p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day. These rules are easy and simple?

6. God's festivals neither serve nor are served by the scriptural or any other calendar. The scriptural calendar simply determines when the first month of the year is and when the first of each month is. The feasts simple occur at a certain time on that calendar. If I were to add  
16 Matt. 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Mark 7:3-7 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

17 Ps. 136:9 The moon and stars to rule by night:

Gen. 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

or subtract one or two days at the beginning of every year to make sure that the fourth of July occurred as a three day weekend, so it never occurred on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July would neither serve or be served by this manipulation of the calendar. It would simple be a manipulation so that the holiday would always lead to a three day weekend. But it would still be a manipulation for man-made reasons. That type of manipulation is not scriptural. The suggestion that any calendar serves the holy days is simply ludicrous.

### **Intercalation is Not a Postponement, even if UCG does not know that**

Unfortunately, the UCG had also chosen to make the rationalization that intercalation of a month is a form of postponement.<sup>18</sup> As has been shown in this book, this is technically inaccurate and misleading. United changed this statement of belief in their discredited study paper on the calendar, but issuing a statement of belief with this kind of misleading and erroneous information demonstrated how United would approach the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar, as did Leon Walker's statement on the calendar.<sup>19</sup> UCG also asks, "Is it possible that the Jews are wrong in the calendar they have preserved? We simply don't know. We could ask the same question about the Scriptures. Are we sure they have faithfully preserved the scriptural accounts?"<sup>20</sup> First, history and Jewish scholarship acknowledges the calendar they preserved for the last 1600 years and observe today is dramatically different than the one used during the second temple period, so the calculated Jewish calendar was not preserved the way the Old Testament was preserved. The Jews, who did preserve the Old Testament and did accumulate the so-called oral law in the Mishnah and the Talmud, that United refers to, acknowledges the changes in their calendar were codified by Hillel II in the 350's CE. Therefore, Jewish leaders and scholars readily admit their current calendar is very different than the one used 2,000 years ago unlike the scripture they preserved. They believe they had the authority to change the calendar and admit they did change it.

UCG's statement is the equivalent of writing something like, "Is it possible the Catholic Church is wrong in the Sabbath they have preserved? We simple don't know. We could ask the same question about the New Testament scriptures. Are we sure they have faithfully preserved the scriptural accounts." There are over 2,000 Greek manuscripts and at least 90% of them are the same text, with the exception of some spelling mistakes or word order. The Catholic Church preserved many of these texts. History also records the Catholic Church codified Sunday as the Sabbath in 325 CE at the council of Nicea. The Catholic Church agrees this is accurate, just as the Jewish leadership agrees they changed their calendar at about the same time. However, there are many Christians who do not believe the Catholic Church had the authority to make this change, so they question the correctness and authority of a Sunday Sabbath. Equating the preservation of texts with doctrine that has admittedly been changed is simply trying to introduce FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) when you cannot support your hypothesis otherwise. Even suggesting that if you don't support the calculated Jewish calendar than you might as well deny the authority of scripture is not just scholastically unsound, but is completely unchristian. UCG's suggestion that those who

18 UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 5

19 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

20 UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 6

doubt the correctness and authority of the calculated Jewish calendar somehow believe the Jews have not preserved the scriptures is preposterous.

UCG's implication that the infallibility of scripture should be equated with the infallibility of the calculated Jewish calendar is therefore erroneous according to the very authorities who have preserved both the Old Testament scriptures and the calculated Jewish calendar and is a very dangerous statement. It implies we must follow current Jewish theology, even when the Jewish leadership admits they have made extra-biblical changes. This statement implies Paul's admonition in 2Tim 3:16 are superfluous.<sup>21</sup> Paul plainly states all scripture is God breathed and therefore is to be taken as being far more reliable and informative than anything else, especially compared to an oral law whose present day authorities and administrators readily admit the calculated Jewish calendar was added to their canon of *halacha* or tradition after scripture was canonized.

Even in their statement on the calendar UCG writes, "In addition, in Christ's time the new moon ostensibly was established by observation... What we know from first-century records is that the calendar was operated by observation and controlled by the Sanhedrin. If Christ and the Church followed this habit, then Christ accepted something that some are claiming is unacceptable."<sup>22</sup> This appears to be a derisive remark aimed at Frank Nelte's work on the calendar, which suggests the new moon is actually the conjunction, something I also disagrees with Mr. Nelte about. However, the UCG suggestion that Christ followed an observed calendar would be at odds with their current practice and their latter statements and writings. It is incumbent upon Christians to observe a calendar similar to the one Jesus observed because he set the example we are to follow.

UCG apparently now disagrees that we should follow a calendar similar to the one Jesus used. Instead they have chosen to follow Kenneth Herrmann's pattern from his 1969 response to the calendar question. Mr. Herrmann would not give a straight answer to explain his understanding of the facts of the calendar, instead choosing to plant seeds of doubt and spread confusion with misleading statements in his writings on the calendar. Leon Walker's statement on the calendar, after I am sure it was pointed out that United's sole stated reason for following the calculated Jewish calendar from their study paper was just plain wrong,<sup>23</sup> followed Mr. Herrmann's pattern of obfuscation.

The UCG study paper on the calendar chose to ignore their earlier statement that Jesus and disciples followed the observed calendar that the Jews believe was practiced during the second temple period. Also, UCG's strongest proof that the calendar was not regulated by observation at the time of Jesus is a quote by the Jewish scholar Saadia Gaon, a quote that has been known to be erroneous and was politically motivated for over 1,000 years.

UCG's original statement on the calendar implies the oracles of God include the calendar. However, in this same statement they write that there are no biblical calendrical concepts

<sup>21</sup> 2Tim. 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

<sup>22</sup> UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 6

<sup>23</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar*



found in scripture.<sup>24</sup> Therefore United has written they believe that at least part of the oral law is as sacrosanct as scripture.<sup>25</sup> This author hardily disagrees with the concept that oral law has any authority or validity, outside of being a commentary on the scripture. He agrees with the Karaite Jews the oral law is nothing more than rabbinic fairy tales that smacks of Gnosticism.

A major problem with UCG's speculation that the calendar is part of some supposedly sacred oral law is UCG's rejection of this oral law. UCG should at least include the oral law about when and how to celebrate Pentecost and Passover because UCG writes that these days are served by the calendar. Can the United Church of God pick which part of the oral law is to be equated with scripture and which is not? UCG's juxtapositions of scripture to the calculated Jewish calendar should not have been made lightly, yet it appears that is just what UCG has done. If the Jewish authorities have failed to preserve the Holy Scriptures accurately, this author contends our faith is in vain because the validity of scripture is broken. However, if the calendar currently used by the Jewish authorities is inaccurate, it does not threaten my faith, which is what UCG has suggested in their studies on the calendar. History and these same Jewish authorities that United writes we should not be questioned state that the calculated Jewish calendar is not the same calendar used 2,000 years ago. UCG's statements and study papers state they believe otherwise. So who do we believe? United when they write we should not question Jewish authority on that calendar and that calendar is sacred. Or do we believe the Jewish authorities that United writes should not question when these authorities say the calculated Jewish calendar is not sacred? Either way, United has to be wrong.

#### **United's Doctrinal Study Paper on the Calendar**

The United Church of God issued their doctrinal study paper entitled *Summary of Jewish Calendar* in January 1997 to follow up on their earlier statement on the calendar. Because they had already issued their conclusions before studying into the issue in detail, it isn't surprising they decided that the calculated Jewish calendar should be authoritative. However, the misleading statements, incredibly poor scholarship and the shoddy straw man arguments they built their case around were amazingly bad. This author was totally shocked that they built their case on an eisegesis of John 7-9, especially when United did not even realize that their slanted presentation actually proved the observed calendar was more viable than the calculated Jewish calendar. However, United erroneously stated, "To arrive at a Wednesday Passover in 31 CE, you must invoke some form of postponement and specifically Postponement rules 1 & 2."<sup>26</sup> As is shown in this appendix, this statement is just plain wrong, but it may explain why United's later statement by Leon Walker avoids scripture and scholarship and instead relies on innuendo, misstatements, and erroneous statements about those who do not accept the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative. It was not until this author read Kenneth Herrmann's 1969 letter on the calendar, which is reviewed in the appendix on John Rittenbaugh and Frank Nelte's calendar scholarship, that this author realized where the pattern for the UCG paper and Leon Walker's statements truly originated. What was even more

<sup>24</sup> UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 2

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>26</sup> UCG statement on the Calendar, copied from the internet, p. 2



shocking is that Christians with the holy spirit actually accepted this paper and Leon Walker's statement as proof of anything.

This rebuttal of United's calendar paper is fairly comprehensive because there scholarship is reminiscent of study papers released by the WorldWide Church of God in 1995. It is time for Christians to share with each other. Not simply theological doctrines, as this book and other papers do, but also our hopes and dreams and love. This author has publicly asked the United council of elders, who lead the United Church of God, to do their job and release a real study paper on the calendar. Rather you agree with calculated Jewish calendar or disagree with its implementation, study papers like the UCG's show just how shoddy church of God scholarship is, how it can avoid answering questions with innuendo, misleading statements, supposition, and how wrong it is to base your theology upon straw man arguments.

### **Assume the calculated Jewish calendar was used to prove it was being Used?**

The UCG paper on the calendar presents its case with the underlying premise that the calculated Jewish calendar was always in existence in Biblical times. This assumption is universally rejected by scholars because there is so much evidence supporting an observed calendar, which by definition cannot contain postponements, during the second temple period. Just a smattering of this author's sources, which reject United's premise, are listed in the body of this book. A typical example is Encyclopedia Britannica's statement, "In the religious calendar, the commencement of the month was determined by the observation of the crescent New Moon and the date of the Passover was tied in with the ripening of the barley. The actual witnessing of the new Moon and observing of the stand of crops in Judaea were required for the functioning of the religious calendar."<sup>27</sup> UCG's original statement on the calendar agreed. "In addition, in Christ's time the new moon ostensibly was established by observation... What we know from first-century records is that the calendar was operated by observation and controlled by the Sanhedrin."<sup>28</sup> History and tradition agree that the calendar at the time of Jesus was an observed calendar. Scholarship agrees the only calculations done were to make sure that the witnesses were not lying about observing the crescent. Yet UCG's premise in studying the calculated Jewish calendar was that this abundance of scholarship is wrong and that the calculated Jewish calendar was practiced at the time of Jesus. No serious scholar would try to place the year of Christ' crucifixion using UCG's method because there is so much evidence against the calculated Jewish calendar being used in Jesus' time. Unfortunately far too many Christians are willing to let others set their manner of worship, thus profoundly affecting their relationship with the God of creation, either because they have become so indoctrinated in following a human leader, no matter what scripture teaches, or they have become so tired of learning about God's way that they simply don't care about how bad the scholarship and theology of their religious leaders is.

United wrote they received over 50 papers on this issue of the calendar, including the first version of my book.<sup>29</sup> Their response was a study paper which assumed the existence the

27 CD Rom, Encyclopedia Britannica, Calendar: Ancient and religious calendar systems, p. 1

28 UCG, AIA, *Summary of the Hebrew Calendar*, January, 1997, p. 6 Because this paper has been circulated in a variety of formats, the page numbers my not match up in all cases

29 UCG Calendar Study paper, p. 1

calculated Jewish calendar at the time of Jesus. They simply ignored all the questions surrounding the calendar, writing that these questions deserve an answer and that they would answer them at a later time. They have had over a decade to answer these questions, which should have been ample opportunity. However, United's answer was Leon Walker's statement on the calendar, which clearly shows they have no intention of answering the questions they raised in their study paper. This author wrote in 1997 that United would never answer these questions and to date they have not. This was not a prophecy. Instead, this author simply assumed they would continue to the pattern of scholarship and biblical exegesis that they had shown from their inception. Jim Franks, the ex-head of the UCG'S doctrinal committee was in Boston in 1997 to explain the UCG calendar paper and did not answer these questions. Instead he repeated misleading and erroneous statements. This author believes United simply could not answer questions about the calculated Jewish calendar without discrediting it, so they decided to prove the calculated calendar by assuming its existence. Even the author of their main reference for their eisegesis of John 7-9, Alfred Edersheim in *The Temple and its Ministry*, does not suggest the year of Christ's crucifixion could be fixed by an examination of the calendar during the last year of Christ's life on Earth. Such an attempt would require far too many assumptions, as the UCG paper proves. Many Christians, even those that accept the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative, have lambasted United's paper on the calendar.

United's belief seems to be that it is more important to be united in error than to take the chance on trying to follow the example of Jesus, perhaps a lesson many of them learned while teaching supposed new covenant truth in the WorldWide Church of God. There are many possible reasons for this. Unfortunately, there are Christians in the United Church of God who know the calculated Jewish calendar is unbiblical and know just how bad the scholarship that their church has presented on this issue is, yet they ignore it. They know that United has failed this simple test of faith by creating a papers designed to obfuscate and mislead, yet they do not seem to realize the implications of this failure. They seem to justify their actions by honoring the institution of church over being a church.

The shame is many Christians have been diverted from a study of the calendar by plausible straw men that have been built to support calculated Jewish calendar. Members of United apparently feel smugly confident their church leaders have answered this question for them and they don't need to waste their time on such issues, except perhaps to make sure their leaders have not mis-typed the few scriptures they quoted. Many years of studying booklets instead of the bible breeds bad study habits that even the introduction of abject heresy by the leaders of their church apparently hasn't changed. However, because of the leaders of the churches of God refuse to answer question about the calendar in meaningful way, many of God's people are sick to death of hearing about the calendar. In the USA, we saw a similar reaction to the scandal around Bill Clinton. He dodged and lied for so long people simply became sick of hearing about the Monica scandal and just wanted people to shut up about it. Mr. Clinton's tactics worked on the American populous in general. Hopefully Christians will not succumb to the same thing. The UCG paper is simply an egregious example of how not to do a Christian study paper because of it misleading statements, terrible scholarship, and plainly erroneous conclusion, as testified to by Leon Walker's statement on the calendar.

The UCG paper states, "While there is no desire to pass judgment on anyone regarding this issue, it was deemed important that we come to a clear consensus for the sake of a unified celebration of God's Holy Days, consistent with the Word of God."<sup>30</sup> It is always important to know what is being researched and why. One of the best pieces of advice this author ever received while doing research was to read the preface of any book because it will reveal what the author is trying to prove and the way they plan to prove it. UCG's stated reason for undertaking this study was to have a unified celebration on the seven days when they take up an offering. They state they are looking something that is consistent with the word of God, but their paper's lack of scriptural references shows how unimportant the word of God was in creating this paper.

### **The Importance of Herbert Armstrong**

The UCG paper also re-stresses that Herbert W. Armstrong always followed and supported the calculated Jewish calendar.<sup>31</sup> They write, "There are no new questions which have arisen about the calendar. Mr. Armstrong addressed the same issues in 1940."<sup>32</sup> Hopefully the time is coming when invoking the name of Herbert Armstrong will not be same as invoking the name of Ellen G. White in the Seventh Day Adventist church, where White's comments are tantamount to scripture, but for far too many that time has not yet arrived. The UCG paper states that there are no new questions about the calculated Jewish calendar in the last 60 years. This is not accurate. 60 years ago Herbert Armstrong kept a Monday Pentecost, having changed from a Sivan 6 Pentecost a decade earlier, which obviously has direct bearing on the calendar. This author also questions if Herbert Armstrong knew the Jewish populous, as guided by their leadership and recorded in the Mishnah, kept tandem sabbaths from the beginning of their written history until at least a century after Christ's death, at atonement. Therefore the nation of Israel did not use the first of the four postponements as long as the temple stood. Hopefully the fact that the World Wide Church of God's lack of references to this fact in the Mishnah and the Talmud can be explained by ignorance of these documents rather than deliberately excluding these documents from the conversation on the calendar. This author included the information about tandem sabbaths being observed at 200 CE as recorded in the Mishnah and the Talmud in an earlier revision of this book, which was submitted to the UCG council of elders when they were in the Boston area.

Footnote 8 of Shabbath in the Talmud, under section 114b states, "If it were of immediate importance, the shebath would have been permitted. But in any case when the Day of Atonement falls on a Friday, the vegetables, even if trimmed, cannot be cooked."<sup>33</sup> The sages declared even if vegetables had been prepared in advance on Thursday when Atonement fell on a Friday, they could still not be cooked on the weekly sabbath after Atonement. But this is not the only instance of ordinances being prescribed for tandem sabbaths at the Day of

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30 Ibid, p. 1

31 UCG, AIA, *Summary of the Hebrew Calendar*, January, 1997, p. 2 Because this paper has been circulated in a variety of formats, the page numbers may not match up in all cases

32 Ibid, p. 2

33 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 4 Menahoth Tract 100b*, Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 615

Atonement. Footnote 6 of tract 100b of Menahoth states, “The Day of Atonement. When the Day of Atonement fell on a Friday the shewbread was baked on a Thursday.”<sup>34</sup> And tract 19a of Kerithoth states if “a Sabbath and the Day of Atonement [follow each other]”<sup>35</sup> showing the idea of tandem sabbaths was not only allowed, but planned for by Jewish leaders 200 years before Hillel II released his calendar and two hundred years after the death of Christ.

The UCG paper states Mr. Armstrong, “consistently supported the Jewish calendar as the basis to be used for the Holy Days.”<sup>36</sup> However, as the UCG paper points out, Mr. Armstrong started out observing Sivan 6 as Pentecost, the same date for Pentecost the Jewish authorities keep. He later switched to Monday, which he observed for over 3 decades and finally in the early 70’s he switched to a Sunday observance of Pentecost once he realized the Jews actually did know how to count to 50.<sup>37</sup> This discrepancy of when to keep certain annual sabbaths raises the question of why we follow the secret, gnostic-like knowledge of the calculated Jewish calendar while ignoring these other, far clearer practices. UCG not only believes the Jews have the wrong date for Pentecost, which they do, but UCG also teaches they have the wrong time for the Passover, although there is no real proof of this.<sup>38</sup> How can the United Church of God claim the Jews do not understand how to keep these annual feasts, yet accept as infallible some secret, Gnostic knowledge of the calendar supposedly maintained by Jewish priests for millennia when even these priests deny they maintained this kind of knowledge? UCG states about the changes the Jews supposedly made to Passover and especially Pentecost, “While these are both issues that have been addressed over the years, neither is a question of which calendar to use, but a question of biblical interpretation.”<sup>39</sup> UCG states the Jewish leadership is unreliable when it comes to the timing of the annual feasts, something the Jews state is found in scripture, but then states that same Jewish leadership is completely reliable about the calculated Jewish calendar, even though the Jewish leadership says their calendar is not supported by scripture or history.

### The Tandem Sabbath of Pentecost

UCG’s contention is the Sadducean and Pharisaical dispute about the timing of Pentecost was a matter of biblical interpretation. The facts reveal the Pharisees pushed for a date of Pentecost that would minimize tandem sabbaths while the Sadducees preferred not to twist the meaning of the word Sabbath (*shabbat*) in Lev 23:15 to prevent tandem sabbaths. Far from being a matter of biblical interpretation, the issue of the timing of Pentecost revolved around the issue of tandem sabbaths. The Pharisees won the war over Pentecost by 200 CE because the Sadducees no longer existed. The Pharisees finished their disposal of the problem of tandem sabbaths over the next 200 years. This author finds it ironic the churches of God, for the most part, support the Sadducean position on Pentecost even though it weakens their stance on the calculated Jewish calendar. But they apparently have little choice given that Herbert Armstrong decreed that Sivan 6

34 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 1 Shabbath, Tract 19a*, Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 147

35 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 4 Kerithoth tract 19a* Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 561

36 UCG, AIA, Summary of the Hebrew Calendar, p. 2

37 Ibid, p. 2

38 You can download *Jesus the True Passover* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

39 Ibid, p. 2

was wrong. For most of them, it would be far easier to go back to the days before 1972 when the World Wide Church of God could defend the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar by stating the Jews did not know how to count to 50. And this the same type of scholarship HWA used to support the calculated Jewish calendar.

Many of the proponents of an early 14th Nisan Passover, of which United can be counted, believe the Jews lost the correct timing of when to keep the Passover while in the Babylonian captivity, although there is no historical evidence to substantiate this claim. If they lost something as important as the correct time to observe the Passover, logic dictates they must have lost something as complicated and secret as the calculated Jewish calendar. To suggest otherwise shows a lack of consistency and integrity. United embraces Jewish tradition when it agrees with their traditional observance of the calendar ordinances associated with the annual feasts, yet ignores and denigrates this same authority when it comes to other ordinances about these same feasts. To be consistent they should either embrace Jewish authority or reject it. They should either embrace *solo scriptorium*, as the Protestants claim to do and the Karaites are actually attempting to do, or they should reject it. But United's practice is akin to the Protestant practice of keeping a Sunday Sabbath, a practice which can only be justified by Papal authority. Protestants may attempt to claim biblical justification for this practice, but it simply does not exist. They observe a Sunday Sabbath because the pope changed the day of the Sabbath, but they cannot admit this because they have rejected Papal authority.

Christ also never condemned the Jewish authorities for their calendar practices, but He never condemned them for their Passover practices either. This question of integrity cannot be explained away by stating some Jews kept an early 14th Passover because no source, either Biblical or extra-Biblical, suggests the Jews have ever been divided on the timing of the Passover observance.<sup>40</sup> However, as this book has shown, there is a great deal of evidence about disputes as the calendar changed from being based on observation to being based on a mathematical formula, between 150 and 350 CE. So again this author asks, why follow a secret, gnostic-like knowledge, supposedly only known by a few powerful priests in Israel, while we condemn these same Jewish leaders knowledge of the annual feasts, especially if the calendar, "serves the Holy Days?"<sup>41</sup> Even the UCG paper points out this inconsistency when it quotes an early Christian leader stressing the importance of keeping Passover at the same time as the Jews. "You shall not change the calculation of the time, but you shall celebrate it at the same time as your brethren who came out from the circumcision. With them observe the Passover."<sup>42</sup> The UCG totally ignores this statement's implication about the timing of Passover in their Passover studies, which is the context of this statement. However, they write an entire paragraph about what Epiphanius may or may not have meant by calculation in this statement to try to lend support to their belief in the calculated Jewish calendar. This is preposterously inconsistent because they ignore the context of this statement in their study on Passover timing. This is obviously misleading and this author contend it is just plain wrong.

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40 This issue is discussed in detail in *Jesus the True Passover*, which can be downloaded from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

41 UCG statement on the Calendar, p. 4

42 Ibid, p. 4-5



The UCG paper makes the broad statement that, “We have no reason to believe that the Church has ever used anything but the Jewish calendar through the centuries.”<sup>43</sup> They proceed to give examples from the first three centuries of church history, all before Hillel II released his codification of what is now called by scholars the calculated Jewish calendar, as support for this statement. The United Church of God apparently deliberately ignored the changes made to the calendar after their examples. It is also conspicuous that they ignore how Herbert Armstrong supposedly restored the celebration of the annual feast to the church after a 1900 hundred year hiatus. Therefore it supposedly would not have mattered what calendar the church was using because it did not observe the holy days.

### Unanswered Questions about the Calculated Jewish Calendar

The UCG paper asks 12 questions about the calendar. They are (*ed. note*-The numbers have been added):

- 1 What does the Bible say about the calendar since the Bible, and not the traditions of men, must provide the basis for answering these questions?
- 2 Did God reveal a calendar to Moses when He brought Israel out of Egypt?
- 3 Is there truly a “sacred” calendar? Does the Bible support such a concept?
- 4 Romans 3 - What is included in the oracles? Can we prove that the calendar was or was not a part of these oracles?
- 5 What part did the Jews play in the development and maintenance of the calendar?
- 6 What about the rules of postponement? When were they developed?
- 7 Are they a valid part of the calendar or merely a pharisaic addition?
- 8 Do the rules of postponement “move” the Holy Days?
- 9 Since there seems to be no controversy between Christ and the Jews over the calendar or the dates for observing the Holy Days, which calendar was in use during the first century?
- 10 When is the ‘new moon?’ Is it the crescent or the astronomical conjunction?
- 11 When did calculation replace visual observance, or has calculation been used from the beginning in determining the calendar?
- 12 What about the leap years and the cycle of leap years? Who should make this determination?<sup>44</sup>

How will the UCG answer these questions? “While there will be no attempt to address all these issues in this brief paper, each one is worthy of addressing.”<sup>45</sup> The first and most important question United asks is, “What does the Bible say about the calendar since the Bible, and not the traditions of men, must provide the basis for answering these questions?”<sup>46</sup> Just three years after they asked, but did not answer this question they changed that stance to, “God did not reveal in the Bible the essential elements for a calendar.”<sup>47</sup> However, in their study paper some attempt was made to answer questions 1 and 9 by building a case dependent upon an eisegesis of John 7-9 and an assumption that the calendar was determined by calculation and not observation, something all of the scholars quoted in their own article would vehemently deny, at the time of Jesus. There is also an attempt to show the calendar

43 Ibid, p. 2-3

44 Ibid, p. 6

45 Ibid, p. 7

46 Ibid, p. 6

47 Walker, Leon, *Did God give a calendar?*



has always been determined by calculation and not observation (question 11), although there is only one quote from a Jewish source to support this contention. Of course, when Jewish sources and scholars disagree with UCG's stand, as do the writings of the Mishnah and nearly every other source, the UCG writes about these sources conclusions, "there is simply no way to prove this with certainty."<sup>48</sup> UCG questions the validity of the Mishnah because there is disagreement, often of a political nature, recorded on its pages. UCG states, "There are only passing references to the calendar in these documents and nowhere can you find a detailed accounting."<sup>49</sup> This statement is simply erroneous. As Maimonides' *Sanctification of the New Moon* shows, the Mishnah and Talmud have an abundance of information on the calendar that consistently depicts the calendar was determined by the observation during the second temple period.<sup>50</sup> Maimonides' purpose in writing *Sanctification of the New Moon* was so that students could study, "even this (extraneous) branch of the Law, and have no need to roam about in search for it in other books."<sup>51</sup> Maimonides does an admiral job and his conclusion is clear. "Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its 'proper time' for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be."<sup>52</sup>

### Moses Maimonides

However, UCG choose to ignore Maimonides and the consensus of modern scholarly opinion. Instead they quote the Jewish scholar Saadia Gaon. "As is well known the Gaon asserted that even in Biblical times the calendar rested on the system of calculation."<sup>53</sup> The UCG even states, "this quote was in the context of a dispute with the Karaites (a schism of the Jews about the 8th century who believed in observation rather than calculation)."<sup>54</sup> The Karaites rejected the Mishnah, Talmud, and all rabbinic authority, often called the oral law and typified by Sabbath *halacha*, and instead relied on scripture and scripture alone as the guiding light on their path of life. In the middle of this rancorous debate inside of Judaism, Gaon made his astounding statement about the calendar always being calculated. UCG suggests we should take this Jewish scholar's word, even though he was writing 8 centuries after the second temple period, instead of scholars writing one or two centuries after the fall of the temple in the Mishnah. It appears they also believe we should ignore the fact that his statement was in the midst of a calendar debate, much like the one UCG found itself in when they wrote their discredited study paper. What is sad is that United either did not

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48 UCG, AIA, *Summary of the Hebrew Calendar* p. 37

49 Ibid, p. 38

50 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956

51 Maimonides, p. xxx

52 Ibid, p. xxviii

53 UCG, AIA, *Summary of the Hebrew Calendar*, p. 8

54 Ibid, p. 8

know or deliberately ignored the fact that Gaon's statement was discredited over 800 years ago and no scholar takes it seriously today.

Maimonides is one of the medieval rabbinic authorities known to have taken issue with Saandiea's and his followers' contention, and his refutation of Gaon's statement amounts to unmitigated reproach of Gaon's intellect as well as showing his religious indignation. While he does not mention the Gaon expressly, there is no mistaking toward whom his scornful rebuke is directed. In his commentary on the law of sanctification as formulated in the Mishnah, Maimonides finds that here, the foremost source of Oral Law, visual observation of the new crescent and its computation by true astronomical values were prescribed explicitly and implicitly, to supplement each other in the refutation of the calendar during the period of the Sanhedrin. He goes on to state:

I am truly astonished over a personage who rejects clear evidence, asserting that the religion of Israel was based, not on observation of the new moon, but on calculation alone—and yet he affirms the authority of these (just mentioned) passages! I think indeed that he did not believe his own assertions, but he merely wished to repel his (Karaitic) adversary by any notion that just occurred to him, be it true or false, when he had found himself unable to escape the force of (his adversary's) argument. Thou, however, discerning scholar, must affirm that observation had been a fundamental principle of our religion, and when the new crescent could not be observed a day was added to the outgoing month. To this truth, statements in the Mishnah and Gemara bear witness, as well as many events that occurred in past times.<sup>55</sup>

Gaon's statement was at the very least erroneous and most probably a lie, created to give credence to the calculated Jewish calendar when he could think of no other way to defend it against onslaught of those who rejected rabbinic authority. Maimonides was a scholar who insisted on truth. He believed in the calculated Jewish calendar and believed it should be observed because it had the sanctification of rabbinic authority. Maimonides believed the rules for the calculated calendar were created between the destruction of the temple and Hillel II released the rules for this calendar. Maimonides believed before the destruction of the temple the calendar was based on observation and that it was okay to change these rules over time because the rabbis had the authority to change it, just as Catholic scholars today realize that a Sunday Sabbath is based on Papal authority, not on scripture.

However, Gaon did not have the courage of conviction, or the religious or scholarly integrity to answer his critics honestly. UCG has ironically quoted Gaon, suggesting they believe his methodology of dealing with the calendar controversy was appropriate. A reading of UCG's study paper confirms they follow Gaon's pattern.

Gaon tried to deal a deathblow to a schism of Judaism that rejected tradition and sought for truth from the scripture and scripture alone. Gaon insisted the majority of current Jewish leaders couldn't be wrong. He insisted that only ignorant people would not realize that God had revealed the truth of the calculated Jewish calendar to his people millennia ago and that history and scripture supported his stance. It is likely he took this action

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<sup>55</sup> Maimonides, p. liii-liv

because he believed the ends justify the means. To keep a schism from spreading disunity, he would mislead, spread rumors, and even lie.

We all know religious leaders have overstated a case, often beyond obfuscation to the point of lying, in an attempt to protect their poor flock from what they perceive to be ravaging wolves who might jeopardize their gravy train. Just as we know leaders of local congregations would always stand up against heresy and for God's ways rather than follow leadership in a vain attempt to protect their jobs regardless of what happened to their congregations. If the leaders of United could not stand up to the abject heresy of rejecting the Sabbath in the mid-nineties until they had secured new, high paying jobs, why would we expect them to seek the truth in other scriptural areas.

### **It Depends on What the Definition of Is Is!**

Beyond quoting a discredited scholar who lied to maintain the unquestioned sanctity of the calculated Jewish calendar, the UCG paper, in order to reach the conclusion they want, is also very concise with its phraseology, just as Bill Clinton was very concise with his use of the word *is* during his Monica Lewinsky scandal. UCG's version of FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) includes questions about the Hebrew word for new moon, *hodesh*. They ask does *hodesh*, "mean a crescent moon or is it the precise conjunction? Of course, the only way to arrive at the precise conjunction is to use calculation."<sup>56</sup> The UCG paper uses the word *precise* when referring to the conjunction in their attempt to prove the calculated Jewish calendar was used during the second temple period. They know they could simply have compared the conjunction to the crescent, as any truly scholarly work would, because the comparison should have been apples to apples, but they chose to compare apples to oranges. Determining the conjunction can be done by observation or calculation, just as determining when the first crescent will be over Jerusalem can be done by observation or calculation, but it cannot be done precisely. It is only the precise conjunction, precise to the degree that UCG determines is sufficient, that requires calculation.

United's questioning of syntax continues with, "the word *hodesh* doesn't always mean new moon. There are a number of times where it should clearly be translated as simply month or months."<sup>57</sup> Of course the word *hodesh* has been translated into English. Translating from one language to another, especially one used two to three thousand years ago, will never be 100 percent accurate because a translation is supposed to convey the meaning in an understandable way to today's reader. One of the verses United quotes to try to show that *hodesh* does not mean new moon is Lev. 27:6 which states, "And if it be from a month old (*hodesh*) even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver."<sup>58</sup> Perhaps sounding a little like an Indian in an old western movie, if I wrote the estimated price for redeeming a male child from a vow of service when he was one moon to 5 years old was five shekels, even English readers would understand that *hodesh* meant a month, but they would also

<sup>56</sup> UCG summary, p. 8

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 8

<sup>58</sup> Lev. 27:6 And if it be from a month old even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver.

know that a month was the time frame from one new moon to the next. *Hodesh* can mean month or new moon in English, but in Hebrew these two things were synonymous and United should have and probably did understand that, yet their paper obfuscates this fact. This pattern continues throughout their paper. After showing a calendar was in use in early biblical times, they write, “There is no doubt that the knowledge for calculating a calendar was available hundreds of years prior to the birth of Christ.”<sup>59</sup> Again, United deliberately used the word calculating when no evidence for calculation is presented in these scriptures or in their paper, with the exception of their terrible eisegesis of John 7 through 9.

“We all generally take for granted the seven-day weekly cycle, without realizing that this cycle has been preserved for us by the Jews. It can be easily verified that ancient Israel was ‘the first known society to have a seven-day week...Of course, we also must thank the Jews for the preservation of the Old Testament scriptures. It would seem only logical that the Jews would also be responsible for preserving the proper calendar.’”<sup>60</sup> It would also seem logical that the Jews would be responsible for preserving the right time to make the Passover sacrifice, that they would be responsible for preserving the right day to observe Pentecost and it would seem logical that they preserved the very important Lulav ceremony, which is included in the oral law on the calendar. However, UCG would deny it was logical the Jews preserved any of these things because they disagree with church of God traditions. Yet United has the audacity to claim we should simply accept that the Jews preserved the knowledge of the calculated Jewish calendar even though the Rabbinic leadership claim they did not.

After all, the Jewish leadership claims it has preserved the right way to worship God on the annual feasts. This same Jewish leadership claims the calculated Jewish calendar is authoritative, but they acknowledge it is only one and a half millennia old. These same Jewish authorities contend their observance of Passover can be traced to Moses and the release of Israel from Egypt. It appears that United’s contention is that Christians should follow their church’s traditionally held beliefs and any source or argument that supports their traditional beliefs should be upheld as sacrosanct, even if this caused conflicts in logic, and any source that does not agree with their traditions should be ignored. Given what Jesus said about traditions that violate scripture, Christians should always choose scripture over tradition.<sup>61</sup>

The Jewish leadership of Jesus’ time consistently accepted the tradition of the father’s over an examination of scripture.<sup>62</sup> In their belief system, it was perfectly legal to avoid one of the ten commandment, to honor their father and mother, by stating they did not have the money to take care of them because it was promised to the temple.<sup>63</sup> Jesus said, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”<sup>64</sup> Jesus’ obvious

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59 UCG summary, p. 10

60 Ibid, p. 12-3

61 Matt. 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

62 Matt. 15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

63 Matt. 15:5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

64 Matt. 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

lesson was supposed to be if a tradition, no matter how long it was held nor what benefit it might have once had, is found to defy biblical principles, even if it is not specifically prohibited in scripture, it should be done away with. United's first study paper tried to prove that the calculated Jewish calendar did not violate scripture. However, United has obviously abandoned this attempt when the weaknesses and flaws of this failed study paper became apparent to many. United has currently embraced the path of accepting tradition without examining scripture, as Leon Walker's statement clearly shows.<sup>65</sup>

We must remember things change. Languages change. Biblical injunctions, like circumcision, change. God is the only constant. That constant has revealed His word to us as a guidebook of life and that guidebook does not include anything like the postponing statutes of the calculated Jewish calendar, except for the Pharisaical practices that Jesus condemned.

The question of observation verses calculation is addressed on pages 8 through 11 of the UCG paper. "It is assumed by many that the Jewish calendar was based on observation as late as the end of the second temple period (70 CE) But there are other sources that dispute this claim."<sup>66</sup> As shown above, United's sole source for disputing an observed calendar is Gaon's quote, which was most probably a knowing lie when Gaon made it and is without doubt erroneous. Gaon probably used it to dissuade people from examining the basis of the calculated Jewish calendar. The use of this discredited source to nullify the vast array of scholarship that agrees the calendar was determined by observation during the second temple period, as is shown in the body of this book, is terrible scholarship at best and is likely deliberately deceitful. UCG also suggests there are multiple sources that dispute an observed calendar during the second temple period, something they never reference or try to prove, and this is also erroneous. UCG's quoting of Gaon implied it has simply chosen to exclude the facts that it does not like. Apparently the authors of UCG's study paper decided not only to quote Gaon, but to follow the path of Gaon in dealing deceitfully with their calendar problem.

UCG continued its pattern of selecting only the scholarship that could be made to agree with its stance when it quoted Josephus' extra-biblical speculation about Abraham and Seth's astronomical knowledge, but they also denigrate all Jewish sources like the Mishnah and Talmud that disagree with them as unreliable.<sup>67</sup> Since Josephus is a Jewish source, United's quoting of him is confusing, inconsistent, and misleading because they have again chosen which Jewish sources are authoritative and which are not based on whether they support United's tradition or not. This is particularly troubling because UCG also ignores Josephus' statement that the calendar was done by observation during his time, as I show in the body of this book. United's selected quoting of Josephus to show a possible basis for the calculated calendar while ignoring his clear statements that the calendar was determined by observation during his time is truly distorted and terrible scholarship.

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<sup>65</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*, United News, September 2000. Downloaded from the UCG web site, [ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org). The article is listed at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html>. Mr. Walker's contention is we have no choice but to follow Jewish authority on this issue.

<sup>66</sup> UCG summary p. 8

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 9

### A Scriptural Quest for Answers?

The UCG paper on the calendar begins to resemble study papers on the Sabbath released by the World Wide Church of God on the Sabbath from this point forward. Without giving any real scholarship to substantiate their assertion, they question exactly how the calendar was determined in the second temple period. They then write: “the Bible implies that calculation was used prior to the time of Christ.”<sup>68</sup> Many cog papers have attempted to use 1 Samuel 20:5 as proof that calculation was the basis of the calendar 1,000 years before Jesus, which is shown to be incorrect in the body of this book. 1 Samuel 20:5 is referring to the first day of the month. It was simply a feast at the time of the new moon. 1 Samuel 20 cannot and should not be used to imply that calculation or observation was used to determine that first day because it does no such thing. It is simply stating David skipped a feast in Saul’s palace to avoid being killed.

A clear pattern of scholarship develops for the reader to discern by this point in the UCG paper. Statements like: “We have no reason to believe;”<sup>69</sup> “It is assumed;”<sup>70</sup> “While the translation is somewhat uncertain, it appears;”<sup>71</sup> “Is it possible that;”<sup>72</sup> “It would seem only logical that the Jews would be responsible for preserving the proper calendar;”<sup>73</sup> “the Bible implies that calculation was used prior to the time of Christ.”<sup>74</sup> These are uncertain times, but we should be honest with each other and point out areas that are controversial rather than try to paper them over by stating this implies this and that implies that, therefore we know what we have done in the past, our traditions, must be true.

After setting the scene, the UCG’s study paper states that, “it became clear that the real answer must lie in the pages of scripture.”<sup>75</sup> This author agree with their premise, but instead of trying to answer questions about the calendar from the Bible in their study paper, United’s approach was to find scripture that could be twisted into verifying that the calculated Jewish calendar was used during the time of Christ. Sadly a majority of the members of UCG actually accepted this flawed paper without question. However, others, including Frank Nelte affected the status quo United worked so hard to maintain. Because United’s paper fails so dismally when examined, United apparently issued Leon Walker’s statement which now contends scripture cannot be used when examining the issue of the calendar. Obviously this is a very large reversal in the way to handle doctrinal disputes, but United’s course is apparently to ignore their past statements and ignore their written pledge to examine other questions on the calendar and the people should just stop asking questions and pay their tithes.

United’s study paper is in error when they write that scholars have mixed opinions about how the calendar was observed in the second temple period because current scholarship

68 UCG study paper, p. 14

69 Ibid, p. 14

70 Ibid, p. 8

71 Ibid, p. 27

72 Ibid p. 28

73 Ibid, p. 33

74 Ibid, p. 33

75 Ibid, p. 14



agrees that the calendar at the time of Jesus was one of observation and not calculation. After making their contention that calculation was used, United boldly sets off in search of scripture to support their preconceived point of view in their study paper.

After stating scripture is important in the quest of the true calendar, UCG concentrated all of its efforts on a interpretation of John 7 through 9. UCG stated, "a careful examination of this section of scripture will reveal that Christ's observance of the Holy Days was consistent with the Jewish calendar... There is simply no reason to believe that Christ followed anything but the standard calendar of His day."<sup>76</sup> This author agrees, but there is no doubt the standard calendar was based on observation according to a vast array of scholars and that John 7-9 can not be used to surmise what calendar was used. As will be shown, UCG's search of scripture is not only flawed, but their conclusions are just plain wrong because even using their premise and their view of data, as terribly flawed as it is, shows that the observed calendar fits their data better than the calculated Jewish calendar, yet their stated conclusion is just the opposite.

Even UCG admits the information from John 7-9 is not easily discernible from the pages of scripture, yet with a pre-supposition of a calculated calendar, they venture onward. John 7:1-36 depicts Christ telling his disciples to go down to the feast of Tabernacles without him. Jesus then goes down in secret and begins to preach in the temple during the feast of Tabernacles. Then,

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, Truly this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Will Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Water Ceremony: UCG presents it as the 7th day of Tabernacles**

UCG states, "It is interesting to study the traditional ceremony that the Jews practiced on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (the 7th day by tradition)."<sup>78</sup> This may indeed be interesting, but it is an extra-biblical tradition. "Both these elements (water and light) were very much in evidence during the Feast and in particular on the 7th and 8th days (the 8th day was a separate festival, a holy convocation)."<sup>79</sup> Again this is interesting, but it could be stated that water and light were depicted as being part of Christ's entire ministry, especially in the gospel of John. What this author found as very interesting was according to this UCG study paper, the last great day of the feast is the 7th day. UCG has apparently decided the 8th day of the feast of Tabernacles is no longer the last great day because John 7:37 is

<sup>76</sup> UCG study paper, p. 13

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 13

<sup>78</sup> UCG study paper, p. 20

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 20

the only place the phrase the last great day is used in the Bible. Of course, the last day is used half a dozen times in the Bible, all dealing with prophetic issues.<sup>80</sup> Apparently, UCG now believes the last great day is part of the feast of Tabernacles, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast, not the 8<sup>th</sup> day. However, UCG then tries to obfuscate this fact, likely because their traditional observation of the last great day is on the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles.

After this statement a long exegesis is made from Alfred Edersheim's *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*. This sets the stage for the UCG to state, "The water ceremony no doubt sets the stage for Christ message as recorded in John 7:37. The timing of the ceremony is not clearly defined."<sup>81</sup> This statement appears to be in error according to United's major reference for their exploration of John 7-9, Alfred Edersheim. "We can have little difficulty in determining at what part of the services of 'the last, the Great Day of Feast,' Jesus stood and cried, 'If any on thirst, let him come unto me and drink. It must have been with special reference to the ceremony of the outpouring of the water, which, as we have seen was considered the central part to the service.'"<sup>82</sup> Edersheim shows these event occurred on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast.<sup>83</sup> Therefore to be consistent with their own primary source, the water ceremony of John 7 can only be the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles with the data United has presented.

Speculation is then made that this ceremony and Jesus' teachings are delivered at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles going into the eighth day. Of course, given UCG's concern that the timing of the water ceremony is, "not clearly defined,"<sup>84</sup> this could also be at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> day or the end of the eighth day using United's reasoning. An evaluation of Edersheim and the vast majority of scholarly sources leave little doubt the water ceremony took place on the afternoon of the seventh day of the feast, as will be shown. This fact was likely known by United, given that their major source contends there should be little difficulty discerning the timing, but to directly state this would have been a contradiction of Herbert Armstrong's teachings and have required a re-interpretation of prophetic doctrine, two things that United has apparently been hesitant to do.

UCG then speculates that Christ returns to the temple the next morning, on the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles, again emphasizing their belief that the water ceremony took

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80 Gen. 49:1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Isa. 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Micah 4:1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

John 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

81 UCG study paper, p. 22

82 Edersheim, Alfred, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book Two Macdonald Publishing Company, McLean, Virginia, p. 160

83 Edersheim, Alfred, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book Two Edersheim lists all the events he believes occurred on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast of Tabernacles on pages 156-163 of Book two of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

84 UCG study paper, p. 22

place on the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles.<sup>85</sup> This, of course, would be an annual feast day, if United were correct, which they are not. The woman caught in the act of adultery is brought to Jesus while he is teaching. After dealing with the Jewish leadership, Jesus tells the woman to go and sin no more.<sup>86</sup> It is interesting that John 8 depicts Jesus questioning the woman while all the Jewish leaders slipped away.<sup>87</sup> Sometime later, Jesus has another confrontation with the Pharisees.<sup>88</sup> This would suggest that a great deal of time had passed since the Pharisees had scattered after the affair of the adulterous woman.

### **Multiple Confrontations equals more than two days**

Jesus' second confrontation, with what is most likely another a group of Pharisees, results in their attempting to stone him, yet he slips away.<sup>89</sup> Then even later, chapter 9 of John relates the story of the blind man being healed, a true messianic sign from Isaiah.<sup>90</sup> This miracle is a fantastic sign that the Pharisees should have recognized. Only the messiah could perform this kind of healing, yet they would not see. John 9:1-41 does not have to be on the same day as John 8:1-12 or John 8:13-59. John 8:12-59 may not have been on the same day as John 8:1-12 and it may not have occurred on the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles, according to one United scenario. The flow of time is very hard to gauge in chapters 8 and 9 of John, which even UCG admits. It appears likely that John 8:1-12 was on 8<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles. The rest of John 8 was either much later on the same day or on another day. It would make sense that if Jesus had an altercation where he somehow managed to drive an entire group of Pharisees away, he would not be confronted by a group of Pharisees just hours later. However, to assume that John 9 occurs on the same day as all the occurrences of John 8 is a large assumption and almost certainly not a correct one. Given that the Jewish leadership not only had time to question the previously blind man, but also to call and question his parents, it is inconceivable to this author that the events of John 8 and 9 could have occurred on the same day. Adam Clarke writes, "Having left the Temple, where the Jews were going to stone Him (chapter 8:59), it is probable our Lord went, according to His custom, to the Mount of Olives. The next day, which was a Sabbath, v. 14, He met a man who had been born blind, sitting in some public place, and asking alms from those who passed by."<sup>91</sup> If Clarke is correct, the events of John 9 not only occurred on a weekly Sabbath, but also after the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles, on which all or part of

85 John 8:1-2 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

86 John 8:11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

87 John 8:9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

88 John 8:13-59

89 John 8:59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

90 John 9:1-41

Isa. 42:7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house

Isa. 29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

91 Clarke, Adam, *The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament*, p. 575

the events of John 8 occurred. This would mean that the first and last day of Tabernacles occurred on a Friday, something that is forbidden by the calculated Jewish calendar.

Other commentaries agree that it is not only possible, but very likely the events of John 9 occurred on a different day than the events of John 8. “It is unlikely that the opening phrase of 9:1 implies unbroken continuity in time between the temple discourse of 8:31-59, and the healing of the man born blind.”<sup>92</sup>

However, the UCG study paper states, “As He is leaving the temple area, Christ comes into contact with a blind man begging in the same general area. Christ mixes clay with saliva and places it on his eyes. He then requests the man go and bathe in the pool of Siloam. This all takes place as Christ is departing from the temple, still on the 8th Day.”<sup>93</sup> Again the assumption is made this is the 8<sup>th</sup> day, not the day after the feast has ended or some other day. This assumption is almost certainly erroneous given the range of events that transpire in John 7-9. One thing that is certain is this healing upset the Pharisees because Christ made clay to heal on the Sabbath day.<sup>94</sup> UCG assumes this is a weekly Sabbath and high Sabbath. “There is no reason for John to make the statement about the Sabbath unless it were truly a Sabbath and not solely an annual Holy Day”<sup>95</sup> United make this statement, even though they write, “Scholars seem to be almost equally divided on the day these events took place.”<sup>96</sup> So speculation is now mounting on top of speculation. It is unlikely that John 8 and 9 occurred on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles and that last day of Tabernacles was also a weekly Sabbath. Perhaps the entire feast was past and the events of John 9 occurred on a weekly Sabbath at some time later than the feast of Tabernacles. The exact time frame of the events of John 7-9 can only be speculated about. Trying to build support from a doctrine on such a speculative foundation can be called nothing except ludicrously bad scholarship.

The word Sabbath is used 11 times in the book of John. There is also no distinction made between annual and weekly Sabbaths when Jesus talks about circumcision and the Sabbath in John 7:22-3.<sup>97</sup> We know John points out that the Sabbath in John 19:31 is a high Sabbath because all of John 13-19 is very time specific to fill in the gaps left by the other three gospels. To assume the Sabbath referred to in John 9:14 is an annual and weekly Sabbath is a huge assumption and is almost certainly erroneous.

UCG’s contention is, “Scholars are almost equally divided on the day these events took place.”<sup>98</sup> However, “they all agree that this took place either on the 7th day of the Feast or the separate festival, the 8th day.”<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately UCG leaves the impression that scholars

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92 Churchill, Jason, from *The World Biblical Commentary* (Word Books, Waco Texas, 1987), page 148

93 UCG study paper, p. 26

94 John 9:1-14

95 UCG summary, p. 26

96 Ibid, p. 27

97 John 7:22-3 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumsise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

98 UCG paper, p. 28

99 UCG paper, p. 28

are equally divided about if the events of John 8 and 9 occurred on the either the seventh or the eighth day of feast. This is simply not true. United's two quoted sources state, "The Feast's seventh and last day was its greatest (cf. Lev. 23:26)"<sup>100</sup> and "the last great day, that great day of the feast, the eighth."<sup>101</sup> So the scholars United quotes are equally divided because they quote only two scholars and ignore the hundreds of sources stating the last great day was the 7th day of the feast. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown is United's only source, and the only source this author is aware of, that proposes the last great day was the eighth day of the feast, not the seventh. The vast majority of scholarship states the events of John 7 occurred on the seventh day of the feast as shown in the body of this book.

### **The Timing of John 7-9**

#### **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown and the Calculated Jewish Calendar: Both Can't be right!**

If UCG's contention that the calculated Jewish calendar was being practiced at the time of Jesus were correct, which it was not, then they should know that Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's understanding of the timing of the water ceremony must be mistaken. UCG writes about their speculation of the timing of event in John 7-9 that "John 7:37 is referring the 8<sup>th</sup> day. In this case, John 8-9 must take place the next day, which is called the Sabbath. This means the healing of the blind man took place the day after the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles and it was also on the Sabbath."<sup>102</sup> Combining JFB's speculation that the last great day was the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles with United's speculation that all of the events of John 8 and 9 occur on the next day, which United speculates is a weekly Sabbath, then the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles occurred on a Friday in 30 CE according to one of United's two possible scenarios. The calculated Jewish calendar does not allow the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles to occur on Friday. Therefore, if UCG's speculation that the calculated Jewish calendar was being practiced at the time of Christ were correct, which it is not, then they prove that JFB are incorrect in their assessment that the water ceremony occurred eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles. Thus United's own logic would dictate they cannot use JFB's chronology of the events of John 7-9, thus they would have to admit the water ceremony was on the 7th day of the feast of Tabernacles, but logic gets lost in United's fallacious use of logic.

United's study paper on the calendar repeated state that there is division among scholars about timing of the events in John 7 through 9. This is true, but the vast majority write that the water ceremony, which occurred on the last great day, occurred on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles. However, the premise of UCG's whole argument, that the calculated Jewish calendar was observed at the time of Christ, is proven false with one of the two possible scenarios they advance about the timing of events in John 7 through 9 in their own study paper. The other possible scenario is also patently false.

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100 Walvoord, John F. and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, Victory Books, USA, 1983, p. 301

101 *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the New Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, 1983, p. 558

102 UCG summary, p. 29



Why did United include Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's mistaken idea that the last great day was the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles when it actually destroys their hypothesis that the calculated Jewish calendar was used during the second temple period? Beyond spreading FUD, which appears to be the main point of United's paper on the calendar, they probably included JFB's scenario because it matches the churches of God prophetic time line for the holy days. United wrote, "If you take a look at the chart you will see that the only years within a reasonable time frame where the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast could have occurred on a Sabbath are 27, 30, 31, 33, and 34."<sup>103</sup> United wrote in their study paper that there were many possibilities for the exact timing of the events in John 7 through 9. Then they present a hypothesis of John 7 through 9 that has the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles occurring on the weekly Sabbath as fact. Therefore United's answer to questions about the calculated Jewish calendar is to build a straw man argument upon the supposed facts that the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles occurred on a weekly Sabbath and that all of the events of John 7 through 9 occurred in a two day period, something that even United's paper shows is not likely.

If the events of John 7 did occur on the eighth day of the feast, United's other alternative scenario, that the events of John 8-9 occurred after the feast of Tabernacles, but on the weekly Sabbath shows that the calculated Jewish calendar was not being used because that would place the first and eighth day of Tabernacles on a Friday, something the first postponement of the calculated Jewish calendar prohibits. There is also no internal time reference in these verses, making it impossible to even guess what year the events of John 7 through 9 transpired in. As flimsy as the support for UCG's chronology of the events of John 7-9 appears at first glance, it is even more tenuous when their interpretation of John 7 through 9 is contrasted with the scriptural account.

### **Scholars Agree John 7-9 is not a Two Day Period**

Another problem present in United's paper is, "Almost all textual scholars agree that these verses were not part of the original manuscript of the Gospel of John. The NIV states in brackets that 'The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have John 7:53-8:11.'<sup>104</sup> United's contention that John 7:53-8:11 is not valid scripture, something this author rejects, stresses the uncertainty of the timing of John 7-9. However, UCG erroneously contends, "This issue does not affect the chronology of this section of scripture."<sup>105</sup> So United's contention is John 7:53-8:11 could be extraneous insertions into the canon of scripture, but that doesn't affect us. John 8:1-2 states, "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them."<sup>106</sup> United bases their argument that Jesus returned to the temple the next morning on John 8:1-2. If this story was edited because of content, then

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103 UCG summary paper, p. 30

104 UCG summary, p. 29

105 UCG summary, p. 29

106 John 8:1-2 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.



the chronology of John 7 through 9 is even less certain, therefore United is again in error when they write, "this issue does not affect the chronology of this section of scripture."<sup>107</sup>

The gospel of John is notable because John is meticulous about recording all of the travels of Jesus during the course of his ministry. It is therefore pertinent that Christ is recorded as traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:1-10), and yet he was still present in Jerusalem more than two months later at the Feast of Dedication (that is, Chanukah, in December) according to John 10:22. If Jesus did indeed depart from Jerusalem following the Feast of Tabernacles, to return later for the Feast of Dedication, John uncharacteristically failed to record these travels in his log. In fact, Jesus is not recorded as moving again until John 10:40, where it is explained that he crossed the Jordan River and 'there he abode.'

