

GOD'S CALENDAR

A BIBLICAL ANSWER TO THIS DILEMNA

by
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How do we know which calendar is God's calendar? We might reason we can simply turn to the scriptures, to determine how to calculate the calendar. However, to our surprise, we soon discover the detailed answers are not there. Not only aren't the answers there, but the more we explore the issues of the calendar, the more complex the subject becomes. Many have approached God's word to determine if a calendar system can be found in the Scriptures. As a result, there are many conflicting views on what God's calendar system is. These confusing systems and opinions are hardly a basis for faith. Now then, if we change the questions and instead of looking for a calendar system and we ask the question: "How does God address the calendar within the Scriptures?" As we will understand, this is the right approach to any doctrinal question. Because too many people approach the calendar issue with emotion and insufficient facts, they lose sight of the actual truth. We must be objective and stick with the facts of Scripture, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Moreover, we must understand the true facts of history. Here is an outline of the calendar issues we will examine:

- 1) GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN GIVEN AN UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE CALENDAR
- 2) THERE ARE MANY ASPECTS OF THE CALENDAR THAT THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT ADDRESS
- 3) WE MUST ASK, "WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?" AND "WHAT DOES IT NOT SAY?"
- 4) IN THE SCRIPTURES, WE FIND THAT GOD DOES GIVE US THE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CALENDAR
- 5) THERE IS A CALENDAR SYSTEM, BUT IN THE SCRIPTURES GOD DOES NOT TELL US HOW TO CALCULATE IT, OR HOW TO WATCH FOR THE NEW MOON.
- 6) WE MUST ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO HAVE THE RIGHT FOCUS
- 7) THE BIBLE'S FOCUS IS THIS: TO WHOM DID GOD GIVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CALENDAR AND ITS PRESERVATION
- 8) WHAT IF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAD DISREGARDED MOSES & AARON WHEN THEY PROCLAIMED THE FEASTS OF GOD?

9) THE TIMES OF THE OFFERINGS WERE COORDINATED BY THE PRIESTS' CALENDAR

10) THE SERVICE OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD WAS A CALENDAR IN ITSELF

11) GOD GIVES DIFFERENT GIFTS TO DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE BODY

12) THE CALENDAR IS VERY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN

13) NOT EVERY ASPECT OF WHAT GOD TAUGHT THE LEVITES WAS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES

14) THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES US THE SAME THING

15) WHY DIDN'T GOD GIVE THE CHURCH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO CALCULATE THE CALENDAR

16) HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

17) WE HAVE ONLY THREE OPTIONS

18) IN CONCLUSION

Let us examine each one of these eighteen points:

1) GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN GIVEN AN UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE CALENDAR: God's people have never had even a fundamental understanding of this subject. Nor has it been a subject that has been widely taught in the Church. But if we really want to answer this question correctly, where do we begin?

2) THERE ARE MANY ASPECTS OF THE CALENDAR THAT THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT ADDRESS: In reckoning the beginning of the year, the priests and Levites had to make judgments which were dependent upon astronomy, as well as the weather & agriculture. For instance there had to be ripened barley for the wave sheaves which were to be offered. Also, there had to be young lambs and turtledoves or pigeons which were fledged for offerings. What calendar system could take all of these variables into account? What is the biblical definition of a new moon? We might think we know but Scripturally can we answer this question? If we do not know, then how can we mark the beginning of each month? How do we reconcile the difference between a lunar year and a solar year? How do we keep the calendar aligned with the seasons? What scriptures address all of the changing astronomical variances, which require periodic adjustments to the calendar? What was the calendar system in the Old Testament or the New Testament? The truth is God provides very little information in His Word, on how to calculate His calendar.

3) WE MUST ASK, "WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?" AND "WHAT DOES IT NOT SAY?"

a) Genesis 7:11 and 8:1-4) provide some information about the calendar, during the time of the Flood. It shows a period of 150 days, from the 17th of the second month

to the 17th of the seventh month. That is exactly five 30-day months, which indicates the likelihood that a year was comprised of 360 days. Some use this information to conclude that at this time there was a 360-day calendar. This is probably a correct conclusion, but God does not reveal to us that at the time of the Flood there was a 360-day calendar. He shows us part of a year, with 30 day months and we make this assumption. Is this a deliberate pattern God takes in the scriptures? Yes. The Scriptures do not show us any complete calendar system.

b) We know from Scriptural and secular sources that at one point in history 747 – 687 BC, due to some worldwide cataclysm, the annual calendar was changed from 360 days to 365 1/4 days. This axial period is used to speculate about all kinds of calendar modifications. Although some prophecies in Amos & Isaiah mention these events, the scriptures do not dogmatically address the calendar change. However, all of these things did take place but this is not where God places His focus. It is important to see where God's focus is and where it is not. Continuing in this approach, let us examine the things that we do know from the things that we do not know.

