Thank you for your letter concerning the festivals of God and the time of their observance. You have obviously put a great deal of effort into the study you have made. Rather than address all your points, I would prefer to give another perspective on the topic for your consideration.

God’s Authorised Calendar has been given to us as a means to an end. The calendar is not the end in itself.  Some believe the calendar is more important that its purpose – and in so doing, lose sight of God’s purpose altogether.  So what is God’s purpose?  We find this in 2 Chronicles 30.

At this time, Israel had gone into captivity, but the remaining nation of Judah was turning to God under the leadership of Hezekiah.  And Hezekiah announced that he was immediately restoring the Passover right then and there in the second month of the religious year.

*2Ch 30:12**Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the LORD.**2Ch 30:13**Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.*

According to strict biblical law, this was wrong.  Unleavened Bread had to be kept in the first month.  We do find an allowance was made by God in Numbers 9:11 that they could keep the Passover in the second month in extenuating circumstances, as we do today - but NOT the festival of Unleavened Bread.  So what was more important here? The calendar OR the purpose of the Holydays?  The latter was more important.  At this time, King Hezekiah was leading a movement to remove paganism from Jerusalem and that was the important issue.

*2Ch 30:14**They arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast them into the Brook Kidron*(pagan altars)*.**2Ch 30:15**Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LORD.**2Ch 30:16**They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood received from the hand of the Levites.**17**For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD.*

The Law (in Leviticus 15) threatened death to anyone who attended the services of the sanctuary in a state of ceremonial uncleanness.

*2Ch 30:18**For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone*(and then comes the condition of being pardoned)*19 who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."**2Ch 30:20**And the LORD LISTENED to Hezekiah and healed the people.*

So what was important to God? It was their repentant attitude AND Hezekiah’s prayer to Him to forgive them of any ceremonial lawlessness they were guilty of in their zeal to serve Him at this time. And the fact that they were allowed to keep Unleavened Bread in the “wrong month” places the timing of the Holydays in a different category to the weekly Sabbath. The weekly Sabbath is enshrined in the 10 commandments, the Holydays are not.

*2Ch 30:21**So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments.*

God would have overjoyed by this!  Finally, His people are beginning to worship Him after previously turning their backs on Him, even if they kept Unleavened Bread one month later than the time laid down. The Holydays are called “holy assemblies” rather than holy time.

*2Ch 30:22* *And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the LORD; and they ate throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers.**2Ch 30:23* *Then the whole assembly agreed to keep another seven days, and they kept it another seven days with gladness.*

Solomon had made the same decision at the dedication of the Temple.  So again, what was important to God?  It was that His people were humble and repentant, and they were coming together to worship and rejoice before Him TOGETHER!  This was the relevant issue. We need to understand God’s thinking on these matters, which we also find in Psalm 133.

*Psa 133:1**A Song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

Again, for God, this was wonderful to see – the happiness, contentment, harmony and beauty which is present when His people meet before Him in the unity of Spirit, with the purpose of humbly worshipping Him. This is a shadow of things to come – a type of our eternal destiny - and it gives God great pleasure to see us meet TOGETHER before Him in this humble and joyful manner - in this age today!

*Psa 133:2**It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.*

This unity we have before God is compared to the sweet-smelling perfume used in God’s sacred consecration of the High Priest, with the Holy Oil representing His Holy Spirit, spreading out to cover everything. That’s how God views this unity.

*Psa 133:3**It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.*

This refreshing dew comes down, spreads out and gives life to all it touches – life forevermore!  All these things are described in the context of His people gathering together to worship in Him unity and peace.  Psalm 133 is saying that we are SANCTIFIED in our unity - when we meet before Him in this way, at the one time. This is what God wants and this is what is important to Him. These meetings then become “holy assemblies”.

Church members are all followers of our Redeemer; of the same spiritual family, fellow heirs of the same spiritual inheritance - and God wants us to worship Him in the beauty of Holiness, as it states in four places in the Old Testament.  The Festivals are family reunions called by the Father, to eat and rejoice together before Him on times He authorises or allows! These are God’s Holydays and Sabbaths - and no-one else can call HIS people together. And He proclaims these days through those whom He has passed that authority to!  No-one else can legitimately take that authority to themselves!

So the question is this: Are we keeping God’s Sabbath and festivals on the correct authorised days of God, days which are pleasing to Him?  The answer is yes!

*Lev 23:3**'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.*

Are we keeping the Sabbath on the correct day today?  When Jesus walked the earth, He kept the same Sabbath as the Jews did.  The Jews have kept the same seventh day Sabbath ever since.  So in Jerusalem today, we know which day is God’s Sabbath. There is little dispute on that issue.  For us here in Australia, the only question that we have to address is the International Date Line (IDL). In verse 4, it begins the section on God’s festivals, beginning with Passover:

*Lev 23:4**'These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which YOU shall proclaim at their appointed times.*

Who is YOU?  Who did God authorise to proclaim the Holydays?  YOU - was the constituted authority in Israel. It began with Moses and later two other groups become involved - the Priesthood and the Assembly of Elders. After describing all the feasts, it says this in verse 44:

*Lev 23:44**So MOSES declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD*

The timing of the Holydays and festivals are clearly given to us in the bible. For example, we know that the Day of Trumpets is on the first day of the seventh month. ALL the Holydays, except Pentecost, are clearly given to us in this manner.  But separate to that, the Bible does NOT tell us which day IS the first of the month and which month IS the seventh of the year!  THAT is the issue!  We need a calendar to give us this information!

And there is no doubt that God preserved the vital knowledge of the Rules governing the Calendar through this constituted authority in Israel, beginning with Moses. There was NO OTHER AUTHORITY! The bible itself does not give us a calendar.