It is entirely possible then that the period described from John 8:1 to 10:22 encompasses a period of several months during which Jesus lodged in Jerusalem and preached on numerous occasions (recorded in John 8:1, 8:12, 8:21, 8:23, 8:28, 8:31) that were not necessarily connected in time.<sup>108</sup>

Alfred Edersheim's book *The Temple, Its Ministry and Service* is used extensively by United in its calendar paper. This book leaves no doubt that the calendar at the time of Jesus was the observed calendar and not the calculated Jewish calendar. Edersheim lists the same rules for the observed calendar and the declaration of the start of the month by observation of the crescent moon that I have listed in the body of this book.<sup>109</sup> United has again ignored their own references in an attempt to prove the calculated Jewish calendar was extant at the time of Jesus. A decent scholar would at least point out that their major reference work disagrees with their own premise. This reflects very poorly on the scholarship of United in general.

Does United really expect Christians to take quasi-scholarly interpretations of what day of the week the events of John 7 through 9 occurred on, which even United acknowledges are tenuous at best, as a basis for doctrine while valid questions about the biblical requirements for the calendar are left totally unanswered? Are we supposed to ignore the fact that every reference United has used in weaving their unbelievable hypothesis of the timing of events of John 7 through 9 leaves no doubt the calendar was determined by observation at the time of Jesus and was not calculated with rules of postponements? The argument used by United would never be accepted by the very scholars UCG quotes as references for their errant hypothesis.

UCG's assumption is that the events of John 8 and 9 occurred on a weekly Sabbath. At the beginning of John 8, the Pharisees bring the woman caught in adultery to Christ to see if he will condemn her. Would the Pharisees have considered this work on the Sabbath? After all, they considered healing on the Sabbath to be work. Would they have considered rendering judgment and stoning the woman to be work? Would they have considered stoning Jesus to death work? This author simply does not know, but these are the same leaders who created the idea of a Sabbath's day journey. If bringing the woman some distance, then judging her and perhaps stoning her would have been considered work, then the events of

<sup>107</sup> UCG summary, p. 29

<sup>108</sup> Churchill, Jason, p. 4

<sup>109</sup> Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 155-8

John 8 did not occur on an eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles which coincided with a weekly Sabbath as United speculates.

The very end of John 8 depicts the Pharisees preparing to stone Christ.<sup>110</sup> The first verse of John 9 has Christ passing by a blind man.<sup>111</sup> Because of the disparate actions of chapters 8 and 9 and because of the Pharisees actions in John 8, this author has serious doubts there is any scenario in which has the events of John 8 occurred on the same day as the event of chapter 9.

The date of Christ's crucifixion is examined in appendix A of this book because it is an interesting side issue, but this author would never make doctrine based on the year of Christ's crucifixion due to all the uncertainties surrounding the timing of Jesus' crucifixion. The uncertainties of the timing of John 7 through 9 are far more tenuous than of the year in which the crucifixion took place, making United's hypothesis even more tenuous.

### **The Calculated Jewish Calendar, A Useful Tool?**

Humphreys' and Waddington's article on the date of the crucifixion is also used to bolster United's contention that the Christ was crucified in 31 CE. This is based on the conviction there was a lunar eclipse the night after Christ's Crucifixion. Of course, "there is no confirmation of this event in scripture,"<sup>112</sup> according to UCG, even though they use it to bolster their case. Having studied Humphreys' and Waddington's work, this author knows there are some inconsistencies in their conclusions, as shown in appendix A.

The bottom line of UCG's study paper is, "While there are some important considerations and legitimate questions about the Jewish calendar, it does serve as a tool which has been preserved by the Jews."<sup>113</sup> There are many tools that have been preserved by the Jews, like the Mishnah and the Talmud. The Jews have also preserved the tools of the timing of Passover and Pentecost. But UCG rejects these tools because traditionally Herbert Armstrong rejected these tools and probably because they believe they have a biblical basis for doing so. Of course, UCG states, "the origin (of the calendar) is impossible to determine. The origin of the rules of postponement is also impossible to know with any degree of certainty. It is therefore impossible to prove that Hillel II *created* the rules of postponement during the 4th century."<sup>114</sup>

This author agrees we cannot prove beyond doubt the rules of postponement were first introduced by Hillel II's calendar because he apparently only standardized rules that had been fermenting for a couple of hundred years. But there is a great deal of evidence to support the contention these rules were created during the time frame of 200 to 350 CE. There is no doubt that these rules of postponement and calculation were not used at the time of Jesus or for hundreds of years before according the Mishnah and the Talmud. Of course, UCG does not deal with any of that evidence.

110 John 8:59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

111 John 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

112 UCG paper, p. 35

113 Ibid, p. 37

114 Ibid

UCG also discounts the Talmudic evidence that shows weekly Sabbaths occurring tandem to atonement suggesting it is impossible to prove with certainty these writings are accurate.<sup>115</sup> They seem to discount the fact the same men who wrote the Mishnah and the Talmud are the men who were supposedly responsible for keeping the rules of the calendar. The Jewish leadership that United contends was responsible for preserving the calculated Jewish calendar contends the calendar was regulated by observation and without postponements during the second temple period. If we write the men who wrote the Mishnah are not to be trusted, to which I agree, then we cannot state with certainty they can be trusted to have passed the calendar down, especially when they write they have not done so. Either both are true or neither can be trusted.

### **A Wednesday Crucifixion in 31 CE matches the Observed Calendar, not the Calculated Jewish Calendar, but as usual, United obfuscates what they don't like**

United admits that their use of an intercalary month in 31 CE does not match the cycle of the current calculated Jewish calendar when they write, "Without an intercalary month, the Passover in 31 CE would have occurred on a Monday, which is not permissible based on the biblical evidence."<sup>116</sup> Their only biblical evidence to support their calendar hypothesis is the need for a Wednesday crucifixion. So they simply ignore this problem that proves the calendar Jewish calendar as we know it did not exist in the second temple by writing, "Because of the irregularities of the solar and lunar cycles, periodic adjustments to the leap year sequences have been made to compensate over the years."<sup>117</sup> So there is no confusion, UCG is admitting the way that the leap year is intercalated can and must be changed with time when using the calculated Jewish calendar although there is no mechanism in the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar to do this. They have intercalated the leap month even though the rules for the calculated Jewish calendar would not intercalate a month in 31 CE. They believe they can determine how intercalation was done in the time of Jesus better than today's Jewish authorities. United's hypothesis shows they do not trust the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar with its metonic cycle, yet they ask Christians to accept this calendar as authoritative. Should Christians really follow what their leaders tell them to do when those same leaders reject that teaching for themselves?

United goes on to write, "Christ died on Wednesday afternoon in the year 31 CE. This is the only scenario which fits the accounts recorded in the gospels...It is also true that postponement fall on the same days with or without postponements for that particular year (30 CE). This is not true of 31 CE. To arrive at a Wednesday Passover in 31 CE, you must invoke some form of postponement and specifically Postponement rules 1 & 2."<sup>118</sup> They also write, "The biblical account shows that the crucifixion was on a Wednesday. This can only be obtained by the use of the rules of postponement for the year 31 CE. Based on the evidence presented in the gospel accounts, it appears impossible to obtain the aforementioned rules without the use of the rules of postponement in the first century. Therefore,

115 Ibid

116 UCG summary, p. 41

117 UCG summary, p. 41

118 UCG summary, p. 32

while the Bible does not reveal specific rules of postponement, they are validated by the biblical account and the example of Jesus Christ...Based on available sources of observation, there are no years within a reasonable time frame that would accommodate both the festival of Tabernacles as outlined in John 7-9 and the Passover week of Christ's crucifixion, except in 30-31 CE... Therefore, while the Bible does not reveal the actual method of determining the Molad and subsequently the first day of Tishri, calculation is the only method that would satisfy the biblical account during the time of Christ."<sup>119</sup>

Are these statements true and are they scriptural accurate? The sad answer is these statement are simply wrong and United's scholarship is so terrible, they do not even realize it. In 31 CE, the conjunction occurred at 22:28, Sunday March the 11<sup>th</sup> and at 11:41, Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, Greenwich time.<sup>120</sup> The date of March 11<sup>th</sup> is quite early for the first day of abib and would lead to a Monday being the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan by observation of the first visible crescent.

Using the conjunction of Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup> as a starting point for the year, we can determine when the first visible crescent was most probably visible over Jerusalem. Jerusalem is about 2 hours east of Greenwich, so the conjunction actually occurred around 1:45 p.m. on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> in 31 CE at Jerusalem. This is only 5 hours before sunset, so the first visible crescent could not be seen Tuesday night. However, the moon would be almost thirty hours old on Wednesday night, April the 11<sup>th</sup>. The crescent would definitely have been visible if it were not obscured by clouds, which is not likely at that time of year in Israel. Therefore, Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> would be the first of Nisan according to observation of the first crescent, the method historically used at the time of Jesus. This translates to Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> being the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan as determined by observation.

As these simple calculations show, UCG's statement that the only way to have a Wednesday crucifixion in 31 CE is by using the rules of postponement is wrong. Not only does observation of the first crescent match United's requirements for a 31 CE Wednesday crucifixion, but it also explains why Abib did not start until April 11<sup>th</sup> in 31 CE while use of the observed calendar in 31 CE would explain this. The observed calendar that depends upon the ripening of the barley and sighting the first visible crescent can and does explain why the crucifixion could be on a Wednesday at the end of April in 31 CE, while the use of the calculated Jewish calendar requires a wave of the hand and a suggestion that the calendar must change over time, thus violating the very rules United is trying to foist on Christians as being authoritative.

The fact that the first of Abib would be on the same day by using either observation of the first visible crescent over Jerusalem or with the calculated Jewish calendars rules of postponement if we allow United to tweak the metonic cycle as it sees fit should come as no surprise because the two calendars will declare the first day of the month on the same days almost 50 percent of the time. Therefore the entire basis of UCG's paper is meritless. Even if their speculations about the time frame of John 7 through 9 were accurate, which it

<sup>119</sup> UCG summary, p. 40

<sup>120</sup> Poulsen, Erling, [www.rundetaarn.dk](http://www.rundetaarn.dk), You can go to this web site and calculate when any astronomical new moon, which is the conjunction, and full moon, might be. Calculations are accurate to within 3 minutes.

almost certainly is not, it cannot be used to determine if the calculated Jewish calendar was used in 31 CE because the observed calendar actually does a better job of matching their time for the crucifixion of Jesus than the calculated Jewish calendar.

United's creation of a plausible diversion placated far too many Christians, especially considering just how bad the scholarship in it was. United should have known their scholarship would not stand a test from the very scholars they quote in their study paper on the calendar. By creating this diversion, they have not answered any of the serious questions about the calendar in a study paper supposedly written to answer questions about the calculated Jewish calendar. It is likely UCG's calendar paper was written in an attempt to discount questions about the calendar without answering them and without resorting to the authority of "God's government on Earth." It is sad that some of this author's former ministers and professors, who sat on the council of elders of UCG, allowed their names to be attached to such shoddy, misleading, and obviously erroneous scholarship.

In the conclusion of their study paper United writes, "does it (the calendar) follow the phases of the moon? The answer is, yes it does."<sup>121</sup> This statement is true and false because the calculated Jewish calendar sort of follows the lunar phases. Forty percent of the time the new moon is proclaimed to be the day of the conjunction. Fifty percent of the time the new moon of Tishri 1 is proclaimed to be on the day the first crescent is visible in Jerusalem. Ten percent of the time it is declared a day after the first visible crescent and two days after the conjunction. Of course this pattern affects the other months of the year because the calculated Jewish calendar places Abib 1 by calculated by counting backwards 177 days from the start of Tishri. Apparently this sort of following is exact enough for United to state unequivocally the calculated Jewish calendar does follow the cycle of the moon.

God wants us to follow what He says.<sup>122</sup> Of course, there is allowance for our shortcomings. There are even gray areas. But God always condemned a systemic misrepresentation or substitution of His ways. The lesson of Jeroboam observing the annual sabbaths one month late should be a great warning for all. But God went even further. He condemned Israel for mixing practices of the religion around them into their worship. He even forbade Moses, a true servant, from entering the Promised Land because he struck the rock to bring forth water rather than talking to it.<sup>123</sup> This may seem like a small offense at first glance, but God always has reasons for His ways. Sort of following the lunar cycle is not following the lunar cycle. The new moon was and is an astronomical event, except under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. The new moon mentioned in scripture cannot be the conjunction, the day after the conjunction and two days after the conjunction, depending on how the math worked that month.

Although United sees no real possibility of changing the calendar, the Jews do not agree

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<sup>121</sup> UCG summary, p. 36

<sup>122</sup> Deut. 6:5-6 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

<sup>123</sup> Num. 20:12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.



with this position. According to Spier, “It will be the task of the (re-organized) Sanhedrin to make a decision as to when and how the sanctified calendar of Hillel II is to be modified in accordance with the requirements of astronomy and the Torah.”<sup>124</sup>

### Rejecting the Quasi-Scriptural Approach

Shortly before the first release of this book, United revised its stance on the calendar. In United News, September 2000, Leon Walker wrote *Did God Give a Calendar?*<sup>125</sup> Given Mr. Walker’s status as chairman of United’s doctrinal committee at the time and the publication of his article in United’s newsletter, it would suggest this is now United’s official stance on the calendar issue.<sup>126</sup>

Mr. Walker’s stance, and thus United’s, on the calendar is apparently summarized with the byline, “If you reject the Hebrew calendar, what have you got? Does the Bible give enough information to construct a calendar?”<sup>127</sup> Mr. Walker’s article is simply an attack on those who question the calculated Jewish calendar and its main arguments appear to be pointed at Frank Nelte. Although this author agrees that Mr. Nelte has a few points wrong in his view of the calendar, as pointed out in the Ritenbaugh-Nelte appendix of this paper, this author embraces his rejection of the Pharisaical rules of postponement, the part of the current calculated Jewish calendar which obviously violate scriptural principles. There is no attempt to discuss the merits, mechanics, or history of the calculated Jewish calendar in Mr. Walker’s statement. Mr. Walker begins his attack with, “There are those who advocate that the Bible provides us with all of the specific elements of the calendar that God wants us to use to keep His Holy Days.”<sup>128</sup> United’s Summary of the Hebrew calendar stated, “Certainly all of the elements of a calendar are found in scripture. We know which month is first month of the year (Exodus 12:1). We know that there are normally 12 months in the year (Esther 3:7). We even have the evidence of a 13<sup>th</sup> month (leap year) being added in time of the Old Testament.”<sup>129</sup> Therefore, just 3 years before Mr. Walker wrote his article, United’s stance was that there was enough information to determine what the calendar should be in scripture. United wrote, “After an exhaustive study, it became clear that the real answer must lie in the pages of scripture.”<sup>130</sup> However when an eisegesis of scripture could not be forced into supporting UCG’s traditional practices, they abandoned using scripture so they could continue to follow their traditions. How sad.

Also, in United’s original study paper, they brought up many of the questions that trouble people about the calculated Jewish calendar. However, at that time, United wrote, “While there will be no attempt to address all of these issues in this brief paper, each one is worthy of addressing. Hopefully, over course of time, papers and articles can be written to more

124 Spier, p. 214

125 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*, United News, September 2000. Downloaded from the UCG web site, [ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org). The article is listed at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/nb/un0011/cal.html>. Given the nature of the download and the shortness of the article, no page numbers will be listed.

126 Ibid

127 Ibid

128 Ibid

129 Summary of the Hebrew Calendar, United Church of God, Doctrinal Study paper, Jan., 1997, p. 7

130 Ibid, p. 13



fully explain what we know of each of these basic issues.”<sup>131</sup> At that time, when the first version of this paper was released, this author wrote that he had sincere doubts about United every answering these questions. This author wrote that United was simply trying to dismiss this problem without dealing with it. Mr. Walker's article verified this speculation. Mr. Walker's article does not deal the issues that United wrote were worthy of addressing, but instead follows the old pattern of making misleading and erroneous statements that are designed to spread confusion and doubt so that the issue does not have to be dealt with.

Mr. Walker attacks those who have rejected the Hebrew calendar because they do not all follow the same calendar, even though they all claim biblical authority for their calendar.<sup>132</sup> He points out, “The rules of postponement, which are an essential element in the Hebrew calendar, come under special attack since these individuals assume that they are merely the rules of men and are in opposition to the will of God.”<sup>133</sup> The rules of postponement are not found in the Bible, so the only way to determine if they are in opposition to God's will is to compare them to scriptural principles. Think about this. Mr. Walker and United dismiss Christians who ask biblical based questions about Christian practices because these questions come from different points of view with people who are currently practicing different things by writing that since there is a variety of different possibilities on what to do about this issue, we must be right and they must all be wrong. Not exactly how Peter said to answer questions in 1 Peter 3:15.<sup>134</sup> Unlike United I believe you should go to scripture and deal with the specific issue rather than trying to draw a general conclusion from competing factions.<sup>135</sup> Mr. Walker's calendar paper shows that United apparently does not share this philosophy.

Mr. Walker writes about those who disagree that the calculated Jewish calendar is authoritative, “The Hebrew calendar, these individuals claim, should only be used as long as it conforms to the calendar given by God in the Bible. The elements of the Hebrew calendar that are not in the Bible, including the rules of postponement, must be rejected.”<sup>136</sup> A clearer way of stating this is that people reject the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative because it violates biblical principles. Most, if not all, calendar reformers realize that God did leave some gray area in the mechanics of the calendar. Most realize that not every ordinance that God wanted us to follow, rather it is calendrical or otherwise, is defined with the completeness most western, technological minds would like. However, scripture is very clear that tradition should not take precedence over scriptural instruction and intent.<sup>137</sup>

131 Ibid, p. 6

132 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*, “These individuals reject the Hebrew calendar, some claiming that it has its origin in Babylon and that it is a calendar of men. Several of these individuals have created their own calendars, each one claiming that his calendar is the one that is revealed in the Scriptures. However, these calendars differ from one another in certain respects. They are not identical, even though they all claim to come from the Bible.”

133 Ibid

134 1 Pet. 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

135 2 Tim. 3:16-7 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

136 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*,

137 Matthew 15 and Mark 7 are a very clear elucidation of this point

Reformers also agree that postponing God's annual feasts is wrong because the postponements are unscriptural and are similar to the pharisaic traditions Jesus rejected.

Mr. Walker asks the question around which his paper revolves. "Does the Bible provide us with the specific elements needed for a calendar?"<sup>138</sup> As a reminder, just three years before Mr. Walker wrote his article United stated it did. They wrote, "Certainly all of the elements of a calendar are found in scripture. We know which month is first month of the year (Exodus 12:1). We know that there are normally 12 months in the year (Esther 3:7). We even have the evidence of a 13<sup>th</sup> month (leap year) being added in time of the Old Testament."<sup>139</sup> In 1997 United attempted to manipulate scripture with an unbelievable bad hypothesis when they wrote, "After an exhaustive study, it became clear that the real answer must lie in the pages of scripture."<sup>140</sup>

However, Mr. Walker and United have apparently changed their minds on this issue. He writes, "However, these elements are not specific enough for a calendar. This scripture does not tell us when a month begins (new moon, full moon, etc.); in which season a year begins (spring, summer, etc.); how many days there are in a week, month or year; nor even at which point the day is divided from the night (sunset, darkness, etc.)."<sup>141</sup>

### Following an Old Pattern of Obfuscation

Mr. Walker has apparently learned this lesson from Kenneth Herrmann and the World-Wide Church of God. Notice the similarities between Mr. Walker's response and Kenneth Herrmann's. Of course Mr. Herrmann never makes as ludicrous an insinuation that scripture does not tell us, "how many days there are in a week."<sup>142</sup> The first physical thing that the bible reveals in Genesis is a seven day week, but this is apparently not clear enough for United. The events of Exodus 16 show God teaching the nation of Israel that the week had 7 days and you needed to rest on the seventh day. Mr. Walker shows just how inconsistent his theology is as he tries to spread FUD when writes just two paragraphs later, "A week is also defined as a period of seven days, by the Sabbath being the seventh day of the week (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 34:21)."<sup>143</sup> Which is it? Does the bible reveal the week has seven days or does it not? Although scripture is clear the week has seven days, this does not serve Mr. Walker's campaign of FUD, so he suggest scripture is not clear and it is clear. Some catch, the catch-22.<sup>144</sup>

This pattern of making ludicrous and confusing and erroneous statements is clearly seen from writings in the WorldWide church of God more than 30 years ago on the calendar. Mr. Herrmann had at first written there was more than enough information from the bible to verify that the calculated Jewish calendar was accurate and it was the same calendar that

138 Ibid

139 Summary of the Hebrew Calendar, United Church of God, Doctrinal Study paper, Jan., 1997, p. 7

140 Ibid, p. 13

141 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

142 Ibid

143 Ibid

144 Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* captures how people twist logic to serve their ends, even when that logic is illogical.

Jesus followed.<sup>145</sup> This was the stance of the United Church of God in 1997 with their horribly flawed study paper on the calculated Jewish calendar, which is reviewed above. When the flaws in his argument were pointed out, Kenneth Herrmann wrote, "The problem of producing a calendar from astronomical observation is not at all a simple one...It is easy to look at a table and conclude that maybe God's Church is keeping holy days several days late. But consider the basis of timekeeping. When would you begin a day? At sunrise, noon, midnight, sunset, 6 p.m. when the sun is due west? Or 6 a.m. when the sun is due east?"<sup>146</sup> The method of answering Mr. Mikulik's question is despicable and misleading, as well as being scholarly and theological inaccurate. The bible is clear that the day begins at even. History agrees that the Jews always started their days at evening. Mr. Herrmann even wrote a decade earlier, "The 'DAY' starts and ends at sunset."<sup>147</sup> Mr. Herrmann has deliberately created a scenario where facts are meaningless and confusion is greeted with a warm embrace. This is the pattern Mr. Walker followed in his paper on the calendar.

Mr. Herrmann writes, "Revelation is needed. We need an Oracle from God to keep time His way."<sup>148</sup> He seems to insinuate that this revelation can only come from the Jews when he writes, "What advantage hath the Jew? Much in every way."<sup>141</sup> What Mr. Herrmann does not write is that we have this revelation in scripture. Mr. Herrmann knew scripture is the oracle that states a day starts and ends at even. There is no need for Jewish interpretation because this fact is accepted by the vast majority of theologians and historians. The few who disagree and believe the Jewish day started at some other time usually do not believe the bible or believe the Jews deliberately lie about their religious practices.

Mr. Herrmann continues, "Let's continue with the problem. When would you begin the week? With which day? It would have to be revealed. No?"<sup>149</sup> Again Mr. Herrmann insinuates that some revelation is needed when scripture clearly states that the seventh day is the Sabbath and has been since creation.<sup>150</sup> The first day is revealed to follow the seventh day in scripture. Mr. Herrmann's hyperbole is obviously designed to ask questions as if there were no clear answers, when scripture and history agree that there is a clear answer on which day is the first day of the week.

He continues this misleading line of reasoning by asking, "When would you begin the month? With full moon or new moon? With the sunset (or 6 p.m.) that preceded the molad (the conjunction or the astronomer's new moon) or with the sunset that followed it? Man can observe but he is going to need revelation to carry out timekeeping God's Way."<sup>151</sup> The very definition of the word month means new moon and Mr. Herrmann knew that. A decade before he wrote, "The 'MONTH' starts with the sunset after each 'new moon'.

145 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 16 from Herrmann, Kenneth, *Which is the Calendar Christ Used*, Good News, February, 1957

146 Herrmann, Kenneth, *Answer to Mr. Louis L. Mikulik*, Dated March 20, 1969, p. 1

147 Nelte, Frank, Kenneth Herrmann's Calendar articles, Off the internet, p. 2 quoting, Herrmann, Kenneth, *God's Sacred Calendar*, Good News, March, 1953

148 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 1

149 Ibid

150 Gen. 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

151 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 1

D) The Hebrew word for ‘month’ is the same as for ‘moon’ and for ‘new moon.’<sup>152</sup> God’s revealed scripture leaves no doubt that the new moon starts the month. Mr. Herrmann also left no doubt that he knew this fact, but preferred to create confusion and doubt rather than to answer questions. Mr. Herrmann also shows the churches of God continuing lack of calendar knowledge by defining the molad as the conjunction rather than the mean average conjunction.

Mr. Herrmann’s insult to theology and scholarship continues with, “When would you begin the year? With the spring equinox? With the summer solstice? With the fall equinox .With the winter solstice? Or with the new moon preceding (or following) which of the above four? Or would you allow the Passover to “wander 40 days in the wilderness” of the other days of the year as is the present rule?”<sup>153</sup> This could have been a valid question. We know from scripture that the beginning of the year has to be in what we call the spring of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. A valid question could have been how do we determine exactly when that should be. However, Mr. Herrmann totally ignores the bounds of decency and scholarship to try to confuse the issue. That some people can accept this as valid logic or theology is beyond depressing. It is actually quite sickening to read this deliberate distortion of facts. Mr. Walker’s statement resembles Mr. Herrmann’s in so many aspects.

Mr. Walker writes, “A day is defined in the Bible (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32). It is from sunset to sunset (Hebrew: ereb, even, evening, sunset).”<sup>147</sup> Yet he also writes that scripture does not distinguish “at which point the day is divided from the night (sunset, darkness, etc.)”<sup>154</sup> So although Mr. Walker writes a day goes from sunset to sunset, he also writes there is no scriptural justification for this definition. Is this confusing to you? It should be obvious that is Mr. Walker’s intent. Of course there is a great deal of scriptural support that day goes from ereb to ereb, but Mr. Walker is correct when he writes there no scriptural support given for the belief that ereb is sunset.

According to the main purveyors of the calculated Jewish calendar, the Jewish sages, the Sabbath goes from 18 minutes before sunset Friday until after dark, when three stars can be seen in the sky, on Saturday evening because of the generic meaning of the word ereb. As show in *Jesus the True Passover*, ereb is not a specific time, but a general time around sunset.<sup>155</sup> Mr. Walker writes, “sunset is not a very specific point in time as long as it is dependent upon observation.”<sup>156</sup> This statement is a classic red herring argument. So what if my observation of sunset is 5 or even 10 minutes different from yours? Does it have any effect on our spiritual lives? Of course not. Does it have any effect on the calendar? Of course not. Even if it did, Mr. Walker has overlooked that there were elders and Levites placed in the nation of Israel to teach them God’s ways. One of this author’s favorite verses is the bible states, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house,

152 Nelte, Frank, Kenneth Herrmann’s Calendar articles, Off the internet, p. 2 quoting, Herrmann, Kenneth, God’s Sacred Calendar, Good News, March, 1953

153 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 1

154 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

155 *Jesus the True Passover* can be downloaded from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

156 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”<sup>157</sup> So not only would this difference of observation make no real difference, the people were supposed to be taught how to do things in a godly, righteous manner with Godly judgement.

However, Mr. Walker has planted his seed that observation can lead to different conclusions, thus must somehow be unrighteous and ungodly when in fact this kind of observation develops Christian judgment and character. Mr. Walker provides a pharisaical view of life, which is why they have built walls around the law with their Talmudic rules. Mr. Walker's assertion that scripture does not distinguish “at which point the day is divided from the night (sunset, darkness, etc.)”<sup>158</sup> is also apparently in error because Mr. Walker and United believe the day ends at sunset. Does it seem confusing the Mr. Walker believes the day starts and ends at sunset according to scripture, yet states scripture does not describe when the day starts and ends? The most likely reason for the confusion is that Mr. Walker is deliberately spread FUD, although it could simply be his ineptness at answering simple questions?

Mr. Walker writes about months, “Therefore, we can conclude that the month begins with the new moon.”<sup>159</sup> This is absolutely accurate. However, in his campaign of confusion Mr. Walker goes on to write, “But does the Bible define when the new moon begins? No, it does not.”<sup>153</sup> This is also correct. He writes, “No scripture can be cited to define when a new moon begins.”<sup>160</sup> This is again correct. So rather than examining the issue of when the new moon is, Mr. Walker instead writes, “Does the new moon begin with the last faint crescent of the old moon? Does it begin with the precise point of total obscurity of the moon? Or, does it begin with the first faint crescent of the new moon? Those who seek to create a calendar differ in their opinions regarding the precise moment when a new moon begins. Those who reject the Hebrew calendar and insist that the Bible gives us the calendar are left to their own human reasoning in determining precisely when a month begins.”<sup>161</sup> This statement is simply untrue.

This is the classic pattern of making two or three correct statements, then sliding in an incorrect statement to get you to accept it as well. This is a classic trick used by salesmen to get you to buy something, rather you should or not. There are differing opinions as to what that new moon is in the churches of God, but the vast majority accept the first faint crescent as the new moon because that is what it was historically throughout the entire middle east, as I show in this book. Theologians and scholars concur that the new moon referred to in scripture is the first crescent moon. So we are not left to our, “own human reasoning in determining precisely when a month begins.”<sup>162</sup> The Jewish leadership who are supposedly responsible for the keeping of the calculated Jewish calendar also agree the new moon referred to in scripture is the first crescent.

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157 Deut. 6:6-7 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

158 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

159 Ibid

160 Ibid

161 Ibid

162 Ibid



Although the Old Testament does not define the day as being approximately 24 hours long, there is a vast amount of evidence showing that Israel defined the day as not just morning and evening, but also a time period of 24 hours. Scripture also never defines the new moon as the first crescent because not only was it common knowledge that the new moon was the first crescent throughout the entire Middle East, but the writers of the Bible had a different perspective on time than we do. However, just because this perception was different does not mean we cannot understand it nor does it mean that we are using human reasoning when we determine when the new month starts, as is shown in this book.

Mr. Walker also never points out that accepting the calculated Jewish calendar is also using human reason according to Mr. Walker's own logic. He is the one who suggests that the Bible cannot be used to help us examine the issue of the calendar. Mr. Walker rejects the Jewish authority on the timing of Passover and Pentecost, two areas of scriptural interpretation. Yet Mr. Walker suggests we must follow these Jewish authorities, who are supposedly wrong on so many points, in following the "secret knowledge" of the calculated Jewish calendar. If this is not a rationalization using human reasoning, then nothing is.

Mr. Walker raises the question about what a new moon is. He gives a number of possibilities, all of which are astronomical events. However, under the calculated Jewish calendar the new moon is none of these possibilities. It is quite interesting that Mr. Walker attacks those who try to define what the new moon is by associating it with an astronomical observation when he cannot define what it is under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar the new moon is only a mathematical abstraction, divorced from physical reality.

Mr. Walker either deliberately distorts the facts or shows his lack of knowledge of the calendar when he writes, "Of course, the determination of when a new moon begins is important because the Holy Days occur on certain specific days of the month. Those who reject the Hebrew calendar and create their own calendars based on their own opinions as to when the month begins can vary by as much as two or three days in calculating the first day of the month. This is further compounded by the fact that the actual moment of the occurrence of a new moon can take place at any time of the day or night. This means that determination of a new moon by observation (as was the case in most of man's history) would not only depend on the individual's definition of when a new moon occurred, but also on the time of day that observation determined that it occurred. This also could cause a variation of another day or more in the determination of which day is the new moon."<sup>163</sup>

The first error Mr. Walker makes is suggesting that people who reject the calculated Jewish calendar are somehow creating a calendar, not realizing the current Jewish leadership is also following a man-made calendar. There is very little doubt that the rules of the current calculated Jewish calendar were created by the descendants of the Pharisees so that Sabbath *halacha* would not be violated, making it a man-made calendar. Maimonides, the greatest Jewish authority on the calculated Jewish calendar writes it was a man-made calendar.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid

<sup>164</sup> Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. liii-liv



Mr. Walker is correct when he states those who have a different definitions of what the new moon can start the month as much as two or even three days apart. Those who keep the exact conjunction will usually start the month a day before those who start the month with the first visible crescent. Those who follow the calculated Jewish calendar can start the month even one day later because of the rules of postponements. This is exactly what happened at the feast of Trumpets in 2000 CE. Mr. Walker's point seems to be that there is so much variation among disparate COG groups who reject that calculated Jewish calendar that there is no way to determine when the new moon would be. Again this misleading suggestion seems to be aimed at causing confusion so that real answers will not have to be given to real question.

Mr. Walker correctly makes the point that the bible never explicitly states that Jerusalem should be used as the starting place for the calendar, although ironically, it is the starting point for the calculated Jewish calendar.<sup>165</sup> The area around Jerusalem has been the starting place of the calendar for over 3,000 years. Therefore Mr. Walkers reasoning is that we have no reason to use Jerusalem as a starting point for the calendar if we reject the calculated Jewish calendar, but we must accept Jerusalem as the starting point for the calendar if we accept the calculated Jewish calendar as authoritative. This lack of consistency reflects Mr. Walker's lack of skill as a scholar. This author agrees that choosing Jerusalem as the starting point for the calendar requires us to look at how the calendar was determined historically. There was no doubt it was the starting point at the time of Jesus. Mr. Walker's embrace of FUD at the cost of logic and consistency is distressing.

Mr. Walker writes, "Does the Bible tell us which precise spot on the earth should be used for the determination of the new moon? No, it does not."<sup>166</sup> It is true that Israel used the new moon over Egypt to determine the very first day of Abib. It is also true they used the new moon as seen in the dessert for 40 years to start the month. But God said repeatedly that the ordinances He was going to give Israel would not come to fruition until they reached the Promised land and He placed his name somewhere.<sup>167</sup> Therefore Mr. Walker's

165 Ibid

166 Ibid

167 Lev. 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

Deut. 14:23 And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

Deut. 14:24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

Deut. 16:2 Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.

Deut. 16:6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

Deut. 16:11 And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the

very carefully constructed sentence is correct because scripture never precisely defines that point. This kind of grammatical usage has come into vogue in the United States since Bill Clinton used it when he did not want to tell the truth. However, any Christian should know that God first placed His name at Shiloh and then placed it at Jerusalem for over a thousand years. He calls the land of Israel the Promised Land. The United Church of God likes to use a little scripture from here and a little scripture from there to prove their theological points, but when others attempt to do this with the calendar they are supposedly simply using human reasoning. There is no doubt that scripturally and historically the area around the Promised Land has always been used to determine the start of the month included in the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Walker also brings up the point that the lunar month lasts just about 29.5 days. He asks the question, “However, what if the precise moment of the new moon occurs just before the end of the day?”<sup>168</sup> Of course the answer is that it is dependent upon what your definition of the new moon is. If you are using the first visible crescent as the new moon, this question is not applicable because the first crescent can only be seen shortly after sunset, thus the new moon could not occur shortly before the end of the day. If you are using the conjunction, then the month would start on the day of the conjunction. If you are using the calculated Jewish calendar, this question is also not applicable because the calculated Jewish calendar uses the molad for its calculations and does not use the new moon to start the month. If *halacha* rules dictate, the day will be postponed one or two days beyond the calculated molad. If it is not postponed because of these rules, it starts on the day on the day of the molad. So again this question has no real bearing on the calendar issue other than to errantly introduce yet more FUD, which, after all, is the apparent purpose of his paper.

Mr. Walker writes about the start of the month, “Those who reject the Hebrew calendar differ in their opinions regarding this problem and are left to their own authority since there is no biblical statement.”<sup>169</sup> This statement suggests that acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar is somehow not done under the authority of the United Church of God without “biblical statement” for its membership when of course it is. This statement is also inaccurate because Mr. Walker wrote, “Therefore, we can conclude that the month begins with the new moon.”<sup>170</sup> So there is a biblical statement that defines when the month starts. The only discrepancy that Mr. Walker has found is a difference of opinion about what the new moon should be defined as, which is a real problem. However, Mr. Walker has taken this one problem and tried to present it as three or four or five problems, which is simply is not.

Mr. Walker goes from the very real problem of defining the new moon to writing, “We now fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

Deut. 26:2 That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.

168 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

169 Ibid

170 Ibid

ask the question, when does the year begin? Does the Bible define for us the precise moment when the new year begins?"<sup>171</sup> The reader should again notice Mr. Walker's use of the word precise. He spent a great deal of time showing how the bible does not precisely define when the day starts and ends, which it does not, yet somehow suggests we cannot use the same kind of judgment United used to determine the start and end of the day to determine the end and start of a year. Mr. Walker is partially correct when he writes, "We know that the year begins in the spring season of the year (Exodus 12:2; 23:15), for those who live in the northern hemisphere, but the Bible does not tell us precisely when in the spring."<sup>172</sup> As pointed out in the book, there are only two seasons in Israel according to scripture, summer and winter. So what Mr. Walker is referring to is the start of summer, not spring. Mr. Walker's second error is that somehow scripture dictates it must be spring in the Northern Hemisphere when the idea of hemispheres is also never mentioned in scripture. Mr. Walker wrote that we cannot use scripture to support Jerusalem being the starting point of the calendar, yet he somehow believes it gives support for season being different in the two hemispheres. These inconsistencies plague Mr. Walker and United's statements on the calendar.

Mr. Walker goes from his erroneous statement about spring to expounding his idea of how the equinox should be used in determining the start of the year. He writes, "They have no other choice since once the Hebrew calendar is rejected, some other reference must be used as a starting point."<sup>173</sup> Again Mr. Walker is incorrect, as is shown in this book. Although many who reject the calculated Jewish calendar do use some relationship with the equinox to determine when to start the year, this is not the only alternative. Historically the end of winter was used to set the first month of the year. This is a viable alternative and one that is used by a number of Jews, the Karaites. Mr. Walker repeats his theme of injecting innuendo and confusion when he writes, "However, does the Bible even mention an equinox? No, it does not. Therefore, those who reject the Hebrew calendar must rely on their own opinion regarding the point in time when a new year begins."<sup>174</sup> Although the equinox is not mentioned in scripture, rejecting the current 19 year time cycle of the calculated Jewish calendar for a calendar that depends upon God showing us when to start the year, every year, with the change of season in the Promised Land is not only viable, but was historically the way it was done during the entire second temple period. It is also the method used by the Karaite Jews today.

Mr. Walker is obviously referring to Frank Nelte when he writes, "There are some who believe that Exodus 34:22 does refer to the equinox. However, a careful reading of this scripture and the other places where the Hebrew word tekufah appears makes it clear that the word had a much broader and general meaning in biblical times than it had in post-biblical times."<sup>175</sup> I agree with Mr. Walker that Mr. Nelte is mistaken in his use of Ex. 34:22 in setting the calendar, as is shown in this book. However, at least Mr. Nelte has suggested

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171 Ibid

172 Ibid

173 Ibid

174 Ibid

175 Ibid

a realistic alternative to the calculated Jewish calendar without deliberately spreading innuendo and confusing misstatements.

Mr. Walker continues with, “It should also be understood that seasons of the year are general. That is, they do not start with a specific day and end with a specific day...Seasons are related to weather and they are not dependent upon a specific day when the earth is in a certain position relative to the sun.”<sup>176</sup> Again this author agrees with Mr. Walker, but Mr. Walker also fails to point out that the calculated Jewish calendar also does not take this seasonal factor into account. Mr. Walker’s attack on those who does not accept the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar is just as valid on those who do accept the calculated Jewish calendar, yet this is somehow supposed to be vindication of the calculated Jewish calendar. This is Mr. Walker’s *modus operandi*. He never mentions the mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar and how it violates many of the principles he has laid out.

For some reason Mr. Walker writes, “It should be noted that the spring equinox in the northern hemisphere always occurs during the first month of the Hebrew calendar. Therefore, the first month is always the “month of spring” even though the first day of the year may be prior to the equinox.” This statement is also incorrect. In 2001, Nisan starts a full 4 days after the vernal equinox on the calculated Jewish calendar. In 2011, the first month of both the observed calendar and the calculated Jewish calendar, started on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 15 days after the vernal equinox. This again shows Mr. Walker’s lack of research and understanding of the mechanics of the calendar. Mr. Walker’s deliberate obfuscation of the issue without having any real knowledge of the issues shows his and United’s desire is to quell questions rather than answer them honestly. Is this really how pastors and teachers of God are supposed to act?

### **The Essential Elements of the Calendar**

Mr. Walker writes, “Those who reject the Hebrew calendar claim that the Bible gives the essential elements needed for a calendar.”<sup>177</sup> They generally believe scripture gives the essential or basic elements of the calendar, just not all of the details. The calculated Jewish calendar violates some of those essential scriptural elements, as is shown in this book. Mr. Walker goes on to write, “But if the Hebrew calendar is rejected and if the Bible does not give the specific elements needed for a calendar, then it is impossible to have a calendar based on any authority other than that of the individual who created it.”<sup>178</sup> Again this statement is true, but the reader should notice there are two very large if’s in Mr. Walker’s statement. One of his contentions is that the Bible does not give us the essential elements for a calendar, but this contention is erroneous. It also ignores that fact that those who accept the calculated Jewish calendar are accepting the authority of the Jews who created to postpone tandem Sabbaths and to make sure the Lulav ceremony does not occur on the seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles. So if you accept the Jewish leaders authority for their calendar, you should at least be observing the Lulav ceremony, which is an integral part of the calculated Jewish calendar.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Ibid

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

Mr. Walker believes that the many problems that he lists makes it impossible for scripture to have the essential information required for a calendar. However, all Mr. Walker has done is list what he sees as problems, some of which are imaginary and some of which are valid. He has ignored what scripture does say about the calendar because the calculated Jewish calendar violates a number of these essential ordinances, as is shown in this book. Mr. Walker also ignores United's earlier statements when it wrote, "The Bible clearly indicates that there were the components of a calendar in existence almost from the beginning; hours, days, months, seasons, and years are all mentioned. These are the essential elements of any calendar."<sup>179</sup> This statement just does not seem to juxtapose with Mr. Walker's belief that, "Therefore, since God did not reveal in the Bible the essential elements for a calendar, those who reject the Hebrew calendar must rely solely on their own opinions regarding how to create a calendar. However, they cannot legitimately claim that their opinions are based on God's instructions, for He did not outline the elements these individuals must use in their calendars."<sup>180</sup>

Obviously Mr. Walker can make any statement he wishes, but it is incumbent upon Christians to determine if these statements are supported by scripture and if they are true. Mr. Walker's statement is incorrect because those who are trying to return to a calendar like the one used by Jesus are doing so using the essentials outlined in the bible. There are disputes because the bible does not explicitly define some elements of the calendar that can be easily ascertained by understanding a little of the Hebrew language and studying into the topic just a little bit. What is true is that the calculated Jewish calendar clearly violates a number of these basic principles, like starting the year in Tishri rather than Abib and by postponing God feasts for reasons of *halacha* tradition.

Mr. Walker continues his speculation by writing, "Therefore, we have two options: either we accept the Hebrew calendar in its entirety or we choose one of the calendars created by one of the several who have created their own calendars in recent years. The latter is not a logical choice."<sup>181</sup> Mr. Walker is right that there are two options. You can either accept the calculated Jewish calendar, which clearly violates a number of scriptural ordinances, which he very carefully did not cover in his speculation, or you can try to follow a calendar that attempts to follow scripture. The former is simply not the righteous, biblical solution, as Jesus' attacks on the Pharisees in the gospels makes clear.

Mr. Walker attempts to defend that calculated Jewish calendar when he writes, "We must then ask the question, What is the origin of the Hebrew calendar? The simple answer is, we do not know."<sup>182</sup> Again, this is not true. If you accept the calculated Jewish calendar as being authoritative, then you should accept the Jewish leadership's understanding of that calendar. They clearly state that the current calculated Jewish calendar took the place of an observed calendar about 1,600 to 1,800 years ago.

Mr. Walker asks, "Could God have given to Moses a calendar with all of its essential ele-

<sup>179</sup> UCG statement on the Calendar, copied from the internet, p. 2

<sup>180</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

<sup>181</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

<sup>182</sup> Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

ments defined? Of course, He could.”<sup>183</sup> Mr. Walker asks if God could have done this or that, not if He did it. So of course the answer is God could have done something, but the evidence suggests He did not and even if God did give this knowledge, scripture shows there is no way this knowledge could have been handed down. However Mr. Walker’s speculation suggests he believes that God’s modus operandi is the Gnostic knowledge shared only by a few and that He deliberately hides things from His called out people by not listing them in scripture. And make no mistake, there is nothing like postponing God’s feast in scripture, with the exception of Jeroboam’s actions, which are heartedly condemned by God. Again Mr. Walker statement has no bearing on whether the calculated Jewish calendar should be considered to be authoritative by Christians today. If there was something that was revealed that was not written down in scripture, it was not important and was surely lost during Israel’s many lapses from God’s way of life. Either way, the current calculated Jewish calendar goes back less than two millennia, so it could not have been handed down from Moses as Mr. Walker seems to imply.

Mr. Walker continues, “Could God have used a calendar that was already in existence at that time? Of course, He could.”<sup>184</sup> Could God use a holiday like Saturnalia to celebrate the birth of His only begotten son? Many believe he did, but scripture shows this is not true. The idea that God somehow will use whatever calendar was already being used is discounted in the appendix on Ron Dart’s calendar paper. Egypt used a totally solar calendar and the scripture depicts God teaching Israel about the seven day week and also about how the moon controls the months, two things they would have forgotten while under harsh Egyptian taskmasters if they forgot about the seventh day Sabbath.

Mr. Walker writes, “While we do not know the history of the Hebrew calendar, we do know that God used the Jewish people to preserve His Word.”<sup>185</sup> This is not correct. We do know the Jews preserved a portion of the word of God and we do know about the history of the calculated Jewish calendar. This history the calculated Jewish calendar is detailed in this book.

We also know that the Jewish people only preserved part of God’s word, what we now call the Old Testament. The last authoritative writings that the Jews have preserved date to almost four centuries before Jesus. We also know that many of the Jewish practices that are written in the Mishnah and the Talmud are practices that were condemned by Jesus. So when Mr. Walker writes, “Isn’t it also logical to conclude that He used the same Jewish people to preserve a calendar that will enable us to keep His Holy Days at the correct time,”<sup>186</sup> the obvious answer is no. This logic would dictate that we should not accept the New Testament as authoritative nor should we accept Jesus as the Messiah. It would also dictate that we should observe Pentecost on Sivan 6 and perform the Lulav ceremony on the 7th day of the feast of Tabernacles. The Jews changed many of their practices in violation of scriptural principles according to the accounts in the New Testament as well as in the Mishna. If the calculated Jewish calendar is one of those traditional practices, which it

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183 Walker, Leon, *Did God Give a Calendar?*

184 Ibid

185 Ibid

186 Ibid



most assuredly is, then it would be illogical and unscriptural to accept it. We should judge the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar according to scriptural principles, something that Mr. Walker and the United Church of God would obviously object to since he carefully avoided doing just that.

Mr. Walker finishes his statement with, "If we do not accept the logic of that conclusion, then we have no other alternative than to accept one of the calendars created in recent times by men with no other authority than their own. These individuals do not have any biblical basis or history to prove that their calendar is the correct one."<sup>187</sup>

This book has shown there is a great deal of historical and biblical basis for a calendar other than the calculated Jewish calendar. There is also a great deal of historical and biblical evidence for rejecting the calculated Jewish calendar. Individuals have always been free to pursue God's way of life. They are free to read and understand the bible and apply its principles to their way of life. However, it is usually good to get both sides of a story. Mr. Walker's innuendo's, misstatements, and phraseology are designed to cast doubt. They can simply be accepted or a Christian can actually look at the calculated Jewish calendar under the prism of scripture, something that the United Church of God seems very hesitant to do.

Many UCG ministers, when quizzed about the calendar, have responded with a statement like, "Can you prove you are right from the Bible." The answer to their question is no. This author cannot prove when and how intercalation was done with 100 percent certainty. He also cannot state there is a biblical definition of the what the new moon is. But if I were to ask this same minister the same question, "Can you prove you are right from the Bible," they would also have to answer no, as their calendar papers and statements have shown. But if the minister asked can I prove that the calculated Jewish Calendar is wrong from the Bible, the answer is yes. If I asked this minister if he could prove the calendar proposed in this book were wrong from scripture, he would have to answer no based on the research United has presented. So is it better to follow something you know is wrong or take a chance on something that is probably right?

This book has exposed the fact that the vast majority of scholarship agrees postponements were added to the calendar over a 250 year period leading up to the time of Hillel II because there is absolutely no indication days were added to prevent tandem Sabbaths in Biblical or Jewish tradition before 200 CE. The calculated Jewish calendar also does not follow any lunar cycle nor does it start the year when God commands, which clearly violates the biblical mandates of Exodus 12:2.<sup>188</sup> Therefore the calculated calendar is the wrong calendar for Christians to follow.

The style and substance of UCG's scholarship is displayed in their calendar paper and their statements on the calendar. They ignore questions about the calendar that even they write are valid questions. They quote discredited, politically motivated, erroneous, and almost certainly lying scholars in an attempt to cast doubt upon accepted scholarship. Jewish authorities that support their position are cited, yet these same Jewish authorities disagree

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid

<sup>188</sup> Ex. 12:2

with their premise, they dismiss. United ignores the fact that their references all support an observed calendar being used in the time of Jesus. They obfuscate the problem of the calculated Jewish calendar while sowing seeds of confusion. Mr. Walker's statement obviously followed the pattern seen in Kenneth Herrmann's writings of trying to spread FUD rather than trying to reason together to answer questions, which is how God deals with mankind.<sup>189</sup>

UCG's supposition in their study paper that postponements must be used to place the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan on Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> in 31 CE is simply an erroneous wave of its theological hands. Even if all their vast array of suppositions about John 7 through 9 were correct, which it almost certainly is not, their conclusions are in error because the calendar historically used in the time of Christ, based upon observation of the first visible crescent and the ripening of the barley, not only agrees with the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan being on a Wednesday in 31 CE, but explains why the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was on April 25<sup>th</sup>, something the calculated Jewish calendar does not do. Therefore, the entire UCG paper is without merit. Mr. Walker's statement about the calendar was designed not to answer questions and to insist the only logical thing for Christians to do is to follow the leader and stop asking these annoying questions. This book and Frank Nelte's continued insistence that the calculated Jewish calendar should not be followed by Christians almost certainly prompted Leon Walker's one sided statement designed to obfuscate questions about the calculated Jewish calendar. What is so sad is that far too many Christians will accept these kinds of papers and statements as valid research even though the United Church of God obviously ignores valid questions to maintain uniformity while destroying unity.

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<sup>189</sup> Is. 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

## CBCOG's Feast of Trumpets 2000

An inspiring reading of the Declaration of Independence at Old South Church on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2000 made this author realize that this appendix had to be added to this calendar book. The Declaration of Independence not only lays out the goals and aims for what would become the United States of America, but also outlines the charges against King George of England. The charges are laid out so the whole world could see that the United States of America was not a rebellious nation after vainglory and personal fortune. They made their charges so the world would know the facts about King George and realize the Colonies had been forced into their actions by the gross injustices of England.

In the same vein, this author believes world should judge the scholarship of Fred Coulter's Christian Biblical Church of God booklet entitled *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, which was released on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2000. Although it is written by Dwight Blevins and Carl Franklin, it follows the pattern of scholarship that Fred Coulter has displayed in his *The Christian Passover* book and other collected works.<sup>1</sup> As is common with many churches of God publications about the calendar, the CBCOG's booklet actually ignores many of the questions of the calculated Jewish calendar. However, its most egregious errors include: its circular logic; its specialized, erroneous mis-translations; ignoring its own references; misstating the reason for the calculated Jewish calendar and ignoring the very rules it sets for the calendar.

The material published by Fred Coulter's Biblical Church of God is particular corrosive and flawed in this author's opinion. Unfortunately, many of Mr. Coulter's followers allow him his scholastic dalliances without examining them in depth, thus allowing themselves to believe Fred Coulter is actually a scholar when his church's works are often so seriously flawed as to be laughable. To those who believe this statement and others in this appendix are unchristian because they are judgmental and are not edifying I give my sincere apologies. However, it is essential to point out the serious mistakes of someone who sits in the role of teacher, especially when his teaching style is bombastic and corrosive. Correcting these types of mistakes with plain words should be edifying for Christians.

*The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* starts with, "The U.S Naval Observatory calculates the conjunction of Tishri 1 in the year 2000 to occur at 21:53 JT (Jerusalem time), or 9:53 on the evening of September 27."<sup>2</sup> This statement is not completely accurate. The U.S. Naval observatory only calculates conjunctions according to the Gregorian calendar. Although this

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Mr. Coulter's *The Christian Passover*, you can download Jesus the True Passover from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

<sup>2</sup> Blevins, Dwight, and Franklin, Carl, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, Christian Biblical Church of God, March 21, 2000, p. 1

may seem like a small point, the literature of the CBCOG has a tendency to misrepresent facts, throw in extraneous information, and build straw men. Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins have actually extrapolated the observatories calculation to calculated Jewish calendar.

Dwight Blevins and Carl Franklin write, “The term Molad does not refer to the astronomical conjunction of the new moon, as many have assumed. The determination of the new moon of Tishri is not based on the time of the conjunction, but on the average time of the conjunction, which rarely coincides with the actual conjunction.”<sup>2</sup> So far, this is a true statement. However, the very next sentence states, “The purpose in calculating the Molad, or mean conjunction, is to determine the earliest time that the new crescent may possibly be seen from Jerusalem.”<sup>3</sup> The authors nowhere state the source of this hypothesis. This statement is erroneous, even by the authors’ own criteria. The authors criteria is, “Scriptures command that the feast of Trumpets be observed on the day in which the new crescent of the seventh moon first appears.”<sup>4</sup> The first crescent was seen over Jerusalem on Thursday night, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000 CE.<sup>5</sup> The criteria that the authors wrote they use should have dictated starting the feast of Trumpets on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup> (starting the evening before). The reader will probably realize this would place the feast of Trumpets tandem to a weekly Sabbath, so the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar would postpone the feast of Trumpets by a day. Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins paper state, “Scriptures command that the feast of Trumpets be observed on the day in which the new crescent of the seventh moon first appears.”<sup>6</sup> However, the authors actually observed the feast of Trumpets on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, so the very premise of their paper was flawed beyond redemption from the start.