c) Some believe that, initially the calendar may have been easier to keep synchronized with the heavens but as time went on it probably grew more difficult. This is undoubtedly true, however this is not God's focus in the Bible. We have no direct knowledge from the Scriptures regarding any complete calendar system. At best we see bits and pieces of it, but never the full story.

d) Some advocate abandoning the calculated Hebrew Calendar. They object to the idea of the postponements, and adjustments for determining the Feast of Trumpets. On the surface that sounds like a valid argument, but it is not. First, we need to ask a basic question: What is the biblical definition of a new moon? Is it the dark phase, the first visible crescent or some other phase? How do we know that God's definition of a new moon is the same as the U. S. Naval Observatory's definition? When we examine the calendar question more closely we understand that it is not the same. So in truth, there is no scriptural condemnation of the postponements. In fact, such adjustments are necessary to account for all the bits and pieces of time.

e) Those who criticize the calculated Hebrew Calendar might ask a basic question? How was the calendar calculated during Old Testament times? During the time of the Jews Babylonian captivity? During the time of Christ? The Scriptures do not tell us. There is no basis of comparison for any argument against the calculated Hebrew calendar after the axial period from 747–687 BC. This is not where God places His focus. If God did not specifically tell us in Scriptures how the calendar is to be calculated, there must be a reason.

f) Where in the Scriptures do we find detailed information on the equinox? In the Bible there are general references to specific seasons—the turning of the year and the return of the year (Ex. 34:22, II Chron. 24:23, I Kings 20:22, I Kings 20:26). But does God show us if or how, the equinox is used to calculate a calendar? No. On the one hand, some advocates for calendar change arbitrarily designate the nearest new moon to the equinox as the beginning of the first month with no Scriptural authority. On the other hand, others state that it should be the new moon after the equinox as the beginning of the first month. Yet, what scripture can we turn to in order to verify that this is the method that God intended for us to use? Truthfully, we cannot because God never addresses it. At best the equinox is a general reference to the

spring, just like the newborn lambs and barley harvest were factors in proclaiming the first month. But the question we should ask is this: "Why didn't God provide us with enough information in the Scriptures so that we are able to devise a calendar?" There must be a reason.

g) While Judah was captive of the Babylonian and later the Persia Empires, we see glimpses of the calendar in the Scriptures. In (Neh. 1:1) we find recorded the month of Chislew, in the 20th year of captivity. Also in (Neh. 2:1), we find recorded the 20th year in the month of Nisan. In the book of Esther, God gives us a glimpse of twelve of the months. "In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar" (Esth. 3:7). In fact all the months of the calculated Hebrew Calendar are mentioned in the Old Testament. But the question remains: By what method was the calendar determined?

h) One Jewish resource states the origin of Hillel II's calendar is uncertain. This begs the question and is not an accurate statement. However, this is the same problem that we are confronted with throughout the Bible. In the Scriptures, God does not give us a definitive system to calculate the lunar/solar calendar or a method to observe the visible new moon.

i) Was the calendar in the early Old Testament different from the calendar in the days of Daniel, Amos, Ezra and Nehemiah, or the New Testament? We have no definite scriptural conclusions, only evidence. However, the same method of calculations that are used today are accurate when calculating back to the days of Daniel, Amos, Ezra & Nehemiah.

God does not confirm an original calendar system with 360-days. But we have some scriptural evidence of it. God does not make many detailed references to the cataclysms (between 747–687 BC) which changed all calendar systems worldwide. However, He gave prophecies that it would occur and it did. God does not directly tell us in Scripture what modifications had to be made to the calendar after these cataclysms. We do have a fairly direct reference in Psalm 81:3-4 that tells us how the beginning of a year was determined. The Scriptures do not contain any systematic method of calculation.

j) The conclusions are clear: God provides us with some information on the calendar but in the Scriptures He does not provide us with the complete calendar system, replete with astronomical calculations. He even carefully avoids showing us what a new moon is. All of the advocates for calendar change have yet to show a complete calendar system, with complete Scriptural support. To make matters even worse, among those who favor abandoning the Calculated Hebrew Calendar do not even agree among themselves. With a wrong focus, we can see how confusing this subject can be, because everyone does what is right in his own sight. That is not a basis for any aspect of faith. Remember that God is not the author of confusion.