While many calendar authors claim that their work comes from Scripture, all must go outside the Bible to construct their calendar. The Bible does not mention a 19-year time cycle, nor does it give the length of a month or the order of intercalary months. It doesn’t give us details of where the IDL is located. It doesn’t provide enough information to know with confidence when a year is to begin or what constitutes a year. Equinoxes are not definitively mentioned in Scripture. We find no definition of the new moon in Scripture, though the new moon is mentioned.

So when is the start of a month?

*Exo 12:1**And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,**Exo 12:2**This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.**Exo 12:3**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 a house:*

The Hebrew word translated here as month is “*chodesh*” which means month, not moon, although very occasionally it is translated as moon. The Hebrew expression “*Rosh Chodesh*” (translated here as beginning of the month), means Head of the Month, not a new moon as we know it. None of this tells us what the Head of the Month means.

1               Is it when the old moon disappears?

2               Is it when you first see the faint crescent of the moon when it first becomes visible?

3               Is it the lunar conjunction?  This occurs in the period when the moon cannot be seen for up to three days.  So is that the biblical head of the month?

4               What if the new month occurs in the daytime. Is that day the first of the month or do you declare it for the next day? – particularly at Trumpets.

An important key of understanding is that God also gave the priests the authority and responsibility of making judgments in areas that are not specifically defined in the Scripture. God must have revealed to them the Calendar at that time enabling the Holydays to be proclaimed at their appointed times.

“*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. . . . These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim* *at their appointed times*” (Leviticus 23:2,4 NKJV) (emphasis added).

Therefore it is obvious that Moses, and the priesthood which followed, had to maintain a calendar in order to proclaim the holy convocations at their appointed times.

In Romans 3:1-2 Paul states clearly that the Jews received the oracles of God. He wrote: *“What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.”*

The Greek word for “oracle” is *logion*and Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance defines *logion* as: *an utterance of God.* Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words explains *logion* as: *a diminutive of logos, a word, narrative, statement, denotes a Divine response or utterance*.

We accept the Old Testament Scriptures as being the Word of God, faithfully preserved for our benefit by the Jewish people. The word *logion* (oracle) which Paul uses in Romans 3:2 is broad enough in its application to not only include the written laws and commandments of God, and the historical record of His dealing with the human race in those years prior to the birth of our Lord, but also the preservation of a calendar.

When Jesus came and established His Church, of which He is the Head, authority to determine matters where there is no clear specific Biblical instruction was also given over to the apostles and the ministry by Jesus (Matthew 16:18-19, and the example of this is shown in Acts chapter 15).

Because of God’s cleardesire for unity in the Church (Psalm 133:1) and so that God’s people may gather at common dates and times, the United Church of God, *an International Association,* after intensive study, issued a ruling on the matter.

*After a careful study of all the issues the Council of Elders of the United Church of God has come to the conclusion that the Hebrew Calendar is a valid calendar for Christians to use in setting the dates for the observance of God’s Holy Days.*

This is the consistent biblically based authoritative doctrinal position of the Church. Today we use the Hebrew Calendar for two reasons:

Firstly because of the authority God gave His Church to make these judgements (these judgements still have to be made in line with scripture and the law).

Secondly – we have recognized the previous authority that God gave to the Hebrew judiciary and priesthood to preserve this Calendar.

There would be no unity if everyone had their own private calendar - and kept the Holydays by themselves at home or in small scattered groups at different times. If one rejects the authority of the Church in these matters, they are following their own authority, which many do. While we are always willing to listen and learn, and commit more study to this subject, we currently have no evidence that would cause us to reject the Authorised Hebrew Calendar that has been accepted in the Church of God since 1940.

The church has also made other judgments necessary in the 21st century in accordance with the authority given to it in Matthew 18 and Acts 15. One judgment concerns the times to keep the Sabbaths and Holydays when living in the Arctic Circle. Another judgment concerns both the weekly Sabbath and Holydays – where does the day begin and end on a round earth? The Church has made the judgement that the IDL be accepted as the point that the new day begins. Those who reject this ruling in Australia are actually keeping their “Sabbath” at the same time as the rest of Australian society is keeping Sunday. This adds to confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Again, the bible gives no clear instructions on these matters. The Church recognizes the authority of the Hebrew calendar and also makes judgments concerning matters not addressed by that calendar. By making these judgments, unity is established for those who come under the authority of the Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Living Head.

So in summary, why do we observe the authorised Hebrew Calendar? The answer is because we have faith in God.

·        We have faith that when God gave His calendar to Moses, He also preserved it down to the time of Christ through the Hebrew nation - and that He has also preserved it down to our time today, in the same way that the Old Testament scriptures and the weekly Sabbath have also been preserved by the Hebrews.

 ·      We have faith that God was behind the decision of His Church to adopt the authorised Hebrew Calendar when HE restored His Holydays to HIS Church,  over 80 years ago.

 ·      We have faith that Jesus Christ is the Living head of His Church and is actively leading us into His Kingdom!

Christ is working through His Church to bring about the unity and sanctification that our Father in Heaven wants for us on HIS Sabbaths and HIS Holydays, as Psalm 133 makes so clear to us!  Since adopting the Hebrew Calendar since 1940, the Church has been given great understanding by God as to the meanings of His Holydays which reveal His plan for mankind. This has not been given to those outside the Church environment. We now also know how Jesus Christ is central to each and all of these days.

At this stage we see no evidence that would cause us to reject the Hebrew calendar. We believe the fruits produced are pleasing to our Heavenly Father. We do keep an open mind on these matters and our Doctrinal Committee monitors calendar information which may become relevant.

We trust this gives a different perspective on the calendar and is helpful to you.

Kind regards

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