It is not a very auspicious start to a study paper when the very first statements about the topic are actually not just inconsistent, but in error. Mr. Coulter, Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin did not even follow their written criteria about the calendar. This demonstrates that their criteria was to follow the calculated Jewish calendar, no matter what the phase of the moon was. This also shows how unimportant the phase of the new moon is to the authors and the calculated Jewish calendar in their observance of the annual feasts, no matter what they write.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins also write that, “Since postponements are applicable 61 % of the years, gross miscalculation would occur if these rules were not valid.”<sup>7</sup> The authors

3 Ibid, p. 2

4 Ibid, p. 2

5 Karaites\_korner.org- Karaites Korner Newsletter #53, New Moon Report, September 2000

On September 28, 2000 the New Moon was seen by 3 observers looking from the lookout point on top of Mt. Hezekiah (Har Hizkiyahu) located a 20 minutes drive north-west of Eilat, near Mt. Uziyahu. The moon was seen by Magdi Shamuël, Yudah Cohen, and Yosi Gaber. There were clouds on the horizon and the moon kept moving in and out of the clouds. Magdi was the first observer to see the moon at 18:45 and it only remained visible for a short time. Immediately after sighting the moon with the naked eye Magdi confirmed the observation through binoculars. Yudah Cohen saw the New Moon a few minutes later with the naked eye and he was able to track it for a few minutes. A few minutes later Magdi saw the moon again with the naked eye. At 19:02 Yosi Gaber sighted the moon and it remained visible for a short time. Sunset was observed at 18:26. 7 other observers present were unsuccessful at sighting the moon. Observers reported from various other locations throughout Israel that the moon was not visible due to heavy cloud coverage.

6 Ibid, p. 2

7 Blevins, Dwight, and Franklin, Carl, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 29

simultaneously contend that the first of Tishri must be on the night of the first crescent moon over Jerusalem, that the use of the molad ensures the first crescent will occur after the molad, and that were it not for postponements, the first crescent would not be visible over Jerusalem at the first of Tishri. This is contradictory and confusing, at best. The crescent moon has no real bearing on the calculated Jewish calendar. As Lasker and Lasker so eloquently state about the calculation of the molad in the body of this book, "If the molad comes on any of these three days, Rosh Hashanah is not observed (Tishri does not begin) until the following day. The avoidance of Wednesday and Friday helps keep Yom Kippur from coming on Friday or Sunday, thus obviating the succession of two days with the full Sabbath restrictions. The avoidance of Sunday prevents Hoshana Rabbah (with its ritual of beating the willows) from coming on the Sabbath."<sup>8</sup> The reason for calculating the molad is to have a mathematically repeatable starting point to which the postponements can be applied to avoid tandem Sabbaths with atonement and to make sure the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles does not fall on a weekly Sabbath so the Jews can wave the willows during the Lulav ceremony. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin are simply in error on this point, as any scholar who has done even a cursory study of the calculated Jewish calendar should know.

The erroneous statements about the calculated Jewish calendar by the authors continue with, "According to the Jewish calendar, the new moon of Tishri is not the astronomical conjunction, but the new crescent."<sup>9</sup> The new moon of Tishri 1 is not calculated to be the first crescent, nor is it the first crescent approximately 50% of the time under the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. Approximately 40% of the time the first of Tishri is the day of the conjunction according to the calculated Jewish calendar and 10% of the time it the day after the first crescent, as in 2000 CE. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin are either disingenuous with the statement that the first of Tishri is declared to be the first crescent under the calculated Jewish calendar or they simply do not understand it aligns with the first crescent over Jerusalem only 50 percent of the time.

### 1 Samuel 20

1 Samuel 20 is discussed in detail in the body of *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*. The authors write, "Since the only new moon that God ordained as religious festival is the new moon of the seventh month, it is evident that this Scripture is referring to the Feast of Trumpets."<sup>10</sup> The authors are most probably mistaken. 1 Samuel 20:5 states, "And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even."<sup>11</sup> There is no suggestion this new moon is a special religious festival, only the new moon. King Saul had a special meal at the court during the new moon, which is common in the history of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Lasker, Arnold A. and Lasker, Daniel J., *Behold, a Moon is born! How the Jewish Calendar Works*, Conservative Judaism, Vol. 41 no. 4, summer 89, p. 12

<sup>9</sup> Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 2

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> 1Sam. 20:5

<sup>12</sup> Henry, Matthew, *Commentary on the Old Testament, The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1983, p. 548-The two next days Saul was to dine publicly, upon occasion of the solemnities of the new moon, when extraordinary sacrifices were

Bromiley writes, “Furthermore, the ‘new moon’ (hodes, also rendered ‘month’) was celebrated each month in a manner similar to a sabbath but with a little more festivity.”<sup>13</sup> Scripture is replete with examples of special observances on the new moon.<sup>14</sup> The New Testament also states, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”<sup>15</sup> The prophets clearly state that there will be special worship and religious services on the new moon as well. “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.”<sup>16</sup> “And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish.”<sup>17</sup>

There is an abundance of evidence that the new moon, every new moon, was a celebration in Israel. The authors pretence that the only new moon mentioned in scripture is Tishri 1 is erroneous. Even Ps. 81:3, an extensively used versed by Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins, states

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offered and feasts made upon the sacrifices.

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1983, p. 548-The beginning of a new month on moon was always celebrated by special sacrifices, followed by feasting, at which the head of a family expected all its members to be present.

Clarke, Adam, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the New Testament, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1983, p. 548-On these new moons they offered sacrifices, and had a feast; as we learn from Numbers 10:10, 28:11. And we may supposed that the families, on such occasions, sacrificed and feasted together.

Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 11, section 9-But on the next day, which was the new moon, the king, when he had purified himself, as the custom was, came to supper; and when there sat by him his son Jonathan on his right hand, and Abner, the captain of his host, on the other hand, he saw David’s seat was empty, but said nothing, supposing that he had not purified himself since he had accompanied with his wife, and so could not be present; but when he saw that he was not there the second day of the month neither, he inquired of his son Jonathan why the son of Jesse did not come to the supper and the feast, neither the day before nor that day

13 Hartley, J.E., Moon, Bromiley, G. W., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume 3, K-P, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1986, p. 410

14 Num. 29:6 Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.

Num. 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

Num. 28:11 And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot;

2Kgs. 4:23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

Isa. 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

Col. 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

15 Col. 2:16

16 Isa. 66:23

17 Ezek. 46:6



that the trumpets were to be blown on the new moon.<sup>18</sup> Although these authors try to show that this verse is referring to the time of the “fall” feasts, this psalm could also be referencing the “spring” feast, as will be shown later in this appendix. Mr. Franklin’s and Mr. Blevins’ assumption that 1 Samuel 20 occurred at the Feast of Trumpets is an erroneous assumption because new moon celebrations are outlined in scripture in both the Old and New Testaments and in the history of the nation of Israel.

The authors also ask of 1 Samuel 20:5, “How did David know that ghoh-desh would occur on the following day? The only possible answer is that the new moon had been calculated in advance.”<sup>19</sup> As I point out in detail in this book, there are many possible answers as to how they knew the next day would be the new moon. One is that the moon had been dark for two days and they knew the new crescent would shine through on the next night. Another is that it was the 29<sup>th</sup> day and the new crescent moon was not seen, so they knew the next day had to be declared the new moon because no month can be longer than 30 days.

Another explanation, one that I personally disagree with, but one which I cannot ignore, brought up by many commentaries, states that, “Apparently Saul held a feast for his court the first two days of every month (cf. Vv. 5, 18f, 24-7. 34); this account suggests that the new moon festival may have been celebrated for two days at certain times in Israel’s history, perhaps because of the difficulty of determining precisely the day of the new moon.”<sup>20</sup> This interpretation seems to be confirmed by Josephus. “But on the next day, which was the new moon, the king, when he had purified himself, as the custom was, came to supper; and when there sat by him his son Jonathan on his right hand, and Abner, the captain of his host, on the other hand, he saw David’s seat was empty, but said nothing, supposing that he had not purified himself since he had accompanied with his wife, and so could not be present; but when he saw that he was not there the second day of the month neither, he inquired of his son Jonathan why the son of Jesse did not come to the supper and the feast, neither the day before nor that day.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore Josephus and others suggest the new moon referred to in 1 Samuel 20 are the two consecutive new moon meals and not the actual new moon. Josephus’ interpretation of 1 Samuel 20:5 suggests that David and Jonathan knew there would be a new moon meal the next evening as well, not the actual new moon.

Jason Churchill presents another possible solution why David could say with certainty that tomorrow was the new moon.

In other words, the Jewish Encyclopedia offers a simple explanation for 1 Sam 20, that does not demand a fixed calendar. This explanation recognizes the historical evidence that the Jewish Calendar of the Second Temple period was not a fixed calendar (but depended upon the confirmed sighting of the visible crescent moon). Specifically, the Jewish Encyclopedia understands that the New Moon was not officially declared by the Sanhedrin until the morning following the sighting. David and Jonathan could have easily known that the New Moon would be officially declared the following morning (“tomorrow”) if their conversation took

18 Ps. 81:3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

19 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 2

20 ISBE, Vol. .3, *New Moon*, Hartley, J. E. p. 527

21 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 11, section 9

place after sunset, on a night when they the young crescent moon was already clearly visible! This is certainly compatible with David's exclamation, "BEHOLD the New Moon", since "behold" can literally mean "Look!"<sup>22</sup>

It should also be remembered that account of 1 Samuel 20 was written after the fact, as history. This could also account for the wording used by Jonathan about when the new moon would be.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write that 1 Samuel 20 proves that the new moon was calculated and there can be no other answer. They write, "Jonathan did not say, 'Tomorrow may be the new moon,' or 'Tomorrow will probably be the new moon.' He said, 'Tomorrow IS the new moon.' Jonathan spoke these words to David with absolute certainty. They both knew that the Jewish calendar had predicted the occurrence of the new moon on the following day."<sup>23</sup> However this bombastic pattern that there is only one answer to their questions is repeated over and over again not only in Mr. Blevins' and Mr. Franklin's article, but in many of CBCOG materials that purport to be scholarly exegesis of scripture. 1 Samuel 20 does not dictate that a calculated calendar was used at that time and scholars are agreed that the calendar was based upon observation and not calculation at the time of David. However, the Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins seem not to have been able to surmise these other possible answers. Instead they state, As shown, there are many explanation why Jonathan spoke those words with certainty, so this statement is simply wrong!

This pattern of brandishing hypothesis and supposition as fact is carried forward by the author's use of the Hebrew word *hay-yah* as proof that the new moon is the first crescent. Unfortunately this exegesis is used by many who believe the new moon is the crescent moon. They write, "Hay-yah means to rise or appear (see Brown Driver Briggs, p. 225) and is used with this meaning in Genesis 1:5 in reference to the appearing of the evening (erev, or sunset) and the morning (bo'ker, or sunrise) on the first day of creation... The new moon had appeared before King Saul and those who were feasting with him at the palace, and before David, who was hiding in the field. Here is undeniable evidence that the new moon of Scripture is not the astronomical conjunction."<sup>24</sup> Yet in their appendix A of their calendar paper, the authors write, "In the context of Genesis 1:5, hay-yah has the fundamental meaning 'to come into being , become.'"<sup>25</sup> The authors use BDB as their authority to state hay-yah means arise or appear, yet they also use BDB as a reference to state hay-yah means to come into being, become. The authors translation of the same word having two meanings might be understandable if their definition of hay-yah was from two different verses, but their two divergent definitions for hay-yah are both from Genesis 1:5. I would ask any translator to at least be consistent with their translation of the same word from the same verse, yet the Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin translate hay-yah to mean two different things in the same exact verse at two different places in their paper. This is terrible scholarship because hay-yah is used 3,540 times in scripture. Some of these translations are explored in the body of this book.

22 Churchill, Jason, *Comments on the Summary of the Jewish calendar*—Doctrinal Study Paper, United Church of God, ai, (Feb. 1997), March, 1997, p. 18

23 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 2-3

24 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 3

25 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 33

An accurate translation of 1 Samuel 10:5 would convey the meaning *hay-yah* in Gen. 1:5. BDB's main definition, that *hay-yah* is to fall out, come to pass, become, be.<sup>26</sup> The definition of *hay-yah* is to be, become, exist, happen.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, what verse 24 of 1Sam 20 actually states is that the new moon happened, not that it could be seen. And even if *hay-hay* meant to visually observe, which it almost certainly does not in chapter 20 of 1 Samuel, that does not mean that it was the crescent that was seen. A lack of light meant that the conjunction would have happened and that could be observed as well as a crescent. I believe the first crescent is and always was the new moon, but I also realizes that there is absolutely no definitive scriptural evidence to prove this, especially not in the verses of 1 Samuel 20.

### The New Moon

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, "Rather than calculating the astronomical conjunction, the Jewish calendar uses the average or mean conjunction to project the earliest visible crescent."<sup>28</sup> This statement is not correct. First, as the Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, the astronomical conjunction can fluctuate by over 12 hours around the mean throughout the course of the year.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the calculated Jewish calendar does not use the molad to project the earliest possible visible crescent because its mechanics, the rules that govern the calculated Jewish calendar, don't take into account when the first visible crescent occurs. Applying postponement rules from the molad, as shown in the body of this book, is not and could not be used to predict when the first crescent would appear after the molad because they were never designed for that purpose. Their purpose is the make sure that a weekly Sabbath was never tandem to atonement and to make sure the seventh day of tabernacles does not occur on the weekly Sabbath so the Jews could perform the Lulav ceremony, which they considered to be too much work to occur on the weekly Sabbath. Therefore not only does the molad have no consistent mathematical relationship with the actual conjunction or the first visible crescent, it was never intended for such a relationship.

After pointing out all the irregularities in the orbit of the moon, the authors state, "That is why God established the mean conjunction as the basis for calculating the new moon. The use of the mean conjunction provides a simple, reliable and consistent basis for calculation."<sup>30</sup> The authors state as fact that God established the mean conjunction for some type of calculation without a shred of evidence because none exists in either scripture nor in history. So this statement is in error.

The question that Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins are not answering is why not simple go by the first crescent? As the body of this book shows, the first visible crescent was used by Israel throughout its recorded history until the destruction of the second temple, as the new moon. It is simpler, more reliable and definitely more consistent than the molad.

They write, "In the days of David and early kings of Israel, calculating the New Moon Day

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26 BDB, *Hebrew English Lexicon*, p. 225

27 Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* Vol. 1, p. 219

28 Blevins and Franklin, p. 3 *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*

29 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 4.

30 Ibid

was a simple task because the lunar cycle was much more constant. But during the reign of Ahaz and later reign of Hezekiah, the hand of God directly altered the arrangement of the heavenly bodies.<sup>31</sup> Even if God's turning back of the sundial and defeat of the Assyrians did alter the course of heavenly bodies, which although entirely possible, is unprovable, there is no evidence presented that the lunar cycle was much more consistent in the days of the early kings of Israel. No proof is presented because there is no such proof. Even if Velikovsky's theories are correct, there is no way to know what the pattern of the moon was before the days of Hezekiah.<sup>32</sup> This author assumed the Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins were using Mr. Velikovsky's theories or something like them because they have presented their hypothesis without proof or substantiation.

The authors listing of proofs from computer calculations really has no bearing on rather the calculated Jewish calendar was extant before the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE because the authors have missed one very important facet of the calculated Jewish calendar. Because fifty percent of the time the calculated Jewish calendar proclaims the new moon on the same day as the first crescent, any calculation of an astronomical conjunction versus the first crescent versus the calculated Jewish calendar in a single year or selected years has no validity. The only scientifically feasible plan would be to calculate when the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri was to be declared over a large number of consecutive years in the ancient past according to the calculated Jewish calendar. Then you would calculate when the first visible crescent should have been visible if the skies were clear enough to see the first crescent. Then you would have to compare these two sets of calculations with the actual date of the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri. If the actual first of Tishri coincided with the calculated Jewish calendar rather than the first crescent, then 50 percent of the time these two calendars do not coincide, then the calculated Jewish calendar was used rather than the first visible crescent. Although it is possible to compute when the first of Tishri should be declared by both the first visible crescent and the calculated Jewish calendar, there are no historic records that would allow us to complete this experiment.

An example of the erroneous, unscientific method used by the authors in an attempt to show that the calculated Jewish calendar was used in the distant past is their calculations from the days of Ezra. The authors state that the molad occurred on September 15, 538 BCE. They contend this was a Wednesday and that their postponement rule one moved the first of Tishri to Thursday, September 16.<sup>32</sup> Although this author has not checked their calculations, it is assumed there are accurate with the exception of an unplanned intercalation of Adar II. The authors then calculate when the first visible crescent could be seen, which they contend would be Thursday evening, September the 16<sup>th</sup> and again this author has no reason to doubt them. However, they go on to state,

The declaration of Tishri 1, the New Moon Day, on September 16, 538, is supported by the astronomical facts. The one-day postponement of the Feast of Trumpets in 538 BCE was necessary to keep the observance aligned with the actual occurrence of the new moon. The same was true of the Feast of Trumpets in 515 BCE, the year the temple was completed.<sup>33</sup>

31 Ibid

32 Velikovsky, Immanuel. *Worlds in Collision*. New York: MacMillan, 1950.

33 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 5 The authors first postponement rule is that

First, the authors have presented no evidence of when the new moon was actually declared in 538 or 515 BCE because no such evidence exists. However, if their hypothesis that the new moon was declared on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 538 BCE is correct, it does not prove the calculated Jewish calendar was used. All they have done is show that the proclamation of the new moon according to the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar corresponded with the first visible crescent over Jerusalem in September of 539 BCE, which it does 50 percent of the time. My question to the reader and the authors is what about the other 50 percent of the time? After all, the authors by the very name of their paper predicted the first visible crescent in 2000 CE would match the new moon predicted by the calculated Jewish calendar, but it did not because the rules of Jewish halacha embedded in it postponed the first of Tishri one day.

All of the calculations by the authors follow the same pattern, showing the calculated Jewish calendar's declaration of a new moon matched the day when the first crescent would have been visible if the skies were clear. This proves absolutely nothing, especially not that the calculated Jewish calendar maintains some astronomical alignment that is not defined in scripture. The authors calculations were an attempt to show a scientific, astronomical, mathematical basis for the calculated Jewish calendar predicting the first visible crescent over Jerusalem when no such basis exists. The postponements of the calculated Jewish calendar are religious ordinances that do not allow tandem sabbaths in the "fall" and prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from falling on the weekly sabbath so the Jews can perform the Lulav ceremony without infringing on *halacha* Sabbath traditions. The declaration of the day of the new moon according to the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar coincides with the first crescent over Jerusalem approximately fifty percent of the time, so it is likely when the Jewish leadership instituted a calendar with postponements as its basis, they tried to mimic the observed calendar as closely as they could.

### **New Testament Evidence of Postponement?**

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins go through a history of the calendar court on pages 10-12 of *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*. They list some of the responsibilities of these court officials. They then state, "When we understand the historical facts, it is evident that the bet din had been regulating the calendar for many generations before the time of Hillel II. The regulation of the calendar by a central authority had begun in the days of Ezra and the Great Assembly. As a priest of the lineage of Hilkiah, Ezra had inherited a full knowledge of the Jewish calendar, including intercalation and the Rules of Postponement."<sup>34</sup> It is too bad that the authors decided not to list what these very same sages wrote about how the calendar was regulated in the past. As shown in the body of this book, these sages write that the calendar was maintained by observation. Therefore the written statements of men who could have sat on the bet din show they did not believe Ezra had received some Gnostic calendar knowledge from the forefathers of Israel.

The calendar court did regulate when to intercalate a month during the second temple

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if the molad occurs after noon, then the day is postponed. This is the second rule of postponements, not the first. The authors have chosen to switch the order of postponement rules for their own reasons.

34 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 11



period. There was a complex set of rules and regulations that were followed. However, as Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins have tendency to do, they have assumed the rules of postponement were also passed down, when there is no mention of the rules of postponement in the writings of the sages that the authors claim exercised these rules. As has been shown, these same sages wrote they not only allowed, but planned for tandem sabbaths in the “fall” as late as 200 CE. Therefore, according to their own writings, the bet din did regulate the calendar for generations using an observed calendar and sometime between 200 and 350 CE the bet din added postponements to prevent tandem sabbaths with atonement, to keep the length of the year from being no less than 353 days long and no more than 355 days long, and making sure the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles did not fall on a weekly sabbath so the Jews could wave perform the Lulav ceremony without infringing on the *halacha* ordinances of the weekly Sabbath.

The Mishnah, compiled by the sages who would have been the ones to have the supposed oracle of the sacred calculated Jewish calendar around 200 CE is proof that the bet din allowed the Day of Atonement to be tandem to the weekly Sabbath before 200 CE. Footnote 8 of Shebath, under section 114b states, “If it were of immediate importance, the shebath would have been permitted. But in any case when the Day of Atonement falls on a Friday, the vegetables, even if trimmed, cannot be cooked.”<sup>35</sup> The sages, those who were supposed to be in charge of the calendar, declared even if vegetables had been prepared in advance on the Thursday before a Friday Day of Atonement, they could still not be cooked on the weekly sabbath after Atonement. But this is not the only instance of ordinances being prescribed for tandem sabbaths at the Day of Atonement. Footnote 6 of tract 100b of Menahoth states, “The Day of Atonement. When the Day of Atonement fell on a Friday the shewbread was baked on a Thursday.”<sup>36</sup> And tract 19a of Kerithoth states if “a Sabbath and the Day of Atonement [follow each other]”<sup>37</sup> showing the idea of tandem sabbaths was not only allowed, but planned for by Jewish leaders 200 years before Hillel II released his calendar and two hundred years after the death of Christ. Unless the Jews were lying, and if they are how can we trust that they maintained some gnostic-like knowledge of a calendar, there were tandem Sabbaths at the time of Jesus so the calendar used could not have been the calculated Jewish calendar.

After tracing the history of some of the serious battles over the calendar that Jewish leaders fought a century or two after Jesus was crucified, the authors state, “This historical record confirms that the new moon of Tishri was calculated in advance by the sages of the calendar court, known as the bet din. If disputes arose over the date of the new moon, the nasi, who presided over the calendar court, had the final word.”<sup>38</sup> The authors have ignored two important facts, the first being the obvious implications of their research. Did the nasi within a century or two of Jesus’ crucifixion calculate the first of Tishri? There is evidence they did. Were there violent disputes about this calculation of the first of Tishri? Even the authors quotes show this to be the case. As the bet din exercised its new found authority

35 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 4 Menahoth Tract 100b*, Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 615

36 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 1 Shabbath, Tract 19a*, Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 147

37 Epstein, I, ed, *The Babylonian Talmud, Vol. 4 Kerithoth tract 19a* Soncino Press, London, 1938, p. 561

38 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 12



after the end of the Sanhedrin, it excommunicated those who disagreed with its rulings. Why would old and respected sages stand up to the authority of the bet din, the calendar council, unless they believed this council to be wrong? Of course there could have been political reasons, but reading the history of the court at Jamnia is like reading a political thriller. As the bet din began to exercise its authority, it began to change the rules of the calendar from observation of the first crescent to a pharisaical construct that eliminated tandem sabbaths with atonement and prevented the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on the weekly Sabbath. It took them generations to institute these changes, but now that the Sadducees were out of the way, the Pharisees set up rabbinical Judaism in their image with their calendar. The second fact the authors ignore is Maimonides' synopsis of the Talmudic rules and regulations of the calendar.

“Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its ‘proper time’ for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”<sup>39</sup> Maimonides wrote, “Thou, however, discerning scholar, must affirm that observation had been a fundamental principle of our religion, and when the new crescent could not be observed a day was added to the outgoing month. To this truth, statements in the Mishnah and Gemara bear witness, as well as many events that occurred in past times.”<sup>40</sup> Obviously the bet din's calculation of the first of Tishri as the start of the year was a drastic change from what was practiced during the second temple period according to the historical record.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write that Paul had renounced his Pharisaical beliefs and practices, but that he had not renounced the postponements. Their supposed proof for this hypothesis is that Paul ate the Passover meal with members of the circumcision party in 54 CE. The authors contend, “Paul's observance of the holy days was based on the calculations of the Jewish calendar as declared by the bet din. Had Paul rejected the court's authority in calendrical matters, he and gentile believers would not have observed the same day as the believers of the circumcision party. The record of Scripture is that Paul's observance of the feast of God matched the of the observance of the Jewish believers, who held strictly to the Jewish calendar and declarations of the bet din.”<sup>41</sup>

This argument is incredibly weak and convoluted for four major reasons. The first reason is that the calculated Jewish calendar proclaims the new moon on the day of the first visible crescent fifty percent of the time. Therefore there would be a 50 percent chance that Paul would have had dinner with circumcision party even if they kept postponements and he did not.

The second reason is that the Talmud, secular historians, and theologians agree with Maimonides that the calendar at the time of Paul was determined by observation and declared by the Sanhedrin based on these observations. “Although we many assume the Gentile

<sup>39</sup> Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. xxviii

<sup>40</sup> Maimonides, p. liii-liv

<sup>41</sup> Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 14

Christians in the NT era made a wide use of the Greco-Roman calendars, it may be understood that the Jews and Jewish Christians, even when far from Palestine, continued to employ the official calendar of the Jewish orthodoxy, particularly for observing the religious festivals.”<sup>42</sup> So the Sanhedrin declared the start of the new moon and new year by observation at the time of Paul. The calculated Jewish calendar did not exist in Paul’s time, so it would have been impossible for Passover to be postponed by a calendar calculation. So Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin’s hypothesis is again proven incorrect.

The third reason why this argument should be rejected out of hand by Christians is because of consistency. The authors believe that the Jews, including the Jewish leadership of the bet din, kept the Passover on the later part of the 14<sup>th</sup>, while they believe true Christians kept Passover on the early 14<sup>th</sup>. Do the authors expect us to believe the circumcision party would reject the bet din on the day on which to keep Passover, yet accept them as the authority for the day to keep the Passover? This makes no sense. If the circumcision party rejected the Jewish leadership’s authority for setting the day of Passover, as the authors contend in other papers, would they accept that authority without question on the calendar? This is not consistent or logical, especially if the Jewish leadership was beginning to play games with the calendar, as is contended in the body of this book.

The fourth reason this argument should be rejected is because the authors have not proven the bet din was practicing postponements at the time of Paul. All of the writings in the Mishnah deny that postponements were being practiced at the time of Jesus the Christ and Paul. If the bet din was only responsible for intercalating Adar II and declaring the new moon by observation, as the historical record indicates, why would Paul, the gentiles, the Jews, and the circumcision party not keep the Passover at the same time? They all believed and practiced that new moon was the first visible crescent over Jerusalem, according to history.

This is a classic case of convoluted, circular logic.

1. Paul keeps Passover with the circumcision party.
2. The circumcision party follows the timing of the year set by the bet din.
3. Therefore Paul also follows the timing of the year as set by the bet din.
4. The bet din practiced postponements {*ed. note*-This is a fallacy. The authors have shown no evidence of this. In magician’s parlance, this is known as the sleight of hand.}
5. Paul therefore practiced postponements.
6. Postponements are scriptural.
7. Therefore the bet din practice postponement.

All they have to do is get line four by their audience and the magicians sleight of hand looks complete. That is why a good magician always gets distracts you while he performs his sleight of hand with the other one.

### **Rabbinic Evidence of Postponements?**

After going through the history of intercalation of Adar II from the Talmud at the time of Gamaliel, the authors state, “The rabbinical commentary that is recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud makes it clear that the intercalation of Adar and the occurrence of the new moon

<sup>42</sup> Buttrick, G.A., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Abingdon, Nashville, Tenn. 1980, p. 483

of Nisan had been calculated beforehand...The new moon of Nisan, like the new moon of Tishri, was determined far in advance and was only verified by observations.”<sup>43</sup> Rather than list this whole section, I suggest that the reader request this booklet from the CBCOG. Even reading Mr. Franklin's excerpt of the tract of the Talmud suggests there is absolutely nothing said about calculating the new moon of Tishri in advance. This entire tract from the Talmud has information about the Samaritans trying to disrupt the proclamation of the new year and nothing else. Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins have conveniently left out all the rules for intercalation of the new year listed in the Talmud, which are listed in the body of this book and many other calendar papers and references. These rules are well known among calendar scholars and their exclusion is shameful. The rules for intercalation are:

1. Barley was immature.
  2. Fruit trees were immature.
  3. Remoteness of the equinox.
  4. The Passover ovens were not yet dry.
  5. Bridges on the road need repaired.
  6. Jews from the Dispersia had not yet arrived.
- There were also 4 minor reasons for intercalating a month:
1. Lambs were too small.
  2. Turtledoves were too young.
  3. Weather was cold or snowy.
  4. Dispersia had not left home.

An eleventh, and disputed, reason for delaying Passover was if a large part of the nation was unclean.<sup>44</sup>

These rules could not be determined far in advance. There is no calculation involved in them. The authors write that, “The discussion of the ancient rabbis in the tractate Rosh Hashanah offers historical evidence that the Jewish calendar at that time of Christ and the apostle Paul was both calculated and intercalated.”<sup>45</sup> Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins are attempting to pass off a half truth as a whole truth. There is no doubt that the calendar at the time of Jesus was intercalated. This is a scriptural requirement. However, not only was this intercalation not calculated by the metonic cycle, but there is no evidence of any kind of calculation.

The very fact that Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins list the current set pattern of intercalation as valid shows how faulty their research is. The current metonic intercalation pattern was not followed until 4 centuries after Hillel II died. But of course the authors build on this supposed fact by stating, “The date of Tishri 1 was calculated by the bet din a full year in advance.”<sup>46</sup> This statement simply has no basis in fact. The authors have presented no evidence in their paper to substantiate it and this book has shown that this is simply not true.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins write, “The calculation of the new moon and the practice of intercalation did not begin at the time of Hillel II, as some have claimed.”<sup>47</sup> This author agrees that the historical record indicates the Hillel II only institutionalized the calculated Jewish calendar. He did not create it. However, the authors go on to state, “The historical evidence in the

43 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 16

44 Beckwith, *The earliest Enoch literature and its Calendar: Marks of their origin, date and motivation*, p 194

45 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 16

46 Ibid

47 Ibid

tractate Rosh Hashanah confirms that the calculated Jewish calendar was in effect at the time of Christ and of Paul—more than three hundred years before Hillel II, who codified these rules.”<sup>48</sup>

This statement is not true and the authors have presented no evidence to support it. There is a great deal of evidence that postponements and creating a set pattern of intercalation were added to the calendar, thus drastically changing its mechanics, between 200 and 350 CE and were not in effect at the time of Jesus the Christ.

Intercalation was practiced at the time of Jesus and Paul, but this intercalation was done by observation, not calculation. There is no sign in history that postponements were practiced at the time of Jesus. Quite the contrary, even the historical record presented by Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins shows an intense period of struggle over the calendar a century after Jesus’ crucifixion, when calculation began to replace observation as the authority for declaring the new moon, as most scholars agree.

### Abib

This section of the CBCOG’s calendar paper is the most perplexing to this author because the Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin describe in great detail and accurately the correct way to start the year, yet they ignore the fact that the current calculated Jewish calendar does not follow these ordinances. They state, “Some have rejected the intercalary rules of the Jewish calendar {*ed. note*—The calculated Jewish calendar rejects the rules for intercalation as they were practiced at the time of Christ, as is shown in the body of my paper}. They claim it is no longer necessary for the months of the year to coincide with the harvest cycle”<sup>49</sup> This is simply not true. Although Frank Nelte appears to be the target of this justifiable criticism, one of the reasons the vast majority of those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar do so is because the calculated Jewish calendar avoids following the cycle of the harvest. I contend Christians should observe a calendar that does follow the harvest cycle in Jerusalem, even if it be one calculated to do so. Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins go on to write, “God’s instructions were only to observe the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread in the first month. This month is clearly identified in Scripture as the time of the ripening barley.”<sup>50</sup> I could not agree more.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins then combine Ex. 12:2 with Ex. 13:4 to show that Abib is the chief or beginning of months.<sup>51</sup> They reference Ex. 9:31-2 to show the time of Abib is when the barley is beginning to ripen, yet the wheat is not ripened.<sup>52</sup> After building a strong case for the first month being when the barley has begun to ripen, but before the wheat had begun to ripen, the authors turn to the matter of seasons.

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48 Ibid

49 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 17

50 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 17

51 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 18

Exod. 12:2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Exod. 13:4 This day came ye out in the month Abib.

52 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 18

Exod. 9:31-2 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolted. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

They agree with me that there are only 2 seasons in scripture and that the equinox is not the determining factor on when the season starts. Winter ends and summer begins when the barley is Abib, according to the Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin. I concur. However, although the authors make the standard case that the year should start when the barley harvest is in Abib, they then completely ignore the fact that this is not done in the calculated Jewish calendar. During the 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> year of the 19 year time cycle, Passover and unleavened bread are observed at the end of April, yet sometimes the barley is Abib at the end of March. If we wait an entire month after the barley is in Abib to celebrate Unleavened bread, the barley will no longer be in Abib. Consistency would dictate that the authors should follow the case they have built against the set intercalation of the calculated Jewish calendar. They should reject these rabbinical rules and follow the lead of the Karaite Jews who do start the year when the barley is Abib, not before and not after. But of course the authors embrace the calculated Jewish calendar instead. To ignore your own scholarship in a vain attempt to continue your traditional practices is not something Christians teachers should be doing. However, Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins seemed more concerned with Frank Nelte's errors than the truth.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins write, "Some have rejected the rules of intercalation and have chosen to follow their own rules. They claim that the first month should be based on the spring equinox, and that all the months of the year should be calculated from the first month."<sup>53</sup> This is apparently aimed at Frank Nelte's mistaken ideas about the calendar. There are two distinct parts to the authors objections, which are apparently pointed at Mr. Nelte. The first is that some have rejected the rules of intercalation and chosen to write their own rules. This would be people like Mr. Nelte and Mr. Solinsky, who base all their rules of intercalation on the equinox, thus rejecting the rules for intercalation that are well established in scripture and history. These well established rules basically state that the first month starts when summer starts, which is most easily determined by the state of the barley harvest in Israel. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin do not point out that the calculated Jewish calendar also rejects these rules of intercalation in favor of a complicated mathematical construct that does not follow the harvest cycle.

The second point of the argument is that some believe all months should be calculated from the first month. The authors seem to feel it makes more sense to go to the equivalent of July on the Gregorian calendar to begin the count of months rather than to begin the count with the equivalent of January. This author could not disagree with Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin more strongly. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin try to build a case that when God commanded the nation of Israel to observe the month of Abib he is not saying to actually observe the new moon, but the celebrate the festival of Unleavened Bread during Abib. They base this upon their definition of the Hebrew word *shah-mar*, which they write can only mean "to celebrate a festival."<sup>54</sup> Their source for this definition is the Brown, Drivers, and Briggs lexicon, the standard lexicon for Hebrew research.<sup>55</sup> It is a shame that more of

53 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 23

54 Ibid

Deut. 16:1 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

55 Brown, Francis, *The new Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, Hendrickson



the followers of CBCOG do not compare their teachers quotes from reference works with the actual quotes. (CBCOG has a tendency to take things out of context and to remove portions of the reference work they do not like, as demonstrated throughout *The Christian Passover*, but particularly in chapter 10, where Fred Coulter quotes a number of liberal, critical sources to bolster his claims about the timing of Passover without relaying the fact that these scholars are trying to build a case for the entirety of scripture being a syncretic book that was not inspired by God).<sup>56</sup> The Brown, Drivers and Briggs lexicon details the possible definitions of *shah-mar*.

Keep, watch, preserve. Preserve, stay awake, protect. Keep, have charge of, tend (as in a flock). Watch for, wait, observe. Keep, retain, restrain. Observe, celebrate, of a festival, keep covenant, keep, preserve protect. Be on one guard. Keep one-self, refrain, abstain.<sup>57</sup>

Exodus 12:2 is not specifically listed in BDB under *shah-mar*. However, *shah-mar* is used as verb almost 450 times throughout the Old Testament. “The basic idea of the root is ‘to exercise great care over.’ This meaning can be seen to underlie the various semantic modifications seen in the verb. In combination with other verbs the meaning is ‘do carefully or diligently’. Thus Prov. 19:8, ‘Give heed to understanding’; Deut 11:32, Be careful to do (i.e. perform carefully) all the statutes and ordinances, and in Num. 23:12, speak carefully or faithfully.”<sup>58</sup>

There are four more definitions for the verb *shah-mar*. The first “expresses the careful attention to be paid to obligations of a covenant, to laws, statues, etc.”<sup>59</sup> Another possible definition of *shah-mar* “is to ‘take care of,’ guard.”<sup>60</sup> *Shah-mar* also has “the meaning ‘regard,’ give heed to.’ It is used of a man’s attitude of paying attention to, or reverence for, God or others.”<sup>61</sup> “The last definition has to do with ‘preserving’, ‘storing up.’”<sup>62</sup>

The verb *shah-mar* has many meanings, all of which connote paying attention to what you are doing. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin are correct when they state that Deut. 16:1 is not an ordinance to physically watch the new moon appear in the month of Abib. However, they are incorrect when they write, “There is no Scriptural basis for observing the new moon in the first month.”<sup>63</sup> The authors tried to lay the ground work for the premise that the only new moon God ordained for Israel to observe was the 7<sup>th</sup> new moon of the year on page 2 of *The Feast of Tabernacles 2000 AD*. Many Christians may have allowed the authors the luxury of this hypothesis because they are only familiar with the Feast of Trumpets and have never done a study of the new moons in scripture. However, as shown earlier (see the second page of this appendix as well as the body of this book), this supposition is erroneous. The reason it is so important for the authors to negate the clear teaching of Ex. 12:2, that Abib is to be the first month of the year is because they write, “Neither is there any

Publishers, Peabody, MA

<sup>56</sup> You can download *Jesus the True Passover* or *What is Liberal Scholarship* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

<sup>57</sup> BDB, *Hebrew English Lexicon*, p. 1036-7 from Strong’s 8104

<sup>58</sup> Harris et al, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* Vol. 2, #2413, p. 939

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 940

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 23



Scriptural basis for calculating the other months of the year from the first month.”<sup>64</sup> The authors have negated the clearest scripture about the calendar in the bible because the calculated Jewish calendar also negates this scripture. Negating scripture for tradition, to avoid disunity, to make life easier, or for any other reason is wrong.

The authors write, “Although the new moon of the first month is the first new moon of the year, it is not the new moon from which the new year is calculated.”<sup>65</sup> This author still has a very hard time grasping how Christians can be fooled by such logic. Abib is the first month, according to the authors, yet it is not the first month, the chief month, according to the authors. That is really Tishri according to Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin. Christians should realize that when the Jews are celebrating New Years on Tishri one because Tishri one is the new year according to the calculated Jewish calendar. This is not a correct scriptural practice.<sup>66</sup> However, the authors contend, “The Scriptures reveal that God ordained the new moon of the seventh month as the basis for calculating the new moon.”<sup>67</sup>

### **The role of the New Moon of the Seventh Month in the Calendar?**

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin base their case that the seventh month was ordained by God as the pivotal month of the calendar upon their special interpretation of Ps. 81. Before discussing this hypothesis, the entirety of Ps. 81 is listed below.

Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.

Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.<sup>68</sup>

There is no doubt the AV version of this psalm leaves something to be desired, but even in the King James version, there should be no doubt that this psalm of Asaph is exhorting Israel to follow their God because he was the one who lead them out Egypt. There is also no

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64 Ibid

65 Ibid

66 Ex. 12: 1-3

67 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 23

68 Ps. 81, KJV

doubt that God lead his people out of Egypt during the month of Abib, not the month of Tishri. This is made a little clearer in the NIV (a text that has many problems), NRSV, or the Tanakh, which is quoted below.

Sing joyously to God, our strength;  
 raise a shout for the God of Jacob  
 Take up the song,  
 sound the timbrel  
 the melodious lyre and harp  
 Blow the horn on the new moon,  
 On the full moon for our feast day.  
 For it is a law for Israel,  
 a ruling of the God of Jacob  
 He imposed it as a decree upon Joseph  
 when he went forth from the land of Egypt;  
 I heard a language that I knew not.  
 I relieved his shoulder from the burden  
 his hands were freed from the basket.  
 In distress you called and I rescued you;  
 I answered you from the secret place of thunder  
 I tested you at Meribah<sup>69</sup>

This wonderful psalm of repentance, a common theme throughout the psalms and prophets, shows us that God released Israel from their burdens in Egypt. When he released them from Egypt, He decreed a law to take up musical instruments, to sing and shout for joy for what God had done for them, during the feasts.

Matthew Henry writes, “This was a statute for Israel, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony (v. 5), a standing traditional evidence, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers. When God went out against the land of Egypt, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go, then he ordained solemn feast days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which, perhaps is meant by the solemn-feast-day.”<sup>70</sup> Adam Clarke writes, “The psalm may have been used in celebrating the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of Tishri, the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the same month, the creation of the world, the Feasts of the New Moons, and the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt-to all which circumstance it appears to refer....The feast of the new moon was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet.”<sup>71</sup>

There is evidence that Psalm 81 was written for and about Israel’s release from Egypt. There is also textual evidence it was written for the month of Tishri and was only harkening back to the wonderful days of Abib when God freed Israel. Either way, the law and the ordinance that was declared was to sing a joyful song to the God of redemption on his feast day.

<sup>69</sup> Ps. 81:2-8, Tanakh

<sup>70</sup> Henry, Matthew from the *Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985, pp. 1097-8

<sup>71</sup> Clarke, Adam, from the *Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985, pp. 1097-8

### A Unique Translation of Psalms 81

Unfortunately the authors follow their common pattern of atrocious scholarship when they examine Psalms 81. They created their own translation based on their current theology. They write, "Calculating the new moon of the seventh month, or Tishri, is of paramount importance to the observance of the feasts of God."<sup>72</sup> This is Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's supposition, their bias, which they have not proven. The most probable reason for the authors hypothesis is because this is how the calculated Jewish calendar works. They continue with, "The record that we find in Psalm 81 show that the calculation of the new moon of the seventh month was a law of God, delivered to the children of Israel at the time of the Exodus from Egypt."<sup>73</sup> The authors state psalm 81:3-5 means "that when God brought the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob out of Egypt, He ordained a testimony concerning a new moon which was to be observed as a solemn feast day."<sup>74</sup> They go on to correctly write, "The ghoh-desh or new crescent, of Psalm 81:3 is the only new moon that God commanded to be observed as an annual holy day."<sup>75</sup> They write,

The word 'statute' in verse 4 is translated from the noun 'ghohk'<sup>2706</sup> The meaning of 'ghohk'<sup>2706</sup> in this context is 'a law of religious festival' (Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 349) The word 'law' in Verse 4 is translated from the noun mish-paht'<sup>4941</sup> and refers to "a case or cause presented for judgment' (Ibid, p. 1048). Mish-paht'<sup>4941</sup> is synonymous with the noun ghah-kak'<sup>2710</sup> meaning 'something prescribed' (Ibid, p. 349), and with the noun 'ghohk'<sup>2706</sup>, which is translated 'statute in Verse 4.

The word 'ordained' in verse 5 is translated from the verb soom'<sup>7760</sup> meaning 'to compute' (Ibid, p. 962) The word 'testimony' in Verse 5 is translated from the noun geeh-dooth'<sup>5175</sup> meaning 'a code of law' (Ibid, p. 730)

When we understand the meaning of the Hebrew words, it is evident that the time of the Exodus from Egypt, God issued to Moses and Aaron 'a law of the festival.' The festival for which this law was issued was the new moon of the seventh month. This law decreed that each year the new moon of the seventh month was to presented for judgment by computation and the a written prescription, or calendar, was to be issued.<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately the authors theory and logic about Psalm 81 is so flawed it is difficult to know where to start. The authors state the solemn feast of Psalm 81:3 is referring to the day of the new moon. The one word they did not attempt to translate for their readers from Ps. 81:3 was solemn feast day. Solemn feast day is translated from the Hebrew word chag, Strong's number 2282. The vast majority of Christians have heard the word chag because it can only refer to one of the three pilgrimage feasts, Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles. Verse 3 states that Israel was to blow the horn on the new moon and on the full moon that was the solemn feast day, the day of the annual pilgrimage. "In the Bible, Feast (chag) is a technical term which always refers to the three annual pilgrimage feasts."<sup>77</sup> So the, "festival for which

72 Clarke, Adam, from the *Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985, pp. 1097-8

73 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 24

74 Ibid

75 Ibid

76 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 24

77 The New Moon in the Hebrew Bible, [http://www.karaite-korner.org/new\\_moon.shtml](http://www.karaite-korner.org/new_moon.shtml), p. 4

this law was issued”<sup>78</sup> in Ps. 81:3 could only be referring to the feasts of Passover, Pentecost or Tabernacles. It could not be referring to the feast of Trumpets, which is the day of the new moon, as a solemn feast day because it is not a pilgrimage feast. Therefore the festival law referred to in Ps. 81 cannot be about the crescent moon of the seventh month. Therefore the authors have chosen not to translate the one word that shows, without doubt, their hypothesis about Psalms 81 depicting a calculation of the new moon in the 7th month to be in error.

The authors also state that God ordained a law about the new moon. Although they chose possible translations for *geeh-dooth* (testimony), *hodesh* (new moon day) and *‘ghobk* (festival ordinance), they have distorted the context in which these words are used, just as they erroneously state the law of Ps. 81:3 was about the feast of Trumpets, when it clearly cannot be. For example, the authors define *‘ghobk* which is Strong’s 2706, as a festival ordinance, although there are many other possible definitions listed in BDB. However, because Ps. 81:4 is listed in BDB under the festival ordinance section of *‘ghobk*, I have no argument that the authors choose the right definition for *‘ghobk*. However, the context of that ordinance is blowing the horn and singing at the chag or pilgrimage festival. It is not referring to any ordinance about the new moon.

The authors chose the correct definition for *‘ghobk* in BDB and simply applied it to the wrong noun, thus taking it out of context. However, they have chosen the wrong definition for *mish-phot* from BDB. The word *mish-phot* is translated as law in verse 4 of Ps. 81 in the King James. The authors choose the definition of *mish-phot* to be “a case or cause presented for judgment.”<sup>79</sup> Just as Ps. 81:3 was listed under the festival ordinance section of *‘ghobk* in BDB, Ps. 81:4 was listed under the ordinance section of *mish-phot* in BDB. The authors have chosen to use BDB for validation, yet they have ignored how BDB defines *mish-phot* as and instead inserted an erroneous definition, out of context. The correct definition for *mish-phot* in Ps. 81:4 according to BDB is ordinance, not case or cause for judgement. As is common in the Psalms, the author has restated the same point using slightly different words. This psalm of Asaph says that it is both a statute and an ordinance that Israel sing and shout and play instruments joyful during the time of the pilgrimage feast, rather than feast is Unleavened Bread or Tabernacles, but not Trumpets.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins continue their mis-translation by defining *soom*, Strong’s number 7760, as “to compute.”<sup>80</sup> Again they have used BDB as supposed validation and again they have chosen the wrong definition according to their own reference. Definition 3b of *soom* in BDB is to set or establish a law. BDB has listed Ps. 81:5, along with Ps. 78:5, under this definition. Ps. 78:5 states, “He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed (*soom*) a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children.”<sup>80</sup> Thus the obvious and only correct translation of Ps. 81:4 using BDB as a reference states it is an ordinance of God to sing and shout for joy and play musical instruments at the time of the chag. Ps. 81:5 repeats this is an ordinance for Israel as a different stanza in a song. There is absolutely nothing about computation inferred in these verses and the authors attempt to force this meaning into Ps. 81 is one of the worst cases of eisegesis this author has ever seen.

78 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* p. 24

79 Ibid, p. 24

80 BDB, p. 1048, definition 3 actually has Ps. 81:4 listed whereas the authors chose definition 1.

The authors have ignored their own reference works, which they list as validation for their terrible translation, to try to create a theological construct validating the practice of using seventh month in calendar computations. Sadly, far too many Christians will take a look at the authors travesty of scholarship and eisegesis of Psalms 81 and believe it because they will never bother to check up on their teachers. It appears that decades of reading booklets with little snippets of scripture and reference works taken out of context have taken their toll on the ability of Christians to judge in righteousness and have emboldened teachers to present rank eisegesis as theological fact.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, "The new moon of the seventh month is the new moon that God ordained to set the months of the year... There is no Scriptural basis for using the new moon of the first month to calculate the beginning of the year. These who do so are violating the clear decree of God himself, as recorded in Psalm 81."<sup>81</sup> Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's hypothesis rejects the meaning Exodus 12:2, which states, "This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you."<sup>82</sup>

Ps. 81 is a joyful song reminding Israel to blow the shofar on the new moon and musically rejoice at the annual feast. Not only is there a long historical record of blowing the shofar on the new moon, but the shofar was blown on many occasions.

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.<sup>83</sup>

And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.<sup>84</sup>

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.<sup>85</sup>

And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.<sup>86</sup>

If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;<sup>87</sup> With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.<sup>88</sup>

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.<sup>89</sup> Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.<sup>90</sup>

And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.<sup>91</sup>

The people of Israel were supposed to blow the trumpet to warn of danger and to celebrate

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81 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 25

82 Ex. 12:2

83 Lev. 25:9

84 Josh. 6:4

85 2Sam. 6:15

86 1Kings 1:39

87 Ezek. 33:3

88 Ps. 98:6

89 Ps. 150:3

90 1 Chron. 15:28

91 2 Chron. 15:14



joyous times, to honor God, and sometime they even blew the trumpet as a weapon.<sup>92</sup> Even without reading Numbers 10:10 there should be no doubt why God ordered the trumpets blown on the new moons and the full moons at the time of the pilgrimage festivals. But the authors have overlooked the tenth chapter Numbers, where many, many uses for the trumpets are listed. Num. 10:10 states, “Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.”<sup>93</sup>

Numbers 10:10 is referring to metal horns while Ps. 81:3 refers to the ram’s horn, but many commentaries and histories agree with Keil and Delitzsch assessment. The summons in verse 4 is directed “to the priests, to whom was committed not only the blowing of the two (later on a hundred and twenty, vid. 2Chron. 5:12) silver trumpets, but who appear also in Josh. 6:4 and elsewhere (crf. Xlvii 6 with 2 Chron. 20:28) as the blowers of the shopar.”<sup>94</sup> Keil and Delitzsch go on to state that not only did the priests use both instruments, but that the two instruments were often used together and that it is probable that shofar was used to denote all types of trumpets, just as today horns has the connotation of many different types of wind blown instruments.<sup>95</sup> Even if the two horns were not used interchangeably, we do not know that only one type of horn was to played on the first day of the seventh month. Both Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 29:1 state that the first day of the seventh month was a day for blowing horns, without specifying what type of horn.<sup>96</sup> Therefore Numbers 10:10 simply agrees with the historical record that horns were blown every new moon.

We know that the metal horns would have been blown on the first of Tishri because scripture states it was to be done.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps on the first of Tishri the rams horn was blown in addition or perhaps the rams horn was blown every new moon. Either way, all Ps. 81:3 states is the horn was to be blown on a new moon. There was no special sanctification or additional ordinances, like the calculation of the calendar, implied.

### Declaration of Tishri 1 for 2000 AD

Perhaps one of the most shameful portions of this paper is the authors comparison of the conjunction with the calculated Jewish calendar as the basis for setting the first of Tishri. It is likely this was done to refute Frank Nelte, which is apparently the intent of this entire paper.

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92 Joshua 6:5

93 Numbers 10:10

94 Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 5, Psalms*, Hendrickson Pub, Peabody, Ma., 1989, p. 393

95 Ibid

96 The word translated as trumpet in these two verses is ter-oo-aw, Strong’s number 8643. The word means to make a loud noise, which was often done with both rams horns and metal trumpets.

Lev. 23:24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

Num. 29:1 And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you.

97 Number 10:10



It is shameful because using the conjunction placed the first of Tishri on Thursday, September 28<sup>th</sup> (starting the evening before). The use of the calculated Jewish calendar placed the first of Tishri on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup> (starting the evening before). The authors do not examine Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, as a possibility for the first day of Tishri, although it is the day the first crescent was visible over Jerusalem (It was actually seen on Thursday night, the 28<sup>th</sup> of September).<sup>98</sup> This omission is all the more damaging to Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's conclusions because they stated the purpose of the calculated Jewish calendar was to determine the earliest time the crescent moon could be visible over Jerusalem.<sup>99</sup> It was Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin who stated the crescent could be visible only 17.2 hours after the conjunction.<sup>100</sup> Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins wrote the conjunction at the end of September in the year 2000 would occur at 9:53 PM, Jerusalem time on the evening of September 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>101</sup> Seventeen hours later would be 3 PM on Thursday afternoon, almost 4 hours before sunset. Surely Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin should have examined the possibility that the first of Tishri might occur on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup> since the first crescent fell 21 hours after the conjunction. Although the sky was cloudy, the new crescent was seen over Jerusalem Thursday night, September 28<sup>th</sup>. Thus if the crescent were the starting point of the month, Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin should have observed the feast of Trumpets on Friday, September 29<sup>th</sup> in the year 2000, but they did not. Instead they waited an entire day because the calculated Jewish calendar postponed the feast one full day to prevent the feast of Trumpets from being tandem to the weekly Sabbath. The Rudd household did observe the feast of Trumpets on September the 29<sup>th</sup> in the year 2000. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's omission of Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> as the first of Tishri shows their scholarship for what it is, terrible, erroneous writing pretending to be scholarship designed to attack Frank Nelte while ignoring the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's belief that first of Tishri would fall on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September obviously was based on the rules of postponement built into the calculated Jewish calendar and not some astronomical event, like the first visible crescent being seen. The first rule of postponement, with the exception of Mr. Blevins' and Mr. Franklin's paper, is that the first of Tishri cannot occur on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday.<sup>102</sup> I will not speculate why the authors have chosen to change the order of the postponements in their presentation. However, it is worse than poor scholarship for a paper that purports to be about the calculated Jewish calendar leaves the reasons for the rule which prohibits Tishri one from occurring on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday out of their paper, as the authors have.