4) IN THE SCRIPTURES, WE FIND THAT GOD DOES GIVE US THE GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CALENDAR. The Scriptures do not show the entire calendar system. God provides the general requirements, which must be part of His calendar. But the details for calculating the calendar were given to the priests. Their responsibility was to proclaim the feasts in their seasons. We don't

know how they worked out the details, but we can know that they did. The calculated Hebrew Calendar meets every one of these requirements and is not in violation of one scripture.

a) Does God show He wanted His calendar to be an annual calendar coordinated with the heavens that all time must be accounted for? At the end of each year, bits and pieces of time cannot be left unaccounted for. “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years’ ” (Gen. 1:14). This is the way God does things. After Christ fed the great multitude “He said unto His disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost” (John 6:12). According to this principle, all time must be accounted for, no matter how much the heavens are out of alignment. The calculated Hebrew Calendar is an annual calendar and accounts for all the bits and pieces of time.

b) Since God does not define what a (moled) new moon is, could it be that He wants us only to know that the months are based upon the lunar cycles? He does not provide enough information so that we really know what a new moon is. We only have general references (Psa. 81:3-4, 1 Chron. 23:31, Neh. 10:33, Ezk. 45:17). God wanted the calendar to be an annual calendar, but also synchronized with the monthly cycles, the calculated Hebrew Calendar also does this.

c) The Scriptures show that God declared that the first month of the year was to be in the spring, the month Abib, later called Nisan, was the time of green ears (Ex. 12:2; Ex. 13:3-4). So we can see, God gives a general reference that the calendar is to begin when there will be ripening barley for the Wave Sheaf offering (Ex. 29:24). The calculated Hebrew Calendar accomplishes this.

d) God wanted, the holy days to be kept in their proper seasons (Ex. 23:14-17, Deut. 16:1, 9-10, 13). “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles...” (Deut. 16:16). Not only did the priests and Levites have an annual calendar synchronized with the monthly cycles, but because of the misalignment of the lunar and solar year, God revealed to them an accurate calendar system to keep the seasons aligned. This is accomplished by way of the 19-year time cycle, and by inserting a thirteenth month seven times during this cycle. The month that is added in the leap year is necessary to maintain an annual calendar that is synchronizes the lunar and solar cycles.

e) God shows each week should consist of seven days. His weekly Sabbath should be observed on the seventh day (Ex. 34:21). One thing many advocates for calendar change do not consider is that if we throw out the calculated Hebrew calendar for some other system that it can change even what day of the week we keep Sabbath. The Essenes who went by a solar calendar (and disregarded a lunar cycle ended up keeping a different day of the week for the Sabbath day. Whether we realize it or not, we keep the weekly Sabbath according to the calculated Hebrew Calendar.

f) God shows that each day is reckoned from evening to evening: (Gen. 1:5; 1:8; 1:13; 1:18; 1:19; 1:23; 1:31). The calculated Hebrew calendar has accomplished this as well.

5) THERE IS A CALENDAR SYSTEM, BUT IN THE SCRIPTURES GOD DOES NOT TELL US HOW TO CALCULATE, OR HOW TO WATCH FOR THE NEW MOON. As early as Genesis Chapter Five we find the chronicle of the patriarchs from Adam to Noah and all the years they lived. If there was no calendar system, then how were such dates determined? The Bible does show there was a continual calendar system. Throughout Israel and Judah's long histories, we see bits and pieces of that calendar. Dates for major events are stated as a matter of fact by the calendar system of their time (Ezk. 1:1, Jer. 1:3). In the New Testament, we know the Church is to observe the holy days by some calendar system (Col. 2:16). But beyond general references, what is God's calendar system? When we turn to the Scriptures, we do not find the complete answers that we might desire. If we look for another method to calculate the calendar for ourselves and still obey God, the answers are not there. As strange as it may seem, God gave more specifics concerning the dimensions of the temple, the sacrifices and offerings than He did for the calendar. The Scriptures show that God's people did have a calendar system, but ironically He did not reveal the details of this calendar system in Scripture.

6) WE MUST ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO HAVE THE RIGHT FOCUS. Just because we cannot find the answers we want, does not mean there is no solution to this dilemma. If the Bible does not address the calendar in the way we think, then in what way is it addressed? If we ask the right questions, can we see what God wants us to understand? What the Bible does and does not say is all that matters. If we cannot find a detailed calendar system in the Bible, then can we consider any other possibilities? Is it worth considering that God has not communicated this technical information to us because it was never our responsibility to calculate or to determine a calendar system by lunar observation? Perhaps God's focus is to show us to whom He gave this responsibility.

7) THE BIBLE'S FOCUS IS THIS: TO WHOM DID GOD GIVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CALENDAR AND ITS PRESERVATION. How did God's people know when to keep the holy days? Did God tell each individual by divine revelation? How did Israel know which day was the weekly Sabbath? How did they know when to observe the Passover, annual holy days or when the new moon was sanctified? Did God give the responsibility of the calendar to Moses, the priests and Levites? According to God's instructions, the calendar was calculated by the Levitical priests because He gave them the responsibility of proclaiming the feasts of God.

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. 'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which YOU SHALL PROCLAIM at their appointed times” (Lev. 23:1-4).