The reason for the first postponement rule, which prohibits Tishri 1 from occurring on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, is, "If the molad comes on any of these three days, Rosh Hashanah is not observed (Tishri does not begin) until the following day. The avoidance of Wednesday and Friday helps keep Yom Kippur from coming on Friday or Sunday, thus obviating the succession of two days with the full Sabbath restrictions. The avoidance of Sunday prevents Hoshana Rabbah (with its ritual of beating the willows) from coming on

98 Karaite\_korner.org- Karaite Korner Newsletter #53, New Moon Report, September 2000

99 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 2

100 Ibid, p. 3

101 Ibid, p. 26

102 Ibid, p. 34

the Sabbath.”<sup>103</sup> Perhaps Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins did not believe their readers needed to be informed that one of the foundational principles of the calculated Jewish calendar is to prevent tandem sabbaths around atonement and to prevent the seventh day of Tabernacles from occurring on a weekly Sabbath because the Lulav ceremony was considered too much work to be allowed to occur on the sabbath. However, since the calculated Jewish calendar is based on this postponement, its omission blaringly admits the horrendous scholarship presented in *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*.

The authors write if the conjunction were used as the starting point for Tishri 1, the rising moon on Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> would “be about 96% full, indicating that the declaration would be too early.”<sup>104</sup> This statement is somewhat deceptive. The rising moon for Thursday October 12<sup>th</sup> actually occurs on Wednesday night, October 11<sup>th</sup>. So the full moon rising over Jerusalem on October 11<sup>th</sup> is about 96% full. The authors go on to state, “The full moon on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles will be a perfect 100%.”<sup>105</sup> What the authors neglect to mention is that according to the US Naval Observatory, the very reference they site, the moon was exactly full at 1:53 PM on October the 13<sup>th</sup>, Jerusalem time. That means that the moon was already waning by sunset on the Friday evening, the day the authors state the moon would be 100% full and the day the authors observed the feast of Trumpets in 2000 CE. What they also neglect to mention is that by the time the moon set at about 6 am on October 13<sup>th</sup>, the moon was approximately as close to 100% full as it was when it rose at about 7 PM that evening. According to the authors astronomical criteria, the 13<sup>th</sup> of October was at least as suitable as the 14<sup>th</sup> of October for the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Tishri. However, the authors never mention a biblical reason why a moon that is 96% percent full is not acceptable according to scripture, yet one that is 99 to 100% full, which it is on both the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of October, is acceptable.

Scripture nowhere states that the moon must be 100% full on the feast of Tabernacles because it that is nearly impossible. The moon will almost always be waxing towards or waning away from 100 percent full at the start of Tishri 15<sup>th</sup>. Also, the eye cannot really distinguish between 99% full and 100% full. Few could even distinguish between 98 or 97 % full, which is why it sometimes appears that moon is full for 2 or even 3 nights in a row. The full moon is only mentioned twice in scripture, in Ps. 81:3 and Proverbs 7:20. The King James has, “He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed (*keh-seh*).”<sup>106</sup> The Tanakh has, “He took his bag of money with him and will return at mid-month (*keh-seh*).”<sup>107</sup> Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin realized that there were only 2 seasons in scripture, not the four that the western mind often wants to read into scripture. However, they overlook that their approach to what the full moon is with a western mind set. *Keh-seh* is defined as the fullness of the moon. How full is full? Is ninety-six percent not enough? Is one hundred percent demanded? If it is, then both the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of October will have moons that are very close to 100 percent full, but not quite full. What the authors

103 Lasker and Lasker, *Behold, a Moon is born! How the Jewish Calendar Works*, p. 12-14

104 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 26

105 Ibid

106 Prov. 7:20

107 Prov. 7:20, JPS

also neglect to state is that the full moon is visible for most of the night on both October the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in 2000 AD.

However, this whole line of reasoning is foolishness. There is no perceptible difference to the naked eye between a moon that exactly full and one that is either waxing or waning at 99% fullness. There were no telescopes until the renaissance, less than 500 years ago. So the moon being exactly full would have been difficult to determine. Perhaps that is why God used the new crescent moon as the starting point for the monthly calendar. Whatever the reason, God chose the new crescent moon as the start point for the month and the full moon has absolutely nothing to with the calendar in scripture. The authors attempt to use Ps. 81:3 as a calendar ordinance comes up incredible short scholastically and theologically. And if their argument had some merit, which it does not, their formula for a full moon is fulfilled just as much on Thursday night the 13<sup>th</sup> as it is on Friday night the 14<sup>th</sup> of October. Because the first visible crescent was seen Thursday night Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> in 2000 AD. Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins date for the feast of Tabernacles was 16 days after the first visible crescent. The rest of their calculation with average fullness of the full moon is meaningless because there is no scriptural justification for their comparison of astronomical data with the various phases of the moon. It appears to me this is nothing more than an attempt to lull their followers with supposed scholarship which is often referred to as boilerplate in marketing.

### **Their Conclusion**

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, "In Old Testament times and in New Testament times, the Jewish calendar accurately projected the appearance of the new crescent, and the feast of God were observed at their appointed times."<sup>108</sup> This statement is erroneous for at least three reasons. The first is revealed in the authors chosen date for the *Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*. The appearance of the first crescent over Jerusalem was on Thursday night, September 28<sup>th</sup>, not Friday night, September 29<sup>th</sup>, shows Mr. Franklin's and Mr. Blevins hypothesis was incorrect. Mr. Franklin's and Mr. Blevins' second error was the belief that the calculated Jewish calendar was intended to predict when the first new crescent would be visible over Jerusalem, as anyone who has studied the calculated Jewish calendar should realize it was never was designed to do this. Its purpose was to prevent the weekly Sabbath from being tandem to atonement, to prevent the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles from falling on the weekly sabbath so the Jews could perform the Lulav ceremony without transgressing their version of Sabbath *halacha*, and to make sure the year has no fewer than 353 days and no more than 355 days (except when it is a leap year, so that the year has no fewer than 383 days and no more than 385 days). The third error in Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's statement is the supposition that the calculated Jewish calendar was used in Old and New Testament times. This book has supplied ample evidence that the authors are wrong on this point as well.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins also write, "the Scriptures command the feast of Trumpets be observed on the day in which the new crescent of the seventh month first appears."<sup>109</sup> The first new crescent appeared over Jerusalem on Thursday night, September the 28<sup>th</sup> in

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108 Blevins and Franklin, *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD*, p. 28

109 Ibid

2000 CE. The crescent was over 20 hours old and was be visible. The authors should have observed the Feast of Trumpets Thursday night going into Friday, September the 29<sup>th</sup> if they followed their main criteria, that the feast of Trumpets should start on the day of the first visible crescent over Jerusalem, but they did not. The authors should have observed the feast of Trumpets on Friday September 29<sup>th</sup> if they followed their second criteria, their supposed balancing of the phases of the moon because the moon was as full on the night of October 12<sup>th</sup> as on the night of October 13<sup>th</sup> and had actually begun to wan on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, 2000, but they did not because the calculated Jewish calendar postponed Trumpets one day so the feast of Atonement did not fall on Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> in 2000. The fruits of the Christian Biblical Church of God in regards to the feast of Trumpets in 2000 AD showed that they follow the pharisaic tradition of postponing God's annual feasts rather than observing it on the day the first crescent became visible over Jerusalem, which they supposedly support.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins try to convince their readers that even Jesus the Christ observed the calculated Jewish calendar. They write, "Much of the New Testament chronology centers around the declarations of the holy days of God. Should we now attempt to invalidate the observances that are documented in the Gospel accounts, when Jesus Himself sanctioned these declarations by His own examples? Such action would show arrogant disregard for the inspiration of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ."<sup>110</sup>

The body of this book was designed to discover the calendar Jesus used and suggest that Christians should be following a similar calendar. The historical records state that the calendar being used at the time of Christ was based upon observation of the first visible crescent over Jerusalem and that there were no postponements for tandem sabbaths or so the Jews could perform the Lulav ceremony without fear of violating Sabbath *halacha*. Scripture indicates the year should start when winter is over and summer begins. The month should start with the first visible crescent over Jerusalem. As Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin themselves point out, in the year 2000 they postponed the Feast of Trumpets one full day past the first visible crescent. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin actually showed the type of disregard for Christ's example that they are accusing others of during the "fall" feast season of the year 2000 CE.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin try to portray the rules of postponement as being more accurate than any astronomical observations and that we should disregard the historical record. They write, "None of these sources has any bearing on the declarations of the feasts of God."<sup>111</sup> Although Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin never reveal the basis for the reasoning they display in the conclusion of their paper, it can be gleaned from an examination of their glossary of terms. They write, "postponement-a one or two day adjustment of the calculation of the Molad of Tishri. The Rules of postponement enable the process of calculating the declaration of the new moon of Tishri to achieve the greatest degree of accuracy in relationship to the lunar cycle."<sup>112</sup>

Again, Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's writings are inaccurate. The reason for the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar are so that the day of atonement is not tandem to

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110 Ibid

111 Ibid

112 Ibid, p. 37

the weekly Sabbath, so that the seventh day of Tabernacles does not fall on a weekly sabbath so the Jews can perform the Lulav ceremony without infringing on their Sabbath *halacha* and to limit the year's length to 353-355 days. The phase of the moon has no bearing on why the postponements are used. Therefore Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's scholarship is again in error for multiple reasons

### **To Much Information is Bad for Christians?**

The authors write, "All attempts to forge a better calendar by infusion of mounds of information have demonstrated that, while it is not possible to construct a perfect relationship between the lunar phases and God's feast days, the Jewish calendar is, nonetheless, the best calendar possible."<sup>113</sup> This statement, like the majority of Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's statements and reasonings, is simply erroneous. It is possible to construct a calendar that exactly matches the lunar phases with God's feast days. If the day the first crescent becomes visible is always the first day of the month, then every biblical ordinance for the monthly calendar has been met (intercalation is another issue). Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins suggestion that the calculated Jewish calendar somehow matches the phase of the full moon does nothing more than mask the fact that the calculated Jewish calendar does not coincide with the first crescent almost 50 percent of the time.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins try to justify the use of a molad being exactly 29.53 days with an analogy of the moon being delivery truck varying speeds and weaving all over the place. Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin write, "Since the speed of travel between any two points is variable for both a moving vehicle and an orbiting moon, determining its location at a given time does not enable us to predict exactly where it will be at a future time...Any attempt to introduce another astronomical data will only complicate the process and lead to error in trying to match the calendar date to a lunar phase."<sup>114</sup>

There is no scriptural reason to match the calendar to any lunar phrase except the first day to the first visible crescent. Do Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin honestly expect Christians to accept their advice to simply disregard any new data about the calendar? This author believes it is a bad idea to ignore facts and data because they might cause confusion and might give more information from which to draw a conclusion.

### **Calculate When the Ice Cream Truck shows up in your Neighborhood?**

If we apply Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's analogy to an ice cream truck delivering ice cream to neighborhood kids, we can get a very clear picture of what they are suggesting. Sometimes the ice cream truck leaves early because it has no customers. Sometimes it has to change routes because of traffic or because the driver needed to pick up gas. Sometime business is so good the driver stays at one stop longer than normal, thus delaying his arrival at other stops. Sometimes the driver may even be sick and not come for a day. So how can the kids know when to get ice cream? Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's answer is to use an average of when the truck will come. If the children follow Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin's advice

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 29



and logic, many a child will miss their ice cream because they came too late. Other will wait anxiously for hours until the ice cream truck shows up.

How do children know the right time to go the ice cream truck? They observe the signs of its coming, like the annoying music the truck plays and the flashing light on top of it. What do Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin contend is the sign of the coming new moon. “The purpose in calculating the Molad, or mean conjunction, is to determine the earliest time that the new crescent may possibly be seen from Jerusalem.”<sup>115</sup> Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins have written this sign is actually the molad manipulated by Jewish rules of *halacha* which supposedly also matches the first visible crescent over Jerusalem. I contend it is much better to metaphorically listen for the little tune the ice cream truck plays then to go out at the mean average time of its arrival. When you hear that tune, you know the truck is there. Analogously, the tune played by the moon is the first visible crescent.

Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins end by writing, “Since the Jewish calendar is not broken, perhaps we should stop trying to fix it.”<sup>116</sup> They contend if the calculated Jewish calendar was not broken, the first visible crescent over Jerusalem as the time of the “fall” feast would not have occurred until Friday night, the 29<sup>th</sup> of September. However, the first visible crescent was seen over Jerusalem one full day earlier, on Thursday night, the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. By the authors own measure, the calculated Jewish calendar is broken.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin apparently excluded Thursday night the 28<sup>th</sup> of September from their paper because their purpose was to show Frank Nelte’s errors rather than examining the calculated Jewish calendar. In so doing, they clearly showed their own bias and errors and revealed just how flawed their scholarship was and is.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin have also written that the year should start when winter is over and summer begins. So the calculated Jewish calendar not only fails to start the month of Tishri with first visible crescent over Jerusalem, but it also does not start the year at the end of winter.

Mr. Blevins and Mr. Franklin have also written the purpose for the calculated Jewish calendar is maintain some type of lunar balance that is not defined in scripture. First, the only type of lunar balance that must be maintained according to scripture is the first day of the month must occur on the new moon, when the first visible crescent can be seen, which it did not do on Tishri 1 in 2000 CE according to the calculated Jewish calendar.


In conclusion, Mr. Franklin and Mr. Blevins have ignored the real mechanics of the calculated Jewish calendar, which is to make sure that there are no tandem sabbaths with atonement and to make sure that the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Tabernacles does not fall on a weekly sabbath so the Jews can perform the Lulav ceremony without worry about violating Sabbath *halacha*. The calculated Jewish calendar determined the date for Tishri 1, 2000 CE to be September 30<sup>th</sup> in 2000 AD. The first day of Tishri according to the visible first crescent over Jerusalem in the year 2000 corresponded to the 29<sup>th</sup> of September (starting the evening before at evening on the 28<sup>th</sup>). The fact that the calculated Jewish calendar postponed it to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September shows what a fraud the scholarship of *The Feast of Trumpets 2000 AD* actually was and is.

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115 Ibid, p. 2

116 Ibid





This appendix will examine some of the writings of Frank Nelte about the Jewish calendar. It will also examine his attack upon John Ritenbaugh's re-affirmation of the calculated Jewish calendar. Ritenbaugh's earlier *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy* will also be examined.

### Frank Nelte on the Calendar

Frank Nelte is well known in the churches of God for his voluminous works on theological topics starting in the early 90's. He rejected the teaching of the trinity and lost his job rather than teach or embrace a heresy that rejected the fact that our relationship with God is actually based on a covenant expounded in scripture. This author met and went sailing with Frank and his wife on another couple's boat when Frank was in Boston in the late 90's. Frank was warm, open, and knowledgeable, but still biased, as we all are.

This author has had problems going through some of Mr. Nelte's papers. One of his favorite statements seems to be, "Can you understand this?"<sup>1</sup> Mr. Nelte also uses a great deal of mathematics in his calendar research to attempt to show that the calculated Jewish calendar could not have remained constant over the last 5,000 years. Even proponents of the calculated Jewish calendar admit there have been major changes in the cycle of intercalation in the past. Mr. Nelte's major argument against the calculated Jewish calendar is based on the premise that if the cycle of intercalation has changed, then the calculated Jewish calendar is not a sacred calendar. This author disagrees with Mr. Nelte's reasoning, which shines through in papers like *Judaism and Baal Worship*. Mr. Nelte believes the Talmud and other Jewish traditions should not be accepted as authoritative.<sup>2</sup> This author agrees with Mr. Nelte on this point and worries about Christians who do accept the Talmud and Mishnah as authoritative. However, Mr. Nelte seems to believe that you cannot use these historical commentaries on the scripture by Jewish sages at all. I disagree. These commentaries are just as informative and just as useful, if not more so, than Catholic and Protestant commentaries and can be used as a tool to frame the history and tradition of the scriptures.

Some may dismiss Mr. Nelte's stance on the calendar as anti-Semitic because he so vehemently opposes the Jewish belief that the Passover lamb was killed on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (something this author disagrees with Mr. Nelte about).<sup>3</sup> Although some of Mr. Nelte's

1 Nelte, Frank, *The Jewish Calendar and God's Holy Days*, July 1996, pp. 18, 34, 46, 58, 61, etc.

2 Nelte, Frank, *Judaism and Baal worship*

3 Mr. Nelte wrote, "Prior to that the Sadducees actually kept the Passover AT THE BEGINNING of the 14th of Nisan, as can be seen quite clearly in the Passover article of the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia." The Sadducees ran the temple and Passover services at temple have always been on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan according to every source examined. During a question and answer period, two hours after I had given Frank the article he quotes above from the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia and explained that I was going to ask him about this article, he still could not understand that he was misquoting the critical scholarship in this article. This misquotation is examined in *Jesus the true Passover..*

writings could be construed to be anti-Semitic, the rejection of the calculated Jewish calendar because of postponements is not necessarily anti-Semitic because there is a small section of Judaism called the Karaites that also reject the calculated Jewish calendar because of its rabbinic, pharisaical postponement rules. Mr. Nelte's erroneous belief that the Jews do not know the right time for the killing of the Passover obviously biases his opinions, but his dogged approach to the problems that the calculated Jewish calendar cause is the correct approach because of its inherent problems. Mr. Nelte's analysis of other's work can be very useful and is usually quite accurate. However, when he goes beyond analysis and suggests solutions, I believe Mr. Nelte's biases severely cripple his suggested solutions.

As an example of this, Mr. Nelte states, "It should be quite clear that the Jewish understanding of the Hebrew word "tekuphah" is that it refers to the solstices and the equinoxes."<sup>4</sup> The current Jewish understanding is that the tekuphah (*ed. note*-This author prefer tekufoth and will use this spelling throughout) are the two solstices and the two equinoxes. However, the current Jewish understanding is that the calculated Jewish calendar is also accurate. Current Jewish understanding is that Pentecost is on Sivan 6. If the current calculated Jewish calendar is inaccurate, which it is, then you cannot accept the understanding of what a major component of that calendar, the tekufoth is, without question, especially when scripture disagrees with this definition and still be intellectually honest. As shown in the body of this book, the scriptural usage of tekufoth does not refer to the equinoxes nor the solstices and attempting to define them as tekufoth is anachronistic.

Mr. Nelte writes, "The correct calendar must not allow the seasons to drift, so that the first month either moves ahead totally into the summer, or regresses totally into winter."<sup>5</sup> This author concurs with this statement, however Mr. Nelte shows that he has not thoroughly examined the issue of seasons in the bible when he continues by writing, "It must stay in the spring."<sup>6</sup> As the main body of this book shows, there are only 2 biblical seasons, winter and summer. This facts renders many of Mr. Nelte's conclusions invalid.

### **Abib, The Green Ears of Barley**

Leviticus states, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:"<sup>7</sup> Mr. Nelte uses this scripture as a basis for the statement, "This means that when the First Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a Sunday (e.g. in 2001 A.D.), then the wavesheaf would have to be available on that Sunday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. THEREFORE the calendar must be constructed in such a way that the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan is NEVER earlier than the earliest date at which barley could be expected to be ripe in the Middle East."<sup>8</sup>

4 Nelte, Frank, *The Jewish Calendar and God's Holy Days*, p. 69

5 Nelte, Frank, *Reply to UCG calendar paper*, p. 7

6 Nelte, Frank, *Reply to UCG calendar paper*, p. 7

7 Lev 23:10-1

8 Nelte, *UCG rebuttal*, p. 7

Mr. Nelte's point is obviously scriptural sound and is one of the main biblical injunctions against the current calculated Jewish calendar. It was a scriptural requirement that the barley crop must be mature enough that barley could be harvested for the wavesheaf offering. What Mr. Nelte does not point out is if the spring harvest is delayed to long; the barley will no longer be in abib. This causes a problem because the people were not allowed to use or harvest the barley until the wavesheaf offering.<sup>9</sup> Although scripture does not specifically command that no harvesting was to be done before the wavesheaf, there is scriptural evidence suggesting this was the case and there is little doubt that is what was practiced in Israel.<sup>10</sup> Therefore the timing of the spring harvest of barley was directly tied to the beginning of the year.

Although Mr. Nelte believes the barley cannot ripen before the start of April on the Gregorian calendar, there is no doubt that barley has been found to be ripe in the middle of March and if the weather conditions were perfect, it is entirely possible the barley could be in abib in early March.<sup>11</sup> There are also references that state the barley can be ripe in March in Palestine, thus Mr. Nelte's assessment of when the barley harvest could be ready appears to be late by as much as a month.<sup>12</sup> This disagreement is minor. However, Mr. Nelte goes further in setting the earliest time that Passover can occur by examining the timing of feast of Tabernacles. It is ironic that Mr. Nelte condemns the calculated Jewish calendar for depending upon the Feast of Trumpets to determine when the year will start, yet uses the feast of Tabernacles in exactly the same manner. Abib is supposed to begin when winter turns to summer and the most obvious sign of this change is the barley being abib. As the body of the book shows, there is no scriptural ordinance about the "fall" feasts having any affect on the start the year.

### **The Tekufoth is not the Equinox**

An absolutely pivotal verse for Frank Nelte's beliefs about the calendar is Exodus 34:22. "And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end."<sup>13</sup> Mr. Nelte writes, "The Hebrew expression in this verse is: 'at the tekuphah of the year' (or tequphah or tequfah as variant transliterations). The word 'tequphah' refers to a circuit of time or space."<sup>14</sup> So far this author agrees totally with Mr. Nelte about the tekufoth. However, Mr. Nelte continues,

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9 Lev. 23:10-14 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it... And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: [it shall be] a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

10 Ex. 22:29 Thou shalt not delay [to offer] the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

11 The Karaite search for abib barley in the 2001 took place on March 3-5 and although the barley was not in abib, this search showed if the weather conditions had been more hospitable, the barley might have been ready.

12 Masterman, E.W.G. Barley, Bromiley, G.W., ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume 1:A-D, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p. 431

Barley is sown in the autumn following the 'early rains' and ripens about a month earlier than the wheat. In Palestine the harvest takes place in March or April, depending on the location.

13 Exodus 34:22

14 Nelte, *Comments on the UCG calendar*, p. 8

It is generally understood that this expression refers to the autumn equinox in the northern hemisphere, when autumn starts. That is September 23 in the Gregorian calendar. A clue is also provided by the name God here gives to the Feast of Tabernacles. God here calls it ‘the Feast of INGATHERING’, an obvious reference to the harvests being ‘gathered in’. The harvest is gathered in the autumn and NOT in the summer!<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this is not scripturally accurate because there is no autumn in scripture.

Mr. Nelte than performs a great number of calculation to try to prove,

As can be seen quite clearly from these molads of Tishri, there are several entire Feasts of Tabernacles which were before the equinox! There is absolutely no way that you can possibly claim divine inspiration for a decision which caused the feast of Tabernacles to start in the evening of September 10 in 360 A.D.!<sup>16</sup>

This book shows that there were and are only 2 biblical seasons. As long as it was warm and things were growing and being harvested, it was the start of summer. When it got cold and rainy, sometimes even snowy, it was winter. Also the tekufoth, although generally understood to be the equinox today, is not defined as the equinox in scripture. The turn of the year referred to in Ex. 34:22 is the change from summer to winter, not an exact time like the fall equinox. An amazingly similar verse is Exod. 23:16 “And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.”<sup>17</sup> However, in Exodus 23:16 the end of the year is two Hebrew words, not tekufoth. *Yâtsâʿ* (אָצֵא) means to bring out, or the end of.<sup>18</sup> *Shâneh shânâh* (שָׁנָה שָׁנָה) is a year.<sup>19</sup> Thus the ingathering is at the end of the year and the only year that could be ending is the year of the harvest, not the equinox, because it is the harvest that is being gathered in. Mr. Nelte believes, “God intended for the farmers to gather in their crops BEFORE they would go to the Feast of Tabernacles!”<sup>20</sup> Although this statement is accurate, it has nothing to do with

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15 Ibid

16 Ibid, p. 12

17 Exod. 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

KB-back, rear end

Strong’s- to go (causatively, bring) out, in a great variety of applications, literally and figuratively, direct and proxim.:—x after, appear, x assuredly, bear out, x begotten, break out, bring forth (out, up), carry out, come (abroad, out, thereat, without)

NAS hebrew- *a year*:—annual\*(1), annually\*(4), annually (2), count (m)(2), every year (2)

Strong’s- a year (as a revolution of time)

18 Strong’s H3318 A primitive root; to go (causatively *bring*) out, in a great variety of applications, literally and figuratively, direct and proximate: - X after, appear, X assuredly, bear out, X begotten, break out, bring forth (out, up), carry out, come (abroad, out, thereat, without), + be condemned, depart (-ing, -ure), draw forth, in the end, escape, exact, fail, fall (out), fetch forth (out), get away (forth, hence, out), (able to, cause to, let) go abroad (forth, on, out), going out, grow, have forth (out), issue out, lay (lie) out, lead out, pluck out, proceed, pull out, put away, be risen, X scarce, send with commandment, shoot forth, spread, spring out, stand out, X still, X surely, take forth (out), at any time, X to [and fro], utter.

19 Strong’s H8141 The first form being in plural only, the second form being feminine); from H8138; a year (as a *revolution* of time): - + whole age, X long, + old, year (X -ly).

20 Nelte, *Comments on the UCG calendar*, p. 12

the fall equinox. If the feast of Unleavened bread commences when the barley is abib, the “fall” harvest will naturally, and perhaps even occasionally, with divine intervention, be ready to be harvested before the feast of Tabernacles.<sup>21</sup> Therefore Mr. Nelte’s belief that Ex. 34:22 proves that the Feast of Tabernacles must occur in the fall, after the autumn equinox, is errant, as is detailed in the body of this book.<sup>22</sup> Mr. Nelte carries this belief even further when he writes, “Exodus 34:22 requires that the Feast of Tabernacles NEVER STARTS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 23 (Gregorian) at the very earliest! If the First Day of Tabernacles falls before the autumn equinox, then Tabernacles is being observed in the summer BEFORE “the year’s end”, and that would be a violation of Exodus 34:22.”<sup>23</sup> As is typical of churches of God scholarship, when less clear the scriptural support of a theological hypothesis, the more bombastic the teacher becomes and more emphatic the writing with NEVER or ALWAYS in large capital letters to obfuscate the lack of scriptural support.

Mr. Nelte’s research does show there was a problem with the calculated Jewish calendar in the 360’s CE. It is highly unlikely the harvest had been gathered in early so many years in a row. However, this is not definitive proof against the calculated Jewish calendar, only proof there could be problems with it. Mr. Nelte even acknowledges if the people accept a calendar as authoritative, then it is authoritative. It may be unbiblical and ungodly, but it is still authoritative.

Mr. Nelte carries his dogmatic conclusion about the how the feast of Tabernacles should effect the calendar to its conclusion near the end of his rebuttal of the UCG calendar paper. Although Mr. Nelte has done a great deal of good research bringing out problems with the calculated Jewish calendar, some of his conclusion drift away from scriptural fact. He states,

Keep in mind also that GOD emphasizes the FIRST Day of Tabernacles; it is the Jewish traditions which emphasize the SEVENTH Day of Tabernacles as the high point.

There is really no justification for reading Exodus 34:22 to mean that God only wants the SEVENTH day to reach unto the equinox. Besides, in that situation it will always be the case that the First Day of UB will be TOO EARLY for any barley to be ripe.

These two biblical requirements complement each other: Leviticus 23:10-11 makes clear that Exodus 34:22 must apply to the entire Feast of Tabernacles being AFTER the autumn equinox. Otherwise there will be no ripe barley.<sup>24</sup>

Frank Nelte’s annoyance with the water and Lulav ceremonies on the 7th day of Tabernacles is obvious. However, to juxtapose the first day of Unleavened bread, when there must be green barley for the wavesheaf offering, with the first day of Tabernacles and the fall equinox, is not supported by scripture or logic. Mr. Nelte could be justified in believing that the

21 Lev. 25:21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.

Deut. 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

Deut. 28:8 The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Ezek. 34:26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

22 Nelte, *Comments on the UCG calendar*, p. 12

23 Ibid

24 Ibid, p. 18



feast of Tabernacles is associated with the fall equinox because the harvest is usually around the time of autumnal equinox, but his belief that the first day of Tabernacles must fall after the fall equinox has no justification whatsoever from scripture. Frank Nelte has apparently not realized there are only 2 seasons in scripture, making all of his conclusions about the timing of the feast of Tabernacles errant. This author hopes this would become apparent to him when he realizes that his suggestions mandate that the “spring” feast be dependent upon the timing of the “fall” feast, when instead Exodus 12:1-3 mandates the month of abib starts of the year. Scripture indicts if the feast of Unleavened bread starts when the barley is abib, with green and tender ears, the feast cycle will parallel the harvest cycle in Jerusalem and everything works out just as God has planned.<sup>25</sup>

### Kenneth Herrmann’s Calendar Articles

My wife and I meet Kenneth Herrmann while we were attending Ambassador College in the early 90’s. In our capacity as lead lab assistants for the computer lab, we remember Ken coming in with his large box of cards and papers and doing some kind of research on our computers. Although he was somewhat senile at the time, he was an incredible nice man, something that made him stand out in the Ambassador College crowd. This author also remembers Mr. Herrmann relating how he worked on building part of the campus at Big Sandy so he could receive social security. Most of the construction workers that he worked with were members of Ted Armstrong’s Church of God International. This author still remembers his somewhat shocking comment, which I now realize is by and large the truth, that those people were much more friendly and nicer than members of WCG. Therefore the reader should realize that it not the intent of this author to attack the very nice old man I meet in the early 90’s, but instead to critique his writings and the mindset of the church that produced these writings.

After giving a history of the articles written in the Good News in the 50’s about the calendar, Mr. Nelte analyzes Kenneth Herrmann’s articles about the calendar. Because these articles were standardly used to support the calculated Jewish calendar by the churches of God, an in depth examination of these articles is indeed warranted.

Mr. Herrmann details the basis for a biblical calendar when he wrote, “A) The ‘DAY’ starts and ends at sunset. B) The ‘WEEK’ starts and ends at sunset on Saturday evening. C) The ‘MONTH’ starts with the sunset after each ‘new moon’. D) The Hebrew word for ‘month’ is the same as for ‘moon’ and for ‘new moon’. E) The ‘YEAR’ starts in the spring, not in the middle of winter, as in the Roman calendar.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Lev. 25:21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.

Deut. 28:2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

Deut. 28:8 The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Ezek. 34:26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

<sup>26</sup> Nelte, Frank, *The Jewish Calendar and God’s Holy Days*, pp. 72-4



Although Mr. Nelte believes Herrmann's analysis is perfectly correct, this author would like to dissent in three areas. The day starts and ends at evening in scripture, not sunset. As I show in *Jesus the True Passover*, sometimes the Hebrew word *erev*, usually translated as evening, is best translated as sunset.<sup>27</sup> However, sometimes *erev* is best translated as the time shortly before sunset, sometimes it is best translated as the time between darkness and sunset, and sometimes *erev* occurs after darkness. Just as evening is a generic time at the end of the day in the western world, *erev* was a generic time for the nation of Israel. This lack of a precise definition of *erev* in scripture is the supposed justification for the rabbinical practice of starting the weekly Sabbath at 18 minutes before sunset Friday and ending it at darkness (when three stars are in the sky) on Saturday, a practice that this author disagrees with. The Sabbath is a day, not a day plus a few hours. The biblical usage of *erev* demonstrates how undogmatic the determination of time is in scripture and practice. This is a small point and has little bearing on the calendar, but does demonstrate how incorrect interpretation of data, especially by bombastic and highly dogmatic teachers, can effect theological research for the worse.

The statement that the year starts in spring is also not totally accurate. Mr. Herrmann was contrasting the Hebrew calendar's start of the year to the Gregorian calendar's starting point, but technically the Hebrew year is supposed to start with the first month of what is scripturally defined as summer. Again, this is a small point because what is defined as the start of summer in scripture is often referred to as springtime for those that follow the Gregorian calendar.

However, the statement that the new month starts with the first evening after the "new moon" is not correct for a number of reasons. The first reason is, as Mr. Nelte quotes, the word for new moon and month are the same. The new moon is the instrument used to determine the new month. The day of the new moon is the first day of the new month. However, the new moon, rather it be the crescent or the conjunction, cannot be seen until after sunset. Ps. 104:19 states, "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down."<sup>28</sup> Numbers 29:6 also shows that the new moon sacrifice was done on the first day of the month.<sup>29</sup> So the day of the new moon is also the first day of the month, which is when the first crescent is visible over Jerusalem according to this book, although Mr. Nelte would disagree.

Mr. Nelte quotes Mr. Herrmann as writing, "God's months begin with the new moon. However, these months may seem to begin a day or so following the actual new moon because of special considerations. The observation of the new moon is to be made from Jerusalem, not from the North American continent. The seven to ten hours difference in time between Jerusalem and the part of the country (i.e. United States) you live in will make actual observation of the new moon from America misleading."<sup>30</sup>

27 *Jesus the True Passover* can be downloaded from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

28 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

29 Numbers 29:6 Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.

30 Nelte, Frank, Kenneth Herrmann's Calendar articles, Off the internet, p. 2 quoting, Herrmann, Kenneth, *God's Sacred Calendar*, Good News, March, 1953

Mr. Nelte believes, “Kenneth Herrmann seems to be under the impression that the Jewish calendar attempts to achieve FIRST VISIBILITY of the new moon crescent! This is, however, simply not the case! The entire calculation of the Jewish calendar is based on establishing THE INVISIBLE CONJUNCTION, “the molad”. Visibility never enters into any considerations one way or the other!”<sup>31</sup> Mr. Nelte’s statement is also not accurate. The molad is not the invisible conjunction, but a mathematical average of the conjunction. Also, the rules of postponement, although instituted for reasons of Jewish *halacha* tradition, have the affect of delaying the declaration of the new moon which increases the occurrences of the first day of the month, as declared by the calculated Jewish calendar, being on the same day the first crescent becomes visible over Jerusalem.

Mr. Nelte continues by writing, “The molad calculations are up to 15 hours in error, even for the Jerusalem area! This error of up to 15 hours is a further major reason why the new moon is frequently visible BEFORE the Jewish calendar starts a new month.”<sup>25</sup> Again, Mr. Nelte does not seem to understand what the molad is and what its function is for the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. The computed molad occurs as much as 15 hours before or after the astronomical conjunction because the molad is a mean average time for the conjunction. Therefore, it is more accurate to state that the calculated Jewish calendar does not use the astronomical new moon in calculating when the first day of the month is because it uses an average conjunction. Also, the molad almost always occurs before the first crescent is visible.

Frank Nelte and Kenneth Herrmann clearly demonstrate the starting date of Passover is of great importance to the calendar in their writings. There is no doubt that the date of Passover observance is dependent upon the calendar, but both seem to have missed the fact that there are only two seasons listed in scripture, not four. Therefore scripture mandates that Passover start at the beginning of summer, the time of things growing and being harvested, and not in winter, when it is cold and rainy or even snowy. In actual practice, Passover can occur as early as March twenty fifth and as late as April twenty-fourth with the today’s calculated Jewish calendar.<sup>32</sup>

Mr. Nelte quotes Mr. Herrmann as writing, “Thus we have established ... the yearly cycle beginning in the spring with the first day of the month in which the early harvest would take place. The day, month and year are easy to follow by watching the sun in its daily path, the moon in its phases, and the seasons as they progress. The signs in the heavens were intended for this purpose.”<sup>33</sup> I agree with Mr. Nelte that Mr. Herrmann’s statement is correct and that the calculated Jewish calendar does not follow this scriptural pattern. However, Mr. Nelte’s belief that the calculated Jewish calendar actually starts in winter six times during the current 19 year cycle of intercalation cannot be substantiated by the scriptural definition of winter. Mr. Nelte obviously believes the vernal equinox ends winter, when in fact the vernal equinox separates winter from spring only on the Gregorian calendar. This

31 Nelte, Frank, *The Jewish Calendar and God’s Holy Days*, pp. 72-4

32 Ibid, p. 3 April 23rd in 2005, and April 24th in 2043, March 25th in 2013 (as also back in 1861) and also in 2089

33 Ibid, p. 3 quoting Herrmann, *Sacred Calendar*, Herrmann’s emphasis retained, p. 8

is simply not the case in scripture because there is no spring season in scripture. Mr. Nelte writes, “it is another point altogether to acknowledge that OVER 30% of the time the present Jewish calendar starts IN THE WINTER. It needs to be acknowledged that this is simply not right!”<sup>34</sup> I would agree that the calculated Jewish calendar sometimes starts the year in winter because it ignores the growing cycle in the Promised Land. However, the scriptural requirement, as I show in this book, is that the barley must be in abib by the start of Unleavened Bread, not that the first of Nisan must be after the vernal equinox. Therefore, Mr. Nelte’s contention that all we have to do to start the months is to watch the new moon is correct, but his contention that we should tie the calendar to the equinox is extra-biblical.<sup>35</sup> It may also be unbiblical because, even though the method for starting summer can only be inferred from scripture, ignoring the harvest seasons in the Promised Land appears tantamount to ignoring God’s wishes for that year.

Mr. Nelte also agrees with Mr. Herrmann that, “The Passover had to be at the time of the early grain harvest for the high priest waves a sheaf of the new grain crop on the morrow after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”<sup>36</sup> If having the barley being abib, that is with its ears green and tender, is a requirement, then why not base the calendar around this requirement? Of course, it makes the timing of the days of Unleavened Bread less certain than with a regulation tied to the timing of the equinox. However, in our age of telecommunications, it is entirely possible, as the Karaites have proven, for this system to work, especially since the vast majority of Christians do not keep the “spring” feast as a pilgrimage feast any longer. Mr. Nelte’s statement that, “There is simply NO BARLEY ripe in Palestine during the month of March”<sup>31</sup> is simply wrong. The ripening of crops varies from year to year and scripture states that this ripening depends on God’s blessings.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Mr. Nelte’s statement that, “Never starting the year before the spring equinox (northern hemisphere) AUTOMATICALLY resolves this problem”<sup>38</sup> of having barley for the wavesheaf offering is simply not accurate. Agricultural cycles are related to, but not tied to the equinox, because of: mild winters; hard winters; draught; excess rain; cultivation techniques; etc. Therefore if the barley is ripe in early March, it would be in no condition for the wave sheaf offering in the middle of April.

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34 Ibid

35 Ibid

36 Ibid, p. 4 quoting Herrmann, p. 8

37 Lev. 25:21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.

Deut. 28:8 The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Mal. 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Masterman, E.W.G. Barley, Bromiley, G.W., ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume I:A-D*, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p. 431

Barley is sown in the autumn following the ‘early rains’ and ripens about a month earlier than the whet. In Palestine the harvest takes place in March or April, depending on the location.

38 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 4

Mr. Herrmann's statement that, "The appearance of the new moon in the western sky just after sunset is used to determine the beginning of a new month"<sup>39</sup> is simply not correct with the calculated Jewish calendar, but he apparently thought that is how the calculated Jewish calendar works when he originally wrote his articles. The calculated Jewish calendar determines the new month by using a mathematical formula based upon the time of the average conjunction, the molad. Visibility of the astronomical new moon, with the exception of the noon postponement, has absolutely nothing to do with when the new month starts, according to the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Herrmann questions who has the authority to determine when the calendar starts, bringing up the example of one person seeing the first crescent one night earlier than his neighbor.<sup>40</sup> Mr. Nelte stresses that Mr. Herrmann continually mentions visibility and Mr. Nelte correctly points out this weakens Mr. Herrmann's stance that the calculated Jewish calendar is correct.<sup>41</sup>

Mr. Herrmann believed there was a "need for a true central authority concerning the calendar is absolute proof that such authority existed. Add the fact that God requires us to keep His holydays today and we must conclude that some SUCH AUTHORITY ON THE CALENDAR EXISTS FOR US TODAY. God never fails to provide man with knowledge that he must know and cannot find out for himself."<sup>42</sup> This is a prime example of circular logic. Mr. Nelte correctly points out that, "this is the key argument of those who support the Jewish calendar. Whatever evidence against the Jewish calendar they are confronted with, when everything else is said and done, when any number of facts expose the major flaws in the present Jewish calendar ... this is the argument they will always turn to."<sup>43</sup> However, it should not be surprising to anyone that the average Christian would rather continue follow errant tradition than change and follow scripture. When churches stress the importance of the authority of the clergy, is it any wonder that members of the church fall back on the idea of apostolic authority even if their apostle is apostate? The Catholic Church keeps the weekly Sabbath on the first day of the week rather than on the seventh based on papal authority. Many in the church of God rely on the authority of Herbert Armstrong for their religious practices and doctrinal beliefs. The question that should be raised about doctrine is if this is the right and Godly thing to do according to scripture?

Mr. Nelte's approach is, "This argument becomes AN ISSUE OF FAITH for such supporters of the present Jewish calendar. And their 'FAITH' will not permit them to openly accept the facts that expose the flaws with the present Jewish calendar. They will fight to retain this 'faith'. And against this 'faith' reason and logic cannot make any inroads."<sup>44</sup> Of course one of the church of God's favorite verses is, "that you should earnestly contend

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39 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 4

40 Ibid, p. 5

41 Ibid

42 Ibid, p. 5 (Author's own emphasis. The February 1957 GOOD NEWS article has the same statement, but has replaced the phrase "and we must conclude that ..." with the phrase "and we can only conclude that".)

43 Ibid

44 Ibid, p. 6 This is the sad truth about much of the churches of God who resemble Rev. 3:16 more than Rev. 2:1

for the faith which was once delivered.”<sup>45</sup> This verse has been used as a control device for decades. If you disagreed with a church of God doctrine, this verse was used to club you into submission. It was also used to show how pagan the Catholics and Protestants were for ignoring the Old Testament, which they do, but they are not pagans as an Wicca practitioner could tell you. However, the churches of God also chose which portions of the Old Testament they would accept based upon authority, thus ignoring the faith once given when it suited them. Although Mr. Nelte may be upset that Christians would rather be loyal to a tradition than earnestly seek God’s way through the study of scripture, he should realize that decades of indoctrination are very hard to leave behind. This author is not justifying such actions, simply stating it is understandable.

### The Oracles of God

Mr. Nelte presents information about the oracles of God. “The expression ‘THE WORD OF GOD’ (Greek is ‘the LOGOS of God’) is used 37 times in the New Testament. The expression ‘THE ORACLES OF GOD’ (Greek is ‘the LOGION of God’) is used 3 times in the New Testament. The Greek word ‘logion’ is the diminutive form of the Greek word ‘logos’. Thus ‘logio’ is something SMALLER than ‘logos’... The expression ‘THE ORACLES OF GOD’ (Greek is ‘the LOGION of God’) is used only 3 times in the New Testament. It is used 2 times by Paul (Romans 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12) and 1 time by Peter (1 Peter 4:11).”<sup>46</sup>

An examination of the logos (logon) and logion (logia) is essential for a complete examination of the calendar because of people’s misinterpretation of Romans 3:2. Mr. Nelte’s examination of the phrase the word of God in comparison to the oracles of God is a welcome addition to battling the misuse of Romans 3:2. However, some of Mr. Nelte’s numbers and statements are not accurate or complete. The phrase *τον λογον του θεου* (the word of God) is used 42 times in the New Testament, not 37 times. This author would also add two verses that have the phrase *λογον του θεου* (word of God). Hebr. 6:5 states, “And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come”<sup>47</sup> and Luke 4:4 states, “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”<sup>48</sup> The phrase word of God is also used 4 times in the Old Testament.<sup>49</sup> These six verses, in addition to the 42 times the phrase ‘the word of God’ is used in

45 Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

46 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 6

47 Hebr. 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

48 Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

49 1Sam. 9:27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.

1Kgs. 12:22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

1Chr. 17:3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

Prov. 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.



the New Testament, re-emphasizes that the word of God is either scripture or God directly speaking to an individual. It is not, nor can it be, exegesis of scripture, which the Talmud, at its most trustworthy, can only be. It cannot be some oral law that was not included in scripture because scripture does not allow for this definition.

This author believes Mr. Nelte's argument about what the oracles of God mean would have been more definitive if he had included the fourth usage of *logion* in the New Testament, Acts 7:38.<sup>50</sup> I have included an exegesis of all four verses that use *logion* in the body of this book.

Mr. Nelte seems to believe "this factual information, this objective assessment, simply cannot be accepted by a mind that works from the assumed premise that there is A NEED for ...a true central authority concerning the calendar."<sup>51</sup> Mr. Nelte is probably overstating his case. There is a need for a central authority for the calendar. That authority needs to discern when the year begins, because without the calculated Jewish calendar for a guide, there are many different reckonings for how to begin the year. There needs to be a central authority to determine what the definition of new moon is. There needs to be a central authority to determine if this new moon should be calculated (of course without postponements) or observed. By whichever method, will the new moon be determined locally or using Jerusalem as a central point? There are many issues which need to be resolved so that God's people can congregate together at the same time that are not completely defined in scripture. However, this authority, which this author contends is now God's called out people, must not break biblical ordinances. I also contend such authority, which would most likely be exercised by a group of leaders in the churches of God, must be honest and forthright with their reasons for their decisions. Unfortunately this generation may have to die in the wilderness before another generation of leaders that exhibit these characteristics can arise. The current leaders of the various churches of God have been anything but forthright and honest with their study of the calculated Jewish calendar. However, without such authority, you have many people creating and setting their own calendars, often under mistaken premises. However, this author believes we, the people of God, are better off meeting at different times and trying to follow the injunctions of Romans 14 than to break scriptural ordinances to follow man-made traditions, as people do when they follow the postponements of the calculated Jewish calendar. Of course every reasonable effort should be made to meet together since one of the definitions of the feast days, the *mow'ed*, is to congregate together.<sup>52</sup>

It would be ideal to congregate together every sabbath and every feast day, but short of ideal is making sure we are not doing something unbiblical in our worship of God. The postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar are wrong and should not be followed by any Christian who knows they are wrong and the very idea of postponing feast days for

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<sup>50</sup> Acts 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

<sup>51</sup> Nelte, Herrmann Articles, p. 8

<sup>52</sup> Strong, James, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Mow'ed, Strong's 4150 From [H3259](#); properly an *appointment*, that is, a fixed *time* or season; specifically a *festival*; conventionally a *year*; by implication, an *assembly* (as convened for a definite purpose); technically the *congregation*; by extension, the *place of meeting*; also a *signal* (as appointed beforehand): - appointed (sign, time), (place of, solemn) assembly, congregation, (set, solemn) feast, (appointed, due) season, solemn (-ity), synagogue, (set) time (appointed).



convenience has and will continue to strike many Christians as wrong. The idea that uniformity is more important than not doing something that God says is wrong is disdainful to me. Unfortunately, even people that I respect believe the problems of the abandoning the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar are just too great to overcome. This author's philosophy is to try to do what is right and holy, even if there is some gray around its practice, rather than do what is wrong simply because it is clear and unifying.

### Mr. Herrmann, Cont.

Mr. Nelte quotes Mr. Herrmann as writing, "If God's calendar is lost, God's commandments in regard to these feast days are impossible to keep! But since God doesn't command the impossible THE CALENDAR IS PRESERVED!"<sup>53</sup> This is circular logic. When Hilkiyah the high priest found the book of the law and brought it to King Josiah, the king did not say, "If the book of the law were lost, it would have been impossible to please our God, therefore this cannot be the book of the law because God doesn't command the impossible." Instead, when "it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes."<sup>54</sup> Josiah's approach was the same as the Bereans.<sup>55</sup> Mr. Herrmann's approach was apparently since we are God's people, we must be doing things the right way, therefore the calendar used by the Jews today must be right because that is what we use. However, the approach of the Bereans would be to research the calendar from scripture and this author believes they would have researched the origins of today's calculated Jewish calendar, just as Christians currently research the origins of Easter and Christmas. They would have come together and discussed, perhaps even argued, about what they had discovered and then let the precedents set in scripture be their guide as what to do.<sup>56</sup>

Mr. Herrmann is quoted as writing, "Writers of profane history only contradict themselves. They can not be depended upon to preserve this essential knowledge. God has in no way used them to preserve His Sabbath or calendar."<sup>57</sup> This logic has been followed far too often by Christians because they are following the example of their long time earthly leader. Christians today are subject to multiple heresies, such as: the day starts at sunrise, not evening; the Sadducees kept an early 14<sup>th</sup> Passover, although they ran the temple Passover sacrifices on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>; that the weekly cycle restarts with every new moon; that the new moon is the full moon; that man has no free will; that Jesus is not the messiah and many others. Tradition and historical, secular records can help define doctrine when scripture is ambiguous. It cannot be allowed to supersede scripture, which the Talmud really does for the Jewish religion, but it is useful information that we must avail ourselves of. This information shows, for example, that the definition of the new moon was the first crescent throughout all of the Middle East with the exception of Egypt, which observed a purely solar calendar. All of middle eastern society accepted that the new moon was the first

53 Nelte, Herrmann, p. 9 (Also quoted in the February 1957 GOOD NEWS article)

54 2Kgs. 22:11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

55 Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

56 Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

57 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 10, quoted from Herrmann, p. 10

crescent, therefore history is helpful in determining what the new moon is because the writers of scripture took it for granted that everyone knew what the new moon was, just as the writers of the New Testament took it for granted that the seventh day was the Sabbath.

The kind of bombastic, errant logic extant in most church of God papers on the calendar is continued with Mr. Herrmann's statement, "Foreseeing world conditions ahead where the Church as well as the Jews would be scattered, GOD GUIDED THESE MEN TO SET UP A CALENDAR based on the laws of mathematics and astronomy—the very physical laws God set in motion—a calendar that could be prepared far into the future—for our day—one that would be ACCURATE. NOT A NEW CALENDAR, but a mathematical continuation of the original one based on observation of the signs of the heavens over a period of nearly 2000 years; a calendar that would lead to order and harmony among God's people in the matter of keeping time."<sup>58</sup>

Mr. Nelte's comments that, "This is a vivid example of the blind faith, in the total and complete absence of any proof of any kind, that the supporters of the Jewish calendar are required to have... The facts are that it is impossible to have a fixed lunar calendar that will remain "ACCURATE" for 2000 years!"<sup>59</sup> Mr. Nelte lists his mathematical calculations that the entire feast of Tabernacles in 360 CE would have occurred before the equinox, in summer on the Gregorian calendar.<sup>60</sup> This really has very little bearing on rather the calendar is correct or not because it is the first month of the year that must occur at the proper time, not the seventh.<sup>61</sup> It is also inconsequential because there is no scriptural autumn, only winter and summer, and the feast of Tabernacles occurs around the time summer changes to winter, not at an exact time.<sup>62</sup>

However, Mr. Herrmann contends that God used Hillel II to set up a calendar that would substitute mathematics for astronomy and observation, yet this supposedly did not change the calendar. This is ludicrous. Mr. Herrmann contends that witnesses were used to observe the new moon, which is an astronomical event. Then he contends that the rules for the calculated Jewish calendar, which ignores the astronomical new moon, have not changed anything. However, this is ridiculous. Without even knowing that tandem sabbaths were accepted and planned for during the second temple period, which includes the time of Jesus, something the calculated Jewish calendar attempts to eliminate, the reader should realize that defining the new moon from a mathematical average of the conjunction which is dependent upon a set of postponement rules is indeed a dramatic change from defining the new moon as the first visible crescent. Therefore, Hillel II's calendar was a new calendar when compared to the one used at the time of Jesus, thus Mr. Herrmann is totally wrong.

Also, Mr. Herrmann contends that God used the Jewish leadership two to three hundred years after the death of the messiah to "SET UP A CALENDAR based on the laws of

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, quoting Herrmann On page 10 in column II of the article

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Ex. 12:1-3

<sup>62</sup> Exod. 34:22 And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

mathematics and astronomy.”<sup>63</sup> Yet he believes that God cannot use them to set up the right time to keep Passover or Pentecost. This is not only inconsistent. It is illogical.

Mr. Nelte disputes Mr. Herrmann’s claim “that the Jewish calendar would ‘lead to order and harmony among God’s people’”<sup>64</sup> Mr. Nelte contends this, “is also not correct. It is actually THE cause of major divisions amongst us!”<sup>65</sup> This has only recently been true. In times past, the calculated Jewish calendar did lead to order and harmony because the authority of Herbert Armstrong made it so. Just as Sivan 6 Pentecost, a Monday Pentecost, and a Sunday Pentecost all lead to order and harmony at various times among God’s people because the authority of Herbert Armstrong was used to crush anyone who objected to any other time. Mr. Nelte contends, “It was inevitable that at some point Hillel’s calendar would become a source of division, simply because it rejects biblical instructions in favour of Jewish traditions, and because it is so obviously removed from reality.”<sup>66</sup> Just the name postponements and the idea that the annual feasts are postponed for the people’s supposed convenience should give Christians pause when they consider how best to worship God, especially Christians who realize the importance of the weekly Sabbath as a time ordained by God. However, when authority and loyalty are emphasized above all else, people generally don’t ask questions about doctrine.

Mr. Nelte does find a very interesting set of quotes from another of Ken Herrmann’s articles on the calendar. “Each new month begins with the discovery of the crescent of a new moon in the western sky just after sundown following the 29th or 30th day of a preceding month.”<sup>67</sup> “That’s the way it was during Christ’s ministry and up until at least the destruction of Jerusalem. So this is how the calendar was determined when the New Testament Church was started. This is the system that the Apostle Paul would have been familiar with.”<sup>68</sup> As the body of this book shows, changing from a calendar based on the observation of the first crescent over Jerusalem to a calendar based on preventing tandem sabbaths by a complex mathematical equation took a couple of centuries to become codified. There is no doubt the calculated Jewish calendar is good math, but it is not scripturally sound.

Mr. Nelte builds a strong case for Kenneth Herrmann believing the, “calendar computations calculate ... ‘when the new moon would occur according to Jerusalem time.’”<sup>69</sup> This author agrees with Mr. Nelte when he writes, “This is simply not correct! The calendar computations calculate only ONE new moon for each year, the (supposed) new moon of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.”<sup>70</sup> These calculation are done to determine when the new moon should be proclaimed to prevent tandem sabbaths, to allow the Jews to perform the Lulav ceremony on the seventh day

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63 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 12 quoting Herrmann, p. 10

64 Ibid, p. 13

65 Ibid, p. 13

66 Ibid, p. 16

67 Nelte, Herrmann articles, p. 16 from Herrmann, Kenneth, “*Which is the Calendar Christ Used*, Good News, February, 1957

68 Ibid

69 Nelte, Frank, Herrmann articles, p. 20 from the internet, from Herrmann, Kenneth, *Prove God’s Calendar Correct!*, Good News Magazine, October, 1957

70 Ibid, p. 21

of Tabernacles without infringing upon their Sabbath *halacha* rules, and make sure the year has no less than 353 days, nor that it has more than 355 days (except for leap years).

Mr. Herrmann is quoted as writing, “The term ‘new moon’ from these secular sources refers to the conjunction (or molad) of the sun and moon rather than the visible crescent which could first be seen about six hours later.”<sup>71</sup> As Mr. Nelte points out, and as anyone who has studied the issue of the calendar at all should know, this statement is incorrect for a number of reasons. First, the molad is not the conjunction. The molad is the mean average of the conjunction. Secondly, the earliest crescent moon sighted in the literature is more than fourteen hours after the conjunction, with it usually being sighted 18 to 20 hours after the conjunction. These two grossly erroneous statements raise serious doubts about Mr. Herrmann’s understanding of the astronomy associated with both the observed and calculated calendar.

Mr. Nelte contends the reason Kenneth Herrmann chose six hours was because he was assuming “the Jewish calendar has a postponement rule that postpones the month to the next day when the conjunction is deemed to occur in the last 6 hours of a day.”<sup>72</sup> This author agrees that the most likely reason Mr. Herrmann wrote this is because of the postponement rule which delays the start of Tishri 1 if the molad, not the conjunction, occurs after noon. This is the most likely solution, which again casts doubt on Mr. Herrmann’s expertise in the field of the calendar.

Mr. Herrmann writes, “In the present Jewish calendar when the molad is deemed to occur 7 hours before the end of the day (and assuming no other postponement rules come into play) THEN that very day becomes the Day of Trumpets. Yet that will still be AT LEAST 9 hours or more before ‘first visibility’ is possible anywhere on earth.”<sup>73</sup> This may be true of some conjunctions, but it is definitely not true of the molad, which again suggests Mr. Herrmann’s lack of knowledge of the calendar.

Perhaps one of the most revealing arguments from Herrmann’s article is the following statement. “One reason for delaying the beginning of a month is to prevent the day of Atonement (Annual Sabbath) from falling on a Friday which is a preparation day. Another is to prevent any of the autumn annual festivals from falling on a Sunday. All feasts which follow Pentecost [*ed. note:* which the Worldwide Church of God was still observing on a Monday at that point] represent the second part of God’s Plan. They must not fall on a Sunday which would represent the first part of God’s Plan which began 1900 years ago.”<sup>74</sup> When I first read this, I said out loud to myself, “What?” Mr. Nelte’s comments on Mr. Herrmann’s statement are actually quite kind, because I view this argument as mystical, Gnostic nonsense.

Mr. Nelte writes, “Here we see Kenneth Herrmann reflecting the Church’s flawed understanding at that time. The Church was desperately looking for SOME JUSTIFICATION for the unbiblical postponement rules. The idea that Trumpets, Atonement, 1st Day of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day must not fall on a Sunday for some SYMBOLICAL

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71 Ibid, p. 22

72 Ibid, p. 23

73 Ibid

74 Ibid, p. 24

reason is absurd, and no longer even used by anyone wishing to justify these postponement rules.”<sup>75</sup> Mr. Nelte leaves out the fact the Mr. Herrmann was also referring to Pentecost, which the WorldWide Church of God observed on Monday at this time.

Kenneth Herrmann listed a number of calendar principles properly and apparently believed the calculated Jewish calendar followed these principles. It does not. It is also obvious that Mr. Herrmann’s knowledge of the calendar was quite lacking. Therefore to use these articles as authoritative would be a very large mistake. Mr. Herrmann also stresses that there must be some kind of authority in determining the mechanics of the calendar. Given the confusion on the calendar, Mr. Herrmann has a valid point, but if such authority cannot be exercised by a synod of God’s called out people, then this author contends it is better for individuals not postpone God’s holy days while trying to follow the example of Romans 14 rather than to continue in the error of postponements.

### **Kenneth Herrmann’s letter of 1969**

Kenneth Herrmann wrote one other interesting note on the calculated Jewish calendar on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969. This letter is used as support for the calculated Jewish calendar by John Ritenbaugh, but this author agrees with Mr. Nelte that this letter is powerful evidence that the focus of how to answer questions on the calendar had shifted in just 10 years. It also shows that the focus of answering questions in general had shifted in the WorldWide Church of God. The approach taken by Kenneth Herrmann seems to have been an example for Mr. Ritenbaugh, Mr. Dart, the United Church of God, aia and others to follow when asked why they use the calculated Jewish calendar.

Kenneth Herrmann answered a question on the calendar by writing, “The problem of producing a calendar from astronomical observation is not at all a simple one...It is easy to look at a table and conclude that maybe God’s Church is keeping holy days several days late. But consider the basis of timekeeping. When would you begin a day? At sunrise, noon, midnight, sunset, 6 p.m. when the sun is due west? Or 6 a.m. when the sun is due east?”<sup>76</sup> The method of answering Mr. Mikulik’s question is despicable and misleading, as well as being scholarly and theological inaccurate. The bible is clear that the day begins at even. History agrees that the Jews always started their days at evening. Mr. Herrmann even wrote a decade earlier, “The ‘DAY’ starts and ends at sunset.”<sup>77</sup> Mr. Herrmann has deliberately created a scenario where facts are meaningless and confusion is greeted with a warm embrace.

Mr. Herrmann writes, “Revelation is needed. We need an Oracle from God to keep time His way.”<sup>78</sup> Mr. Herrmann seems to insinuate that this revelation can only come from the Jews when he writes, “What advantage hath the Jew? Much in every way.”<sup>79</sup> What Mr. Herrmann does not write is that we have this revelation in scripture. Mr. Herrmann knew scripture is the oracle that states day starts and ends at even. There is no need for Jewish

75 Ibid

76 Herrmann, Kenneth, *Answer to Mr. Louis L. Mikulik*, Dated March 20, 1969, p. 1

77 Nelte, Frank, Kenneth Herrmann’s Calendar articles, Off the internet, p. 2 quoting, Herrmann, Kenneth, *God’s Sacred Calendar*, Good News, March, 1953

78 Herrmann, Answer to Mikulik, p. 1

79 Ibid



interpretation because this fact is accepted by the vast majority of theologians and historians. The few who disagree and believe the Jewish day started at some other time usually do not believe the bible or believe the Jews deliberately lie about their religious practices.

Mr. Herrmann continues, “Let’s continue with the problem. When would you begin the week? With which day? It would have to be revealed. No?”<sup>80</sup> Again Mr. Herrmann insinuates that some revelation is needed when scripture already reveals that the seventh day is the Sabbath and has been since creation.<sup>81</sup> Therefore the day after the Sabbath is the first day of the week. Mr. Herrmann’s hyperbole is obviously designed to ask questions as if there were no clear answers, when scripture and history agree that there is a clear answer on which day is the first day of the week.

He continues this misleading line of reasoning by asking, “When would you begin the month? With full moon or new moon? With the sunset (or 6 p.m.) that preceded the molad (the conjunction or the astronomer’s new moon) or with the sunset that followed it? Man can observe but he is going to need revelation to carry out timekeeping God’s Way.”<sup>82</sup> The very definition of the word month means new moon in scripture and Mr. Herrmann knew that. A decade before he wrote, “The ‘MONTH’ starts with the sunset after each ‘new moon’. D) The Hebrew word for ‘month’ is the same as for ‘moon’ and for ‘new moon.’”<sup>83</sup> God’s revealed scripture leaves no doubt that the new moon starts the month. Mr. Herrmann also left no doubt that he knew this fact, but preferred to create confusion and doubt rather than to answer questions. When in doubt, create FUD and then demand loyalty to authority. Not exactly the pattern practiced by Peter, Paul, John or Jesus.

Mr. Herrmann’s insult to theology and scholarship continues with, “When would you begin the year? With the spring equinox? With the summer solstice? With the fall equinox. With the winter solstice? Or with the new moon preceding (or following) which of the above four? Or would you allow the Passover to ‘wander 40 days in the wilderness’ of the other days of the year as is the present rule?”<sup>84</sup> This could have been a valid question. We know from scripture that the beginning of the year has to be in what we call the spring of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. A valid question could have been how do we determine exactly when that should be. However, Mr. Herrmann totally ignores the bounds of decency and scholarship to try to confuse the issue. That some people can accept this as valid logic or theology is beyond depressing. It is actually quite sickening to read this deliberate distortion of facts.

After quoting Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin’s *Introduction to Astronomy* to show how non-uniform the orbit of the moon around the earth is, Mr. Herrmann writes, “Knowing now that the average synodic month is 29.53059 (days) and that each synodic month has a different length, how many days are you going to put in each month? The present series of 30,

80 Ibid

81 Gen. 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

82 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 1

83 Nelte, Frank, Kenneth Herrmann’s Calendar articles, Off the internet, p. 2 quoting, Herrmann, Kenneth, *God’s Sacred Calendar*, Good News, March, 1953

84 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 1



29, 30, 29, 30, 29, 30 for the first seven months of the Sacred Calendar would obviously be at times just a bit out of step with astronomical observance.”<sup>85</sup> This statement is absolutely correct. However the calculated Jewish calendar is “at times just a bit out of step with astronomical observance.”<sup>86</sup> Mr. Herrmann raises an issue that effects the calculated Jewish calendar. If he does not supply any kind of answer, it would appear by his logic that since the calculated Jewish calendar is a bit out of step with astronomical calculation, then it is also not accurate. However, Mr. Herrmann’s intent is to continue to sow the seeds of confusion and doubt in the name of the WorldWide Church of God rather than answer questions. This ungodly practice is condemned in scripture. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”<sup>87</sup>

Mr. Herrmann also interjects possible issues with intercalation in his campaign of fear, uncertainty and doubt. He asks, “Would any two church members agree as to when to add a thirteenth month, how many days it should have, whether to insert this extra month just before Nisan or the twelve other possible places?”<sup>88</sup> This is the first quasi-reasonable question that Mr. Herrmann asks in his response to a letter. This is a problem that has solutions, but there should be no doubt that if the calculated Jewish calendar is no longer held to be authoritative, then disputes about how to intercalate the thirteenth month will arise.

Mr. Herrmann delves into the problem of the international date line. “The day comes to us from the east. It sweeps across the earth at a thousand-mile-an-hour speed in the equatorial regions. It begins at that International Date Line and sweeps all the way around and ends once more there, Jerusalem being rather central. A day thus begins 24 hours earlier for an individual on an island on one side on the Date Line that it does for the observer on the east of that line.”<sup>89</sup> Mr. Herrmann knows that the entire world has agreed where the international date is. This problem is actually inconsequential and the sad thing is that Mr. Herrmann almost certainly knew that, yet decided to sow deception and confusion instead.

Mr. Herrmann continues, “If each man were to depend upon local observation, the Californian would note his new moon earlier in the calendar day and even earlier on his calendar than the man in India. The man in India would begin and end his day earlier but note the new moon a day later on his count of days.”<sup>90</sup> This statement is entirely true and is a real problem if the calculated Jewish calendar is not longer held to be authoritative. Most would agree with the desirability of using Jerusalem as the point to calculate or observe when the new month began, but there is a minority that believes the month should be declared locally.

How does Mr. Herrmann suggest we deal with any problems in the calendar. “The conclusion is inescapable, there is no way to avoid it. If man is to have any calendar at all it must come from Authority. Apart from Authority on the Calendar and Sabbath every man would

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85 Ibid, p. 2

86 Ibid, p. 2

87 1Pet. 3:15

88 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 2

89 Ibid, p. 2

90 Ibid

go his own way, and the Calendar that had been intended to give unity to mankind would disintegrate into thousands of conflicting designs.”<sup>91</sup> Did God use authority to make sure the Israelites did not try to gather manna on the seventh day? Did Jesus use authority to fight Satan during his temptations? Did Paul use authority to force Philemon to free Onesimus? The answer to all these questions is obviously and vigorously no! God’s pattern is, “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>92</sup> God’s solution is to search the scriptures for answers.<sup>93</sup> God way is to study the scriptures to answer questions about how to worship him.<sup>94</sup> Of course after telling Christians to study the word of God, Paul advises Christians to avoid, “profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”<sup>95</sup> Some may place the study of the calendar as profane and vain (although they should remember God is somewhat particular about times of worship), but surely it is better to use scripture in such arguments rather than illogical and misleading arguments leading up to advising people to follow authority. Surely if a Christian is going to deal with an issue, they are better off depending on honesty than deception.

Mr. Herrmann even has the audacity to write, “The question of whether God’s Church might just be keeping God’s Holy days a day or two days or a month late is just not a proper question. God’s Church follows the Oracle that God guides the Jews to preserve.”<sup>96</sup> Not a proper question? This statement makes it clear how the WorldWide Church of God was dealing with problems in the late 60’s, a pattern which seems to continue in the churches of God today. Apparently the attitude was and is, instead of asking foolish questions about the bible, you should be praying, paying, and obeying everything the leadership teaches. This pattern helps explain why the majority of people in the WorldWide Church of God changed their entire theological belief system in just a few years, giving up a pearl of precious value, the truth of scripture, so they could continue to follow authority.

Mr. Herrmann even goes to the absolute extreme of circular logic to justify the calculated Jewish calendar. He writes, “Why does God insist that the new moons of His Calendar be delayed? So that certain festivals do not fall on certain days of the week. The fact that He does so is certain because that is the way the Sacred Calendar is given to us. Why it does? It is not really necessary for us to know ahead of time. I know He has good reason.”<sup>97</sup> Why are the days delayed in the calculated Jewish calendar? Because the calculated Jewish calendar says so and there is no reason for you to be asking why according to Mr. Herrmann and the WorldWide Church of God and many of its current splits. Convoluted and condescending all with just a few strokes of the typewriter. This is the pattern that many of the leaders of

91 Ibid

92 Isa. 1:17-8

93 Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

94 2Tim. 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

95 2Tim. 2:16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

96 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 2

97 Ibid, p. 3

the WorldWide Church of God were indoctrinated into when they were young and impressionable while attending Ambassador College. It is not surprising that their calendar papers resemble Mr. Herrmann's letter in style and substance.

Mr. Herrmann completes his soiree into the meaning of authority in the WorldWide Church of God when he correctly writes, "An Oracle is a God-given communication. It has God to back it up."<sup>98</sup> However, he goes on to write, "Thus if God's Church is following that Oracle faithfully it is completely impossible that we would be wrong on any of these dates for the Holy Days. That one basic fact every Church member must know and trust. We lay members merely take instructions in the Hebrew Scriptures (an Oracle) and the Sacred Calendar (an Oracle), and check whether this Church is following faithfully. Pentecost's date depends upon a revealed Sabbath."<sup>99</sup> If this were not so sad, it would be funny. At this point in time, the WorldWide Church of God was still keeping Pentecost on Monday. Mr. Herrmann states it would be impossible for the church to be doing something wrong if it followed authority, yet just a few years later the church would admit it was wrong. Mr. Herrmann also states that the calculated Jewish calendar is an oracle, a direct communication from God, equivalent with scripture, yet even the current Jewish leadership that accepts the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar does not believe this. Error compounded upon error for the sole purpose convincing God's called out people to follow authority, no matter what. "Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies."<sup>100</sup>

Although Mr. Herrmann writes that it is the duty of the lay member to follow the oracle of scripture and the supposed oracle of the calculated Jewish calendar, that is not what he means. As he has stated, the only way to follow this oracle is to follow those in authority. The final duty of a lay member in the WorldWide Church of God was to follow authority. This is a far cry from, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>101</sup>

### **Uzzah and the Ark**

Mr. Herrmann believes, "When there was need to adjust the Calendar it was done by a duly-constituted Sanhedrin. We only copy the Sacred Calendar as a scribe would make a copy of the Bible, fearing to change a letter of punctuation mark...It is not in any way our appointed job to 'steady the ark' for them (the Jewish leadership). 'Hands off' is the only rule to follow."<sup>102</sup> Again, Mr. Herrmann contends our job is not work out our own salvation.<sup>103</sup> Our job is not determine from scripture that the ark of the covenant should not

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98 Ibid

99 Ibid

100 Ps. 40:4

Prov. 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

101 Eccl. 12:13

102 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 3

103 Phil. 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

have been on a cart.<sup>104</sup> Instead we must allow the leadership to do whatever they think is best, no matter what scripture states, according to Mr. Herrmann's writings.

Under the leadership of David, a brand new cart was used to carry the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem.<sup>105</sup> If the leadership of David had been informed that the ark had to be carried by men and could not be placed on a cart, Uzzah would never have died and the ark would have been in Jerusalem far earlier.<sup>106</sup> The entire story of Uzzah shows that if you do follow leadership and you do the wrong thing, you are not following God and if required, God will institute punishment to teach you the lessons you need to get closer to Him.

However, Mr. Herrmann obviously believed that following leadership was paramount for those in the WorldWide Church of God. He wrote, "We are coming to end of 6000 years.... It (the calculated Jewish calendar) is an Oracle and a very dependable one."<sup>107</sup> Because the church was supposedly in the last 10 years of its existence before the return of Jesus, it became more important to follow leadership than to answer a straight question with a straight answer. Sadly, close to half a century later, the leadership of the churches of God follow the same pattern of deliberate misinformation and misleading statements to soothe their lay members into following the leadership of the church. After all, if a citizen of Israel would have told the king it was not proper to put the ark on a cart, no matter how well intentioned King David was, because it was against scripture, would David have listened to this person? This author contends that David would have probably reasoned with this citizen out of scripture. However, as Kenneth Herrmann clearly shows, reasoning from scripture in an honest manner apparently left the WorldWide Church of God sometime during the 50's in favor of following authority even if it meant misleading and misinforming the members of the church, God's called out people.

### John Ritenbaugh on the Calendar

In August of 1994 John Ritenbaugh wrote an article entitled *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*.<sup>108</sup> It is appropriate to review this article before examining the controversy between John Ritenbaugh and Frank Nelte as background. It is important for the reader to note that Darryl Henson was actively involved in the ministry of John Ritenbaugh and the Church of the Great God before he split away over the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Ritenbaugh introduces the topic of the calendar by writing, "It continues to be a focus of research, writing and discussion, with very strong opinions—sometimes coupled with

104 Num. 7:9 But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

Num. 18:3 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.

105 2Sam. 6:3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

106 Even though the Philistines sent the ark back by cart, the nation of Israel was supposed to know better because they had the scriptures of the living God to teach them the right way to do things.

107 Herrmann, *Answer to Mikulik*, p. 4

108 Ritenbaugh, John Forerunner: *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, Church of the Great God, off the internet at CCG.org, page numbers should match because of CCG's format of their articles

a great deal of sarcasm, even angry finger-pointing and accusation—being expressed by those of opposing views.”<sup>109</sup> This is true. Mr. Ritenbaugh writes, “Frank Nelte’s or anybody else’s calendar proposition is a departure from what God’s messenger gave us as part the foundation for our faith. This push for a calendar change is simply a continuation through a different doctrine of what the Tkaches began.”<sup>110</sup> So Mr. Ritenbaugh chooses to equate those who disagree with calculated Jewish calendar, especially Frank Nelte, to following the heresy of the Tkach’s “new covenant” teaching. This is finger pointing and accusatory. Mr. Ritenbaugh also wrote, “Who in the world is Frank? Is he a judge, prophet or apostle? Where is the fruit that he is? Frank was ordained to pastor people converted under HWA’s ministry as an apostle. Instead he has rejected all requests that he do that and abrogated his responsibility.”<sup>111</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh goes on to write, “These angry denunciations over the calendar are taking place within the church of God, not the world!”<sup>112</sup> Yes, this finger pointing and angry denunciation is going on in the churches of God. This author contends it is because the leadership of various groups will not deal honestly and openly with the problems of the calculated Jewish calendar. It became obvious that John Ritenbaugh will not.

When a group of elders has serious problems with a doctrine and they wish to discuss this problem with the leader of their group, the scripturally correct thing to do is to discuss the matter, openly and honestly.<sup>113</sup> If the matter has to be put off, but a promise is given that the matter will be discussed at such and such a time, then that promise should be kept. If that leader later stands up and states there is no reason to discuss this issue any further because they have all the proof they need on this issue, therefore breaking his promise and rejecting council, that leader would be following in the footsteps of Rehoboam, an unwise and vain glorious king of Judah. This is the path Mr. Ritenbough chose to follow.

Mr. Ritenbaugh seems to believe that new knowledge cannot enter the church at this time. “Why do you think that warning to ‘hold fast what you have’ is in the Philadelphia era message, the last church group with a truly right standing with God? It is there because God knows and so should every true minister that the pattern is very clear in Scripture. God raises up a judge, prophet or apostle, sets those who have made the covenant with him on a right footing; there is a period of stability and prosperity and then the people depart from what was given them. The claim is always made by those departing from the faith once delivered that what was given them is deficient.”<sup>114</sup> Of course, the assumption is made that we are in the very last times and Christ will return very, very shortly, as Herbert Armstrong preached over and over, pointing to dates in the mid-forties, then again in the

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109 Ibid, p. 1

110 Ritenbaugh, John Appended to an internet message sent out by Darryl Henson that I received in early August of 2000.

111 Ibid

112 Ritenbaugh, *Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, p. 1

113 Prov. 11:14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Prov. 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Prov. 24:6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

114 Henson Reply, p. 3



mid-seventies, yet 40 years later the error of this message has still not struck home. It is also assumed that those who follow the truth as delivered by Herbert Armstrong are the only correct Christians, both assumptions this author believes to be false.

How does Mr. Ritenbaugh deal with the questions raised by those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar? He writes about these men, “What is interesting is that most of them disagree with each other on major points.”<sup>115</sup> There are difference between those who reject the calculated Jewish calendar. However, they all agree postponements are wrong and should not be practiced by God’s people. This is probably why, “there has scarcely been a single dissenting movement in Judaism that has not been associated with a desire to manipulate the calendar.”<sup>116</sup> Apparently many have seen the weakness of the calculated Jewish calendar, like the Karaite Jews.

Mr. Ritenbaugh follows the pattern of many calculated Jewish calendar apologists when he writes, “They look for clearly defined rules contained in verses or implied in a story or example. The few rules in the Bible pertaining to producing a tabular calendar are unclear, written in such a way as to allow for much ‘private interpretation.’ Other factors necessary for producing an accurate calendar are either missing entirely or are so vague that one is forced to make arbitrary decisions.”<sup>117</sup> As shown in the body of this book, there are clear rules for the calendar, like Abib is the first and chief month and the month starts with the new moon, two things that the calculated Jewish calendar does not follow. Yet because there are uncertainties and gray areas in the biblical calendar, Mr. Ritenbaugh, along with others, believes it is preferable to practice something clearly against scripture than trying to change it. He attacks those who disagree by spreading innuendo and misleading statements rather than dealing with the issue of postponing God’s annual feasts.

John Ritenbaugh writes a great deal about intercalation, as do many apologists of the calculated Jewish calendar. There is no doubt there is no absolute way defined to do intercalation in scripture. However it is a biblical requirement that intercalation should be done to follow seasonal adjustments that allow the barley to be abib in the first month, but exactly how this is to be done is not detailed in scripture. However, it is factual that at the time of Christ, intercalation was done at the end of Adar, the 12<sup>th</sup> month, to follow seasonal adjustments and the current calculated Jewish calendar does not do that.

Even John Ritenbaugh seems to acknowledge that the calculated Jewish calendar was not used at the time of Jesus. He writes, “So, instead of having the calendar the church has used for at least 1,600 plus years we have Frank’s or somebody else’s calendar.”<sup>118</sup> This author believes we should try to follow the pattern of intercalation practiced in Christ’s time, but it must be acknowledge this issue is not clear cut, unlike the issue of postponements, which are clearly unbiblical. It is interesting that John Ritenbaugh quotes from Maimonides that intercalation was done by seasonal observation and not with a fixed pattern. However, he dismisses this method of intercalation by writing, “That might work in a small country the

115 Ritenbaugh, *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, p. 1

116 Ibid

117 Ibid, p. 2

118 Reply to Henson, p. 3



size of New Jersey, but what about applying that to a worldwide Work? Also, if we use observation only, what happens when the moon is not visible during the critical period for several months in a row?”<sup>119</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh ignores the fact that observation of the first visible crescent to determine the start of the month was used by the Jews when they were spread out around a quarter of the world when telecommunication consisted of sending notes overland or via ships and it worked fairly effectively. Mr. Ritenbaugh also resorts to a logical subterfuge when he suggests just because ancient Israel did it that way, we can't be expected to do it that way. That can and has been said about many of the ordinances of scripture.

### Moses Maimonides

John Ritenbaugh brings up Maimonides, so he should also know that there were rules and regulations to deal with many months of poor visibility in a row. The fact that Mr. Ritenbaugh suggests that we have no guidance for problems of visibility means that either Mr. Ritenbaugh did not understand Maimonides or he is being deliberately misleading in an attempt to cause confusion and doubt.

Maimonides emphasizes that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its “proper time” for several months in succession. “Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”<sup>120</sup>

Mr. Ritenbaugh goes so far as to suggest that observation of the new moon was not truly done by observation the time of Christ because, “*The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* states that witnesses of the new moon could not always be trusted to give honest testimony. They were often zealous but misled. Community leaders, therefore, had to study astronomy to ascertain by means of calculation when the new moon should appear, and thereby check up on the testimony of witnesses.”<sup>121</sup> It is difficult to be certain exactly what Mr. Ritenbaugh is referring to because he does not list what article from the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* he is referencing, nor does he give proper footnoting. However, the reason for examining the witness's observation with calculation was not only to make completely sure the witness was correct, but to keep people like the Samaritans from testifying falsely to purposely cause the Jews to keep the new moons at a different time.<sup>122</sup> It appears that keeping the new moon at the time of the first crescent, an astronomical event, was very important to the nation of Israel during the second temple period.

Mr. Ritenbaugh goes on to write, “Eventually, the calendar was determined entirely by calculation, and the hearing of witnesses only retained to encourage individuals to carry out

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119 Ritenbaugh, *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, p. 5

120 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. xxviii

121 Ibid, p. 6

122 Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple: Its ministry and service*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p. 156

their religious duties.”<sup>123</sup> This is unfounded speculation by Mr. Ritenbaugh and is simply erroneous. However, Mr. Ritenbaugh writes, “Nobody knows with absolute certainty when calculation of the calendar began. Maimonides claims it has been calculated from the beginning (with Moses).”<sup>124</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh again either did not understand what Maimonides wrote or he was deliberately being misleading. What Maimonides wrote was, “great stress in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its ‘proper time’ for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”<sup>125</sup> During the second temple period, as Maimonides writes, calculation was only done to check observation. Maimonides writes, “Thou, however, discerning scholar, must affirm that observation had been a fundamental principle of our religion, and when the new crescent could not be observed a day was added to the outgoing month. To this truth, statements in the Mishnah and Gemara bear witness, as well as many events that occurred in past times.”<sup>126</sup> John Ritenbaugh’s usage of Maimonides as a reference is distorted and there is no doubt his understanding of Maimonides is errant. Maimonides believed the calculation was done only to assert the validity of the observation of the new crescent. He did not believe that observation was some kind of individual religious duty.

### The Karaites

Continuing with his errant research and misleading statements, Mr. Ritenbaugh writes that the Karaites, Jews who reject Rabbinic tradition, which includes the calculated Jewish calendar, eventually had to create something akin to the calculated Jewish calendar. This statement is erroneous and can be verified as such by anyone with internet access by going to <http://www.Karaite-Korner.org>.

### Various Calendars used in Israel?

John Ritenbaugh quotes Morgenstern as writing, “Secular history shows that Israel used at least three and possibly four different calendars during its long history. Mr. Morgenstern believes one of those calendars started the day at sunrise rather than sunset. He believes another calendar, the calendar of Jubilees, was used by the Essenes, a small sect of Judaism. The calendar of Jubilees was strictly solar and 364 days long.”<sup>127</sup> Scholars believe, “the text demonstrating this calendar may be dated to approximately 200 B.C.”<sup>128</sup> If the calendar of Jubilees was actually

123 Ritenbaugh, *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, p. 6

124 Ibid, p. 6

125 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. xxviii

126 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. liii-lvi

127 Ritenbaugh, *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, p. 7

128 Morgan, D.F., Calendar, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol 1, A-D*, Bromiley, G.W.

used from approximately 200 BCE, when it was written, Passover would have already been celebrated in the middle of winter and been moving back towards summer at the time of Jesus. During Jesus' time, the calendar of Jubilees would have its followers observing Passover in August, near the time of the harvest. Obviously this is ludicrous and why scholars not caught up in today's trend of modern, critical scholarship, dismiss the calendar of Jubilees as a theological contract that was never used to observe the feast days.<sup>129</sup> The idea that the vast majority of Judaism, and also the Messiah, did not use the observed calendar is simply incorrect. Beckwith destroys Jubert's theory about the calendar of Jubilees in his writings as I show in the body of this book and in *Jesus the True Passover*. It is obvious that Mr. Ritenbaugh has resorted to FUD by quoting outdated, erroneous critical scholarship to avoid answering tough questions just as he was taught to do at Ambassador College. The forty years in the wilderness cannot come to an end soon enough to end this kind of leadership.

Finally, as Mr. Ritenbaugh quotes from the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, "As is the case with all other calendars, the Jewish calendar as now observed is the product of a long historical development."<sup>130</sup> Of course Jewish sources report that the calculated Jewish calendar has developed and changed over time. Catholic sources would also write the Sabbath has developed and changed over time. The Jews know that the calendar used during the second temple period was based on observation of the crescent new moon and that intercalation was based on seasonal variation, most specifically the ripeness of the barley. They also know the current calendar is based on a mathematical formula that tries to maintain a regular calendar while trying to prevent as many tandem sabbaths as possible for the sake of Jewish *halacha*. The mandated changes occurred after the second temple period, not during it. Even John Ritenbaugh wrote the current calculated Jewish calendar was codified about 1,600 years ago, showing the type of change most scholars refer to was the Jewish leadership rejecting the observed calendar for the calculated Jewish calendar hundreds of years after the death of Jesus.<sup>131</sup>

### John Ritenbaugh and Frank Nelte

It is apparent from their writings that Frank Nelte and John Ritenbaugh have talked about the calculated Jewish calendar for an extended period of time. Frank Nelte writes, "Previously you did acknowledge publicly that you could actually see some real problems with the present Jewish calendar."<sup>132</sup> However, there can be no doubt that John Ritenbaugh has reaffirmed his belief in the calculated Jewish calendar and that he wishes the cancerous calendar controversy would just go away.<sup>133</sup> John Ritenbaugh wrote that he believes, "that there is no calendar in the Bible. I have since found confirmation of that in several places."<sup>134</sup>

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ed. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p. 577

129 Beckwith, R.T., *The earliest Enoch literature and its Calendar: Marks of their origin, date and motivation*, p 385-90

130 Ritenbaugh, *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy*, p. 7

131 In his reply to Darryl Henson John Ritenbaugh writes, "So, instead of having the calendar the church has used for at least 1,600 plus years we have Frank's or somebody else's calendar."

132 Nelte, Frank, *A REPLY TO THE 2 CALENDAR SERMONS GIVEN BY JOHN RITENBAUGH ON JANUARY 1 AND JANUARY 8*, 2000, Feb, 2000. Off the internet, so all page numbering may vary. p. 1

133 Ritenbaugh's *The Cancerous Calendar Controversy* article can be found on his web sit at ccg.org

134 Nelte, Reply to Ritenbaugh, p. 1

Because the calendar is not listed like the 10 commandments, Mr. Ritenbaugh apparently believes that we should accept the calculated Jewish calendar without question, parroting many in the church of God. Frank Nelte's response is quite apropos.

Now since in BOTH of your sermons you totally and completely ignore and avoid ANY AND ALL instructions for a calendar that we find in the Bible, it seems to me that you have used your 'basis' to justify a total ignoring of all biblical calendar requirements. Thus, for all practical purposes, the Jews could be observing the Chinese calendar or the Indian calendar or the Roman Julian calendar ... and your sermons make it a matter of faith to accept whatever calendar the Jews happen to have accepted. What the Jewish calendar actually looks like in a real life situation never enters the picture in your messages.<sup>135</sup>

Mr. Ritenbaugh continues the standard response to questions about the calculated Jewish calendar by ignoring all the biblical evidence and spreading FUD and authority. Mr. Ritenbaugh contends that Herbert Armstrong was informed about the calendar and that nothing has changed.<sup>136</sup> Mr. Nelte discusses some of the information about the calendar that might have escaped Herbert Armstrong's notice.<sup>137</sup> As far as this author is concerned, this is inconsequential. Herbert Armstrong has been dead for a quarter of a century. He was not infallible. For those who believe he was, books like this one have no redeeming value. What should matter for Christians is that are we doing the right thing now, today. Are we doing the best job we can to follow in Christ's footsteps? We cannot do a perfect job and sometimes we even do a bad job, but are we doing the best we can to follow God and the ordinances He has written for us in the word of life? Teachers, no matter how good or how close they are to God, only help with this task. Herbert Armstrong often said not to believe him, but to believe the word of God. He also often became upset when people did exactly that.<sup>138</sup> Christians should examine scripture for the correct way to live and try to follow it as closely as we can, of course with God's guidance and strength through his son Jesus and the holy spirit.

Mr. Ritenbaugh sounds a common argument that apologists for the calculated Jewish calendar when he states, "there is no calendar in the Bible."<sup>139</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh is correct that no precise and comprehensive definition of the calendar is found in scripture. However, as Mr. Nelte discusses and as this book shows, Mr. Ritenbaugh is incorrect because he implies there are no rules for the calendar in scripture when there are. The reason John Ritenbaugh's argument is superfluous can be seen with the examples of Christmas and Easter.

Scripture simply does not say Christians should not observe Christmas and Easter. However, there are many principles in scripture that show observation of pagan holidays should not be done by God's called out people, even if their meaning has supposedly changed. Simply because not every pagan observance was named and the idea that these days could and

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135 Ibid, p. 2

136 Ibid, "Now some people have the mistaken idea that Herbert Armstrong was uninformed regarding the calendar; but that is very far from the truth."

137 Ibid, p. 2-3

138 First a Sivan Six Pentecost, then a Monday, then a Sunday Pentecost. People were tossed out along with way for disagreeing with these things. He taught against the Petrine doctrine in the 30's and espoused them in the late 70's. He taught Christ would return in 1975, which was obviously erroneous. These are but a few issues over which people were disfellowshipped.

139 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 2

would be disguised as memorials to the messiah is not specifically discussed in scripture does not mean we should or can observe Christmas and Easter. In like manner, not every possible perversion of the calendar is listed in scripture, but there are ordinances which outline the basic mechanics of a scriptural calendar. We cannot violate those principles either, even for the sake of Christian unity. Most of Christianity will ask a keeper of God's ways if they really are a Christian when they learn God's called out people have given up the supposedly wonderful, unifying traditions of Christmas and Easter. The obvious answer for covenant keeping *solo scriptura* believing and practicing Christians is yes.

Instead of examining the issues around the calculated Jewish calendar, John Ritenbaugh states, "Now listen to this: The issue on the calendar is not a mathematical, astronomical one. But, like everything else in the lives of those who are called, it is A BIBLICAL FAITH ISSUE."<sup>140</sup> When all else fails, bombastically claim if you do not believe I am right, you are not a faithful Christian. Frank Nelte discusses a bible study John Ritenbaugh gave in his house about faith, obviously believing that Mr. Ritenbaugh is not being consistent with his application of what faith is.<sup>141</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh's appeal to faith is a method of saying his followers should believe him and not their bibles. They should believe Herbert Armstrong and not their bibles. Even the demons believe in God and tremble, but they do not do what is right.<sup>142</sup> The demons have faith that God exists. But they do not follow up this faith by doing the right thing, by trying to do God's will by living like Jesus did. Faith is not blind loyalty to tradition, to a faith once delivered,<sup>143</sup> but reliance on God, upon his manual of life, the Bible and upon the holy spirit, our comforter. After all, the faith once delivered stated that every male had to be circumcised to be part of God's called out people, but we know that changed.<sup>144</sup> We also have numerous examples of God's people following the wrong path for many years, only to be returned to the correct worship of God.<sup>145</sup> Would anyone contend that Samson gave the right advice and set the right example of how God's people should deal with sex and marriage? Yet he was a judge in Israel who did many right things, but his example surely affected the people's attitude towards sex and marriage. The nation of Israel, as well as all of God's called out people who still read scripture for instruction, was supposed to follow Samson's correct examples and dispose of his incorrect ones. We need to discern what is good from what is bad and not just take it on faith that what our leader did was correct.<sup>146</sup>

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140 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 5

141 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 5

142 James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

143 Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

144 Gen. 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Acts 15:24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

145 2Kgs. 22:8 And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

146 2Tim. 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.



John Ritenbaugh is quoted as saying, “Just from the things that I have given you here he clearly saw that there are not enough rules in the Bible to establish a calendar. A calendar is not the simple device that you and I tend to think of it as something that you just hang up on the wall.”<sup>147</sup> Of course Frank Nelte quotes Kenneth Herrmann’s article, where he wrote, “The day, month, and year are easy to follow.”<sup>148</sup> However, John Ritenbaugh supposedly held up five different articles on the calendar when he meet with his group of elders, stating these articles prove the calculated Jewish calendar and it was no longer necessary to discuss the calendar. One of these articles was supposedly Kenneth Herrmann’s, therefore John Ritenbaugh should have known what he was saying was not correct. Every student of the calendar should be familiar with Maimonides and Schurer, who wrote, “And yet, primitive as this calendar was, it had this great advantage, that serious and persistent inaccuracies, such as in the course of the year inevitably crept into a calendar calculated upon an incorrect basis, were avoided.”<sup>149</sup> The calendar that was practiced by the nation of Israel at the time of Jesus was that simple, far simpler than the Gregorian or calculated Jewish calendar used today.

But to continue trying to show just how complicated a calendar supposedly has to be, after giving the correct facts about the orbits of the earth, sun and moon, John Ritenbaugh misleadingly states, “Putting the moon in makes things a great deal more difficult. So you need a lot of rules in order to keep the chart on the wall accurate with the heavenly bodies that are spinning around up there.”<sup>150</sup> It appears Mr. Ritenbaugh is deliberately trying to mislead his following about the complexities of the calendar or he simple has not studied into the issue as he should have. The rules for the calendar at the time of Christ were quite simple, as long as it was not cloudy. The complexities that ensued with several months of poor visibility are dealt with in the Talmud and expanded upon by Maimonides, but even these rules seem simple compared to postponing the first of Tishri by two days if the molad occurs 205 parts after 3 am on a Tuesday.<sup>151</sup>

### Authority and the Calendar

John Ritenbaugh believes that, “God had given no authority to anyone outside of the Bible to establish a calendar...And brethren, this even includes you and me, as we will see later on in the sermon.”<sup>152</sup> As Frank Nelte points out, “you have OMITTED TO SAY that “IN THE BIBLE God has not given anyone authority to establish a calendar EITHER!”<sup>153</sup> Mr. 1Cor. 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

Hebr. 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

147 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 5

148 Ibid

149 Shurer, Emil, *A History of the Jewish People at the time of Jesus Christ*, First Division, Vol. 2, Trans. by MacPherson, John, Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, p. 372

150 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 6

151 Postponement 3- When the Molad Tishri of a common years falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 am, i.e., 3d 9h 204p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to a Wednesday, and, because of Dehiah 1, it is postponed to a Thursday.

152 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 6

153 Ibid, p. 7



Nelte's point is the Jewish leadership also does not have the authority for the calendar it created according to the Mr. Ritenbaugh logic. This would leave us with a dilemma. If God has given no one authority outside the bible to establish the calendar and there is no calendar in the bible, there can be no authority for any kind of calendar. John Ritenbaugh's logic is severely lacking, which often happens in arguments that depend upon circular logic. There are rules for the calendar in the bible, but there are gray areas in these rules. It is our job to interpret them as best we can, but we will be held responsible for our mistakes and our false teachings if we have not tried to do what scripture mandates. We will never be perfect or completely righteous, but this author believes we will be judged harshly if we confuse hate for love or wrong for right.<sup>154</sup> Of course there are hundreds of millions of Christians who keep a Sunday sabbath because they do not know any better, but if they are called into a closer relationship with God by God, they should actually understand the 10 commandments teach a seventh day Sabbath. However, if they refuse to walk closer to God when they are called, they will be held accountable.

The calendar is a smaller and less significant doctrine than the weekly Sabbath, but the weekly Sabbath is a smaller and less significant doctrine than loving God and loving your neighbor. Of course, the weekly Sabbath is essential to understanding the love of God. The calendar is essential in understanding how the annual feasts operate and what they mean. So just because a doctrine may have less importance in the life of a Christian in the short term does not mean it will not affect their relationship with God in the long term.

Frank Nelte believes, "There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that the calendar is 'an authority issue'! That is simply AN ASSUMPTION Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong made, one he received from the Church of God 7th Day ... and it has been accepted by everyone who has supported the present Jewish calendar since then. The fact that ALL of the requirements for a correct calendar are found in the Bible, as clearly presented in Kenneth Herrmann's articles, shows that it is simply not required for God to somehow confer 'special authority for a calendar' to any group of people."<sup>155</sup>

This author must disagree with Mr. Nelte here on a number of issues. The calendar was a matter of authority for Herbert Armstrong, as was all doctrine. That is how he ran the World-Wide Church of God. Scripture suggests this is not the correct way to administer the church of God, but that is the way it was done.<sup>156</sup> It should be no surprise that leaders of various churches of God would continue the pattern that they learned for decades. However, all the rules for the calendar are not found in the bible. The definition of the new moon is not found in scripture. This author believes there is no doubt it was the first crescent, but it is never defined as such in scripture. The writers of the bible took it for granted that everyone knew what a new moon was. Although the year must start with the month of Abib, the reason for

154 Matt. 25:31-46 The story of the sheep and the goats

155 Ibid, p. 7

156 Mark 10:42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

Luke 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

starting it must be inferred because the intercalation of the leap month is also not specifically described in scripture. Just because the calculated Jewish calendar breaks biblical injunctions does not mean that all biblical ordinances are found in the scripture.

After reading Acts 7:38-9,<sup>157</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh states, “Okay, we’re dealing with a faithless people here, who were given the living sayings of God, but they would not obey. They were a faithless people, a people who were prone to make, what we’ll call them, to make mistakes. So you don’t trust the Jews, because they make mistakes. Okay, what if the Jews were without faith and they made mistakes? Shall their lack of faith make the faithfulness of God of none effect? No, God is going to be true, regardless. People do. People to whom God gives responsibility can sin, not being faithful to that responsibility. But that doesn’t change God. And in this case: regardless of the sins of these people, He will preserve His oracles in spite of them!”<sup>158</sup>

Stephen’s quotation from Acts 7 is referring to the golden calf. Stephen is stating the nation of Israel wanted a God they could see. This was a major mistake on their part. But they were God’s called out people, just as we are today. We also make mistakes. Mr. Ritenbaugh apparently believes even if the Jews messed up, they maintained the oracles of God. However, Mr. Ritenbaugh does not believe the Jews have maintained the oracles of God when it comes to the timing of Passover and Pentecost. He believes he is required to examine scripture and change his religious practices when he deems the Jews have violated the biblical injunctions about the timing of Passover and Pentecost (This author believes the Jewish leadership is wrong about Pentecost, but right about when the passover lamb was slain in Egypt).<sup>159</sup> However, when it comes to the calendar, according to John Ritenbaugh, we must follow the Jewish practice because God “will preserve His oracles in spite of them!”<sup>160</sup> This is illogical and inconsistent. I believe the reason John Ritenbaugh supports the calculated Jewish calendar is that Herbert Armstrong followed the calculated Jewish calendar and the suggestion that he might be wrong is anathema to many of his followers.

John Ritenbaugh wrote to Darryl Henson, “The claim is always made by those departing from the faith once delivered that what was given them is deficient. That is EXACTLY what we are going through. Frank Nelte’s or anybody else’s calendar proposition is a departure from what God’s messenger gave us as part the foundation for our faith. This push for a calendar change is simply a continuation through a different doctrine of what the Tkaches began. What HWA taught regarding how doctrine is put into the church is biblically true. There is absolutely no record in the Bible of God ever putting doctrine into the life of Israel or the Israel of God, the church, through any other means than an apostle or prophet.”<sup>161</sup>

Was Herbert Armstrong a prophet? Although he made many prophecies in writing, even

157 Acts 7:38-41 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we now not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

158 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 7-8

159 You can download *Jesus the True Passover* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

160 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 8

161 Letter to Darryl Henson from John Ritenbaugh from the internet.

his most adamant followers must acknowledge he always taught he was not prophet. As for his being an apostle, he did claim that to be the case from the 1950's onward. So should the church have ignored his teachings from those first 25 years of his ministry? This author is not suggesting that Frank Nelte is an apostle, but the supposition that only certain kinds of people can bring knowledge to the church from the scripture is simply not correct. Using John Ritenbaugh's approach, the people of the church of God, 7<sup>th</sup> day and others should have ignored the teachings of Herbert Armstrong until he proved he was a prophet or an apostle. The scriptural approach is to study the bible and reason together.<sup>162</sup>

As for scriptural examples of truth entering into the church by other than a prophet or an apostle, Hilkiah and Hezekiah, neither of which was a prophet or an apostle, returned truth to God's called out people.<sup>163</sup> So did King Josiah.<sup>164</sup> God used the translators of the King James Bible to open the door to the study of His word, which allowed the truth of God to shine forth, although it is entirely possible not a single translator was actually called by God. It is certain that none were apostles or prophets. There are many examples of people who were not called being used by God to help his people, like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Artaxerxes, and even Balaam. We must grow in grace and knowledge and we must do it ourselves.<sup>165</sup> Teachers are tools that God gives us in our walk towards him, but surely we should have learned that God demands a one on one relationship with him and anything that stands in the way, rather it be the temple of God or our own eye cannot stand in the way or it will be removed.<sup>166</sup>

After stressing the authority of Jews with what Mr. Ritenbaugh believes the oracles of God are, he makes a very interesting aside. "Now I don't know whether you are aware of it, but the Jews officially rejected the New Testament as Scripture, at a conference at a little town called Jebneh in Judea in AD 90. I only bring this up because, in this case, they didn't have

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162 Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Isa. 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

163 2Kgs. 22:8 And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

2Kgs. 22:11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes

164 2Chronicles 35

165 Phil. 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

2Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen

166 For a detailed examination of this issue, you can download *How does God Work with Mankind* from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

Jeremiah 7

Matt. 5:29-30 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

This saying is a metaphor showing how absolutely nothing should stand between us and completing our walk with God.

the opportunity, once they rejected it. God turned to somebody else.”<sup>167</sup> Frank Nelte realizes that Mr. Ritenbaugh has drawn, “the conclusion that therefore God had the Greeks preserve the New Testament, instead of using the Jews. I agree with your conclusion.”<sup>158</sup> This author also concurs, as does secular and Christian history. However, as anyone who has made even a cursory study of the calculated Jewish calendar knows, it was developed between 200 and 350 CE, when Hillel II finally codified it in the mid-three fifties. John Ritenbaugh contends that God can and did use someone else, rather than the Jews, to preserve part of the oracles of God, the entire New Testament after 100 CE. Yet he misses the point that if God rejected them from maintaining the oracles of the New Testament after 100 CE, then how does he justify them maintaining the oracles of the calendar, which they changed dramatically after 100 CE? Mr. Ritenbaugh simply refuses to allow for the possibility that God can use someone else when it comes to the supposed oracle of the calendar.

Part of John Ritenbaugh’s predicament is he has stated on many occasions that we must follow the faith once delivered, which for him means following the teachings of Herbert Armstrong. He believes and teaches deviation from the teachings of the man he believes to have been an apostle of God will lead to heresy, as it did in the 1990’s in the WorldWide Church of God. If he makes an exception here, then others may want to change another teaching, bringing other doctrines under the scrutiny of scripture. This author contends examining doctrine in the light of scripture is a good thing, a growth process. However, it certainly could lead a loss of control.

Mr. Ritenbaugh believes, “Now the Jews, then, are responsible to God for the calendar; and the reason is the Holy Days cannot be kept without it. In other words: the calendar is an attachment to the Old Testament! Even though there is no calendar in the Old Testament, the calendar is a necessary attachment to it if the holy days are going to be kept on the correct dates.”<sup>168</sup> As Frank Nelte writes, “WOW... ‘AN ATTACHMENT’ to the Bible ... elevating this non-biblical thing to an equal status with THE BIBLE?”<sup>169</sup> John Ritenbaugh contends that there is no calendar in the bible and he also contends that the knowledge of the calendar is essential to follow the will of God. He contends this knowledge is maintained by the Jews outside of scripture. This is Gnosticism by definition.<sup>170</sup> This author rejects that God interacted with His people by using Gnosticism and the apostles Paul and John soundly rejected the notion that there was essential knowledge that God had not given His called out people in scripture.

Beyond bringing in esoteric, Gnostic arguments in support of the calculated Jewish calendar, John Ritenbaugh also brings in the supposed “government of God” on earth as the authoritative force that must be yielded too. “Now this whole issue is A QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT, whether God is capable of ruling, whether God can intervene in the affairs of His people to correct their errors. So can we have faith in God’s faithfulness? Did God correct the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God regarding Pentecost? He did,

<sup>167</sup> Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 11

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>169</sup> Ibid

<sup>170</sup> *The American College Dictionary, Random house, NY, 1948, p. 517* gnostic-possessing knowledge, esp. esoteric knowledge of spiritual things.

didn't He? But, He had 50 years to correct the calendar while there was an apostle alive, and He did nothing! That ought to tell us something."<sup>171</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh asks if people can have faith while he works to destroy it by teaching Christians must follow the Talmud of Herbert Armstrong just the the Pharisees taught that Jews had to follow their Talmud rather than follow scripture in the light of Jesus as the Messiah.

What is this supposed to tell us? Noah preached repentance for 120 years, yet people would not listen or change, so God allowed this error for 120 years before he took final action. Jeremiah prophesied for 25 years just two generations after the Assyrians had taken the northern tribes of Israel into captivity. Yet the people preferred to believe that since they had the temple of God, Jerusalem would never fall, no matter what they did or didn't do. They did not want to follow the way of scripture, the path God placed before them, instead choosing to settle for a shallow imitation of the religion of God.<sup>172</sup> It took another apostle to stand up to Peter and correct his mistake,<sup>173</sup> something which was not allowed to happen in the last fifty years in the WorldWide Church of God. As Frank Nelte brings out about the issue of Pentecost, "God DID correct that issue. HOWEVER, it took a full 47 years (from 1927 till 1974) before Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was prepared to correct that ONE error!"<sup>174</sup> I contend the WorldWide Church of God had a terrible track record on correcting mistakes, both relational and theological. Depending upon the old adage that God will correct whatever is wrong with the church as long as people stay, pray, and obey should be passé after the heresies of the nineties. Yet John Ritenbaugh seems determined to obey the authority of a man who has been dead for a quarter of a century even though that man admitted he was wrong about theological issues during his life.

### **Herman Hoeh on the Calendar**

John Ritenbaugh quotes from Herman Hoeh's 1981 Good News articles, "So the Romans finally put an end to visual observations by the Jews. The Jews chief leader, Hillel II, whose responsibility it was to regulate the calendar, was forced to issue a decree for the years AD 358/359, to reinstitute the authority of the fixed calendar we know today as the Hebrew calendar."<sup>175</sup> I talked to Dr. Hoeh about this in December of 1992 over a lunch of Thai food. Dr. Hoeh believed that the history recorded in the Talmud and that vast majority of scholarship about the origin of calculated Jewish calendar was in error. He did not even acknowledge that calendar at the time of Jesus was based on observation. He seemed to feel the observations of the first visible crescent recorded in the Talmud were simply some ritual the Jews added to the calculated Jewish calendar and that the calculated calendar could be traced back at least as far as Moses. He never presented his reasons for believing this, nor did he present his evidence why the vast majority of scholars of the world are all wrong. Dr. Hoeh presented evidence and support for many of the issues we discussed that day, but

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171 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 13

172 Jeremiah 7

173 Gal. 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

174 Nelte on Ritenbaugh, p. 13

175 Ibid, p. 16



to simply state the Jews were wrong as was almost every other scholar in the world on this issue without support lead me to believe this was nothing more than a bias.

Mr. Nelte wrote about Dr. Hoeh's statement, "It is clear from historical records that at the time of Christ the Jews regulated the calendar based on visual observations, something Dr. Hoeh is tacitly acknowledging."<sup>176</sup> This author is certain that this is not what Dr. Hoeh was acknowledging. Dr. Hoeh believed that the Romans had put a stop to the erroneous practice of observation and forced the Jews to return to only using calculation for determining their calendar. Of course, Dr. Hoeh was wrong because there is not a shred of scholarship to support his belief that the calculated Jewish calendar predated the observed calendar of the second temple period. Therefore Mr. Nelte's belief that Paul was not exposed to the calculated Jewish calendar, although it's almost certainly correct, it is not supported by Dr. Hoeh's statement because Dr. Hoeh believed observation was simply ritual garnish that had been added to the calculated Jewish calendar.<sup>177</sup>

### Herrmann on the Calendar

One of John Ritenbaugh's major points in support of the church of God continuing to observe the calculated Jewish calendar is the letter written in 1969 by Kenneth Herrmann. An analysis of this letter shows it to be a travesty of misleading innuendo and deliberately planting seeds of confusion rather than truth. In this letter Herrmann asks,

When would you begin a day: at sunrise, at noon, at midnight, at 6 p.m., when the sun is due west or when the sun is due east?... When would you begin the week: with which day?... when would you begin the month: with the full moon or the new moon, with the sunset that preceded the molad, which is the conjunction, or with the sunset that followed it?... When would you begin the year: with the spring equinox, with the summer solstice, with the fall equinox, with the winter solstice or with the new moon preceding or following which of the above four? Or would you allow the Passover to wander 40 days in the wilderness of the other days of the year, as is the present rule?<sup>178</sup>

Although Mr. Nelte believes this response is "absolutely abominable," which it is, I contend Mr. Nelte is simply not acknowledging how terrible the vast majority of the church of God's scholarship has been, either from that era or this. This is exactly the same kind of logic that is used by the United Church of God, aia, in their defense of the calculated Jewish calendar by assuming the calculated Jewish calendar was being used to prove it was being used. And even with all their assumptions, they still proved the observed calendar fit their model better than the calculated Jewish calendar, although they did not realize it. Although Ron Dart's tactic for defending the calculated Jewish calendar is different, its logic and pattern are similar to Mr. Herrmann's. It is exactly the same kind of defense that is used to justify a Monday Pentecost or an early 14<sup>th</sup> sacrifice of the Passover lamb. This is

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, "Further, Dr. Hoeh's statement is a clear admission that this change from visual observation to the present calculated Jewish calendar wasn't made till the 350's AD. So none of the original apostles, including Paul, would ever have been exposed to such a 'fixed' calendar. So how could Paul possibly have included the thought of "the fixed calendar" in his expression "the oracles of God" when he wasn't even aware of a 'fixed calendar'?"