There are a number of scriptures that show the relationship of the calendar to Moses and the priests. Let's ask some fundamental questions. Did God instruct the Levites regarding the beginning of the year? Yes, Moses and Aaron were Levites (Ex. 12:1-2). Whom did God make responsible that the feasts were kept in their proper season? The priests and Levites (Lev. 23:4). Who performed the sacrifices to sanctify each new moon? (2 Chron. 31:3). Who did God instruct concerning the observation of the

holy days and the weekly Sabbath? (Lev. 23:1-4). Who did God instruct regarding the tenth day of the first month, when a lamb would be selected for each house? (Ex. 12:3). Who did God instruct that the Passover was to be kept on the 14th of Abib? (Ex. 12:14). Who did God instruct to count from the wave sheaf offering to Pentecost? (Lev. 23:15). It was a law that the priests were to announce the arrival of the key dates in each calendar year. "Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, A law of the God of Jacob" (Ps. 81:3-4).

8) WHAT IF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAD DISREGARDED MOSES AND AARON WHEN THEY PROCLAIMED THE FEASTS OF GOD? After Israel was delivered from Egypt, they were living the holy day dates (we now annually observe). Some might reason the calendar system was a simple issue for them, but the truth is, the issues for determining the holy days then, are the same issues that God's people face today. God told Israel once they entered into the promise land, they were to continue to observe the holy days—beginning with Passover & the Days of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 13:5-6). But how was this determined? There are only two choices!

The first choice is that God provided a calendar system for the people, which everyone could calculate and verify individually? Many of God's people today, have chosen to believe this. But the issue is as simple as this: Does the Bible contain a complete detailed calendar system—yes or no? The answer is no! The truth is that God only gave us general guidelines for the calendar previously discussed. But in the Scriptures there is no other revelation from God.

The second possibility to understand how God's people knew when to keep the holy days is this: He gave this responsibility to the priests and Levites. Unfortunately, many brethren reject this notion because they have an attitude of bitterness toward all Church leadership and they have many unresolved problems in their own lives. But setting aside all of the emotion and bitter feelings, we need to take a second look at the issues. What does God's Word simply state? How did Israel know when to observe the holy days? "And Moses said to the people remember this day..." (Ex. 13:3).

How did the Israelites, who had known only slavery for hundreds of years, know when the holy day calendar began? They did not know. Israel even lost track of the weekly Sabbath while in slavery. "Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Ex. 12:1-2). God spoke to Moses and Aaron, who were Levites. Moses was the prophet and God's representative, while Aaron was to become the High Priest.

Who told Israel when to select a lamb, how many animals per house, and the quality of the animal to be selected in preparation for the Passover? God commanded Moses: "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats' " (Ex. 12:3-5). God through Moses and Aaron proclaimed and marked this

time as the beginning of Israel's holy day calendar that had all of the holy days of God set each year. Now we need to ask the question: Where does God tell the people to form committees and figure this thing out? Nowhere! God through Moses, disseminated the information to the elders of Israel, who in turn, told every household the specific commands of God concerning the instructions for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:6-13, 22-24).

But what if Israel had not followed the instructions that God had given to Moses to give to them? If they had not precisely followed the instructions that Moses had given, they would have found themselves in the very same state as the Egyptians. If they had put the blood on your door posts one day too early, or one day too late, it would have made all the difference in the world. However, no Israelite told Moses, "Now wait a minute you have it wrong. The first of Abib began last month and I already have kept the Passover." As we find today, they might immediately think they were right. But on the first Passover night designated by God they would have lost their lives. Attempting to devise an independent calendar system would have meant certain death.

9) THE TIMES OF THE OFFERINGS WERE COORDINATED BY THE PRIESTS' CALENDAR. God shows us ... "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying command the children of Israel, and say to them, My offering, My bread for the sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto Me, shall you observe to offer unto Me in their due season" (Num. 28:1-2).

Beginning with Moses and Aaron, the people followed the priest's leadership and proclamations of the holy days. "Afterwards they offered the regular burnt offering, and those for New Moons and for all the appointed feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and those of everyone who willingly offered a freewill offering to the Lord" (Ezra 3:5).

10) THE SERVICE OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD WAS A CALENDAR IN ITSELF. Looking back to the time when Israel came out of Egypt, the initial dates of the calendar were not hard to pinpoint, because they were living during the first holy day season. God appointed the time when they were to come out of Egypt (Ex. 9:5). It was Moses and Aaron who kept track of time by the command of God, beginning with the daily offerings—morning and evening. "Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually" (Ex. 29:38).

From the time that God gave them this responsibility, they kept track of time as one of the duties that God gave them. It should be noted the 24 courses of the priest's service was of itself an annual calendar (Numbers 28 & 29). "They assigned the priests to their divisions and the Levites to their divisions, over the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18).