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 17



typical of the research produced by Ambassador College students, whatever their theological stance might be, because the students were taught to ignore all scholarship other than WorldWide scholarship, except when it could be used to verify the church's position. This is why Dr. Stavrinides was able to convince so many that the trinity must be correct. After all, a scholar presented the evidence and his stance was blessed by the authority of the church. Surely Frank Nelte's *Contra Stavrinides* articles should have shown him exactly how people had been taught to bow to authority without question over a period of more than five decades even if such actions and teachings are inherently ungodly.

### The Calendar and Growth

Frank Nelte seems to believe that this Kenneth Herrmann letter has great significance. After quoting a number of letters from Herbert Armstrong about a supposed 30% growth rate for decades, Mr. Nelte writes, "Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was able to see very clearly that for 35 years (1934 to 1968 inclusive) God had blessed him with 30% growth per year. THEN IT HAD STOPPED! It stopped with the year in which Kenneth Herrmann, on behalf of the Church at that time, gave an evasive answer to a genuine question from a sincere member of the Church about the calendar."<sup>179</sup>

I sincerely wish to disagree with Frank Nelte on this point. As an engineer, I learned the adage long ago that statistics lie. Just as you can twist scripture to support almost any theological belief if you don't use scripture as a whole, you can twist numbers to support almost any hypothesis. This is often done by well-intentioned individuals who did not mean to lie, but were so enthralled with their research that they could only see support for their beliefs. Without dealing with the erroneous supposition of 30% growth, there were three great factors that effected the church of God's growth in 50's to the late 60's. The first is *1975 in Prophecy*. This booklet brought many people into the Worldwide Church of God in the fifties and sixties to supposedly avoid the tribulation before Jesus' return in the mid 70's. Of course, when this never materialized, growth would be expect to dramatic decrease, not only because of the false prophesy would cause people to be less supportive and leave, but also because a major tool of recruitment had been taken away.

The second factor that had to effect growth was growth itself. A business can easily grow 50 percent a year for a few years or even a decade because the company started out with only a few people. It is far easier to grow a company from 100 to 150 people in one year than it is to grow a company from 100,000 to 150,000 in one year. The larger a group becomes, any group, the smaller the percentage of increase will become, even if the number of people added actually continued to increase at rate higher than years before.

What that 30% growth was is never quantified. Was it membership or number of TV stations or was it increased tithes? This author has always suspected it was tithes that supposedly stop growing at a 30% increase per year. Therefore, I find it highly unlikely that Kenneth Herrmann's letter stopped the supposed 30% a year growth. However, I believe the third reason for the lack of growth in the WorldWide Church of God, both physically and spir-

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179 Ibid, p. 19

tually, was the change in attitude, the increased arrogance and overflowing pride of those in charge of the WorldWide Church of God that increased dramatically from the fifties to the late sixties. Reading Mr. Herrmann's articles makes this attitude clear. How this church went from trying to answer questions to maintaining control by belittling Christians and spreading FUD. Thankfully, I am too young to have been there. This author contends this third change, this change in attitude had the greatest effect on the growth of the church, not simple their evasiveness on the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar.

John Ritenbaugh is quoted as saying, "Now Kenneth Herrmann caught the major portion of the essence of this issue for us. That despite the clouds of reasoning being put forth by those seeking a calendar change, THE CENTRAL ISSUE for us is to FIND TO WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN THE AUTHORITY to construct and preserve a calendar, and THEN for us to HAVE FAITH in God's faithfulness."<sup>180</sup> This statement is similar to one this author read in a cult busting book's comparison of religions. When dealing with a Catholic on any theological issue, you are always supposed to start with the Petrine doctrine because a good catholic can always deflect any theological issue with the answer, "The Pope says so." Gary Antion's Comparison of Religion class at Ambassador College taught the church closest in structure to The WorldWide Church of God was the Roman Catholic church. To paraphrase Mr. Ritenbaugh, a bishop might respond on the issue of keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath rather than Sunday with, "That despite the clouds of reasoning being put forth by those seeking a change in the weekly Sunday sabbath, the central issue is to find whom God has given authority over such issues and then to have faith in God's faithfulness." Any good Catholic would know exactly what they needed to do, which is to be quite and follow what the Pope says. However, the church of God supposedly mirrors the Protestant belief that scripture alone should be used to set doctrine and that there is no such thing as Papal infallibility. However, like most Protestant churches, the church of God seems bound in tradition rather than in scripture.

### **Authority and the Calendar, cont.**

Besides relying on a principle akin to Papal infallibility, John Ritenbaugh is also theologically inconsistent. He states, "Every reference that we are able to find on the true church from that period on to the present, we find them celebrating, observing, at least Passover on the same date as the Jews. What calendar, pray tell, were they using? And often times, they were confused with being Jews because they were keeping that date."<sup>172</sup> Mr. Ritenbaugh carefully avoided stating that Christians were celebrating the Passover at the same time as the Jews, substituting date instead. Even though Mr. Ritenbaugh did not list his sources, this author believes if Mr. Ritenbaugh actually quoted his sources, they would state at the same time as the Jews, not the same date.

Mr. Ritenbaugh feels justified keeping Passover at a different time than the Jews, even though it is likely every reference he found to what he believes was the true church actually kept Passover at the same time as the Jews. He believes he can ignore this evidence in favor of his interpretation of scripture about Passover timing, yet does not believe interpretation

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 22

of scripture is a valid method of determining if the calculated Jewish calendar is correct. This is simply not consistent. The arrogance of Mr. Ritenbaugh's obfuscation techniques is simply astounding.

We return to John Ritenbaugh's Gnostic leanings with his statement, "In other words, the word oracles is broad enough to include, not only what is written, but what does not necessarily appear in writing, also those things that are nonetheless inspired of God... Okay now, think of the word 'oracles', and definitions and usages I gave of that word. It has to do with the sayings of God. It can even include the whispers or the inspirations of God. Now you apply that to the service of God that is in this verse, because to the Israelites was given the service of God."<sup>181</sup> This is the same reasoning used by Jewish authorities who elevate the Mishnah and the Talmud to the level of scripture. They contend that this oral law, which does not appear in scripture, is actually more binding than scripture because it was delivered to the priesthood and passed down secretly from generation to generation. Of course this is ludicrous, as is Mr. Ritenbaugh's claim that *logion*, the oracles, include the sacred calendar, but doesn't include the correct timing Pentecost or for the Passover sacrifice.

Mr. Ritenbaugh continues this line of reasoning with, "Remember the oracles were given to Judah. Now this goes on to say: the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet...Lawgiving, that includes the calendar,...until Shiloh come. In other words, the tribe of Judah, Judah as a tribe, has been given that authority by God to be the chief administrator of His law...The oracles were given to Judah. It's the Church's responsibility to recognize that and to have faith in it and to conduct ourselves accordingly."<sup>182</sup> This is incredibly poor, convoluted scholarship at its worst. John Ritenbaugh has quoted Genesis 49:10.<sup>183</sup> However, it was the Levites, not Judah, that administered the law in the temple for over a millennia and a half. God gave them that role personally.<sup>184</sup> If Genesis 49:10 is a prophetic statement, which it probably is, then it is referring to Jesus the Messiah, who is the ultimate lawgiver and king. If it is the Jews who have the authority as lawgivers, then we should be following their authority on how to observe the weekly Sabbath and when to observe Passover and Pentecost. In his attempt to justify the calculated Jewish calendar, John Ritenbaugh would actually be embracing Talmudic authority if he were to be theologically consistent and intellectually honest. From Mr. Ritenbaugh writings and practice, there should be no doubt he most emphatically denies Talmudic authority, as do I. Therefore Mr. Ritenbaugh's statement about following the Jews is incredibly selective. We should follow them when Mr. Ritenbaugh in the stead of Herbert Armstrong says we should and we should not follow them when he says we should not.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p. 24

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p 29

<sup>183</sup> Gen. 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p. 32-3

Num. 3:12-3 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD.

I believe there is no doubt that John Ritenbaugh has learned well at the feet of the teachers of the WorldWide Church of God. He teaches that authority is more important than scripture. Loyalty is more important than doing what is right. Control is more important than open and honest debate from scripture. We must follow the Talmud of Herbert Armstrong and never let scripture be the deciding factor in arguments because the Herbert Armstrong's Talmud, just like Ellen G. White's for the 7th day adventist and the Mishna for the Jews, is superior to and answers all the questions of scripture. Mr. Ritenbaugh's teachings are that no new knowledge can enter the church and they have need of nothing new.<sup>185</sup> This is generally known as stagnation which leads to atrophy and lack of growth.

Although the author disagrees with Frank Nelte's analysis of the tekufoth, I also have no doubt that he sees the error of the postponements and believes it is better to fail at doing something right than succeed in committing error.

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<sup>185</sup> Rev. 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

## “The Sacred Calendar”

This appendix deals with a number of papers written by Richard Nickels on the topic of the calendar. Mr. Nickels represents the faction of the churches of God that believe the calculated Jewish calendar is the “sacred calendar” of God. Mr. Nickels work can be found at <http://www.giveshare.org>. Mr. Nickels is one of the few writers to offer a critique of Herb Solinsky’s work by name, Mr. Solinsky’s work has been included in this appendix as well.

Section Eight of Mr. Nickels paper on the biblical holy days deals with the topic of the calendar, which Mr. Nickels refers to as “the Sacred Calendar.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Nickels correctly observes that “for hundreds, if not thousands, of years there has been controversy surrounding the determination of God’s Calendar.”<sup>2</sup> As the body of this book demonstrates, these arguments about the calendar started among the Jewish leadership after the temple was destroyed. Mr. Nickels conclusion is “that the calendar rules of the Jewish calendar follow God’s will for His people. The arguments of various ‘observable calendar’ proponents do not hold water.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Mr. Nickels lack of astronomical knowledge, as well as his errant scholarship about what the visible calendar actually is and which calendar was observed during the second temple period, which includes the time of Jesus, destroys the credibility of his arguments.

Mr. Nickels correctly summarizes that the year is luni-solar and must contain 12 or 13 months. He points out how the 19 year Metonic cycle is currently instituted. However, when Mr. Nickels inaccurately describes the major rule of postponement he excludes the reason for the Sunday portion of *dehioth* 1, which is the 21<sup>st</sup> day of Nisan, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast of Tabernacles, cannot fall on the weekly Sabbath because it would cause the Jews to violate their Sabbath *halacha* with the Lulav ceremony. Mr. Nickels defines the dehioth this way. “To prevent unauthorized Sabbath work, the Day of Atonement can never fall on a Friday or a Sunday. Abib 21 is the only Holy Day that can fall on a Friday. Extensive food preparation is not permitted on other Holy Days.”<sup>4</sup> This exclusion of a major portion of dehioth 1 is a serious error; a serious oversight or a deliberate obfuscation. Mr. Nickels lack of knowledge of the calculated Jewish calendar makes it impossible for this author to speculate on which of these reasons is accurate. However Mr. Nickels apparent belief that the

1 Nickels, Richard, *Sacred Calendar: Section eight of Biblical Holy Days*, URL-[www.giveshare.org/HolyDays/calendar.html](http://www.giveshare.org/HolyDays/calendar.html), p. 1 Because this article was downloaded from the web, page number may not match up exactly.

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

rules of postponement are to allow food preparation is obviously in error if the postponement for Lulav ceremony is taken into account.

Mr. Nickels also states, “Abib 16 and Pentecost must be in the spring.”<sup>5</sup> Following the typical pattern of research in the churches of God, Mr. Nickels lists scriptural or historical source for this statement. Of course there is no justification for Mr. Nickels hypothesis because there is no such thing as spring as a season in the bible. There is only summer and winter. The mistake that Passover must be in spring is a common one among people unfamiliar with either the calculated Jewish calendar or the seasons in the bible, but Mr. Nickels contention that Pentecost must be in spring is quite unusual and is obviously erroneous.

Mr. Nickels is incorrect when he writes that, “In the fourth century A.D., Hillel II made public heretofore secret sacred calendar rules used by the Jewish Sanhedrin to confirm observation.” Only the bet-din, the calendar council, used these rules of calculation. The Sanhedrin, which proclaimed the calendar during the second temple period, did not use these rules according the written record, as shown in the body of this book. Mr. Nickels follows this erroneous statement with the rabbinic fairy tale about the oral law when he writes, “These rules were given to Moses.”<sup>6</sup> This statement is quite bold and expresses the faulty reason used by far to many Christians who embrace the calculated Jewish calendar as the “sacred calendar of God”. As is shown in this book, this belief is also erroneous. There are so many examples of the nation of Israel losing even the book of the law as guidepost to the will of God that the idea they could retain a mathematical formula as complex and convoluted as the calculated Jewish calendar from the time of Moses is ludicrous.

### The Children of Issachar and the Calendar?

Mr. Nickels asks if there is a calendar that God uses and if so, wouldn't his chosen people be using it?<sup>7</sup> This circular logic can be answered in the negative when we realize that the entire nation of Israel lost the law in the time between Hezekiah and Josiah, until the priests discovered a copy of the law in the temple.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Nickels question would be like asking if God had a law, wouldn't His chosen people be using it? After all, scripture does show that God gave His people His law as a school teacher, but it also shows His people often lost that law, thus God's called out people were not using His law. It was only when Israel re-discovered the law that they could begin to practice it again.<sup>9</sup> But Mr. Nickels answers this question by

5 Ibid

6 Ibid

7 Ibid, p. 2

8 2 Kings 22:8, 10-1 And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it... And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

9 2 Kings 22:19-20 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard *thee*, saith the LORD. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.



writing, “During the time of King David of Israel, certain of the children of Issachar ‘had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do,’ 1 Chronicles 12:32. They had knowledge of astronomy and the calendar of God so as to know the times of the Sabbaths, Holy Days and New Moons that Israel was commanded to keep holy and observe.”<sup>10</sup> Mr. Nickels supposition that the princes of Issachar knew astronomy and therefore knew when and how to keep the Holy Days is quite interesting. Mr. Nickels hypothesis is rules of the calendar were kept secret by the priesthood and rabbis, not the princes of Issachar, until the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. However the princes of Issachar supposedly knew these rules a millenia and a half before? This lack of consistency and grasping at unrelated scriptures for support will plague Mr. Nickels analysis of the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Nickels often stated that consistency in biblical interpretation is important. This author agrees. His statement about the princes of Issachar knowing the secrets of the sacred calendar is not consistent with a priesthood clinging so tightly to the secret of the calendar that they would loose the correct way and time to observe Passover, the most important day in the history of the nation of Israel, yet maintain the knowledge of the “secret sacred calendar.” Mr. Nickels likely source for his belief about the princes of Issachar knowing astronomy probably stated something like, “*Children of Issachar*. According to the Targum they were all astronomers and astrologers.”<sup>11</sup> Or perhaps his source wrote something like, “children of Issachar...that had understanding of the times, etc-Jewish writers say that the people of the tribe were eminent for their acquirements in astronomical and physical science; and the object of the remark was probably to show that the intelligent and learned classes were united with the military, and had declared for David.”<sup>12</sup> Since Mr. Nickels has not listed his sources, this author can only speculate at his reasoning. However, Mr. Nickels use of 1 Chronicles 12:32 is not consistent with the priesthood retaining and keeping some special, Gnostic knowledge of the calendar.

Verse 32 of 1 Chronicles 12 must be viewed in context, just like the rest of scripture, if we are to discern its true meaning. 1 Chronicles 12 depicts David succession to the throne of a United Israel. The context of verse 32 is that the princes of Issachar were making the right choice. They knew Israel should choose David as king. “From this remark, some of the older commentators (Chald., various Rabbins, and Cleric.) concluded that the tribe of Issachar had distinguished itself beyond the other tribes by astronomical and physical knowledge, by which it was qualified to ascertain and make choice of proper times for political action. But the words do not suggest astronomical or astrological knowledge... The statement in question, therefore, affirms nothing more than that the tribe of Issachar (in deciding to raise David to the throne) followed the judgment of its princes, who rightly estimated the circumstances of the time.”<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, it does appear that princes of Issachar referred to in 1 Chron. 12 were simply

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, Adam, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, from The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the Old Testament*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn. 1985, p. 751

<sup>12</sup> Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *JFB Commentary, from Bethany Parallel Commentary on the OT*, p. 751

<sup>13</sup> Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 3, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, Hendrickson Pub., Peabody, MA, 1989, p. 194-5

astute men and leaders, not astronomers. This is much more consistent with the idea of an oral law being passed down through the priesthood as well, an assumption that Mr. Nickels agrees with and that this author dismisses as a rabbinic fairy tale. When you examine the context of 1 Chron. 12. These verses are not stating these men know the right time to keep the holy days, but the right time to make David king of all Israel.

### Seasons and the Sacred Calendar

Mr. Nickels asks, “Of what value is it to know and use God’s Sacred Calendar? It is as valuable as eternal life.”<sup>14</sup> Incredibly strong words. Mr. Nickels contention seems to be that our eternal life depends upon drinking of the cup and eating the bread at the Passover and that this must be done at the right time.<sup>15</sup> Although he acknowledges the confusion around the timing of some of the holy days, Mr. Nickels states, “The true Christian should know *when* to observe God’s sacred times.”<sup>16</sup> Mr. Nickels is not preaching the gospel of the calendar, but instead is preaching that salvation comes by keeping the Passover at the right time. This author disagrees with both teachings. Scripture teaches that eternal life is neither of these. “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Nickels seems to believe that some time in the past, the earth’s and moon’s rotation and orbit were different than they are today and consisted of twelve thirty day long months. He lists a number of scripture about prophetic timings and even verses that suggest events that may have changed the course of the earth and moon.<sup>18</sup>

This author agrees it is possible that the earth’s orbit may have been different in the past. There is no need to go into this speculation in detail other than to state it has nothing to do with the current calculated Jewish calendar.

The crux of Mr. Nickels argument seems to be that the feasts must fall in their seasons, which is a biblical requirement. However, Mr. Nickels does not understand what falling in the right season means. He writes,

Do the Feast Days fall in particular seasons? Leviticus 23:4. What determines these seasons? Genesis 1:14, Psalms 104:19 . *NOTE:* God tells us in the Bible to keep His Holy Days in their proper seasons from year to year. Yet the Bible does not tell us *how* to figure the calendar upon which these Holy Days are derived. We must go to another source -- the Jews, Romans 3:1,2 and Matthew 23:1-3 . They have been entrusted

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14 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 2

15 Ibid p. 2, He mentions the famous bread and wine of 1Cor. 11:23-6 and John 6:53-4 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

16 Ibid, p. 2 I personally find Mr. Nickels quoting of 1John 2:3-6 as proof that true should know when to keep the holy days a little contrived, but can understand how he stretches the meaning of these verses to convey this meaning.

17 John 11:25

18 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 3, Mr. Nickels lists Revelation 11:3 compared with 13:5, and Daniel 7:25, suggesting there may have been a 360 day year. Verses with astronomical events that probably changed the earth-moon orbit. Joshua 10:12-14, II Kings 20:8-11 and Isaiah 38:4-8. Note: another factor is that the earth’s rotation has slowed down over the centuries.

with the preservation of God’s Calendar. God could not order us to keep His Holy Days without also preserving His Calendar which tells us *when* to keep them.<sup>19</sup>

An exegesis of Leviticus 23, Gen. 1:14, Ps. 104:19, Rom. 3:1-2, and Matthew 23:2-3 is available in the body of this book. It is sufficient to state that Mr. Nickels does not understand there are only 2 seasons listed in scripture and that the heavenly bodies were placed there to help us know the season, but exactly how they were to be used is not detailed in scripture. Also his belief that the Jews have preserved the oracles of God is not consistent with Mr. Nickel’s practice and belief. He does not believe the Jews know the right time to keep the Passover and his belief in a Monday Pentecost showed that he believes the none of the Jewish leadership, the supposed keepers of the oracle of the calendar, have a clue about the very oracles they supposedly preserved because none of them believe there is any basis for a Monday Pentecost. At least Jewish theologians acknowledge that there is some basis for a Sunday Pentecost, albeit supposedly errant. They simply disagree with that basis.

Mr. Nickels’ question about God preserving his calendar with his holy days deserves to be answered. He believes he can discern when the Jews have misinterpreted scriptures on topics like Passover and Pentecost. He believes that God has led him in spirit and truth to discern truth from the scriptures the Jews have preserved, although the Jewish authorities that he believes kept the calendar would tell him there is no scriptural or historical basis for his beliefs. So why did Mr. Nickels keep Passover and Pentecost at the times he does? Because he believes he was able to discern from the bible, with God’s holy spirit, the right way and time to keep these holy days (This author disagrees with Mr. Nickels interpretation of the timing of both Pentecost and Passover). If Mr. Nickels believes God lead him into this truth about the Passover and Pentecost, even though no Jewish authority would agree with him, why can’t God lead his people into truth about the calendar if the Jewish authorities have that wrong as well? Mr. Nickels is not being consistent when he asks his question because the obvious answer is that God did not leave us without a calendar to frame the holy days just as he did not leave us without a guide of when to observe the holy feast day of Pentecost nor did he leave us without guidance as to when the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed. This guide is the holy scriptures. This author and many others contend the calendar that the Jews currently use for their celebration of the Holy Days is built on unscriptural rules based on Jewish *halacha* traditions, exactly the kind of traditions Jesus condemned.<sup>20</sup> Since Mr. Nickels has no problem with changing the timing of Pentecost and Passover from the time set by Jewish authorities, if he were being consistent he should have no problem changing the calculation of the calendar if they have that wrong as well, yet he is reluctant to even consider the possibility.

Mr. Nickels states, “The first of Nisan or Abib is always the first new moon near the beginning of Spring (near March 21). So Nisan falls in Spring. Likewise the month of Tammuz falls in summer, Tishri in the autumn, and Tebet in the winter. The purpose of the calendar  
19 Ibid, p. 4

20 Matt. 15:6 And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Mark 7:8,13 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do... Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

laws is to ensure Holy Days fall in their proper seasons.”<sup>21</sup> Mr. Nickels statement about the 4 months he has chosen occurring during 4 seasons in the northern hemisphere may be correct, but this has no bearing on the issue of the calendar. There are only 2 seasons in the bible. His statement about calendar law ensuring that the holy days fall in the right season is also in error. The reason for the rules of postponement, the laws upon which the calculated Jewish calendar are built, are to make sure that: the seventh day of Tabernacles does not fall on a weekly Sabbath so the Jews can wave the willows in the Lulav ceremony without infringing on their rules of Sabbath *halacha*; that there are no sabbaths tandem to the day of atonement; and to make sure the year varies only from 353 to 355 days, except during the leap years, as this book explains in detail.

### Seasons and The Observed Calendar

Mr. Nickels firmly held belief in the calculated Jewish calendar is evidenced by this statement. “Various theological reference books state that the Jewish calendar *evolved*. If this is true, then so did the Bible!”<sup>22</sup> Mr. Nickels belief that the sanctity of the calculated Jewish calendar can be equated with scripture is fairly widely held among proponents of the calculated Jewish calendar, but is not substantiated in scripture or history. This author rejects this premise entirely. The evolution of the calendar from observation to calculation can fairly easily be traced to the period from 200 CE to 350 CE, as shown in this book.

Mr. Nickels correctly lists how the new year and new month were general pronounced under a system of observation, but in an attempt to support that idea of the calculated Jewish calendar actually being the sacred calendar of God he asks the question,

Is this true? Is observation alone the basis of God’s Calendar? If it were, then what if the day were cloudy and no one could see the new moon? How could the first of the month be determined if some could see the new moon and others could not?<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Nickels had either not done much research on the topic of the calendar or had simply decided not to list the answers to his questions in an attempt to instill doubt and confusion into his readership. When all else fails, teachers in the churches of God always seem to fall back to introducing FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt). All of Mr. Nickels questions are answered in this book and are very well documented in most sources about the Jewish calendar during the second temple period. The months were declared by the leaders of the Sanhedrin, as was the start of the year, based upon a fairly simple set of criteria, all revolving around observation. Maimonides lists all the criteria the Sanhedrin followed if it was cloudy several months in a row.<sup>24</sup>

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21 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 4

22 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 4

23 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 4

24 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. xxviii “Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its ‘proper time’ for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.”

Mr. Nickels comments on the calculated Jewish calendar begin to follow COG SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) from this point forward. Mr. Nickels’ remarks are followed by scriptural references. It appears the majority of his followers continue the tradition that members of the churches of God have observed for years. Teachers in the churches of God know that the majority of people don’t even bother to turn to the scripture listed because they assume that the teacher can be trusted to list scripture properly. Those who do turn to the scripture only read enough of the scripture to confirm it really is in the bible. The context of the verse is never really examined, usually on the mistaken assumption that their teacher has not only checked the context, but actually understands that context. The ability of those who are in the role of teacher to pull scriptures out of context is boundless, as the thousands upon thousands of Christian sects confirm. However, if Christians would not allow their teachers this luxury by being lazy, the practice of pulling verses out of context and building religions on these misinterpretations could be greatly decreased. This author believes it is a lack of interest in the word of God and laziness that combine to lead to this sad state of affairs. It is especially sad when the study of scripture has never been easier because of the volume of reference works and translations available both at the local library and on computer.

Mr. Nickels states, “Observation alone cannot be the basis for God’s Calendar, because God’s Holy Days are divine appointments (*moed*), times which God, and not man, has predetermined,”<sup>25</sup> It is true the God created the *mow’ed*.<sup>26</sup> However Mr. Nickels insinuation that observing the feasts using the observed calendar somehow makes these appointments man-made and observing them using the calculated Jewish calendar is somehow divine is something Mr. Nickels never attempts to support because it is nothing more than his opinion. This author’s question for Mr. Nickels, which he never answered while he was alive, was if God wanted to show His power, majesty, and glory to reveal how dependent Israel was upon Him, would it be better to have a complex set of Gnostic rules that only the priests knew or to have Israel as a nation look for His hand in how He controlled nature itself every month and every year?

The historical record and scripture reveal that God wanted his called out people looking to Him and not to any man or group of men. The priests were ordered to proclaim these seasons<sup>27</sup> and God told the people He would give them rain in the right season if they were following Him.<sup>28</sup> These promises are discussed in detail in the body of this book. God even appointed the moon for the *mow’ed*,<sup>29</sup> yet Mr. Nickels somehow believes we are not supposed to notice these signs that God has given us. Mr. Nickels supposed support for an observational calendar being wrong are: Exodus 23:15; Ps. 81:3-5; and Daniel 2:21. These

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25 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 4

26 Gen. 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

27 Lev. 23:4 These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

28 Lev. 26:4 Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

29 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.



verses will be examined in context. Exodus 23:14-17 is part of the statutes and judgments that God revealed to the nation of Israel through Moses while at Mt. Sinai. It states,

Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) And the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.<sup>30</sup>

Verse 15 instructs the nation of Israel to eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in Abib. There should be no doubt that God has appointed that time, but this scripture does not enhance our ability to understand precisely when the season starts. This author believes it must be combined with the other uses of Abib, which is done in the body of this book, to determine the season. That season is when the barley is abib, when it is ripened only into green and tender ears.

Ps 81:3-5 states,

Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.<sup>31</sup>

This Psalm is examined in detail in the body of this book and in the appendix dealing with the Christian Biblical Churches of God's eisegesis of the calculated Jewish calendar. Israel is commanded to sing and play musical instruments and to generally rejoice at the time of the annual feasts for all that God had done for them. Again these verses do not detail when those seasons are nor how they are to be determined, simply that God appointed them.

Daniel two is the story of Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The reader should remember that Nebuchadnezzar would not reveal what the dream was and commanded all the Chaldeans to be executed if an interpretation of the dream was not rendered.<sup>32</sup> Daniel asks the king for a little time to interpret the dream and God reveals it to Daniel.

Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.<sup>33</sup>

Mr. Nickels use of Daniel 2:21 points out a number of mistakes in his logic and reasoning. The most obvious becomes apparent when we examine verse 21 in context.<sup>34</sup> Verse 21 is referring to the Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and has nothing to do with

<sup>30</sup> Exod. 23:14-7

<sup>31</sup> Ps. 81:3-5

<sup>32</sup> Dan. 2:3-12

<sup>33</sup> Dan. 2:13-18

<sup>34</sup> Dan. 2:21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:



any calendar. The dream and interpretation reveals that four mighty kingdoms that would be raised and cast down by God.<sup>35</sup> The seasons and times referred to by the dream are times and season for the setting up and removing of kings over a period of hundreds of years, not the *mow'ed* of God.<sup>36</sup>

Mr. Nickels use of Dan. 2 is also very interesting because God revealed to his true servant the truth without any manuscript or oral tradition. Mr. Nickels asked earlier in this article on the calculated Jewish calendar, “To whom did God reveal the knowledge of His Calendar?”<sup>37</sup> It appears to this author that God reveals knowledge to his true servants and sometimes that can be done without depending upon traditions. Sometimes God actually reveals secrets in dreams and visions. Usually He simple opens the mind of his people to their error when they read and understand his word.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps one of the most egregious portions of Mr. Nickels paper is his warnings from scripture that we cannot determine the truth of the calendar. He writes,

Mankind is forbidden to observe the new moons for himself and to determine when to keep God’s appointed times. Because at times some have done this very thing, God has said, “*Your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts my soul hateth” Isaiah 1:14 and Hosea 2:11.<sup>39</sup>

Is. 1:14 and Hosea 2:11 are not about people determining appointed times for themselves. Isaiah is prophesying to the nation of Judah.<sup>40</sup> The nation of Israel was a “sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.”<sup>41</sup> They were a sick people and the nation had been laid waste.<sup>42</sup> Yet in midst of all this spiritual sickness, the people continued to follow the mechanics of their religion by bringing sacrifices to the temple.<sup>43</sup> What follows is one of the most beautiful examples of God’s love in scripture

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of

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35 Dan. 2:19-22

36 Dan 2:28-45

37 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 1-2

38 2 Kings 22 is the story of God revealing new knowledge which was actually quite old to his called out people after they had lived in error for years.

39 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 2

40 Isa. 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

41 Is. 1:4

42 Is. 1:5-8

43 Is. 1:11-2 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.<sup>44</sup>

Mr. Nickels attempt to persuade Christians that Isaiah 1 as an example of people trying to keep their own new moons is a travesty of scholarship and theology. Mr. Nickels either did not understand the context of Isaiah 1 or he obfuscated it by using a small pull quote out of context. Isaiah 1 reveals that Israel is keeping the right times and bringing the right sacrifices, including the new moon sacrifices, but that God hates this vain show of religion because Israel would not show love or mercy or practice justice. The mechanics of religion are to help us draw near to God, not to be substituted for God. Mr. Nickels contention that Isaih 1 reveals that Israel was observing the new moons at the wrong time is completely wrong. Judah was keeping the right times, but only as a vain show because their hearts were far from God and the way they lead their lives showed their disregard of God.

Hosea is the story of a prophet of God called to marry a whore to symbolize God's marriage to Israel. Chapter two describes how: God will not have mercy on these whoredoms;<sup>45</sup> how the whore Israel will not be able to find lovers to help her;<sup>46</sup> and how Israel took God's gifts and gave them to Baal.<sup>47</sup> In the midst of all this lewdness and perversity, God, "will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts."<sup>48</sup> God is going punish Israel's depravity, not for keeping the feast days at the wrong time as Mr. Nickels contends, but for all their other evil actions.

Kiel and Delitzsch write about Hosea 2:11, "The feast days and festive times were days of joy, in which Israel was to rejoice before the Lord its God. To bring into prominence this character of the feasts, "all her joy," is placed first, and the different festivals are mentioned afterwards. Chag stands for the three principal festivals of the year, the Passover, Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles, which had the character of chag, i.e. of feast of joy par excellence, as being days of commemoration, of the great acts of mercy which the Lord performed on behalf of His people. Then came the day of the new moon every month and the sabbath every week."<sup>49</sup>

44 Is. 1:13-19

45 Hos 2:2-3 Plead with your mother, plead: for she *is* not my wife, neither *am* I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

46 Hos. 2:5-7 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

47 Hos. 2:8-9 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.

48 Hosea 2:11

49 Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F. *Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 10, Minor Prophets*, Hedrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1989, pp. 57-8

God is not punishing Israel for keeping the feast days at the wrong time, but is going to punish them for their continued bad behavior by taking away the festivals. God expresses the same sentiment in Amos 8:10, Jer. 7:34, and Lam. 1:4, 15.<sup>50</sup> Mr. Nickels use of Hosea and Isaiah as examples of God disapproving of people supposedly keeping a different calendar are totally fallacious. These examples have nothing to do with the calendar except to show that even people who observe the correct calendar and keep the annual feasts with the correct mechanics can still be disdainful and repugnant to God if they do not practice judgment, mercy, and faith.

Mr. Nickels writes,

Specific Bible laws *forbid* us to determine for ourselves when the year and the months begin. We are told not to ‘observe times [from the Hebrew *anan*, cloud or soothsayer; see *Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance*, page 966, and *Strong’s #6049*]’ Deuteronomy 18:10, Leviticus 19:26. An observer of times ‘watched the clouds’ to foretell the future. Those who adapt this practice to determine when the winter rainy season is over and when the spring harvest season begins, set themselves up in the place of God, who alone can determine when the year begins in the spring.<sup>51</sup>

Again Mr. Nickels has created a set of definitions which are simply not true. First, only God determines when winter ends and summer begins in scripture because there is no scriptural season like spring because the Middle East only has two seasons, not four. Mr. Nickels’ premise that a soothsayer or magician, practices forbidden by God, is someone who watches the clouds is also simply wrong. The word usually used for cloud is the Hebrew word ‘ānan, Strong’s 6051, which is listed directly below 6049 in *The New Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance*.<sup>52</sup> Strong’s 6049, ānān, is used only once in relationship to clouds. It is a “denominative verb, used only once, in the Piel,”<sup>53</sup> in Genesis 9:14.<sup>54</sup> Genesis 9 depicts God telling Noah, “I do set my bow in the cloud (‘ānan), and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring (ānān) a cloud (‘ānan) over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud (‘ānan).”<sup>55</sup> When scripture uses ānān, Strong’s 6049, in relationship to clouds, which it does only once, it is referring to

<sup>50</sup> Amos 8:10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

Jer. 7:34 Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

Lam. 1:4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

Lam. 1:15 The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress.

<sup>51</sup> Nickels, Richard, *How does God’s calendar work*, p. 4

<sup>52</sup> Green, J.P, ed. *The New Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance*, Hendrickson Pub, Peabody, Ma, 1984, p. 966

<sup>53</sup> Harris, R. Laird, Archer, Gleason, and Waltke, Bruce, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, word 1655a, p. 684

<sup>54</sup> Gen. 9:14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud (*anan*):

<sup>55</sup> Gen. 9:13-4

God who is the bringer of clouds. This can have nothing to do with watching clouds or sorcery because it was God who brought the clouds. If God is depicted as the bringer of clouds in scripture, it is not wrong to look at the clouds God brings. Just as He brings the barley into abib. Just as He brings us out of our sins.

Mr. Nickels belief that a diviner is someone who watches the clouds is akin to a statement that a sorcerer is someone who practices going to the source. Sorcery appears to be related to source about as much as ‘ānān (6051 in the peil form) is related to ‘ānan (6049 in the poel form). Hopefully people wouldn't be fooled into believing a sorcerer is someone who goes to the source, even with the popularity of Star Wars. A sorcerer is someone who practices magic and rituals. A weatherman is not a sorcerer, nor is a farmer, who also watches the clouds to know when to sow and when to reap. If we were to take Mr. Nickels' perverse definition of watching the clouds to be the equivalent of being a sorcerer, then Christians should not be weatherman or boy scouts or farmers, nor should they look at the clouds before going on a picnic.

Mr. Nickels contends that God gives his people a scriptural warning not to look at the change of the season to determine when the start of the year is. What God really condemns is:

Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.<sup>56</sup>

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.<sup>57</sup>

God tells his called out people not to eat blood, pass children through the fire, be a witch or wizard or charmer or a necromancer or to call on evil spirits and, as Mr. Nickels would have us believe, included on his list is a watcher of the clouds. Hopefully people will not give serious credence to such an extreme eisegesis based upon erroneous personal translation of the scripture. Mr. Nickels hypothesis makes all farmers the equivalent of a soothsayer or witch.

Mr. Nickels also believes that Paul forbade the use of the Roman calendar by Christians in Gal. 4:10.<sup>58</sup> Paul was indeed upset that the Galatians were setting aside some days for special celebration.<sup>59</sup> Exactly what was Paul condemning in Galatians? Most of the western Christian world today believes he was condemning the keeping of the weekly seventh day Sabbath and the annual feasts. The standard church of God explanation is he is condemning the keeping of pagan holidays, like Christmas. He could also have been condemning

<sup>56</sup> Lev. 19:26

<sup>57</sup> Deut. 18:9-14

<sup>58</sup> Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 5

<sup>59</sup> Gal. 4:10-11 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain

certain set fasts, as he did in Romans 14.<sup>60</sup> Paul kept the Sabbath and holy days and God created them for mankind. Therefore this author envisions no way in which Paul could be condemning keeping these biblically ordained days. Perhaps Paul was condemning the keeping of pagan holidays, but since the book of Galatians was written to combat the Judiazers, this author also rejects that explanation. The most likely explanation, since Paul was attacking the pharisaical elements of Christianity that were demanding all Christians also follow the traditions of the Jewish fathers, is that he was attacking the worship of days rather than the worship God, which would coincide with God’s disgust at such practices in Hosea 2 and Isaiah 1. We can be certain Paul was not condemning observation of the Roman calendar in Gal. 4:10 because Galatians had nothing to do with the calendar. There are also numerous mentions of both the Canaanite and Babylonian calendars in scripture. The apostle John even appears to use Roman time in his gospel. The fact that other systems of time keeping are mentioned in scripture makes it unfeasible, at least to this author, that Paul was condemning the Roman calendar in Galatians 4.

### Maimonides

Mr. Nickels states, “God’s calendar is determined primarily by *calculation*, the laws of which have been handed down from at least the time of Moses to the present day.”<sup>61</sup> Mr. Nickels source for this belief is listed as Moses Maimonides’ *Sanctification of the New Moon*. Unfortunately Mr. Nickels is again totally mistaken. Maimonides’ *Sanctification of the New Moon* details how the Mishnah and Talmud have an abundance of information about the calendar that consistently depicts that the calendar was determined by the observation during the second temple period.<sup>62</sup> Maimonides’ purpose in writing *Sanctification of the New Moon* was so that students could study, “even this (extraneous) branch of the Law, and have no need to roam about in search for it in other books.”<sup>63</sup> Maimonides does an admiral job. The conclusion of *Sanctification of the New Moon* is;

Maimonides puts great stress in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendrical months apply only to the specific contingency of the new crescent remaining invisible in its “proper time” for several months in succession. Whenever the new crescent did appear in its proper time—on the even of the 30<sup>th</sup> day—sanctification was mandatory, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, however desirable or expedient this appeared to be.<sup>64</sup>

Maimonides writes about Gaon, who like Mr., Nickels, claimed that the calendar had always been determined by calculation, “Thou, however, discerning scholar, must affirm that observation had been a fundamental principle of our religion, and when the new crescent

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60 Romans 14:5-6 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

61 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 5

62 Maimonides, Moses, trans. Gandz, Solomon, *The code of Maimonides: Book Three, Treatise Eight, Sanctification of the New Moon*, Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 3 Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956

63 Maimonides, p. xxx

64 Ibid, p. xxviii



could not be observed a day was added to the outgoing month. To this truth, statements in the Mishnah and Gemara bear witness, as well as many events that occurred in past times.”<sup>65</sup>

Far too often true Christians have trusted their teachers to correctly discern what a reference states. Far too often these teachers have taken advantage of that trust by misstating and even lying about what a source writes. In the cloistered environment of the WorldWide Church of God, where any scholarship outside of the leadership of the church was not even to be read, teachers could get away with such indiscretions. It is past time for Christians to hold their teachers to at least a standard of honest scholarship. Maimonides’ writings clearly show that the calendar was determined by observation and that any calculation was done to verify the testimony of the witnesses of the crescent first moon and to help determine the new month if it was cloudy at the time of the new moon. Therefore Mr. Nickels is complete wrong when he states that Maimonides supported the idea that the calendar was calculated during the second temple period.

### Seasons, cont.

Mr. Nickels believes that Deut. 29:29 states that God reveals the truth of his holy days and a calendar by which to keep them.<sup>66</sup> I agree that God gave His people a calendar, but Mr. Nickels belief that the calendar revealed by God is the calculated Jewish calendar is in error. Deut. 29:29 states, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”<sup>67</sup> Mr. Nickels believes that God has revealed a different time and method to keep both Pentecost and Passover to His called out people, and not the Jewish leadership, from scripture by the power of the holy spirit. Yet Mr. Nickels cannot consider the possibility that God could also reveal that the calendar by which the same Jews keep these same holy days, supposedly at the wrong time, could also incorrect. This inconsistency is incredibly perplexing if you depend on logic, but not unusual in the churches of God because logic and consistency have been practiced so little. Also, many people prefer tradition, right or wrong, to the chaos of change and growth.<sup>68</sup>

Mr. Nickels contends that some will try to change times and laws, but that God’s called out people will see through this deception.<sup>69</sup> This author concurs that Daniel 7:25 depicts the beast trying to change times and laws.<sup>70</sup> And this author agrees that 2 Timothy 2:15 should be a mandate for all of God’s called out people to know His word.<sup>71</sup> But Mr. Nickels seems to contend that because this author and others believe the unbiblical statutes of the calcu-

65 Maimonides, p. liii-liv

66 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 5

67 Deut. 29:29

68 For more on this, you can download God is not the author of confusion, but he is the author of Chaos from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

69 Nickels, p. 5

70 Dan. 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

71 2Tim. 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.



lated Jewish calendar, especially the postponing of God’s appointed times so the Jews can wave the willows in the Lulav ceremony, make it unusable for observing God’s annual feasts, that we are somehow associated with or minions of the beast power. The Pharisees also contended that Jesus worked by the power of the devil when he challenged their traditions.<sup>72</sup> God’s people will have understanding because they will study his word and divide it correctly.<sup>73</sup> God does give his called out ones understanding by his spirit.<sup>74</sup> This author is contending that Mr. Nickels actions and accusations are akin to the Pharisees, not that the calendar has the same importance as Jesus’ message of salvation and love.

After examining some of the complexities of the calendar, Mr. Nickels writes, “Yet this slight difference means that each Jewish calendar year exceeds the tropical year by 6 minutes, 39.370 seconds. Though this difference is very small, it amounts to one day’s variation in 216.34 years, or 4.6 days in a thousand years. Thus, Passover -- and as a result, Pentecost -- are continually forced later in the season. Without a calendar adjustment, such as the one in 140-163 A.D., Pentecost would eventually occur in the summer, which is not permitted according to the calendar law.”<sup>75</sup>

Again, as a reminder to the reader that there are only 2 scriptural seasons, summer and winter. Mr. Nickels seems to be fixated upon some Gnostic teaching of the WorldWide Church of God that the “spring” holy days have been fulfilled, but the “fall” holy days have yet to be fulfilled. Therefore Mr. Nickels contention that some calendar law regulates Pentecost so that it will only be in spring and not summer is extra-biblical and unbiblical. The variation that Mr. Nickels brings up is quite real, but is only a factor if the addition of leap years are controlled by some extra-biblical mathematical algorithm rather than depending upon the change of season from winter to summer for intercalation.

Mr. Nickels correctly defines how the year, months, days and parts of the calculated Jewish calendar are related. However, he shows his lack of knowledge about the calendar when he writes, “In the reckonings of the *molad* (conjunction of the moon with the sun), the day is figured as beginning at 6:00 P.M. at Jerusalem.”<sup>76</sup> The molad is not the conjunction, but the mean average of the conjunction, a fact any scholar writing for or against the use of the calculated Jewish calendar should know because it is a very basic fact upon which that calendar is built.

Mr. Nickels believes the most important rule of the calendar is that a month must be interca-

72 Matt. 12:22-28 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

73 2Tim 2:15

74 John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

75 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 8

76 Ibid, p. 8

lated “to prevent Nisan 16 from occurring before the vernal or spring equinox (on or about March 21). The spring equinox is the time when the sun rises due east and sets due west, and everywhere in the world there is equal daylight and equal darkness (12 hours each). Spring must arrive on or before Nisan 16. This is the number one cardinal rule of God’s calendar.”<sup>77</sup>

Is this true and is this scriptural? Christians should always ask themselves these questions when it discussing doctrine. Mr. Nickels belief is Passover can be no earlier than two days before the vernal equinox because, “when Passover falls on Friday and the wavesheaf was cut the following Sunday, Nisan 16, that Sunday must occur in spring. Otherwise, the harvest would begin in winter.”<sup>78</sup> Is this true and is this scriptural?

First, it is not scriptural because it is not listed in scripture. This is most probably why Mr. Nickels does not attempt to quote any scriptural justification of his hypothesis. It is also not true because Mr. Nickels does not seem to understand farming or biblical seasons. If it is winter, there is no crop to be harvested. As is shown in this book, one of the main definitions of the biblical season of winter is when there is no harvest and it is rainy and cold. Therefore, it is impossible to begin the barley harvest in winter because, by definition, there would be no barley to harvest in winter. However, in the calculated Jewish calendar, it is possible to have Passover and Unleavened Bread occur in the winter when there would be no barley to be harvested.

Mr. Nickels believes if Unleavened Bread started a day before the vernal equinox, “The Feast of Unleavened Bread would not be a spring Feast.”<sup>79</sup> Mr. Nickels seems to have forgotten that it is not a “spring” feast for the southern hemisphere, where Unleavened Bread is actually a “fall” feast for the South Africans and Australians. However, Unleavened Bread must always be an early summer feast in Jerusalem according to scripture, so the weather conditions in the rest of the world have no bearing on when the days of Unleavened Bread commence.

Mr. Nickels writes, “From the time of Moses through the time of Christ, Passover itself apparently never fell before the spring equinox.”<sup>80</sup> This supposition cannot be substantiated nor can it be proven false because historical records that correspond to astronomical events for that time frame do not exist. Mr. Nickels quote of Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* is not proof of his statement. Josephus wrote, “In the month of Xanthicus, which is by us called Nisan, and is the beginning of our year, on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, when the sun is in Aries, (for in this month it was that we were delivered from bondage under the Egyptians,) the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which I before told you we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was called the Passover;”<sup>81</sup> Josephus wrote the that sun was in the constellation of Aires at Passover time. Josephus was giving an approximation of time very much like stating that Passover occurs in March. It doesn’t always occur in March, but we are giving an approximate time for Passover on the

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77 Ibid, p. 8

78 Ibid, p. 8

79 Ibid, p. 8

80 Ibid, p. 8

81 Josephus, Flavius The Sage Digital Library, Reference/History, *The Life and Work of Flavius Josephus*, Translated by William Whiston, Translator, *Antiquities of the Jews*, III, x, 5

Gregorian calendar, which is the same process Josephus is using for his Roman audience. Mr. Nickels’ supposition is wrong for two reasons. The rising of the constellations drifts westward approximately 1.4 degrees every century. This implies if a certain constellation rose on March 21<sup>st</sup> at the time of Jesus, it would rise on the same spot on the horizon on February 22<sup>nd</sup> in the year 2000. So we cannot turn to the stars to determine a pattern of the year over the millennia. Mr. Nickels also contends that major astronomical events have transpired since the time of Moses, causing great changes in the earth’s rotation and/or orbit.<sup>82</sup> Even if Mr. Nickels was unaware of the shift of the constellations over time, it is inconsistent for Mr. Nickels to try to maintain that he can discern that Passover never fell before the spring equinox when he also maintains there were major shifts in the earth’s orbit and rotation from the time of Moses to Christ and also presents no real scriptural evidence to support his theory. One thing for certain is there is no way to prove any Passovers fell before or after the equinox in ancient times.

### Postponements

Mr. Nickels examination of the postponements follows the pattern of scholarship shown throughout the rest his paper. As this book shows, all calendar authorities agree the postponements: prevent the weekly Sabbath from being tandem with the Day of Atonement; prevent the 7<sup>th</sup> days of tabernacles from being on the weekly sabbath so the willows can be waved in the Lulav ceremony, something that Jewish *halacha* tradition forbids on the weekly Sabbath because it was deemed to be too much work; keep the year 353 to 355 days long. Mr. Nickels does not agree with these facts. He lists scriptures showing that the holy days are times of joy and that God created the Sabbath for man, not man for the sabbath.<sup>83</sup> This author concurs wholeheartedly with Mr. Nickels on this point. However, Mr. Nickels writes, “If the Day of Atonement were to fall on a Friday, there would be no possibility of preparing food for the weekly Sabbath. One would have to fast for two days instead of one. Likewise, if Atonement fell on Sunday, the cleaning-up and chores of the Sabbath would have to be postponed until Monday, or one would do too much work on the Sabbath in preparation for Atonement.”<sup>84</sup>

Perhaps Mr. Nickels believes the rabbinical rules forbidding the lighting of a fire on the weekly Sabbath for food preparation were correct, but this author doesn’t. Apparently Mr. Nickels believes you cannot prepare meals two days in advance, but it has been standard practice for events for millennia. Apparently Mr. Nickels believes you have to fast if you cannot eat hot food. This author would rather eat cold food than continue a fast for a second day. Mr. Nickels suppositions seem to support that Jewish *halacha* are the righteous

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82 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 2

83 Mark 2:27-8 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Num. 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

Matt. 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

84 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 8

rules of God. This author disagrees and believes these Sabbath *halacha* rules were condemned by God through Jesus.<sup>85</sup>

However, even under the heavy yoke of rabbinical rules, Mr. Nickels contention that a two day fast would have been required if atonement occurred on a Friday is erroneous. People could have and would have eaten food cold. Just as ludicrous is the suggestion that God would postpone the day because people might do too much work by cleaning up dinner dishes on the weekly Sabbath. God never operated that way in scripture. He taught people what to do, then gave them the opportunity to either obey or not.<sup>86</sup> God did not build walls around his way of life so that people would not have the opportunity to break His law. He did not build a wall around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. He did not build a wall around the camp of Israel Friday night to make sure no one went out to gather the manna on the weekly Sabbath.<sup>87</sup>

Mr. Nickels also wrote about the first and primary postponement, “if Tishri 21 fell on the weekly Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day would both fall on Sunday. Preparation for these High Days would have to be on the weekly Sabbath, which is not permitted.”<sup>88</sup>

Tishri 21 is not allowed to occur on the weekly sabbath is because it would interfere with the Lulav ceremony, which is listed as the primary reason for this postponement in the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar. As a by-product, this rules also prevents the first and last day of Tabernacles from falling on Sunday. Mr. Nickels contention that a preparation day was needed for these two days is also erroneous. These days were a time of joy, not work. Food was bountiful because the harvest had just occurred.

Exod. 12:15-6 states “Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore scripture mandates that food preparation is allowed on the

85 Matt. 15:2-9 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. *Ye hypocrites*, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

Luke 6:7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

Luke 14:3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

86 This is the story of the manna in Exodus 16. For more information you can download How does God work with Mankind from <http://www.KeepersOfTheWay.org>

87 Ex. 16

88 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 8

89 Exod. 12:15-6 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out

days of the holy convocations in the “spring.” Because scripture does not specifically state food preparation may be done on other days of holy convocation, Mr. Nickels feels that it is not allowed.<sup>90</sup> He writes, “Of all the Holy Days, only Nisan 15 (the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) can ever fall on a Sunday...In this case, preparation for Nisan 14 must be made on Friday, Nisan 13, while cleaning up of the Sabbath dishes and any last-minute food preparation for the night to be much observed and the morning of the Holy Day may be done on the Holy Day itself (Sabbath sunset to Sunday sunset). No food preparation for Sunday Nisan 15 may be done on the weekly Sabbath.”<sup>91</sup> It is nice the Mr. Nickels has created his own Talmud with his own rules of *halacha*, but this author prefers scriptural statutes to *halacha* traditions, rather they be Jewish or a creation of Mr. Nickels, especially when they have no scriptural support.

As Mr. Nickels has written, under the calculated Jewish calendar, the first day of Unleavened Bread can occur on Sunday while the last day of Unleavened bread can occur on Friday. Mr. Nickels writes,

Passover (Nisan 14) and Nisan 21 (the last day of Unleavened Bread, a Holy Day) can and often do fall on a Friday. Nisan 21 is the *only* Holy Day that ever falls on the sixth day of the week. In such cases, preparation for the Holy Day and the succeeding weekly Sabbath should, as much as possible, be done on the day before the Holy Day (Thursday, Nisan 20). But a certain amount of food preparation for the Sabbath and the cleaning up of the dishes of the Holy Day may have to be done on the Holy Day. And God’s law of Exodus 12:15-16 permits this. The two annual Holy Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are special. To a certain extent, food preparation may be done on them that may not be done on the weekly Sabbath, OR on any of the other annual Holy Days.<sup>92</sup>

Again, is this biblical and is this true? Are the two annual holy days of the feast of Unleavened Bread special, different than the other annual feasts? In one sense they have to be because each of the seven annual feast days have their own special statutes and ordinances. But do the annual feast days share as general set of ordinances about what can and cannot be done on, with the exception of Atonement which scriptures definitely defines as being different.<sup>93</sup> On the first day of Unleavened Bread, “ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.”<sup>94</sup> Also on the seventh day of Unleavened bread, “is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.”<sup>95</sup> On the feast of Pentecost, “ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no

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of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you

90 Nickels, Richard, *Calendar Controversy*, [www.giveshare.com/holydays/calcont.html](http://www.giveshare.com/holydays/calcont.html)

91 Ibid

92 Ibid

93 Lev. 23:31-2 Ye shall do no manner of work: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. *It shall be* unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth *day* of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

94 Lev. 23:7

95 Lev. 23:8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.



servile work therein.”<sup>96</sup> On the feast of Trumpets, “Ye shall do no servile work therein.”<sup>97</sup> The first day of the feast of Tabernacles, “shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.”<sup>98</sup> Also, “on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.”<sup>99</sup>

This comparison shows that there is no scriptural distinction about the manner and amount of work that may be done on any of the annual feasts, excluding the fast day of Atonement. They were all days to congregate without servile work. There is no scriptural evidence for stating the two holy convocations during unleavened bread are any different than any other annual feasts, outside of the fact that there were specific ordinances and sacrifices that distinguished each annual feast day. Jewish scholars, those who Mr. Nickels believe have preserved the sacred calendar write, “For the preparation of food is permitted on Festivals, Ex, XII. 16.”<sup>100</sup> There is no distinction made between how food may be prepared on any of the annual feasts listed in Lev. 23 or Deut. 16, with the obvious exception of the fast day of atonement. Therefore Mr. Nickels personal *halacha* traditions delivered from his personal Talmud about the annual feast are simply not supported by scripture. This should not be surprising because many of the Jewish *halacha* traditions are also not supported by scripture. If Mr. Nickels wishes to teach that his *halacha* traditions somehow make a Christian more righteous, that is his purgative. However, when Mr. Nickels teaches that his *halacha* traditions somehow support his belief that the calculated Jewish calendar is authoritative, he is simply wrong.