The New Testament's focus is the same as the Old Testament. Zacharias was a priest at the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 1:5, 8-9). He served his priestly office, according to the course of Abijah. The rotation of the 24 courses was coordinated with the calendar year just as it was outlined in I Chronicles 24:7-19. The very same calendar by which, the offerings, sacrifices, new moons and holy days were observed. In truth, the 24 courses were a calendar of itself. There is complete consistency between Old Testament and New Testament times.

11) GOD GIVES DIFFERENT GIFTS TO DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE BODY. The Bible reveals to us that God gives special gifts to various people so they can be used for a specific service He appoints (Ex. 36:1, I Cor. 12:28). He doesn't give the same gifts to everyone in the Church. Therefore, the idea that everybody was intended to calculate the Bible for himself or herself is not found in the Scriptures. In reality to keep track of the calendar is an immense responsibility, requiring specialized gifts—which God Himself gives. He gave it to the Levites and is now preserved in the calculated Hebrew Calendar.

12) THE CALENDAR IS VERY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN. Some believe the calendar system is a simple matter. They reason that God would make it simple enough for a child to figure it out. But is this true? It is evident from any calendar system which has been devised, that astronomers, mathematicians and scientists of that society, were responsible for maintaining it. The responsibility was never given to children, nor to the average adult, but specialists who understood the complex issues of maintaining a calendar. In ancient Israel, the priests and Levites were educated in the Scriptures and calendar calculations. The priests had to take into account many technical and mathematical things in order to fulfill their responsibilities of maintaining an accurate calendar. An annual calendar that meets God's Scriptural requirements, that synchronizes the heavens, the moon and the earth movements and cycles is no small matter. The solar year is approximately 365 1/4 days. The lunar year is 354 day. The moon is not always the same distance from the earth. Therefore, the shortest lunar month is 29.25 days and the longest lunar month is 29.82, or a variance 13.67 hours. In addition, there is a wobble in the moon's movement, as well as the earth's movement. All of these variations must be accounted for and they affect the calculations. The time between the setting of the old moon to the rising of the new moon can vary from 17 hours to 42 hours. The time from the new moon to the full moon can vary from 13 to 15.5 days. At times there can be 5 months in a row with 30 days. Although the 19-year time cycle is the most accurate means of synchronizing the lunar and solar cycles, it is not precise. Every 247 years an adjustment has to be made in order to keep the cycles synchronized. There are many other things to be considered. To maintain this responsibility requires the skills of an astronomer and mathematician.

In light of all these variations that must be coordinated and synchronized to keep the calendar accurate, there is no question that God had to reveal this to the priests and Levites in order for them to maintain the calendar for these many thousands of years. It required a detailed knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and trigonometry. Are such skills generally found among God's people? No, they are not (1 Cor. 1:26-31). It is evident, because of the changing heavens, that the calendar would have to be periodically adjusted. This is another reason, why God never placed a complete detailed calendar system in the Bible.

13) NOT EVERY ASPECT OF WHAT GOD TAUGHT THE LEVITES WAS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES. "What advantage then has the Jew [meaning the priest and Levites], or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1-2). The elementary meaning of the word "oracles" in Greek means "utterance from God" (3051 Strong's Concordance). It is derived from the word *logion* (3052 Strong's Concordance), which means, "versed in antiquities, skilled in speech." Other references show its relevance, as a divine communication or revelation, including the calculations for determining the calendar (*The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*).

The word “the oracles” in Romans 3:2 is translated from the Greek τα λόγια *ta Logia* means “the utterances of God.” The term “the Holy Scriptures” in II Timothy 3:15 is translated from the Greek phrase τα ιερα γραμματα *ta iera grammata*, and means “the written Holy Scriptures.” We know Ezra played an important role in canonizing the books of the Old Testament but evidently it was not God’s intention that the method of calculating the calendar, be included in this canonization. However, they did have a system of calendar calculation, which they used and preserved but was not contained in the Scriptures. That is a biblical and historical truth. With this system there was no disagreement. Romans 3:1-2 shows us that the responsibility for calculating the calendar was not transferred to the Church nor recorded in the New Testament.

14) THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES US THE SAME THING. Do the New Testament scriptures reveal a calendar system? No! If we change the question, do the New Testament Scriptures show us that Jesus Christ as well as the New Testament Church followed the priests’ calendar? Yes! By keeping the weekly Sabbath and holy days, as recorded in the New Testament, Jesus Christ confirmed the holy day calendar system calculated and proclaimed by the priests and Levites of His day for the Jewish nation (John 5:1, John 6:4). While Jesus strongly denounced many of the practices and traditions of the priests, scribes and Pharisees, He did not denounce the calculated calendar system they used to proclaim the feasts of God. The system of calculating the Hebrew Calendar today is exactly the same system that was used in Jesus’ day. In fact, Jesus Christ died on Nisan 14, the Passover day. This is a major proof that the calculated Hebrew Calendar is the calendar that God the Father and Jesus Christ gave to the Levites. Jesus died on Nisan 14, a Wednesday. The Passover was in the middle of the week. Jesus was in the tomb three days and three nights. On the first day of the week, the wave sheaf offering day, He ascended to be accepted by God the Father as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. However, using a visible crescent new moon for determining the Passover in the year that Jesus died would not have placed the Passover in the middle of the week. Rather, it would have fallen on Thursday or Friday, making it impossible for Jesus to have been resurrected after three days and three nights in the tomb, and to fulfill the wave sheaf offering day on the first day of the week.

Hebrews 7:11 states that throughout Old Testament times the people received the law through the Levitical priesthood. They were the only ones who had the authority to proclaim the holy days according to the calculated Hebrew Calendar. Moreover, the Levitical priesthood maintained the holy days by the calendar system. The Levitical priesthood performed those functions during Jesus Christ’s time (John 1:8). The Sanhedrin was a continuation of the 70 elders, consisting of priests and Levites, originally appointed in Moses’ time (Num. 11:24). In Christ’s time, the Sanhedrin announced the feasts and proclaimed the holy days. It was the highest council of the Jewish nation, having both religious and civil functions.

What instruction did Jesus Christ give the Church, regarding this same priesthood? Notice: “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to **observe, that observe and do...**’” (Matt. 23:1-3). The scribes were Levites, as well as some of the Pharisees. They made judgments between disputing parties based upon Scripture. This judgment seat was called Moses’ seat. One of their responsibilities was to proclaim the calendar and when the holy days were to be

observed. Considering these facts, it is interesting that Christ used the word “observe,” in recognition of their authority to judge between disputing parties and the calendar proclamations. But He said that we were not to do after their works, nor follow their traditions. In the Old Testament the word “observe” is used over twenty times, mostly referring to the calendar and the days to be observed. The word “observe” means the same thing in the Old and the New Testament. In Leviticus 23, Moses was given the detailed information and the responsibility to proclaim and to teach God’s people about the weekly Sabbath and the annual holy days in their seasons.

Throughout Christ’s ministry, He set the example by following the calculated Hebrew calendar system, referred to as the Jews’ feast observances (John 2:13, John 7:2, John 6:4, John 19:42, John 11:55). They followed the dates set by the priests and Levites. Moreover, nowhere does Christ tell us what the calendar system was. He followed the calendar dates. Neither Christ nor the apostles devised a different calendar system. Neither is any calendar system found anywhere in the New Testament. Did Jesus Christ anywhere in the Gospels set down the rules, regulations and requirements on how we are to calculate the calendar? The answer is, No. Remember, His people are yet to become kings and priests (Revelation 1:6). Was Christ’s last Passover kept on Nisan 14 as set the calculated Hebrew Calendar of their time? The answer is, Yes.

Some might believe, Jesus told us to listen to the priests because He had not died yet nor ascended into heaven to become our High Priest. However, this argument is not true. In the remainder of the New Testament writings no calendar controversy is found. The Church did not devise their own calendar but maintained the same calendar the Jews followed, which was proclaimed by the calculation of the priests and Levites. In fact, some Christians and Jews kept the weekly Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths together in Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:13-14; 17:1-2).

15) WHY DIDN’T GOD GIVE THE CHURCH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO CALCULATE THE CALENDAR? Why shouldn’t the Church assume responsibility for making its own calendar system? First, God never gave that responsibility to the Church. Second, because we are yet to become the kings and priests of God at the resurrection (Rev. 1:6). At this time God has not given the Church responsibility for maintaining the calendar system. The responsibility still remains with the Levites. Through the means of the calculated Hebrew Calendar, the Levitical proclamation is followed to this day.

If we take it upon ourselves to construct our own calendar, then we are going against what God has established. The Bible shows that we have not yet been given the responsibility of kings and priests (Rev. 1:6). The Bible teaches one cannot assume the responsibilities of a priest, as King Saul did (1 Sam. 13:11).

16) HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

a) Jews of Elephantine Egypt followed the Hebrew calculated calendar. Historical references show, in the 5th century BC, that the Jews in Elephantine Egypt, kept a calendar with a 19-year time cycle. In this region there are few overcast days, which makes observation of the new moon no problem. Yet, they did not follow a method of literal observation of the lunar cycles, disregarding the solar year. The Jews of Elephantine, Egypt were in agreement with the calculated Hebrew calendar in

Jerusalem, which gives an indication that they both followed the same calendar. This can be proven from a petition sent to Jerusalem asking for permission to build a temple. The papyri was written in 407 BC and addressed to the governor of Jerusalem. It references the month of Tammuz in the 14th year of Darius. It is evident they both followed the same calendar system. The Jews of Elephantine looked to the leadership of the priests and Levites in Jerusalem when; (1) requesting permission to build a temple, (2) listing a date that the Jews in Jerusalem would understand.

b) Where did Babylon get its calendar system? JC Gibson, states the Babylonians followed a calculated calendar based upon a 19 year time cycle, of 12 months. Seven times during this period a 13th month was added, just like the calculated Hebrew calendar. There are multiple sources, which confirm this. The Scriptures show that Babylon, during the time of Nebuchadnezzar, acquired their calendar from the Jews (Daniel 1:4, 17, 20). The calculated Hebrew calendar became the Babylonian calendar. It was the same calendar system the Jews followed before and after the captivity.

c) Critics of the calculated Hebrew Calendar state that exiled Jewish rabbi Hillel II in 359 AD created a calculated calendar system, which was different from God's true calendar. Some allege that Hillel II's calendar was not the calendar that Christ and the Church followed. Furthermore, they claim that it was not the system that the Levitical priesthood followed prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The evidence shows these allegations are not true.

Jewish authorities show "He (Hillel II) is undoubtedly responsible for publishing the rules as they existed in AD 359" (*Book Of Jewish Concepts*, p. 309). He only published the rules and method of calculating Hebrew Calendar to make them public knowledge. He did not invent a new calendar. Some historians place the use of the current method of calculation for determining the calendar in Judah as early as the sixth to fifth centuries BC. J. B. Segal states more conservatively that certainly by the 2nd century BC the Jews had acquired this proficiency, and it was in use before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. It places the common use of the calculated Hebrew Calendar in the time before Jesus Christ was born. Moreover, using the current methods of calculating the Hebrew Calendar, it is possible to accurately calculate the exact dates given in the Books of Daniel and Haggai.

d) After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, there are historical references that show the true Church continued to observe the holy days by the calculated Hebrew calendar. The significance of this is that those who advocate rejecting the calculated Hebrew Calendar claim that this was a period of the supposedly reprobate calculated calendar of Hillel II.

A History of the True Religion, by A. N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd writes of a first-century group called by the world "Nazarenes." He wrote: "Eusebius, who wrote of the Church of the first centuries, speaks of the Church observing the Lord's supper at the same time the Jews kept the Passover; viz, on the 14th of the first month, Nisan" (p. 44).

Continuing from *A History of the True Religion*, the Nicene Council held in AD 325: "At this council, the Passover (Easter) was placed on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover, which fell on the Fourteenth of Nisan, or Abib. This made Easter a fixed

festival, instead of falling on any day of the week, according to the day of the fourteenth of this month. The Eastern churches to this time had celebrated the Passover once a year on the fourteenth of Abib [Nisan]" (p. 78). The significance is that the Church kept the Passover according to the calculated Hebrew Calendar.

17) WE HAVE ONLY THREE OPTIONS concerning all of the calendar systems. They fall into only one of the three categories: (1) Strictly Solar, (2) Strictly Lunar, (3) Averaging the Lunar and Solar Years, as the calculated Hebrew calendar does. There are no other methods by which to calculate any calendar.

a) **The Solar Calendar:** Will a solar calendar work? The Essenes kept such a solar calendar, which ended up even changing the 7th day Sabbath by 54 AD to a Wednesday. Following such a method disregards one of God's conditions of addressing the lunar cycles. Did Christ give any indication that we should look to their calendar system? The answer is, No. Those who advocate changing the calendar should realize that by rejecting the calculated Hebrew Calendar, they might lose the knowledge of the weekly Sabbath. This was the problem that the Essenes were confronted with. Regarding the feasibility of a strictly solar calendar, we can eliminate that from our considerations.

b) **The Lunar Calendar:** What about following a strictly lunar calendar? Maybe we can make this work? But with the Islamic religion (which follows strictly the lunar cycle) the date of Ramadan falls back 11 days every year. When we consider a lunar calendar it too presents us with problems. Following a strictly lunar cycle leads to a misalignment of the seasons over time. James Hastings shows in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Calendar: "Sometime shortly after AD 750, they (Karaites Jews) repudiated the fixed Hebrew calendar and reinstated lunar observation as the method of determining holy days. They later called astronomical calculation 'stargazing' and 'cloud-peering, and said approximate calculations were permitted only if weather made observation impossible. However, the Karaites in scattered locations fell into confusion and began celebrating the same festival on different days. They were eventually compelled—for the sake of unity and accuracy—to once again accept the nineteen-year cycle and resort to calendar calculations. They devised astronomical tables very similar to the fixed Hebrew calendar." Their strictly lunar cycle does not address God's requirement for the calendar to be also an annual calendar. All time must be accounted for. It is evident a strictly lunar calendar must also be eliminated from our considerations. But what other option is there?