Mr. Nickels writes about postponement two, which delays the declaration of Tishri 1 if the molad occurs after noon, that it is important to see the moon if it is to be declared.<sup>101</sup> This author thinks this is a biblical sound principle, but the second rule of postponement does not accomplish this. The second rule of postponement arbitrarily chooses noon, when it would be impossible to observe the moon. This can only be done after sunset during the time of the new moon. Mr. Nickels believes, “experience has proven that if the *molad* takes place before noon, then the new moon can be seen by an acute observer the same day near sunset, and that same day was the first of Tishri.”<sup>102</sup> This is simply not true. Mr. Nickels has repeat the error of Kenneth Herrmann.<sup>103</sup> First, as the body of this book has repeatedly

96 Lev. 23:21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

97 Lev. 23:25 Ye shall do no servile work therein

98 Lev. 23:35 On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

99 Lev. 23:36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.

100 Talmud, *Shabbath 114b* footnote 20

101 Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*; p. 10

102 Ibid, p. 10

103 Mr. Herrmann is quoted as writing, “The term ‘new moon’ from these secular sources refers to the conjunction (or molad) of the sun and moon rather than the visible crescent which could first be seen about six hours later.” Nelte, Frank, Herrmann articles, p. 20 from the internet, from Herrmann, Kenneth, Prove God’s Calendar Correct!, Good News Magazine, October, 1957, p. 22



shown, the first visible crescent cannot be seen for 16 to 20 hours after the conjunction, not the molad, and then only after sunset. Eliminating the last 6 hours on the day declared to be the first of Tishri does increase the chance that the first of the month will be declared on the day the first crescent is sighted. But more than half of the time, as shown in this book, the first of Tishri is declared before the new moon is visible. And this rule only affects the new moon on the month of Tishri. Therefore, the purpose of rule two is not to allow for the observation of the new moon, as Mr. Nickels contends. It is possible that its intent was to increase the percentage of time that the new moon, as proclaimed by the calculated Jewish calendar, would coincide with the day the first visible conjunction could be seen in Jerusalem on the first of Tishri. Mr. Nickels is also incorrect for another reason when he states, “experience has proven that if the *molad* takes place before noon, then the new moon can be seen by an acute observer the same day near sunset, and that same day was the first of Tishri.”<sup>104</sup> The crescent new moon can never be seen before sunset. Because Mr. Nickels believes that day starts and ends at sunset, the new moon could only be seen on the day after the molad, according to Mr. Nickels’ hypothesis. Therefore the day after the molad would be declared the first of Tishri, not the same day.

Mr. Nickels writes that, “Sunday is very rarely a Holy Day.”<sup>105</sup> Yet he never states why this is so important. Perhaps Mr. Nickels belief that Sunday is very rarely a Holy Day helps with his belief in a Monday Pentecost. Although his use of scripture in the article on the calendar has not been consistent, at least his belief in a Monday Pentecost is somewhat consistent with acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar. However, instead of moving Pentecost from Sunday to Sivan 6, as the Pharisees did, Mr. Nickels has accepted the WorldWide Church of God’s movement of Pentecost to Monday. Both a Sivan 6 and a Monday Pentecost have the effect of reducing or eliminating certain tandem Sabbaths. Of course the best the Pharisees could do was to reduce the number of tandem Sabbaths at Pentecost and not eliminate them because they and their followers understood Hebrew and the correct way to count to the 50<sup>th</sup> day and realized substituting Sivan 6 for Sunday was the best they could do. The believers in a Monday Pentecost continue to insist the Jews did not know how to count to 50, thus they have created the same kind of artificial, paradoxical support for the calculated Jewish calendar the Jews did by writing the Jews could not count to fifty.

### History and the Calendar

Mr. Nickels writes, “One thing should be noted: there are many conflicting ideas about when the ‘visible’ new moon occurs. ‘Support’ for conflicting positions must come from historians. Someone once said that you can ‘prove’ *anything* from history, and the myriad of diverse calendar beliefs certainly demonstrates this. The Sacred Jewish calendar, given to the

As Mr. Nelte points out, and as anyone who has studied the issue of the calendar at all should know, this statement is incorrect for a number of reasons. First, the molad is not the conjunction. The molad is the mean average of the conjunction. Secondly, the earliest crescent moon sighted in the literature is more than fourteen hours after the conjunction, with it usually being sighted 18 to 20 hours after the conjunction. These two grossly erroneous statements raise serious doubts about Mr. Herrmann’s understanding of the astronomy associated with both the observed and calculated calendar.

104 Ibid, p. 10

105 Ibid, p. 10

Patriarchs and Moses, has continued down through the ages. Its rules make much sense, unlike the confusion of Babylon.”<sup>106</sup> First, the science of astronomy confirms the visible new moon can be seen a little more than 14 hours after the conjunction if everything is just perfect. However, the first crescent is usually visible 16 to 20 hours after the conjunction.

Mr. Nickels seems to contend that since history can be used to make any position seem correct, we should ignore history and follow his assessment of the history of the “sacred Jewish calendar.” Of course there is no history of a calendar being given to the patriarchs or to Moses, so it appears Mr. Nickels contention is to ignore historical accounts when they disagree with his theories, but to accept accounts that are neither historical nor scriptural accurate when they agree with his theory.

Not only is Mr. Nickels statement nonsensical, it should be clear that even scripture can be used to support many conflicting theological positions. Mr. Nickels position continues to be that the Patriarchs, Moses, and the princes of Issachar knew the rules of the sacred calendar. As has been shown, Mr. Nickels assessment of the knowledge of the princes of Issachar is without doubt mistaken. His supposition about Moses and Patriarchs knowing the rules of the sacred calendar cannot be from scripture, thus must be some kind of historical gnostic knowledge gleaned over the years, most likely from Jewish oral law, which Mr. Nickels thoroughly rejects, as does this author, except of course when it agrees with him. There is no doubt the Israelites had no knowledge of God’s ways when they left Egypt and scripture shows that throughout its history Israel continued to lose all of God’s ways until they stumbled upon the scrolls of scripture in the temple.<sup>107</sup> Mr. Nickels himself uses historical references, although not that many, which he misquotes, as evidence that these leaders of Israel knew the rules of the calculated Jewish calendar as it is practiced today. Perhaps Mr. Nickels does have a point that certain people can take history and twist it until it resembles their conclusions.

Mr. Nickels lists among his questions and answers on the calendar, “you state that ‘Maimonides is regarded as a great Jewish scholar . . . and that calculation has precedence over observation.’”<sup>108</sup> As was pointed out earlier, Mr. Nickels’ belief that Maimonides supported the idea of calendar being calculated is in error.

Jason Churchill correctly summarized the calendar teachings of Maimonides many years ago. Jason and this author bravely fought the battle of the calendar many a moon ago. This author has since retrieved a copy of Maimonides and read it, but Jason Churchill’s answer is so eloquent, this author will allow him to answer Mr. Nickels erroneous contention.<sup>109</sup> If the reader will simply insert Mr. Nickels for Keith in the statement quoted below, I believe Mr. Nickels summary that Maimonides taught that calculation took precedence over observation will be shown to be erroneous.

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Keith’s main premise is that the Jewish court had latitude (supposedly) to make

<sup>106</sup> Nickels, *Calendar Controversy*, p. 21

<sup>107</sup> 2 Kings 22 is the story of God revealing new knowledge which was actually quite old to his called out people after they had lived in error for years.

<sup>108</sup> Nickels, *Sacred Calendar*, p. 14

<sup>109</sup> Jason Churchill’s answer was originally given to Keith Hunt on the RCG forum.

their own calendar rules whenever it suited them “in order to be expedient”. This being his premise, it is not surprising that Keith somehow overlooked to bring to the reader’s attention the following important statement in the Introduction to this book. On page xxviii of the Introduction, the translator, noted Jewish scholar Solomon Gandz, says (emphasis and bracketed notes mine (*ed. note*-Jason’s)):

Maimonides puts GREAT STRESS in emphasizing that any and all talmudic references to the discretion given to the court in regulating the calendaric months apply only to the specific CONTINGENCY of the new crescent remaining invisible in its ‘proper time’ for several months in succession [i.e., CLOUDS OBSCURED the new moon]. WHENEVER THE NEW CRESCENT DID APPEAR in its proper time-on the eve of the 30<sup>th</sup> day-sanctification was MANDATORY, thus automatically forestalling intercalation of the month, HOWEVER DESIRABLE OR EXPEDIENT THIS APPEARED TO BE.’

Gandz is referring to statements made by Maimonides’ in Chapter 18, sections 1-12. After discussing difficulties that can arise when the sky is overcast by clouds, Maimonides concludes in section 10 that ‘ONLY UNDER THESE CONDITIONS [i.e., several successive months where the new moon was obscured]...was it permissible to intercalate a month for reasons of expediency. In such months, however, when the new moon did appear in its ‘proper time,’ thus becoming visible immediately after its conjunction with the sun, the court was always bound to sanctify the new moon (AND HAD NO AUTHORITY TO INTERCALATE).’

Thus, while Keith lays great stress on the latitude supposedly granted to the court to fix the calendar up however they wanted, Maimonides stresses just the opposite-latitude was granted to the court only in certain strictly circumscribed situations. According to Maimonides, they were NEVER allowed to “bypass” a new moon in a premeditated manner, for ANY reason.

This is a critical point to understanding where Keith misses the boat in analyzing Maimonides. All of the examples that Keith cites from Maimonides, which he supposes demonstrate how freely the court “postponed” new moons, were examples of CONTINGENCY situations which COULD NOT BE ANTICIPATED. Unlike Keith, I hope that most people can tell the difference between latitude granted for a contingency situation (which cannot be predicted), and postponements under the present Jewish Calendar (which are actually FIXED into the calendar, and anticipated well in advance). It should be just as apparent as the difference between finding an ‘ox in the ditch’ on the Sabbath, and deliberately placing an ox into your ditch every Sabbath on a routine basis, for the sake of ‘expediency’.

Here are some specific problems with Keith’s reasoning. Keith wrote:

Did you catch it? The Jewish court did use “calculation” – the governing of the new month day was not always done by mere observation of the crescent of the moon. I guess not, some days it would be cloudy, and the crescent of the moon would not be visible.

His comment here is very misleading. A more careful look at the passage from Maimonides that he used as the basis for his assertion will show that calculation was NOT used to FIX the calendar in advance, but merely to corroborate the reports of eyewitnesses to the visible new moon. That is, the ONLY times that calculation took precedence over eyewitness reports was when the available eyewitnesses were disreputable, or when the claims of these witnesses could clearly be shown, based on comparison with calculations, to be either imagination or outright lies.

Thus Keith has raised a red herring, because nobody disputes that calculations

were used to identify false witnesses, or to reject false sightings of the new moon during the Second Temple period. This is a very different use of calculations than what is done with today's Jewish Calendar, in which calculations are used to fix calendar dates IN ADVANCE, and to frequently postpone the first day of the month so that it no longer corresponds to the new moon.

What people need to understand is that the use of calculations to corroborate eyewitness reports is not the same as using calculations to fix the calendar in advance for 'convenience'. Don't let Keith confuse these two different things. Despite what Keith implies, Maimonides emphasizes repeatedly that observation took precedence OVER calculations, with the sole exception being when the credibility of the witnesses was in question! According to Maimonides, even if the new moon was calculated to be visible after the end of the 29th day of the month, the new moon was NOT declared that if cloud cover prevented all reliable witnesses from seeing it. In such cases, the desirability of having witnesses actually SEE the new moon was deemed to be more important than calculations, and the declaration of the new moon was therefore made by default the following day (because a month could never have more than 30 days). This is one reason why the Jewish calendar of this period could not be "set" or published in advance (!!--it was impossible to predict whether cloud cover would obscure the new moon, a circumstance which would sometimes force the month to start one day later than anticipated by calculations.

In other words, in the Jewish calendar of the Second Temple period, calculations would sometimes override false eyewitness reports, but in all other cases, it was eyewitness reports that were the basis of declaring the new moon. Calculations served only a 'security' function, not a predictive function!

Here is the passage that Keith quoted from Maimonides. This time, read it with the proper understanding that the purpose of the calculations was to prevent FALSE testimony, not to set the calendar in advance:

Just as the astronomers who discern the positions and motions of the stars engage in calculation, so the Jewish court, too, used to study and investigate and perform mathematical operations, in order to find out whether or not it would be possible for the new crescent to be visible in its "proper time," which is the night of the 30th day. If the members of the court found that the new moon might be visible, they were obliged to be in attendance at the court house for the whole 30th day and be on the watch for the arrival of witnesses. If witnesses did arrive, they were duly examined and tested, and if their testimony appeared trustworthy, this day was sanctified as New Moon Day. If the new crescent did not appear and no witnesses arrived, this day was the 30th day of the old month, which thus became an embolismic month. If, however, the members of the court found by calculation that the new moon could not possibly be seen, they were not obliged to be in attendance on the 30th day or to wait for the arrival of witnesses. If witnesses nonetheless did appear and testified that they had seen the new crescent, it was certain that they were false witnesses, or that a phenomenon resembling the new moon had been seen by them through the clouds, while in reality it was not the new crescent at all.

In summary, his approach is to focus on unusual contingency situations (whose occurrence could not be predicted) described by Maimonides, and distort these to imply that the Jews have God's endorsement to manipulate the calendar in advance whenever they please. In doing this, he ignores Maimonides EMPHATIC statement (see above) that the Jewish court was always obligated to declare a new moon that had been duly witnessed and confirmed. Always!

Keith wrote, ‘And people today want to make a big thing about so-called errors in the Jewish perpetual calendar! What errors I ask? Where are all the rules and laws laid out in the Bible as to how the calendar is to be governed? Try to kind them if you can!’

Ignorance is bliss, eh? It’s so easy to relieve ourselves of any responsibility for thinking about this question, just because SOME of the issues seem to be confusing, and some of the answers are not immediately forthcoming. Our frustration over the calendar does not relieve us of all responsibility to seek the answers (although we must be balanced, and remember that there are obviously other important matters that Christians must think about).

Here is one very easily recognized problem (“error”, if you will) with the Jewish calendar. Numbers 29:1-5 describes the sacrifices that are to be offered on the Feast of Trumpets, then notes in verse 6 that these sacrifices are ‘beside [that is, in addition to] the burnt offering of the month [that is, the offerings that were to be made on the day of the NEW MOON, Num. 10:10].’ To put it plainly, the Feast of Trumpets is to fall on the FIRST day of the seventh month, and the first day of the month is to be a NEW MOON DAY. The problem with the Jewish calendar as it currently exists is that the “Molad” (which is merely a mathematical approximation of the conjunction) serves as the new moon, and because of postponements, the first day of the seventh month frequently does not correspond to the Molad at all (nor does it correspond to the crescent, or the true conjunction, or anything for that matter). In other words, under the Jewish calendar, the Feast of Trumpets is not associated with anything that has EVER been understood to define a new moon. This practice is obviously contrary to Numbers 29:1-6.

Col. 2:16-17 tells us that the new moons, like the holydays and Sabbath day itself, ‘foreshadow things to come’. It would seem like a matter of some pressing interest to Christians, therefore, to answer the question, ‘What exactly is the lesson to be learned from the new moons, and what do they foreshadow?’ Unfortunately, somebody who takes Keith’s approach will be content to never seek an answer to this question.<sup>110</sup>

Mr. Nickels writes, “From the record of the Jews and secular history we can determine that the weekly cycle has not been lost or destroyed. So we are confident that Saturday is the Sabbath. Likewise we can determine that the Sacred Calendar and its calculations have been preserved since the days of Moses.”<sup>111</sup> However, Mr. Nickels wrote only two pages earlier, “Someone once said that you can ‘prove’ *anything* from history, and the myriad of diverse calendar beliefs certainly demonstrates this.”<sup>112</sup>

Perhaps the reader can understand how Mr. Nickels rejection of historical accounts of the observed calendar, of which the vast majority disagree with his interpretation of the scriptural calendar, can be consigned with his statement from history we can prove the weekly cycle has not been lost. I find these two statements to be contradictory. As this book shows, I take it on faith that Saturday is seventh day Sabbath, but it is not blind faith because there is no historical record of this day ever being changed. However there is a great deal of evidence showing the calendar used by the Jews to regulate the annual feasts was changed in the period of 200 to 350 CE. Mr. Nickels chooses to ignore this evidence because it disagrees with his traditional beliefs,

<sup>110</sup> Jason Churchill for the RCG forum in 1996 or 97.

<sup>111</sup> Nickels, *Calendar controversy*, p. 23

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 21



but surely the reader should see that his juxtaposition of the weekly sabbath with the calculated calendar is erroneous because he lists no proof for his statement. Over and over again he states the postponements in the calculated Jewish calendar go back to Moses, yet he has presented no proof of this, except for his erroneous belief that the princes of Issachar supposedly knew astronomy, even though they were not of the line the supposedly preserved the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Nickels has also ignored the myriad of times that Israel lost the law of God, yet Mr. Nickels contends in those lost times they still maintained a complex gnostic calculated calendar that was not even used to celebrate the holy days because they were not celebrated during these lost times. Even worse, Mr. Nickels states that this proof cannot be found in the bible and that we cannot trust history, therefore his own statements condemn his belief that we can trace the calculated Jewish calendar back to Moses as erroneous. But of course we can trust Mr. Nickels' suppositions, but we must reject the thousands of scholars who used history and scripture who disagree with Mr. Nickels.

### The Calendar God gave Moses?

This section of the appendix deals with Richard Nickels' critique of Herb Solinsky's *The Calendar God gave Moses*. Because Mr. Nickels is one of the few teachers to review Herb Solinsky's work by name, it has been included in this appendix as well. The sub-title of his review, *The Calendar God Didn't Give to Moses*, informs the reader of his view of Mr. Solinsky's paper. Mr. Nickels' critique definitely points out weaknesses in Mr. Solinsky's arguments, but Mr. Nickels' prejudice for the calculated Jewish calendar and his lack of knowledge of the calendar are also evident in his review. This author has also included some of his personal critique of Herb Solinsky's paper as well.

Mr. Nickels writes about Mr. Solinsky's paper, "This 'scholarly' work presupposes the 'fact' that today's Jewish calendar is a **different** calendar than the one God gave to Moses."<sup>113</sup> Mr. Nickels has a very valid argument against Mr. Solinsky, which is why this book has some just data about the calendar of the second temple period. Mr. Solinsky does not list the history of conflict surrounding the calculated Jewish calendar or the vast array of sources which list an observed calendar being used for the second temple period. Mr. Solinsky's supposition weakens some of his arguments when he could have included a historical perspective of the calendar of the second temple as this book has done. However, Mr. Nickels also greatly weakens some of his arguments with statements like the following. "There is no admission that Pentecost must be in the spring, which was the reason why the calendar adjustment was necessary."<sup>114</sup> Mr. Nickels continued to believe not only that the Passover must be in the spring, a non-existent season in scripture, but that Pentecost must also be in the spring. Many have fallen into the trap of believing that Passover must be in the spring, some time after the vernal equinox, because it is Jewish and church of God tradition. But as stated earlier, to compound this error with a belief that Pentecost must also be in spring is

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113 Nickels, Richard, Review: *The Calendar God gave Moses: The Calendar God didn't give Moses*, [www.giveshare.org/HolyDays/solinsky.html](http://www.giveshare.org/HolyDays/solinsky.html), p. 1 All page numbers will be approximate because downloads from the web will vary, depending upon how individual browser have been formatted.

114 Ibid



a fairly unique error. It appears the Talmud of Armstrong divided the holy days into spring and fall days for some abstract theological reason that Mr. Nickels clung to for all of his life.

### Mr. Nickels writes about Mr. Solinsky’s Paper

Mr. Nickels writes;

Chapter One of the paper gives a lesson in the astronomy of the sun, earth and moon. If azimuths and syzygies and other complex astronomical concepts can be made simple, they sure aren’t in this lengthy chapter. It is almost as if the authors purposely attempted to write in unplain, technically-oriented language. I’d be surprised if 10% of the people who read this paper really gain a good grasp of what it says.<sup>115</sup>

Perhaps Mr. Nickels analysis is accurate. This author believes Mr. Solinsky’s dependence upon the angle of the moon in the sky has some technical interest, but has very little to do with a calendar based upon observation of the first crescent. Mr. Solinsky’s dependence upon computers rather than upon history and scripture is apparently as evident to Mr. Nickels as it is to this author. However, Mr. Nickels writes in his review of *The Calendar God gave Moses*, “The new moon conjunction (molad) is when the earth is between the moon and the sun.”<sup>116</sup> Mr. Nickels admitted he did not understand Mr. Solinsky’s chapter on astronomy, but he should have gone to another source to learn some astronomy before writing this critique. First, Mr. Nickels has confused the conjunction with its mean average conjunction, the molad, a fairly common mistake among church of God apologists for calculated Jewish calendar. However, Mr. Nickels shows a complete lack of astronomical knowledge because the conjunction is not, “when the earth is between the moon and the sun.”<sup>117</sup> The moon is full when the earth is between it and the sun. The conjunction occurs when the moon is between the sun and the earth, as this book explains. This is a very serious mistake, showing a dramatic gap in Mr. Nickels astronomical knowledge, raising the question why Mr. Nickels believes his critique should be taken seriously when he is not knowledgeable on the subject.

Mr. Nickels quotes Mr. Solinsky as stating “When the [astronomical] new moon [molad] occurs, it is invisible; however, the time of invisibility of the moon usually lasts from **one to three nights**, so **without measurements and calculations, it is not possible to accurately determine the new moon.**”<sup>118</sup> As this book demonstrated, for at least 500 years the new moon was determined by observation of the first crescent. Calculation does greatly aid in determining when the new moon will be visible over Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin used such calculation to test the veracity of those who testified about witnessing the new moon. But determining if you saw the first crescent is really very simple and requires no calculation if you are in Jerusalem. Mr. Nickels agrees with Herb Solinsky that calculation is necessary because it lends credence to the historical need for a calculated calendar. However, Mr. Solinsky is mistaken on this point, as the vast majority of scholarship on the calendar shows.

Mr. Nickels writes about Mr. Solinsky’s paper, “The major goal of the paper is to show that

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115 Ibid

116 Ibid

117 Ibid

118 Ibid, p. 2

the Bible does contain enough information to visually determine the calendar. However, the paper shows that observation alone is not enough to determine the calendar. Complex calculations and measurements are necessary!”<sup>119</sup> This is a valid critique. Mr. Solinsky has taken a fairly easy subject and made it very difficult because he insists on using astronomical calculation to determine all aspects of the calendar. This is simply not historically accurate. This author agrees with Mr. Nickels that Mr. Solinsky’s paper does not and cannot show how someone stranded on a dessert island could keep the calendar.<sup>120</sup> Hopefully the reader of this book will find it more useful than Mr. Solinsky’s in this regard.

### The Tekufoth

Herb Solinsky has made the argument that the tekufoth mentioned in scripture is the equinox. Mr. Solinsky devoted many years to the study of the calendar and should be credited with re-opening the issue of the calculated Jewish calendar in the mid-eighties in the churches of God. However, Mr. Solinsky’s dependence on the equinox as the sole mitigating factor on when to start the feast cycle is in error.

Mr. Solinsky writes that the Egyptians had a considerable working knowledge of astronomy, which is true. However, he makes the assumption that, “Moses was familiar with the Egyptians knowledge of astronomy.”<sup>121</sup> The scriptures he uses for this assumption are:

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.<sup>122</sup>

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter<sup>123</sup>

And when he was cast out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.<sup>124</sup>

Just because Moses was brought up in the court does not mean he learnt the entirety of the knowledge of Egypt. The pharaohs would not have been educated in how to build pyramids. They would not have been skilled in the science of farming. Pharaohs were taught the science of war. The only verse that has any bearing on rather Moses had some knowledge of astronomy is Acts 7:22. Moses was schooled in the wisdom, the Greek word Sophia, of the Egyptians which helped him become a powerful leader. Steven was explaining why Moses was a great leader, because he was schooled wisdom, the Sophia, of Egypt, not in the gnosis, the knowledge of Egypt. Is it possible Moses learned astronomy in the court of the Pharaoh? It is possible, but this is a major and unproven assumption for which there is no scriptural backing. It also appears Mr. Solinsky did not realize that the astronomical knowledge of Egypt was used to regulate a purely solar calendar.

Mr. Solinsky also states, “In Ex. 34:22 God uses the Hebrew word tekufoth in telling

119 Ibid, p. 2

120 Ibid, p.2

121 Solinsky, Herbert and Anderson, Robert, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, Version 9/23/82, p. 50

122 Exod. 2:10

123 Hebr. 11:24

124 Acts 7:21-2

Moses, literally, ‘And you shall celebrate...the Feast of Ingathering tekufoth the year.’<sup>125</sup> There is an in-depth examination of the word tekufoth in the body of this book reveals that it is not the equinox. After looking at the Greek translation of tekufoth in the LXX, Mr. Solinsky writes, “Ex. 34:22 can only be referring to the autumnal equinox.”<sup>126</sup> Although this author has questioned some of Mr. Solinsky’s conclusion, most of his research is quite good, but not in this case. Unfortunately Mr. Solinsky has taken tekufoth out of context because he did not quote Ex. 34:22 in its entirety. God is listing a number of ordinances that the nation of Israel was to follow in Ex. 34. He speaks about Unleavened Bread in verse 18. “The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou calmest out from Egypt.”<sup>127</sup> After giving instruction on what kind of offering was acceptable and about how the weekly sabbath reflected the harvest, scripture goes on to state, “And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end. Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.”<sup>128</sup>

The feast of Unleavened Bread was associated with the barley being abib. When was the feast of weeks, often called Pentecost, to be kept? At the first fruits of the wheat harvest? Not according to scripture. When was the Feast of Tabernacles to be kept? At the fall equinox? No. Just as the timing of the feast of Weeks was associated with the first fruits of the wheat harvest, scripture states the feast of Tabernacles was associated with the end of the feast of ingathering, the end of the harvesting part of the year. However, Pentecost was approximately seven weeks after the season of unleavened bread and Tabernacles was exactly 6 months after the feast of Unleavened Bread. Although Mr. Solinsky’s assumption about Moses knowledge of astronomy is without biblical basis, it cannot be disproven with scripture either. This is the nature of hypothesis without fact. However, Mr. Solinsky assumption about tekufoth is in error.

Mr. Solinsky states the barley harvest was ready when the plague of hail hit Egypt, but the wheat was not ready, according to Ex. 9:31-2 and this author believes scripture supports his contention.<sup>129</sup> Mr. Solinsky goes on to write that the events of Exodus 9:31 occurred at the beginning of April because the barley harvest does not begin until the middle of April in Egypt.<sup>130</sup> Mr. Solinsky apparently has very little practice in the art and science of agriculture nor did he research when these harvests actually took place. William Willcocks writes, “The barley and bean harvest begins on the 10<sup>th</sup> March and terminates on the 10<sup>th</sup> April.”<sup>131</sup> Barnes writes, “The flax was bolled - i. e. in blossom. This marks the time. In the north of Egypt the barley ripens and flax blossoms about the middle of February, or at the latest

125 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 50

126 Ibid

127 Exod. 34:18

128 Exod. 34:22-3

129 Exod. 9:31-2 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

130 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 51

131 Willcocks, Willaim, Ireland, James, Hanbury, Craig, *Egyptian Irrigation*, third edition Vol. 2, , Spon and Cahmberlain, 123 Liberty Street, New York, 1913, p. 768

early in March, and both are gathered in before April, when the wheat harvest begins.”<sup>132</sup> Both of these statements make sense because Egypt is at a lower elevation and closer to the equator than Israel, thus it should be warmer and the crops should be ready sooner. The barley harvest is usually ready sometime in the middle of March in Israel. It appears Mr. Solinsky’s desire to incorporate the equinox into his calendar considerations has caused him to miss this very important point. This error alone invalidates Mr. Solinsky’s hypothesis about the observed calendar using the vernal equinox.

The timing of when a crop is ready to harvest can vary greatly depending upon the variety of the crop, the exact location, and the weather conditions. It is true crops normally are ready to be harvested at the same general time every year, but there can be significant variation. It is highly implausible that we can state exactly when the harvest occurred in plague-torn Egypt 3,500 years ago, but the most likely time is early March, not early April. Mr. Solinsky’s idea of the equinox having great importance in a calendar is again proven to be incorrect. However Mr. Solinsky uses the errant hypothesis that the barley is always in abib in mid April when he states, “Moses perceived the new crescent. Moses knew that this was the first new crescent since the days of the vernal equinox. The conclusion comes naturally and easily.”<sup>133</sup> Although this conclusion is natural and easy for Mr. Solinsky, it is based upon a string of assumptions that cannot be verified and of which a number are incorrect.

Mr. Solinsky is also a very firm believer that Genesis 1:14 means that equinox should be used to determine the start of the year. “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.”<sup>134</sup> This verse should leave no doubt that somehow the sun, moon and stars in the sky have an effect on the earth. The sun divides day from night. We know the moon was appointed for the seasons.<sup>135</sup> All three are used to mark the time, allowing the tracking of years, days, and feasts. However, it is quite a stretch to combine Ex. 12:2 with Ex. 34:22 and Gen. 1:14 and to create Mr. Solinsky’s translation of Ex. 12:2. “This (visible) new crescent (which is on or after the first day of the vernal equinox, is) chief of (visible) new crescents to you; it (is) first among (visible) new crescents of the year to you.”<sup>136</sup> This translation is built upon Mr. Solinsky’s beliefs that Gen. 1:14 combined with Ex. 34:22 defines the tekufoth as the equinox and his statement that, “I do not believe God would have barley control the calendar.”<sup>137</sup> Of course this book has shown Mr. Solinsky’s belief about the tekufoth being the equinox in scripture to be in error and his belief about the barley’s relationship to the calendar is personal bias, which apparently lead Mr. Solinsky to ignore a number of scriptures. If the events of Exodus 9:31-2 did take place in early March, as they almost surely did, then Mr. Solinsky’s belief that the vernal equinox had anything to do with the calendar or anything to do with what God revealed to Moses in Ex. 12:2 is completely erroneous.

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132 <http://bible.cc/exodus/9-31.htm>

133 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 51

134 Gen. 1:14

135 Ps. 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

136 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 51

137 Solinsky, Herb, Tape on the calendar that God gave Moses.

Mr. Solinsky’s presents what he believes are his two strongest proofs of his hypothesis that the new year always starts with the first new moon after the vernal equinox in his paper. They are the ease of calculating the vernal equinox and a comparison of the Jewish calendar with the Babylonian calendar at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Even if these points were true, which we will show is highly questionable, the timing of the barley harvests in Egypt and Israel are far stronger evidence Mr. Solinsky is wrong.

### Calculation of the New Year by Herb Solinsky

Mr. Solinsky believes the ancients used

a straight board and an object with a sighting point so that the middle of the board is about the length of a person west of the sighting point, and when looking approximately west the one’s eye at the sighting point, the long top edge of the board is even with the horizon. Each day near sunset make a mark on the board where the board crossed the line of sight from the sighting point to the middle of the sun. For accuracy this should be done when the center of the sun is at the horizon.<sup>138</sup>

Mr. Solinsky’s suggestion is to keep track of the equinoxes by tracking when marks on a board did not move much over a period of several days. “The mark closest to the midpoint while the marks are heading north is the mark at the vernal equinox. The mark closest to the midpoint while the marks are heading south is the mark at the autumnal equinox.”<sup>139</sup>

Mr. Solinsky also quotes Joseph Lockyer’s *The Dawn of Astronomy* about a method the Egyptians could have used to determine the equinoxes.<sup>140</sup> This method involved creating a flat surface and marking the sunrise and sunset, then bisecting the angle to determine north and south. The Egyptians could then make a right angle to determine east and west. With this they could determine the equinox by letting, “a rod throw a shadow; mark the position of the shadow; at sunset we again note where the shadow falls. If the sun rises exactly in the east and set exactly in the west, those two shadows will be continuous, and we shall have made an observation at absolute equinox”<sup>141</sup>

Mr. Solinsky’s third method for finding the equinoxes is to use a gnomon, something like a sundial, to determine the equinox. Mr. Solinsky writes;

The minimum length for a year of all noontime shadows is the gnomon determines the summer solstice (assuming the gnomon is in the Northern Hemisphere). The maximum length for the year of all noontime shadows of the gnomon determines the winter solstice. If the elevation angles of the sun at the two solstices are bisected and the shadow length for the bisected angle is noted, the noontime shadow length closest to the noted shadow length determines the day of the equinox (page 82, New-CR). For the few days near the solstices the noontime shadow lengths hardly change, so the days of the solstice need not be determined precisely in order to determine the equinoxes. The vernal equinox is determined as the noon time shadow lengths are decreasing, and the autumnal equinox is determined as the noontime shadows are increasing.”<sup>142</sup>

138 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 12

139 Ibid

140 Ibid, Lockyer, Joseph, *The Dawn of Astronomy*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1894, p. 63-4

141 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 12

142 Ibid, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 14



As convoluted and complex as these methods are, Mr. Solinsky himself admitted he has not tested them.<sup>143</sup> As an engineer from MIT, I can assure the reader what Mr. Solinsky has suggested is non-trivial. It is also not exacting. It is imprecise. The exact day of the equinox could not be determined until after the equinox had occurred by any of these methods. Even then, it would only be as precise as the measuring rod used. By Mr. Solinsky's own estimates, using method one yields less than a 1% differential per day during the time of the equinox. If a 10 foot rod were used, which this author considers quite long, the differential is less than an inch a day. If a standard sundial of 3 feet were being used, it would yield less than a third of an inch differential every day. When the new moon occurred a couple of days before the vernal equinox, the differential would be very small and very hard to quantify. However, Mr. Solinsky believes this type of method is verified by Eccl. 1:5-6. "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits."<sup>144</sup>

Using various translations, Mr. Solinsky writes, "The first half of Eccl 1:6 as literally translated describes the north-south "walking" of the sun as pictured in the marks made each day at noontime or sunset when on determines the equinoxes and solstices described in chapter 1."<sup>145</sup> Unfortunately Mr. Solinsky has shown he is not immune to the churches of God disease that causes people to create special, personal translations of scripture that have no resemblance to what they author wrote. Ecclesiastes is a poem meant to show the futility of physical existence without God. Poetry was often used to emphasis importance of points in the Old Testament. However, taking Solomon's statement of futility as literal proof that equinox measurements were made is a case of eisegesis. A listing of Ecclesiastes 1:1-8 in context should convince that reader that Mr. Solinsky was looking so hard for justification of the equinox being part of a scriptural calendar that he found it even if it was not there.

Utter futility!-said Koheleth  
 Utter futility! All is futile!  
 What real value is there for a man  
 In all the gains he makes beneath the sun  
 One generation goes, another comes,  
 But the earth remains the same forever.  
 The sun rises and the sun sets-  
 And glides back too where it rises.  
 Southward blowing,  
 Turning northward,  
 Ever turning blows the wind;  
 On it rounds the wind returns  
 All streams flow into the sea,  
 Yet the sea is never full;  
 To the place (from) which they flow  
 The streams flow back again.

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143 When asked by Mr. Paul Yoos about these methods, Mr. Solinsky stated he uses his computer for all such computations

144 Eccl. 1:5-6

145 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 53



All such things are wearisome:  
 No man can ever state them;  
 The never has enough of seeing,  
 Nor the ear enough of hearing.<sup>146</sup>

Solomon’s wonderful poem is about the meaning and futility of life without God and has nothing to do with the calendar. This author is sorry to see Mr. Solinsky stoop to the theological level of his critics in search of scriptural proof the equinox is essential to the calendar.

### **The Babylonian Calendar**

The second major proof Mr. Solinsky presents that feast of Unleavened Bread supposedly should start 15 days after the first new moon after vernal equinox is really in two parts. The first part revolves around a Babylonian calendar system, whose dates generally, but not always, show that the new year started after the vernal equinox. This proof would be meaningless except that Mr. Solinsky attempts to equate this Babylonian calendar system to one used by Ezra and Nehemiah.

According to Mr. Solinsky’s calculations, the new year of the Babylonian calendar, as measured by the first crescent, started on or after the vernal equinox 99 years out of 100 at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The one year it fell only 2 or 3 days before the vernal equinox according to Mr. Solinsky.<sup>147</sup> Mr. Solinsky is doing computations on events that occurred 2,500 years ago attempting to confirm a rule about the equinox and, although he believes he found it, his own research shows he did not. To prove a that a rule exist empirically, without having direct access to that rule, you would have to not only prove that rule had never been violated in the past, but also present some evidence it would not be violated in the future. The fact that Mr. Solinsky’s research proved this rule was violated in the past means that it can not be a rule.

I would like to ask Mr. Solinsky and those who agree with his interpretation of when the feast of Unleavened Bread should start if they would also start their new year with a crescent moon 2 or 3 days before the vernal equinox? Mr. Solinsky and his acolytes have already shown they would not.<sup>148</sup> Mr. Solinsky doesn’t seem to understand that a rule is a rule. 99 times out of 100 does not make a rule. Another rule, for example a rule that states the new year does not start until the barley is abib, may also match Mr. Solinsky’s computations 99 times out of 100 or perhaps even 100 times out of 100. 99 times out of 100 is nothing more than a coincidence, especially when Mr. Solinsky does not even try to present evidence about how this rule could not be violated outside of the time frame he examined.

Some have said this is too much of a coincidence. However, if this author stated that 99 times out of 100, it had snowed in Boston by December 25<sup>th</sup>, would that mean there was a rule that it must snow in Boston by December 25<sup>th</sup>? If I drop an egg and 99 times out of 100 it breaks and causes a mess on the floor, does that mean it will always break? Of course not. A rule states that if I do something, something else always happens. A real rule states

<sup>146</sup> Eccl. 1:2-8, Tanak

<sup>147</sup> Solinsky, Audio tape on the calendar

<sup>148</sup> When I asked that of a group of Mr. Solinsky’s followers in Rhode Island, they said absolutely not

if I drop an egg, 100 times out of 100 it will go towards the floor and not the ceiling. Mr. Solinsky's followers would never break his rule about when to start the new year, but none of them, including Mr. Solinsky has a good explanation why his rule did not work in Babylon.

Mr. Solinsky's continues this futile attempt to prove the new year must start after the vernal equinox by attempting to tie this Babylonian calendar to the biblical one practice by Ezra and Nehemiah. This portion of his hypothesis also has serious flaws. First Mr. Solinsky builds a case for Ezra and Nehemiah following the laws of Moses, including when to keep the annual feasts. There should be little argument with this supposition because these are two of the great reformers in the history of God's people and they not only tried, but succeeded in returning many people to the worship of the true God in the manner which He ordained.<sup>149</sup> However, Mr. Solinsky goes on to use verses like Ezra 6:16 and Neh. 6:15, where the Babylonian names for the months are mentioned, in an attempt to show that these reformers were using the same Babylonian calendar whose dates he has calculated as agreeing with his hypothesis, at least mostly agree with his hypothesis.<sup>150</sup> "In the context of Jerusalem, Neh. 6:15 mentions the month named 'Elul' which is the sixth month of the current Jewish calendar; 'Elul' is the Babylonian name for the sixth month. If this did not usually correspond to the sixth month of the calendar that God gave to Moses as Nehemiah understood it, why would he use it in the context of Jerusalem?"<sup>151</sup>

Mr. Solinsky has been given the answer to this very question on his tape about the calendar. He was asked if it were possible that these Babylonian names were used when reporting back to a king, like Artaxerxes.<sup>152</sup> Could Ezra and Nehemiah have been telling the king what they were doing on the days of his calendar, just as today we would often tell those who do not celebrate the annual feasts that we are returning from the feast of Tabernacles on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of October rather than the 21<sup>st</sup> of Tishri? This has to be at least a possibility. Therefore another of Mr. Solinsky's supposed proofs from scripture that the vernal equinox is tied to a scriptural calendar has been found to be suspect and has to be in error considering this is a two part proof whose first part was false. An examination of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah reveals that when these two great men were recording history for their people, they referred to the days and months by number and not by name. It was only when reporting back to non-believers on the events that were occurring did they use Babylonian names. The scriptures listed below confirm this pattern.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,<sup>153</sup>

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149 This is the story of Ezra and Nehemiah

150 Ez. 6:16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

Neh. 6:15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* Elul, in fifty and two days.

151 Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 35

152 Solinsky, Audio tape on the calendar.

153 Ezra 1:1

And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.<sup>154</sup>133 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD.<sup>155</sup>

Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites,<sup>156</sup> Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.<sup>157</sup>

In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid;<sup>158</sup>

And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.<sup>159</sup>

And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.<sup>160</sup>

Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.<sup>161</sup>

Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain.<sup>162</sup>

And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.<sup>163</sup>

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,<sup>164</sup>

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king.

Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.<sup>165</sup>

154 Ezra 3:1

155 Ezra 3:6

156 Ezra 3:8

157 Ezra 4:24

158 Ezra 6:3

159 Ezra 6:19

160 Ezra 7:7-10

161 Ezra 8:31

162 Ezra 10:9

163 Ezra 10:16-7

164 Neh. 1:1

165 Neh. 2:1

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.<sup>166</sup>

So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities.<sup>167</sup>

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.<sup>168</sup>

Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.<sup>169</sup>

And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.<sup>170</sup>

And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.<sup>171</sup>

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.<sup>172</sup>

The days and months were most often referred to by number, not name in the Old Testament. Mr. Solinsky states, “Ezra 7:6, 9-10 show that Ezra knew the law of Moses. Ezra 7:9 shows he knew when each month began.”<sup>173</sup> Ezra 7:9 not only shows he knew when the months began, but also that he referred to them by number, not name. “The Babylonian names comprise the third system (*ed. note*-with numerical and Canaanite being the other two calendrical systems) in use in Israel and are found in relatively late text:… Sometimes these month names are found alone and sometimes precede by and an explanatory numerical reference (e.g. Est. 3:7, Zech 7:1, etc.)”<sup>174</sup> When examined in context, Neh. 1:1, 6:16, and Ezra 6:15 definitely show a pattern of communicating time to others in a time frame they are familiar with. Thus Ezra and Nehemiah translated the day and month of their calendar to the Babylonian calendar when they reported to the king, but otherwise they used numbers for both the day and month, showing they did not use the Babylonian calendar that Mr. Solinsky had done his calculations on.

<sup>166</sup> Neh. 6:15

<sup>167</sup> Neh. 7:73

<sup>168</sup> Neh. 8:2

<sup>169</sup> Neh. 9:1

<sup>170</sup> Ezra 6:14-5

<sup>171</sup> Neh. 2:1

<sup>172</sup> Neh. 6:15

<sup>173</sup> Solinsky and Anderson, *The Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 35

<sup>174</sup> Bromiley, *ISBE, Vol. 1, Calendar*; Morgan, D.F. p. 575

Esth. 3:7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

Zech. 7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;

When Ezra and Nehemiah were communicating with the nation of Israel, they referred to the months by number. When they were communicating with Babylonians, they used the Babylonian months. I hope the reader understands that I perceive Mr. Solinsky’s research to be honest and helpful, just in error about the requirement that the new year must start on the new moon after the vernal equinox. Mr. Solinsky grasped for biblical straws and unsurprisingly found them, but he is wrong about what he found.

Going back to Mr. Nickels analysis of Mr. Solinsky’s work, Mr. Nickels also mistakenly believes, “The Hebrew word *tkufah* refers to an equinox, either spring or fall.”<sup>175</sup> As this book has repeatedly shown, there is no concept of spring or fall seasons nor of the equinox in scripture. Mr. Nickels mistakenly believes that scripture shows that the feast of Tabernacles must occur near the fall equinox, but rejects that Unleavened bread must have some kind of relationship with the vernal equinox because tekufoth is never mentioned in the context of the days of Unleavened Bread. The timing for the feast of Tabernacles is directly dependent upon the starting time of the feast of Unleavened bread, which is directly dependent upon the start of summer, which signifies the start of the harvest cycle. Therefore, the feasts of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles are indirectly dependent upon the equinoxes because seasonal variation is indirectly dependent upon the equinoxes.

Of Mr. Solinsky’s belief that Abib 1 must be after the spring equinox, Mr. Nickels writes, “Where is the proof? Certainly not in the 84-page paper entitled *The Calendar God Gave to Moses*.”<sup>176</sup> Mr. Nickels critiqued both Mr. Solinsky’s erroneous beliefs that Unleavened bread starts with the first new moon after the equinox and Mr. Solinsky’s use of 1 Samuel 20. Because this author generally agree with Mr. Nickels assessment of Mr. Solinsky’s position on these issues and because these arguments are covered in the body of this book, Mr. Nickels arguments will not be re-listed.

However, this author disagrees when Mr. Nickels writes, “David and Jonathan both said it was tomorrow, which verse 6 clearly shows was the Holy Day of Trumpets.”<sup>177</sup> Although Mr. Nickels’ belief that the new moon of 1 Samuel 20 was the first of Tishri is possible, there is no way this can be proven and the preponderance of evidence is against this belief.

### **Abib Barley to Start the Year**

Mr. Nickels agrees with Mr. Solinsky’s assessment that “The Bible does not define a precise relationship between the barley and the first month called Abib.”<sup>178</sup> Mr. Nickels, as well as Mr. Solinsky, ignore the use of abib as a time frame in Exodus 9:31. As this book has shown, and most scholars concur, abib does not simple mean green ears, but the time when the ears of barley are green and tender. Mr. Nickels even lists this definition of abib, but dismisses its meaning because the starting time of the harvest can vary throughout Israel.<sup>179</sup>

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175 Nickels, Richard, Review of the *Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 2

176 Ibid, p. 3

177 Ibid, p. 4

178 Ibid, p. 5

179 Ibid, p. 5

Mr. Nickels quotes Solinsky's 7 reasons why the barley is not used as for determining the start of the year.

(1) He says that Leviticus 23:10-14 restricts using the new crop for food before the wave sheaf offering, but does not prohibit harvesting and storing the crop before the ceremony. This is not true. Exodus 22:29 is a statute showing that one is not to delay offering firstfruits. One could not go out and harvest, and then weeks later come and offer a wave sheaf offering. There is not a precise relationship between the barley harvest and the first of Abib. True! Just like there is not a precise relationship between the spring equinox and the first of Abib! Why not be consistent in logic?

(2) Barley ripens at different times in the various parts of Palestine, as much as 50 days difference due to regional differences.

(3) Solinsky says that the Bible is not clear on whether the barley is to be ripe on the first of the month or on the wave sheaf offering day. True. But he fails to mention that the Bible does not say whether or not the barley has to be ripe for the wave sheaf offering! Abib means "green, tender ears." Go out into a field of wheat or barley sometime. Grab some husks and chew them, like the Messiah did when he walked around Palestine. If they are green, they are soft and chewy. If they are ripe, they are hard and more dry. The month of green ears of barley is Abib, not the month of dry, uniformly ripe ears!

Carl O'Beirn, former Worldwide Church of God minister of Cleveland, Ohio, left that church about the year 1970 over the issue of the calendar. His main point was that the barley must be RIPE, or the first month is postponed. He had an "official observer" in Palestine to report on the barley harvest. O'Beirn insisted that the "meat (cereal) offering" of Leviticus 23:13 was of the new produce of the land, failing to mention that the drink offering of the last part of the verse is of wine (obviously from the last fall or earlier grape harvest). O'Beirn's Holy Days are generally a month later than the Jewish calendar.

Let's test O'Beirn's "ripe barley" theory. What happens in the seventh sabbatical year, or the jubilee year, when no barley is sown at all? Do we cancel the Holy Days those years? Obviously not, but there isn't any barley, ripe or not, to examine! What about Deuteronomy 16:13? "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine." Do you mean that you have to postpone the Feast of Tabernacles if all the crops are not harvested? But I broke my plow, we had a late summer, the grapes were late this year! No wonder the Rabbanites teased the Karaites, with the pitifully weak Karaite arguments presented by such as O'Beirn!

(4) The fourth reason given by Solinsky why the barley cannot be the key to calendar determination is that Genesis 8:4, 13-15 show that Noah could determine the first month without ever leaving the ark. No need to observe the barley crop.

(5) Genesis 1:14 shows that the sun and moon, not the barley, determines the holy day seasons.

(6) During the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel didn't have barley crops to examine, yet they knew when Passover was, Numbers 9.

(7) Barley harvest determination leads to conflicts and disputes, whereas (Solinsky's) calculated method with his computer is "more objective."<sup>180</sup>

These objections will be dealt with one at a time. However, it is important to remember that Mr. Nickels lists these objections to having the barley harvest as the determining factor for starting a new year to support of the calculated Jewish calendar while Mr. Solinsky lists

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180 Ibid, p. 5-6



them in support of his theory of calculating start of the year with the first new moon after the vernal equinox. As this author shows in the body of this book, neither has scriptural support. It is also important to realize Mr. Nickels cast serious dispersions on Mr. Solinsky’s scholarship, at least unless it gives credence to Mr. Nickels’ beliefs.

1. Mr. Solinsky’s point that Israel probably could not harvest until the wave shear offering was made is a valid point. Mr. Nickels points out how important consistency is in theological matters. Mr. Solinsky’s insistence that the vernal equinox is a delimiter for starting the year while insisting that the ripening of barley has no bearing on the start of the year is not consistent. If there is no tie between the barley crop and the beginning of the year because the barley could be stored, then there is also no precise relationship between the equinox and the beginning of the year. However, to be consistent, since Mr. Nickels believes that Ex. 22.29 states that there should be no delay in offering the first fruits of barley, then this should be proof that the year must start with the first new moon during which abib barley can ready to be offered according to Mr. Nickels’ hypothesis about the calendar. The calculated Jewish calendar does not do this, thus this point reveals both Mr. Nickels’ and Mr. Solinsky’s inconsistency and error on how to start the year.

2. The fact that barley ripens at different times in Israel is inconsequential. This difference is probably why we were given judgment. History records that the Sanhedrin pronounced when the year began, largely based on the ripeness of the barley crop. Some areas were ready sooner and others later, but the Sanhedrin was supposed to use its judgment to do the correct and Godly thing just as Christians are supposed to use the same kind of judgement today.

3. Mr. Nickels agrees with Mr. Solinsky, as does this author, that scripture does not dictate that barley must be in abib at the start of the first month. Mr. Nickels points out that the barley must be in abib for the wavesheaf offering, yet again seems not to realize to be consistent, for the barley to be in abib for the wavesheaf offering, it must be a determining factor on when abib starts. If the offering is delayed, the barley will be ripe, not in abib. Even Mr. Nickels writes, “The month of green ears of barley is Abib, not the month of dry, uniformly ripe ears!”<sup>181</sup> It is apparent to this author that Mr. Nickels did not realize his attack on Mr. Solinsky’s rejection of abib barley having anything to do with the calendar also weakened his argument in support of the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Nickels relates that a former minister in WCG believed that the ripeness of the barley in Jerusalem was the determining factor for the start of the first month. Mr. Nickels disputes barley being the determining factor in setting the start of the year with this statement. “What happens in the seventh sabbatical year, or the jubilee year, when no barley is sown at all? Do we cancel the Holy Days those years?”<sup>182</sup>

Mr. Nickels apparently did very little farming or harvesting. Although we live in a large city, we grow flowers, herbs, and some vegetables in our postage stamp size yard. Often crops from the last growing season will grow again, even though they have not been planted. Gardeners refer to such plants as volunteers. Even if the Israelites did not plant barley for

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181 Ibid, p. 5

182 Ibid, p. 6

7 years, not just the sabbatical year, there would still be barley growing in the fields. There is barley growing in Palestine where no recorded cultivation has occurred in over five decades.<sup>183</sup> The suggestion that the holy days be canceled because of the sabbatical year of rest is a ludicrous statement showing a complete disregard for logic or consistency by Mr. Nickels. Mr. Nickels attempt at sarcasm will hopefully backfire for any reader of his critique.

4. Genesis records that Noah's ark came to dry ground in the second month, even though there was no barley to determine the month. Again, this is a totally and completely ludicrous argument. Genesis is history written under God's inspiration. There had been no way to keep time for certain for over half a year, yet Noah recorded time as best he could. Obviously Noah didn't use barley, but he certainly didn't use the stars or the moon to keep time either. How did he know it was the second month? Perhaps Noah counted the number of months and determined not to intercalate Adar II. Or perhaps God told Noah it was the second month. Perhaps God revealed to Moses this was the second month when he wrote this history down. An earth wide flood is not a normal occurrence. This author assumes, as Moses probably did, that Noah did the best job to reconcile time that he could under these extraordinary circumstances. This example does demonstrate that barley is not the sole determining factor of when the first month should be, as it was not historically, especially every time there is a worldwide flood. The coming of summer determines when the first month should be and God implies that is tied to a certain ripeness of the barley crop in Israel with the Hebrew words used in scripture. The ripeness of the barley also appears to be an easy way to empirically determine when God has ended winter and started spring.

5. The argument that Genesis 1:14 dictates stars are used to determine when the feast commences is dealt with in the body of this book. Scripture does dictate the sun, moon, and stars are instrumental in determining the timing of the annual feasts. All the heavenly lights were to be used to determine days, years, and assembling times. Scripture states, "Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night."<sup>184</sup> But the sun, moon, stars and rains, all of which are under the control of God, are all instrumental in determining the harvest seasons.

6. During 40 years of wondering the Israelites did not have barley to determine the start of the year. But they did have God in the camp, then outside the camp with them. During these 40 years they had Moses to talk face to face with God and rely God's will. Scripture even informs us that it was not until the people entered the Promised Land, with its harvest seasons, that these rules would go into effect. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest."<sup>185</sup> The Israelites were to bring in a wavesheaf offering from the land that God was to give them once God had given it to them and not before. Mr. Nickels and Mr. Solinsky are suggesting

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183 Karaite Korner Abib FAQ [www.karaite-korner.org/abib\\_faq.shtml](http://www.karaite-korner.org/abib_faq.shtml), p. 3

184 Jer. 31:35 Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:

185 Lev. 23:10

because Israel could not perform this rite because God would not allow them, we should ignore the importance of this rite. That is simply nonsensical.

Even a superficial reading of the book of Deuteronomy reveals that many changes would take place when the people entered the Promised Land. To ignore these facts in an effort to undermine the use of abib barley as one of the major signs that summer had started in the Promised Land, thus a new year had begun, is not good scholarship. During the forty years in the wilderness, Israel also could not celebrate the harvest of ingathering because there was nothing to gather in, but did they celebrate the feast of Booths? We simply have no history for 38 of those 40 years in the wilderness, but we do have God’s written word on what to do now and the history of what has been done for over three millennia.

7. Mr. Nickels brings up Mr. Solinsky’s belief that his method will help to eliminate conflicts because of the various ripen times of the barley in Palestine. Even Mr. Nickels does not agree with this, yet he lists this point in support of the calculated Jewish calendar. Since neither Mr. Nickels nor this author believe this point, we will simply agree it has no validity at all.

Mr. Nickels states, “Yes, the barley harvest is not the sole determining factor for determining the first new moon, nor Passover. And neither is the vernal equinox, nor Solinsky’s computer program.”<sup>186</sup> This author agrees with Mr. Nickels statement. But the barley harvest is still the most visible sign that summer has come to the Promised Land, which is the determining fact on when the year starts, a fact the calculated Jewish calendar ignores.

## Conclusion

The first month starts when summer starts, unless there is something like a worldwide flood. That usually coincides with the first barley being ripe in Palestine. But just because one patch might be ready while the majority of Palestine is still cold and damp does not mean the new year has begun. That is why the Sanhedrin used a number of factors to determine if the month of Adar II should be intercalated or not, as is shown in the body of this book. One of God’s purposes for putting us on this earth was to learn to exercise judgment rather than depend upon Talmud’s as a third of the angelic realm apparently did when they became demon’s under Satan.

Mr. Nickels writes, “Herbert Solinsky and Rob Anderson’s paper, *The Calendar God Gave to Moses*, is a poor job of fake scholarship. It has deceived some who are set to form their own independent church groups.”<sup>187</sup> This author disagrees with Mr. Nickels and believes this description comes closer to describing Mr. Nickels research. Some of Mr. Solinsky’s writings are overly technical and unclear. His logic and conclusions are sometimes quite convoluted. His belief that the new year must start after the vernal equinox, and unscriptural and erroneous ideas have clouded his judgment and research. But at least Mr. Solinsky was willing to examine the problems with the calculated Jewish calendar. However, Mr. Solinsky’s dogmatic approach, which totally ignored the meaning of *mow’ed*, the appointed seasons, as a time of congregating in favor of substituting one mathematical formula for another to

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<sup>186</sup> Nickels *review of the Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 7

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p. 7

determine the start of the year is in error. This is the same approach used by Frank Nelte. It is a shame that these two men do not allow their theological writings to reflect the love and grace of God they apparently reflect in person. Righteousness is important. However, God is the most righteous being and what He reflects is love and grace.

Mr. Nickels shows why he is unwilling to examine the short-comings of the current calculated Jewish calendar when he writes, “Remember what Zvi Ankori said in his book on the Karaites: (1) Karaites are themselves unsure of their position, and (2) Calendar differences are a crucial element in the sect-forming processes, a reason for separation from another institution or group. These two character weaknesses are very much evident in ‘modern Karaites.’”<sup>188</sup> Zvi Ankori wrote about the Karaites 50 years ago and a lot has changed since then, as a visit to <http://www.Karaite-Korner.org> will show.

Mr. Nickels believes that because those who are against the calculated Jewish calendar are not completely unified in what should replace it, then they must not be taken seriously. Even more importantly, he believes that the issue of the calendar is being used to create a following. Unfortunately this is probably true, but the fault lies with leaders who accept the Pharisaical rules of the calculated Jewish calendar so unquestioningly. Leaders like Mr. Nickels, who condemn others without evening grasping the basics of astronomy or theology that surround the calculated Jewish calendar. Ignoring the questions and faults built into the calculated Jewish calendar has left this problem to fester. Scholarship that equates basic farming techniques used to determine when sow with sorcery shows how far church of God scholarship will go to cast dispersions on those who do not believe in the calculated Jewish calendar. The calculated Jewish calendar is a problem that will not go away until real scholarship is used to explain its apparent shortcomings, as Mr. Nickels critique clearly did not.

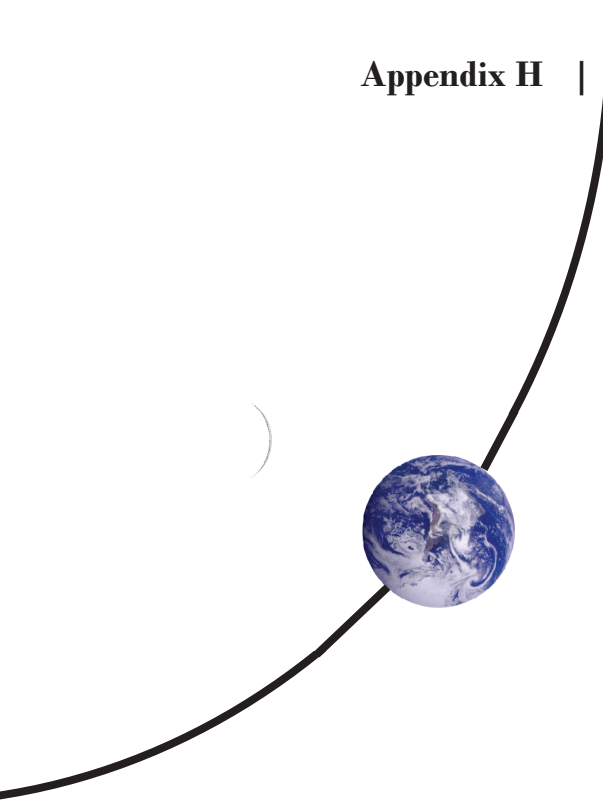
Mr. Nickels is dead. However, if his followers wish to continue to try to present the calculated Jewish calendar as the “sacred calendar of God,” they should re-examine some the basic material on the calculated Jewish calendar so they at least understands what the molad is, learn not place the moon 180 degrees out of its orbital path for definitions, and understand what seasons (*mow'ed*) mean in scripture. They need to quote Maimonides in context instead of pulling quotes out of context to support their erroneous hypothesis, especially when Maimonides' main thesis is clearly in opposition to Mr. Nickels' beliefs that the calculated Jewish calendar is the “sacred calendar” handed down from God to Moses to the priesthood in an unbroken chain, even if every other law of God got lost over time. If Mr. Nickels followers present the same kind of scholarship he presented, then this author will echo Mr. Nickels critique that such papers are, “a poor job of fake scholarship.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Nickels *review of the Calendar God gave Moses*, p. 7

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

## Bill Dankenbring's Strong Support of the Calculated Jewish calendar



As late as the fall of 1999, Bill Dankenbring still strongly supported the calculated Jewish calendar, even though he acknowledged that it was not practiced during the second temple period. He even listed what he believed was conclusive proof that it was not practiced, yet continued to preach that we must follow the Jewish authorities' leadership in setting the calendar. However, in the fall of 1999 Mr. Dankenbring examination of the new moon celebration revealed what Mr. Dankenbring has a tendency to call yet "another astounding new truth." Mr. Dankenbring wrote to his followers, "We read an astounding thing in the book of Colossians, which thousands of God's people have overlooked, ignored, and misunderstood. In their attempt to

refute the gainsaying and heresy of those who try to do way with God's laws and holy days, they have stumbled and overlooked a vital TRUTH!"<sup>1</sup> Colossians 2:16 states, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*."<sup>2</sup>

Of course many Christians, including this author, have told the story over past decades of asking a minister in the WorldWide Church of God why we don't celebrate the new moons, only to rebuffed with an answer along the lines, "Well, if you want to celebrate it, go ahead, but I chose to follow the church's teachings."<sup>3</sup> The Rudd family has been celebrating the new moons since 1996. Even the late Richard Nickels and John Ritenbaugh have endorsed the idea of observing the new moons.<sup>4</sup> So this is by no means a new idea. However, it is always encouraging to see people, especially those who sit in the role of teacher, be willing to change and follow the word of God.

However, Mr. Dankenbring wanted to make absolutely certain that everyone knew they were supposed to follow the "sacred calendar" since the early 1980's and used all of his power to dissuade his followers from even asking questions about the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Dankenbring wrote,

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1 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at the NEW MOON! Prophecy Flash!*, Vol. 13, No. 3, June-July 1999, p. 65

2 Col. 2:16

3 This is the answer I got almost a quarter of century ago when I was just a lad of 16 asking an honest question of Eugene Noel, the minister in Youngstown, Ohio. This is the same answer I got in the mid-nineties from David Register in Boston, Mass.

4 Nickels, Richard, *giveshare.org, New Moon*,

Ritenbaugh, John, <http://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Library.sr/CT/PERSONAL/k/613/New-Moons.htm>



The apostle Paul writes, ‘God is NOT the author of confusion, but of peace, as in ALL the churches of the saints.’ (1Cor. 14:32) Notice! Paul tells us it is God who is *not* the author or source of all the current confusion different groups have over the sacred calendar, some attempting to create their own ‘calendars,’ others trying to observe ‘new moons’ locally, or according to their own standards! God is, on the other hand, the author of or source of ‘PEACE’, as in all the churches of the saints.’ The early Church was united. *They all followed the officially established Jewish calendar.* Each local church did not do its own ‘sightings’ and declare its own (different) ‘new moons,’ and ‘holy days,” The word for ‘peace’ in this verse is *eirene*, from a primitive verb meaning ‘to join.’ This word means ‘peace, prosperity, one, quietness, rest, set at one again.’ Notice! It connotes UNITY, rest from strife and confusion, everyone doing “his own thing.”<sup>5</sup>

This sounds like an indictment against anyone who did not follow the sacred calendar. Notice the stress placed on uniformity above all. Of course Mr. Dankenbring uses one of the three classic control verses of the church of God when he quotes 1 Cor. 14:33, the other two being 1 Sam. 15:23 and the story of Korah in Numbers 16.<sup>6</sup> The general pattern followed by the churches of God is that any new doctrine introduced by the leader of the church is an astounding truth delivered by God, but any doctrine that challenges the traditions of the church not presented by the leader disturbs the unity and peace of the church, therefore it cannot be of God.

It is incumbent upon teachers to admit their past errors rather than gloss over them or even worse, deny that the error was taught. Refusal to even think about admitting a past mistake shows Herbert Armstrong’s influence is still extant in the churches of God, but hopefully it will fade away soon. His pattern was to deny that 1975 was taught as the time when Christ would return, but an honest evaluation of his writings leaves no doubt he taught that the church of God would be in a place of safety in 1972, with Christ returning in 1975. When 1975 came and went, he denied that he had ever taught 1975 would be the date when Jesus returned. Even on theological matters, Herbert Armstrong would not admit error. “Now there is really no one else that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong could blame for the wrong way of counting Pentecost ... it was his own fault. And for 34 years (from 1940 till 1974) he vigorously defended his wrong way of counting. When Ernest Martin finally pointed his error in counting out to him, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong reluctantly and under great pressure eventually changed from a Monday observance to a Sunday observance. From 1927 until 1974 his understanding about how to count for Pentecost had always been wrong. And he disliked intensely having had Ernest Martin point his error out to him; and for the next few years, whenever he spoke about “counting for Pentecost”, this intense dislike came through loud and clear.”<sup>7</sup>

5 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at the NEW MOON! Prophecy Flash!*, Vol. 13, No. 3, p. 77

6 1Sam. 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Num. 16:31-3 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

7 Nelte, Frank, *A Reply to 2 calendar sermons by John Ritenbaugh on Jan. 1 and 8, 2000*, Feb. 2000, From



### Chastisement for those who did not believe in the Calculated Jewish Calendar

This author is going to delve into the historical context of Bill Dankenbring's calendar teachings for the good of others who sit in the role of teacher, who may latter change a doctrinal position. This author still remembers the feast of Tabernacles in Kissimmee, Florida in 1996 when Dave Havir apologized to the audience at this United Church of God site for not standing up to rank heresy quickly enough. This was in contrast to the rest of the paid ministry there who gave sermon after sermon about how they had stood up at just the right time, years after Dave Havir did. Dave's (I played basketball with Dave for two years, so I am going to call him Dave) actions showed me how teachers are supposed to act and what they are supposed to do when they have been wrong. This is a lesson the churches of God need desperately, but one that I fear will have little effect on the current leaders of the churches of God. Pointing out these errors are especially important when it appears that Mr. Dankenbring still does not understand the mechanic of the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Dankenbring apparently still does not understand the molad is not the conjunction, nor did he realize that the noon postponement actually increased the percentage of time that the first crescent moon over Jerusalem will coincide with the declaration of the first of Tishri according to the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Dankenbring's former acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar is clearly discerned in his writings. "David J. Smith is a false teacher who denies the truth about Passover and Pentecost, as well as the authenticity of God's sacred calendar given to the Jews for preservation (see Rom. 3:1-3, Matt. 23:1-3)."<sup>8</sup> Mr. Dankenbring accused David Smith of being a false teacher because he did not accept the calculated Jewish calendar. He accused him of being a wolf and he deplored the fact that God's people would follow anyone who taught bizarre conspiracy theories.

Mr. Dankenbring wrote,

David J. Smith has also rejected the fact that Christ said the scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, and that we must do as they tell us to do and to observe (Matt. 23:1-3). The Jews, and in particular the rabbis, who are the descendants of the scribes and Pharisees, were appointed BY GOD HIMSELF to be the custodians of His Word, His holy 'oracles,' including the preservation of His calendar, which they have preserved these 1966 years since the ascension of Christ (see Rom. 3:1-3)<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring chastises David Smith for trying to

re-invent the calendar based on a few hints in the Jewish encyclopedia and the Bible, and in effect seizes this authority away from the Jews, and takes this prerogative unto himself—seizing authority which God never gave him, or any of the other various groups which go about to establish each their own version of the 'sacred calendar, basing their calendars upon their own interpretations and decisions as to the correct 'new moons,' the correct 'intercalary [leap] years,' and so forth.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting that just a decade ago Mr. Dankenbring preached and taught that no one, including him, had the right to challenge the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar,

the internet, so page numbers may not match, p. 37

8 Dankenbring, William, *Many False Prophets shall arise and Deceive Many: David J. Smith, Conspiracies, the Calendar, and the Place of Safety.*, Prophecy Flash, Vol. 10, No. 3, August, 1996, p. 55

9 Ibid, p. 56

10 Ibid, p. 57

yet now he believes he has the power to defy the authority of those who he believed sat in the seat of Moses. But of course Mr. Dankenbring thinks you can only challenge the authority of those who supposedly sit in the seat of Moses, the current Jewish leadership with the their Talmud, about a doctrine if Mr. Dankenbring also challenges that authority. But if you challenge any doctrine where Mr. Dankenbring agrees with the Jewish authorities, then you are trying to seize authority that God never gave you or any one else.

Mr. Dankenbring defended the supposedly “sacred calendar” using Matthew 23 and Romans 3 and dismissed the questions raised by those who doubt the historical veracity of the calculated Jewish calendar.<sup>11</sup> Dismissing doctrines that we don’t like or that might cause disunity is very much in the church of God tradition, but it is unscriptural and wrong.<sup>12</sup> But Mr. Dankenbring follows the pattern of church of God teachers who don’t want to answer questions about doctrine because it might threaten their authority and might possibly force them to become servants rather than the master in charge.

Mr. Dankenbring’s contention in 1999 was he had done serious research into the calendar years ago. In the summer of 1995 he wrote, “Hillel II created the ‘perpetual calendar,’ which was the same Jewish calendar which had always been used. But instead of using ‘observations’ of the new moon at Jerusalem, to determine the New Moons, since the Jews could not live there any longer, and since there was not a proper Sanhedrin, he invoked the historical precedent of determining the dates of the calendar mathematically, based on astronomical laws.”<sup>13</sup> Mr. Dankenbring embraced this errant hypothesis with all of his ecclesiastical authority when I wrote the first revision of this book that was sent to him in 2001, which he apparently received because I was shortly thereafter removed from all of Mr. Dankenbring’s correspondence.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring’s contention that the mathematical system at the heart of the calculated Jewish calendar was the backup for the observed calendar was inaccurate, as is shown in the body this book. The mathematical rules at the heart of the observed calendar, which were used to confirm the witnesses were not lying about seeing the first visible crescent, are very different from the mathematical calculations used to the time of Hillel II to create a calendar based around rabbinic *halacha* rules and traditions. However, both in 1999 and today Mr. Dankenbring believes in the authority of “the oral law,” except of course when he doesn’t.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring quoted Deut. 17:8-11 and 21:1-5 as justification for the acceptance of oral law.<sup>16</sup>

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11 Ibid, p. 57

12 John 7:51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

13 Dankenbring, William, *The Hebrew Calendar: Inspired Gift? Or Human Perversion?*, Prophecy Flash, Vol. 9, No. 2, June-July, 1995, insert p. 3

14 Dankenbring, William, *The Hebrew Calendar: Inspired Gift? Or Human Perversion?*, Prophecy Flash, Vol. 9, No. 2, June-July, 1995, insert p. 3

15 Dankenbring, William, Tape, New appraisal of “Postponement.”, 12/25/99

16 Deut. 17:8-11 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt

Thus the judicial 'case law' became legal precedent and part of the 'Oral Law.' In this way, the Law of God as given at Sinai was kept relevant and up-to-date for each succeeding generation and even to our modern generation, today."<sup>17</sup>

This is the Jewish prospective on the Mishna and the Talmud. I contend that Jesus did not agree with this prospective nor with the oral law. "For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."<sup>18</sup>

How do the tradition of oral law and Jesus' clear rejection of false tradition reconcile? According to Mr. Dankenbring,

Jesus Christ Himself alluded to the this truth, and the authority of the Jews to preserved the calendar, which is key to understanding and observing the annual Holy Days and Festivals of God. He declared in plain words: 'The scribe and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do.' (Matt. 23:2-3) Anyone who sits in 'Moses' seat' would have authority to interpret and rule on the words and laws that were imparted by God through Moses—including the Law, the Holy Days, and the statutes and judgments God gave Israel through Moses. The scribe and Pharisees of Jesus' time inherited this prerogative—this jurisdiction—not the apostles and elders of the Church! The rabbis of mainstream Judaism today have inherited that mantle and legacy of the ancient Pharisees and scribes. Therefore, in that sense, today they "sit in Moses' seat."<sup>19</sup>

Rather than look at the underlying problem of the calculated Jewish calendar, Mr. Dankenbring looked at the results of following the calculated Jewish calendar. "The Church of god would have rejected the authorities of the scribes and Rabbinic Judaism regarding these matters of the calendar. Now, if the Jews had perverted, twisted, distorted, and corrupted the calendar, that would have been an altogether different matter. If that had been the case, then God would have no doubt used another method to preserve His calendar. But He did not...The Jews have indeed preserved the sacred calendar. Were it not for them, we would

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thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment: And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: =According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.

Deut. 21:1-5 If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

<sup>17</sup> Dankenbring, *Hebrew Calendar*, p. 4

<sup>18</sup> Mark 7:8-9

<sup>19</sup> Dankenbring, *Hebrew Calendar*, p. 6

all be hopelessly lost and in confusion, without a ‘compass’ to guide us.”<sup>20</sup> Mr. Dankenbring continues,

Therefore, we can have utmost confidence that the calendar, with its calculations, and holy days, as preserved by the Jewish authorities and rabbis, which we have today, known as the ‘permanent calendar,’ is the authorized calendar of God—the one which He has provided for His people to use, today!<sup>21</sup>

Even in the fall of 1999, Mr. Dankenbring shows that, although he gives the calculated Jewish calendar his full support, he does not understand how it works. He wrote, “The astronomical ‘New Moon’ is the exact time the moon passes in its orbit in front of the sun, the exact moment being called the ‘molad.’<sup>22</sup> The exact moment that Mr. Dankenbring described is the conjunction, not the molad, which this book had repeatedly stated is the mean average of the conjunction. As with most of the teachers of the churches of God who learned at the feet of Herbert Armstrong, Mr. Dankenbring shows he believes he is qualified to teach that you must follow the current traditions of their church even when they don’t really know what they are talking about because they never studied the issue.

Mr. Dankenbring correctly points out that before Hillel II codified the calculated Jewish calendar, the calendar was determined by visual observation of the first crescent. However, he erroneously states that Hillel II’s calculated calendar, “was based on secret calendar mathematical calculations used for millennia by the priests as a back-up system to certify the visual sightings of the New Moons.”<sup>23</sup> In 1996 Mr. Dankenbring wrote;

Rather than complain about the postponement, which were devised for *our good*, in accordance with the laws and the Word of God, (Deut. 17:8-11; Rom. 3:1-3; Matt. 23:1-3), let us rejoice in them, and in the authority which God gives His people, and let us observe His Holy Days with Understanding and gratitude!<sup>24</sup>

Obviously in 1996 Mr. Dankenbring still accepted the 4 postponements as well as the Gnostic oral law as authoritative. He knew the postponements had been added to the calendar, but the authority of the Jews who supposedly sit in Moses’ seat was more important than some addition that were supposedly for our own good.

### Rejecting Part of One of the Postponements

Thankfully at the end of 1999, Bill Dankenbring seems to have realized that his previous statements and acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar were not correct. He wrote,

Although I had known of these ‘postponements’ for several years, I let the matter rest because I thought there might have been a precedent for them in Bible times I simply did not know, and did not want to reject the postponements unless I knew and could PROVE that they were wrong, and were never followed in bible times.<sup>25</sup>

20 Dankenbring, *Hebrew Calendar*, p. 3-4

21 Ibid, p. 6

22 Dankenbring, William, *Biblical Questions and Answer*, Prophecy Flash, Vol. 13, No. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1999, p. 54

23 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 20

24 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at God’s Sacred Calendar: What’s All the Business about “Postponements”*, Prophecy Flash, Vol. 10, No. 4, Sept.-Oct. 1996, p. 17

25 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at the NEW MOON!* Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 13, No. 3, June-July

Mr. Dankenbring writes that he chose to teach error, and teach it forcefully, to the point of labeling those who did not accept the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar as heretics. He wrote that he believed it was better to brand people as heretics if they disagreed with him and his current doctrine rather than study into the issue. Yet he does not admit this error. Instead he covers it up by writing, "Then, last fall, in studying the matter deeper, I came across passages in the Mishnah which literally 'blew me out of the saddle,' so to speak."<sup>26</sup> After reading this, I wondered if the original copy of the this paper that was sent to Mr. Dankenbring is what enlightened him as to the error of his ways. No matter how he came across the passages in the Mishna that are listed in the previous edition of this book, Mr. Dankenbring should have rectified the damage he caused by labeling people like me as heretics. But as a "teacher" and "servant" in the churches of God, the idea of helping people that he had unjustly vilified never seems to enter his thoughts.

Any encyclopedia that has more than a couple of paragraphs on the history of the Jewish calendar describes Mr. Dankenbring's remarkable new discover in detail. Only when one of Mr. Dankenbring's followers created a calendar that bears no resemblance to the historical calendar of Israel, one that replaces the importance of the weekly Sabbath with the new moon, did Mr. Dankenbring actually study the calendar. It required a trusted aid to begin teaching abject heresy before Mr. Dankenbring would do more than quote his favorite proof texts to support of the calculated Jewish calendar or for that matter, it appears, any doctrine that suggests the Jews don't have authority in doctrinal matters.

Mr. Dankenbring's statement that in the fall of 1999 that he, "came across passages in the Mishnah which literally 'blew me out of the saddle,' so to speak"<sup>27</sup> is also not quite accurate. In the fall of 1996, Bill Dankenbring wrote, "Rabbi Hillel II did institute a few changes in the calendar, when going from an observation calendar to a mathematical one. The major change he inaugurated was the introduction of 'postponements' of the New Year (Rosh Hoshanah) and subsequent holy days Accordingly, when the molad (new moon) of Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri is postponed to the following day... This change or innovation was made, based on the authority given to the Sanhedrin too interpret and rule on technical legal matters for the good of the community during every generation or circumstance. Jesus Christ Himself accepted this authority, so long as it did not contradict Torah or the Word of God (Matt. 23:2-3)."<sup>28</sup> Mr. Dankenbring even quotes the same passages from the Mishna that blew him out of the saddle in 2000, but he writes, "Clearly, the later postponements were not part of the calendar law prior to Hillel II. Does this fact invalidate the 'postponements' for God's people, today? Not at all. This change was duly authorized by the established authorities appointed by God for the duration of the present age."<sup>29</sup> Mr. Dankenbring clearly states that he believes the Jewish leadership dictates the tenants of the mechanics of the Christian religion until the

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1999, p. 57

26 Ibid, p. 59

27 Ibid

28 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at God's Sacred Calendar: What's All the Business about "Postponements"* p. 7

29 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at the NEW MOON!*, p. 66



messiah returns a second time, a premise this author rejects. As late as 1999, Mr. Dankenbring wrote that he knew that Jews had changed the calendar at the same general time and with the same kind of authority the Catholic Church used to change the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday and Mr. Dankenbring blessed these changed base on the authority of those he perceived sat in Moses's seat.

Mr. Dankenbring's excuse for preaching total acceptance of the calculated Jewish calendar to rejecting one of the postponements is that he has learned that God, "reveals new truth a little at a time, so as not to overwhelm us or inundate us or bury us, causing mental paralysis, or chaos and confusion."<sup>30</sup> It is always nice to have a juicy rationalization. This author's rationalization for following the conjunction rather than the first crescent over Jerusalem was his understanding of Ps. 81 and astronomical symmetry, but he was wrong on both counts. However, in the first paper upon which this book was based, this author mentioned that the crescent was a possibility for being the new moon and that is what it appeared to be historically. Mr. Dankenbring's approach in teaching about the calendar was, "The Jews, and in particular the rabbis, who are the descendants of the scribes and Pharisees, were appointed BY GOD HIMSELF to be the custodians of His Word, His holy 'oracles,' including the preservation of His calendar, which they have preserved these 1966 years since the ascension of Christ (see Rom. 3:1-3)"<sup>31</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring now writes about the codification of the calculated Jewish calendar by the Jewish authorities, those who sit in the seat of Moses according to Mr. Dankenbring, that they, "devised and added NEW calendar rules never heard of in the time of the second Temple, or in Christ' day—they added several new laws called 'postponements.'"<sup>32</sup> After asking if this change was justified, Mr. Dankenbring writes, "Some would say, 'Yes, because the Jews sit in Moses' seat.'"<sup>33</sup> For years, Mr. Dankenbring wrote that the calculated Jewish calendar was justified because the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat. He attacked those who disagreed with postponements because he believed and taught we must follow these changes because the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. However, in the year 2000 Mr. Dankenbring changed his opinion when wrote about those who would reject the calculated Jewish calendar, except for postponement one, "Daniel warns us about those who would 'seek to *change times and laws*.'"<sup>34</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring wrote,

Some say we should follow the modern Orthodox Jews in error and ignorance, simply because to do otherwise would be to 'add' to the chaos and confusion over

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30 Ibid

31 Dankenbring, William, *The Great Controversy, Sadducees vs. Pharisees!*, Prophecy Flash! Volume 9, No. 2, June-July 1995

Matt. 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

32 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 48

33 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 48

34 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 48



the calendar. Some say that since the 'oracles' were committed to the 'Jews' (Rom. 3:2-4), we should accept the standard Jewish calendar, even with its postponements, additions, and changes... It is true that apostle Paul stated that to the Jews were committed the 'oracles' of God. But wait a minute. Just who are the 'Jews'? And which Jews was Paul talking about? He did not say 'Pharisees,' or their successors.<sup>35</sup>

However, just 5 years before this Mr. Dankenbring was preaching the same kind of fire and brimstone that Christians HAD TO follow the calculated Jewish calendar. He quoted Matt. 23 as proof it was the Pharisees and their successors that sat in Moses' seat and had that authority.<sup>36</sup> Mr. Dankenbring actually castigated the Sadducees by quoting Matt. 22:29 when Jesus said of them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."<sup>37</sup> Mr. Dankenbring's sympathies still lay with the Pharisees and the oral law, of which he wrote, "Jesus said in approbation of their teaching concerning the Law: 'The scribes and *Pharisees* are occupying Moses' seat: therefore *do and observe whatever they tell you*, but do not behave as they do' (Matt. 23:1-2)."<sup>38</sup> This sounds like a ringing endorsement of the authority of the Pharisees, although Jesus rebuked them for their sins and hypocrisy and attitudes.<sup>39</sup> Until very recently Mr. Dankenbring was one of those who taught we had to follow the Pharisees in everything. If Mr. Dankenbring had written that he used to believe and teach these changes in the calculated Jewish calendar were justified because the Pharisees sat in Moses seat, but he was mistaken, than this author would be more welcoming of Mr. Dankenbring' conversion. That would be the honest approach. However, Mr. Dankenbring still believes and teaches the Pharisees are true teachers that we should follow because that is his tradition and doctrinal distinctive. Except of course when Mr. Dankenbring determines Christians should follow those whom Mr. Dankenbring teaches sit in Moses's seat for other theological issues.

Although Mr. Dankenbring does not admit his past error, it is admirable that he was willing to change what he taught about at least one portion of the first postponement when he believed it was wrong. Mr. Dankenbring explored the reasons for postponements and came to the conclusion that the postponements were made a part of the calculated Jewish calendar "due to Jewish Sabbath *halacha*—the stringent and onerous Jewish Sabbath rules."<sup>40</sup> This is partially right. The other reason for the codification of postponements was to facilitate Jewish ritual, most specifically the ritual of the Lulav ceremony. Although Mr. Dankenbring lists the reason for the Sunday postponement in postponement 1 is sabbath *halacha*, what is truly important is that the Rabbis ruled the Jews could not ceremonially wave the willow on the seventh day of Tabernacles if it was the weekly sabbath because it would be work. The lulav ceremony took precedence over scripture, so the appointed time was postponed for this

35 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 48

36 Dankenbring, William, *Many False Prophets shall arise and Deceive Many: David J. Smith, Conspiracies, the Calendar, and the Place of Safety*

37 Matt. 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

38 Dankenbring, William, *The Great Controversy, Sadducees vs. Pharisees!*, Prophecy Flash! Volume 9, No. 2, June-July 1995

39 The entirety of Matthew 23 is a scathing attack to teach Christians not to follow the Pharisaic way.

40 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, Prophecy Flash!, Vol. 14, No. 2, May-June 2000, p. 48

ceremony. However it appears Mr. Dankenbring did not mention this because he most likely supports the Lulav ceremony and its ordinances, a practice that might be questioned if his followers realized it was tied to the rules of postponement in the calculated Jewish calendar.

Mr. Dankenbring writes, “Jesus Christ plainly gave His apostles the power and authority to make halachic decisions whenever necessary, upon this earth...But again, this authority must be used in accordance with and agreement with the LAW and Scriptures of God according to the TRUTH!”<sup>41</sup> This author concurs. However, Mr. Dankenbring goes on to write, “The so-called ‘calendar experts’—and there are many of the them—have fallen victim to Satan’s seduction and suggestions that appeal to human vanity.”<sup>42</sup> This is totally uncalled for and shows that same kind of hateful disdain that Frank Nelte wrote that Herbert Armstrong held about the change from a Monday to a Sunday Pentecost. It also shows that Mr. Dankenbring continues of the churches of God tradition that followers of a teacher are wrong to question anything “the elders” have decreed.

So in the year 2000 Mr. Dankenbring wrote it is perfectly okay and even a Christian duty to reject the first postponement in the calculated Jewish calendar because Mr. Dankenbring rejects that postponement, but if you question anything else about the calculated Jewish calendar than what Mr. Dankenbring believes you are the equivalent of a servant of Satan. And the result of rejecting just the first postponement meant that Mr. Dankenbring was advocating the first of Tishri always occur on the molad, thus fixing the definition of the astronomical new moon as a mathematical average of the conjunction. This author does find some comfort that certain things never change about teachers in the churches of God even if this author would prefer to be uncomfortable. This is the same kind of hateful disdain Mr. Dankenbring showed towards David J. Smith’s, who this author agrees is a dangerous and heretical teacher, teachings against the calculated Jewish calendar.

For a couple of decades Mr. Dankenbring taught the calculated Jewish calendar was sacred, was an oracle of God. He wrote the calculated Jewish calendar was a gift that God, “has provided for His people to use, today!”<sup>43</sup> He derided any who would question the authority of the Pharisees or those who did not accept oral law as authoritative. He now finds one area of disagreement with oral law, but condemned those who find more than one area of disagreement, even though his previous studies were not thorough enough to show him the obvious error of the calculated Jewish calendar. This is disingenuous and demonstrates a drastic shortsightedness.

A decade ago, Mr. Dankenbring wrote,

Hillel II did not invent a ‘new calendar in 358 A.D. Rather, because of onerous Roman persecution against the Jews, in order to preserve the calendar and Jewish unity amongst the Diaspora, Hillel II and the rabbinical council agreed to make the

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41 Ibid, p. 49,

Matt. 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

42 Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?* p. 49

43 Dankenbring, *Hebrew Calendar*, p. 6

age-old calendar calculations, used to verify the visual sightings of the new moons each month, which had come down from the time of Aaron and Moses, public information, so that the sacred calendar would never be lost, even during the galut, or time of the Jewish dispersion and banishment from the land of Israel."<sup>44</sup>

Historic Jewish sources including the Mishna, the Talmud and Maimonides dissertation on the sanctification of the new moon disagree with this rabbinic fairy tale of God giving some special, extra scriptural knowledge to Moses and Aaron. It is a shame Mr. Dankenbring believed and forcefully taught in this Gnostic concept. He still teaches this concept, except when it comes to the calculated Jewish calendar. The second temple calendar was based upon the winter turning into spring and the observation of the first crescent moon. The Sadducees, the descendents of Moses and Aaron, even agreed there was no oral law given Moses and Aaron. Who are we supposed to believe, the people who supposedly have the secret of the oral law when they claim they don't have it or the Pharisees who claim the Sadducees actually did have it? There is only one logical answer to that question and Mr. Dankenbring does not give it. The history of Israel, as recorded in scripture, shows they lost all knowledge of the law periodically, so the contention that God gave any kind of calendar to Moses who supposedly secretly handed it down is erroneous.

Mr. Dankenbring lists instances of tandem sabbaths from the Talmud, something that the calculated Jewish calendar does not allow. He writes,

Clearly, then, the changes wrought in the calendar in the days of Hillel II concerning the postponement of "Dechiah a" were an innovation not supported by Scripture, nor were they observed in Temple or Biblical times. There constituted a DEPARTURE FROM THE LAW of Almighty God! They were unholy, unwarranted, and sacrilegious! Because of them, millions have been keeping God's annual holy Days on the wrong day, for centuries, and even down to this present time!"<sup>45</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring objected to postponement one, as well he should. However, he seemed to endorse the other three postponements without realizing they are just as contrived as the postponement to prevent tandem sabbaths. However, Mr. Dankenbring's quotation of Is. 1:13-4 and Amos 5:21 as proof that God hates postponements is not correct.<sup>46</sup> As shown in the body of this book, God hated the fact that Israel was keeping his appointed times while at the same time showing how much they despised God's way of life. These verses are about how the hearts of the Israelites was far from God and had nothing to do with the issue of the timing of these appointed congregations. These verses almost certainly mean Israel was keeping the appointed times, but with the a wrong heart, at the right time during the days of Isaiah and Hosea.

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44 Dankenbring, *Postponements*, p. 50

45 Ibid, p. 53

46 Amos 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Isa. 1:14-7 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Mr. Dankenbring had apparently also embraced the idea of accepting the current nineteen-year cycle of intercalation. There are valid reasons for doing so, just as there are reasons to reject it, as are shown in the body of this book. Because some question the way intercalation is done, as this author does, Mr. Dankenbring writes they, “want to throw out the entire calendar, which has been preserved, and start all over, with their own ideas combined with various historical theories and assumptions. In essence, they want to throw out the baby with the bath water, and start all over!”<sup>47</sup> Mr. Dankenbring obviously did not realize how illogical and inconsistent this statement was. He had decided that he will not accept postponement one, which prevents as many tandem sabbaths as possible and to make certain the seventh day of the feast of Tabernacles did not fall on a weekly Sabbath. Again, this had the effect of designating the molad as the new moon. He did not seem to realize the entire premise of the calculated Jewish calendar is to prevent tandem Sabbaths and then attempt to repair the damage these actions caused to the calendar. As Mr. Dankenbring pointed out, the calculated Jewish calendar even prevents the ninth of Av from occurring tandem to a weekly sabbath.<sup>48</sup> Mr. Dankenbring reasoned that there is no doubt the other postponements are valid because the Jews have the authority of preserving the oracle of the calendar. However, less than a year before he wrote that, he believed this authority mandated keeping all four postponements and he never expresses any regret for castigating those who he erroneously defamed.<sup>49</sup> This lack of logic and consistency and humility is simply staggering to the author. Mr. Dankenbring’s artificial boundary around the oral law that states you have to follow all of the oral law unless Mr. Dankenbring teaches you don’t have to creates a new Talmud based upon the authority of Bill Dankenbring.

Mr. Dankenbring asks, “Do you see the difference between rejecting the Jewish calendar completely, and simply rejecting the invalid, man-made ‘postponements.’”<sup>50</sup> This author does and suggested to Mr. Dankenbring that he should continue his study of the calculated Jewish calendar when I sent him the first copy of this book in 2001 because it took Mr. Dankenbring decades to realize that the prevention of tandem sabbaths were a “pollution.”<sup>51</sup> This author felt it was entirely possible in another couple of decades of occasional study Mr. Dankenbring might find other portions of the oral law about the calendar are also a pollution of God’s law It only took five years and a close associate who both went off the tracks and took advantage of Mr. Dankenbring’s lack of knowledge of the calculated Jewish calendar to get Mr. Dankenbring to actually study the issue in detail.

Mr. Dankenbring should have realized that when he rejected only the first postponement in the calculated Jewish calendar, he was still accepting a mathematical definition of the new moon rather than the astronomical new moon, which was historically the first visible crescent over Jerusalem. Mr. Dankenbring’s solution of accepting the parts of the oral law he likes and rejecting the ones he does not in relationship to the calendar shifted the proclamation of the

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47 Dankenbring, *Postponements*, p. 54

48 Ibid, p. 57

49 Dankenbring, William, *A New Look at the NEW MOON! Prophecy Flash!*, Vol. 13, No. 3, June-July 1999, p. 65

50 Dankenbring, *Postponements*, p. 58

51 Dankenbring, *Postponements*, p. 58

new moon to be even further away from the historically accepted new moon, which were a pollution. Mr. Dankenbring's solution gave even more power to the Pharisees who he still sees supposedly sitting in the seat of Moses and even less credence to Exodus 12:2.

The Rudd family may continue to follow the current cycle of intercalation of the calculated Jewish calendar because that is when the majority of God's people congregate. However, the current metonic cycle is incorrect because it has the wrong basis, but there is much more gray area in the matter of intercalation than in the practice of postponements. The definition of the word *mow'ed* means the right time to congregate and part of that right time is when people are actually congregating.

Mr. Dankenbring seemed to contend that the Christian church has the right to determine *halacha*. However, he seemed to contend that it can only do so when he deems that Jewish practices are not following scripture. This author contends the calendar used to observe the annual feasts is a matter that Christians should work on together. This author even speculated in 2001 that, "Mr. Dankenbring will find that all four rules of postponement defy talmudic practice and there is no doubt that postponement b, that noon time postponement, is just as unbiblical and wrong as the postponement a."<sup>52</sup>

### **Now Rejects the calculated Jewish calendar Entirely**

The Pharisees believed their injunctions against certain activities on the weekly sabbath were more important than keeping God's appointed times as God wanted them observed. Mr. Dankenbring agreed that was true, at least with postponement one which prevents tandem sabbaths in the year 2001. This author had hoped that Mr. Dankenbring would realize that a Sivan 6 Pentecost was also developed as a way to avoid tandem sabbaths, also by the Pharisees, also during the same time frame they developed the calculated Jewish calendar. But given that a Sivan 6 Pentecost is such a doctrinal distinctive for Mr. Dankenbring, this author does not believe this change is likely. Mr. Dankenbring has continued to brush aside questions about Pentecost by using Romans 3:1-3 and the first three verses of Matthew 23, just as he did in actively advocating for the authority of the calculated Jewish calendar just a few years ago. Mr. Dankenbring now points out the "Karaites Jews, who were descended from the Sadducees, themselves rejected the calendar innovations created by Hillel II and his followers."<sup>53</sup> These Karaites also reject the Pharisaical interpretation of Pentecost being on Sivan 6. One of the questions this author has for Mr. Dankenbring about Pentecost is, "Are you still chained to Jewish tradition? Or will you follow God's truth?"<sup>54</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring, just five years after writing that he strongly supported of rules 2,3 and 4 of the calculated Jewish calendar and after writing the that anyone who did not support these rules was actually supporting Satan wrote a book every similar to the first edition of this book. In it Mr. Dankenbring writes,

Again, some people misunderstand Jesus' words in Matthew 23, and misapply them, to their own destruction and spiritual hurt. They seem to think we must

<sup>52</sup>Rudd, James, *The calculated Jewish calendar*, June, 2001

<sup>53</sup> Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, p. 41

<sup>54</sup> Dankenbring, William, *What is the true biblical calendar?*, p. 41



blindly accept and follow the Pharisees, *right or wrong!* This, however, is a total perversion of understanding the principles of Church Authority! I know a minister who used to say, ‘Follow Herbert Armstrong, right or wrong!’ He later said, essentially, ‘Follow Joseph Tkach, right or wrong!’ How did he come to that conclusion? Because, in his mind, they were “God’s representatives.” That is to say, in effect, he taught that they sat on Moses’ seat – and therefore had to be obeyed, regardless of whether the religion,” where they fear their minister, and to ask questions, and DARE NOT ever disagree with a minister of their Church – lest they would be thrown out!<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring then writes a couple of dozen pages on why we need to accept Jewish authority, but that the Jewish authority we ought to accept on the calendar is from the Karaite Jews.<sup>56</sup>

Welcome to the battle, Mr. Dankenbring. It took a lot of courage to admit that at least one of the postponements was wrong in 1999. However, assailing Christians who know that all 4 postponements were tied together and needed to be accepted or rejected as a package as serving Satan when you took that same position just 5 years later should have taught you to stop calling people the servant of Satan just because you disagree with them. Unfortunately it looks like this lesson has not been learned. Especially in areas that Mr. Dankenbring has not studied, but still authoritatively preaches about.

However, Mr. Dankenbring’s rejection of the pharisaical calculated Jewish calendar leaves opens many questions. Past and current errors are no reason to continue in darkness. Mr. Dankenbring teaches that the Karaites have the authority to set the calendar, but he rejects their authority on the date of Pentecost. Why? It appears that Mr. Dankenbring is still teaching the Jews sit in the seat of Moses, but it is the Karaites for the calendar and the rabbinites for the date of Pentecost. Apparently Mr. Dankenbring gets to pick and chose, thus for all practical purposes Mr. Dankenbring is sitting in the seat of Moses.

It appears obvious that the setting of Pentecost on Sivan 6 by the Pharisees was done to prevent having scriptural support for the idea of tandem Sabbaths, so much so that the rabbinites have a special translation of the word Sabbath, which means the seventh day Sabbath in every other verse in which it is used, but in Lev. 23:15-6 it supposedly means the annual feast day. Hopefully the study of Pentecost under Karaite tutelage will also bring about a change in Mr. Dankenbring’s teaching on the date of Pentecost as it did with partial and then a complete rejection of the calculated Jewish calendar. Mr. Dankenbring writes words that this author hopes Mr. Dankenbring will take to heart. “What about you? Are you willing to repent and change—even if it takes a little effort and study, and persistence, and willingness to STAND UP, and not follow all the other fish downstream? Are you willing to fight your way upstream, against the current of the majority? Are you really willing to REPENT of error?”<sup>57</sup> Good advice for every Christian, but especially for a teacher who emphasizes prophecy.

55 Dankenbring, William, *A NEW LOOK AT GOD’S TRUE CALENDAR*, Triumph Prophetic Ministries PO Box 842, Omak, WA 98841 pp. 71-2, can be downloaded from [http://www.triumphpro/calendar-god\\_true-calendar-new-expanded-book.pdf](http://www.triumphpro/calendar-god_true-calendar-new-expanded-book.pdf)

56 Dankenbring, William *A NEW LOOK AT GOD’S TRUE CALENDAR*. PP. 42-60

57 Ibid, p. 59



This author thought this appendix was finished until he visited Mr. Dankenbring's web site.<sup>58</sup> On the site, Mr. Dankenbring has an article entitled *Blood Red Lunar Eclipses and Solar Eclipses on God's Holy Days in 2014-2015 – What Does It all Mean?*<sup>59</sup> Mr. Dankenbring starts this article by writing, "Astonishing as it seems, four lunar eclipses will occur on God's annual Holy Days during Passover and Sukkot in the years 2014 and 2015, and two solar eclipses on Nisan 1 and the Feast of Trumpets! These are exceedingly rare occurrences, especially when they dovetail with God's Holy Days! What does it all mean? What is the prophetic significance? It's time to wake up and take heed of these ominous, fateful warnings from heaven."<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately Mr. Dankenbring did not begin to study the calculated Jewish until the about the year 2000 or he would realize this is not all that uncommon. James Russell, who I believe is teaching the gospel of the calendar rather than the gospel of Jesus, wrote in 1997, "WE DO NOT have 15 or 20 more years left before the tribulation. The end of this age is now very near"<sup>61</sup> What was one of Mr. Russell's points that Jesus would return before 2011? "POINT TO PONDER! Why was there an eclipse on the first day of the feast of Tabernacles in 1996 (Sept. 27 evening before) and two more will occur in 1997, one on the First day of Unleavened Bread March 23, 1997 and on the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles Sept. 16, 1997. IS GOD TELLING US SOMETHING??"<sup>62</sup> (*ed. note-All formatting done by the original author*).

This author refuted Mr. Russell's claims of astronomical support in the first edition of this book published in 2001 by writing, "It has been estimated that the maximum possible number of eclipse per year is 7 (five solar and two lunar, or four solar and three lunar), and the minimum possible is two, (both lunar)."<sup>63</sup> Thus having two lunar eclipses near the annual sabbaths is not only possible, but this pattern will be repeated every 18 years and 11 1/2 days.<sup>64</sup> Thus the signs and wonders extolled by the church of God in Truth were not really truthfully presented in 1995. Although this author attended MIT, it does not take a rocket scientist to realize that if you add 18 years to 1997 you come to 2015. This author makes no claim to being a prophet, but I "prophesied" that Mr. Russell's supposed sign would return in 2015. Yet Mr. Dankenbring writes, "These are exceedingly rare occurrences, especially when they dovetail with God's Holy Days."<sup>65</sup> Mr. Dankenbring is simply mistaken and show a lack of any real astronomical knowledge. These events are not rare. They happen in a repeatable pattern every 18 years.

Mr. Dankenbring quotes an article from World Daily Net that states, "tetrads occur at least six times, but what's interesting is that the only string of four consecutive blood moons that

58 <http://triumppro.com>

59 This article can be found at <http://www.triumphpro.com/blood-red-lunar-eclipses-and-solar-eclipses.htm>

60 Dankenbring, William, *Blood Red Lunar Eclipses and Solar Eclipses on God's Holy Days in 2014-2015 – What Does It all Mean?* From <http://www.triumphpro.com/blood-red-lunar-eclipses-and-solar-eclipses.htm>

61 Russell, James, *Prove All Things*, Vol. 4 ,issue 2, Feb. 97, p. 1

62 Russell, *Prove All Things, Faint Crescent: New Moon or Pagan Symbol*, p. 5

63 *Ibid*, p. 28

64 *Ibid*, p. 28

65 Dankenbring, William, *Blood Red Lunar Eclipses and Solar Eclipses on God's Holy Days in 2014-2015 – What Does It all Mean?* From <http://www.triumphpro.com/blood-red-lunar-eclipses-and-solar-eclipses.htm>

coincide with God's holy days of Passover in the spring and the autumn's Feast of Tabernacles (also called Succoth) occurs between 2014 and 2015 on today's Gregorian calendar."<sup>66</sup> In this article, Mr J. R. Church is quoted as saying, "There are no more of these for the rest of the century."<sup>67</sup> But he is also quoted as saying, "We don't know that will be the concluding year of the tribulation period ... so we're not setting a date and saying this is a warning. We're introducing the possibility of a watch."<sup>68</sup>

This author understands how people are enthralled by prophecy, but he has seen the result of Mr. Russell's predictions and was not thrilled by their fruit. In the past Mr. Dankenbring has asked if certain comets could also be the sign that Jesus would return within the next 7 years. Unfortunately many of these signs did not mean what Mr. Dankenbring thought they meant. For those that excuse Mr. Dankenbring speculation as just that, Mr. Dankenbring also speculated, "What will happen in the year 2004? By all indications, that may be the time of the final flight of God's people to a place of safety in the wilderness, where they will be trained and endure 3 1/2 years or 1260 days"<sup>69</sup> Before this Mr. Dankenbring had written that Jesus would return by 1998. "Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is coming -- most likely, according to all to history and chronological {sic} evidence -- within the NEXT EIGHT YEARS!"<sup>70</sup>

Mr. Dankenbring has long used prophecy as the point of the spear for his ministry. He has missed the mark so many times, especially when he looks to the skies to fuel his belief that Jesus would return in: 1998; 2004; 2008; 2012 and now 2015. Who knows, some day Mr. Dankenbring might be correct, but like the boy who has cried wolf too many times, will it matter?

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<sup>66</sup> Kovacs, Joe, *Blood moon eclipses: 2nd Coming in 2015?* Minister uses NASA forecasting to study signals of Jesus' return from <http://www.wnd.com/?pageId=63076>

<sup>67</sup> "There are no more of these for the rest of the century."

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Dankenbring WF. *The '70 Years' Prophecy & the New World Order*. Prophecy Flash; 14(5):5, Nov-Dec 2000).

<sup>70</sup> Dankenbring WF. *What Can We Do To Help Spread the Gospel?* Prophecy Flash; 4(1):13, March 1990.

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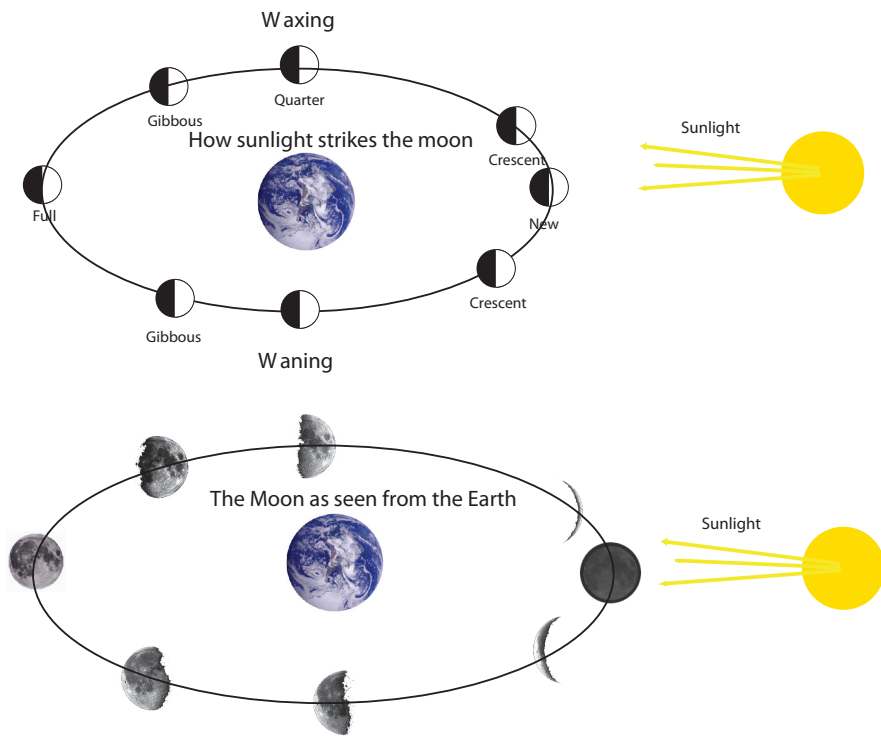
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αΩ

The search for Righteousness  
allows for lots of grey area,  
but not for fear of the unknown

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## The Calculated Jewish Calendar

The Catholic Church codified their changing of the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday at the Council of Nicea in 325 although this change had been spreading across Christendom for over two centuries. The Catholic Church began to rigidly enforce this edict in 364 with Papal authority after the Council of Laodicia. At the same general time for the same general reasons using the same kind of authority, Hillel II released his codification of the calculated Jewish calendar. Like the change in the Sabbath instituted by the Catholic Church, the changes made to the observed calendar used by Jesus began to be made centuries before, starting in 90 CE at Jamnia, and took more than two centuries to come to fruition. The calendar that Hillel II released was based around rules that postponed God's feast days to ensure that tandem Sabbaths and having the Lulav ceremony from occurring on the weekly Sabbath. These changes were to prevent interference with Jewish Sabbath traditions, known as *halacha*. *The calculated Jewish calendar* is designed to make this history readily available to the reader, while also providing basics in astronomy so that Christians can more fully celebrate all of the feasts of God listed in Leviticus 23. It also asks the question, if the Pope doesn't have the authority to change the day of the first of God's feasts listed in Leviticus 23, the weekly Sabbath, do the Jews have the right to change the days of the other feasts?

## Keepers of the Way

The Keepers of the Way was founded to try to follow in the footsteps of the Bereans, who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 11:26 states, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Before that Christians were known as either Nazarenes or those who "kept the way of God" or "walked in the way." Paul wrote that knowledge misapplied will puff up an individual (1 Cor. 8:1), but scripture is replete with the admonitions that God's people must have knowledge of Him so they can walk closer too and have a better relationship with their maker. In Hosea 4:6 God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." It is only by knowledge that we know, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) A personal relationship with God is the object of Christianity, but knowledge is a tool to help us love God and love man. The goal of Keepers of the Way is to help help bring insight into that knowledge while our sister web site, Walking in the Way, is designed to help Christians live in the way of righteousness.