c) **Averaging the Solar and Lunar Year:** Considering all of the requirements God gave us for the calendar, the only system that will work is the one that averages the lunar and solar years. Addressed earlier in this text, God shows that His calendar must be an annual calendar and all bits and pieces of time must be accounted for. It must also be based on the lunar cycles. Yet considering the lunar and solar years: the seasons must remain aligned—the holy days must be kept in their proper seasons. Days are to be reckoned from evening to evening and the 7th day is the Sabbath day. If it is not a system that averages the solar and lunar years, and makes adjustments to keep the lunar and solar cycles synchronized, as the calculated Hebrew Calendar does, what other calendar system will meet God's requirements? The answer is there is no other calendar system, which can. Only the calculated Hebrew Calendar can fulfill all the requirements that God has given. There are some who proclaim they have an alternate calendar system, but as time goes on it will become evident they

have not. In truth, those who reject the calculated Hebrew Calendar have not only failed to meet the requirements for the calendar, as the Essenes and Karaites did, but even their reference for the weekly Sabbath is in danger of being lost. We cannot keep the weekly Sabbath by one calendar system and the holy days by another.

18) IN CONCLUSION: If God ever documented in the Scriptures what any full calendar system was (during any specific period of the Bible), it would have created confusion at a later time because the system would have needed to be modified because of the astronomical changes in the heavens. God never told us what the full system was (at any time). God only revealed the knowledge of the calculated Hebrew Calendar to the priests and Levites. Hillel II, who was a Levite, made the God-ordained method of calculating the Hebrew Calendar to the world.

If we seek to find a calendar system in the Bible we will not be able to find it. But if we change the question and ask: "In what way is the calendar addressed in the Bible? Then we can resolve the calendar dilemma scripturally."

Whom did God tell to proclaim the calendar to the people? The answer is the priests and Levites. They blew the trumpets, to announce the new moons & holy days. Who coordinated the sacrifices, offerings, with the new moons and holy days? The 24 courses for the priestly duties were set according to this calendar. They were to make offerings day by day, month by month, holy day by holy day and keep track of time, according to the calculated Hebrew Calendar.

The priests calculated the calendar to meet the scriptural requirements God laid down: 1) It must be an annual calendar. 2) Months are based on the lunar cycle: with no specific explanation of what a new moon is. 3) The beginning of the year must be in spring. 4) The holy days must be kept in their proper seasons. 5) A week is seven days and the Sabbath is the seventh day. 6) Days are reckoned from evening to evening. It should be noted that the calculated Hebrew Calendar meets these requirements, and it does not violate one single scripture—regardless of opinion or debate.

Time has proved that the heavens are constantly changing, which all calendar systems must take into account to remain accurate. Yet how many have considered the lengths that the priests and Levites have gone to accomplish this? They didn't make arbitrary changes, but from the history of the calculated Hebrew Calendar we know that since the axial period of 747–687 BC the calendar has remained in alignment with the heavens. Also it should be noted: All of this has been accomplished without violating a single scripture in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

What was Jesus' relationship to the calendar of the priests and Levites? Jesus Christ Himself kept the feasts according to their system described in numerous scriptures as the feast of the Jews. The calculated Hebrew Calendar dates back nearly 600 years before Christ. It was not invented in 354 AD.

The priests' appointment was a perpetual statute (Ex. 28:1, Ex. 29:9, Ex. 30:30, Num. 8:5-26). Later the priesthood was transferred to Christ, but remember what He taught His disciples: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitude and to His disciples, 'Saying, the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do...' " (Matt. 23:1-3). The scribes, who were Levites,

proclaimed the observance of the holy days and feasts according to the calculated Hebrew Calendar.

The apostle Paul tells us that the Jews, who were the priests and Levites, were given the oracles of God (Rom. 3:1-3). The calendar in Ezra's time was passed down to Christ's time outside of the Scriptures. This is the calendar which remains in full force today.

After Christ's resurrection, the Church kept the holy days according to the calculated Hebrew Calendar. They observed the weekly Sabbath and the holy days at the same time and in some cases even with the Jews in their synagogues. There was no disagreement in the early Church concerning the calendar.

The nation of Judah was destroyed in 70 AD, and the Levitical priesthood was exiled to Tiberius in northern Galilee where they continued to proclaim the calculated Hebrew Calendar and the holy days of God until the time of Hillel II. What other option does the Church have than to look to this calendar system by which the dispersed Jews continued to proclaim the holy days? What other option does the Bible give us? What other command does Christ show us? What calendar system can we construct, with complete scriptural support? The conclusions should be clear. The dispersed Jews, with the Levites among them, have preserved the very same calendar system down through the ages. This is the God-ordained calendar system that we should be using today. Using any other calendar system is going against God.