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Summary of Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

Approved by the Council of Elders
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Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

In the spring of 1996 the Council of Elders prepared a preliminary study and published a paper addressing the issue of the Hebrew calendar. At that time everyone was invited to submit papers or send their questions to the Council or the Doctrine Committee. Approximately 50 papers were submitted, both asking questions and stating a position on the subject. While there were some common points and some common questions in the expanse of papers, there was also a wide range of opinions and positions. All of this was proof that the issue was quite complicated and deserved a more detailed study. The Council requested that the Doctrine Committee undertake such a study and report back with the goal of publishing a paper on the subject. The following statement is the result of that recently completed study.

We should begin by thanking all those who contributed to this project. Checking and double-checking papers and sources has consumed hundreds of hours. All involved have gained a much deeper appreciation for the complexities of this subject. We simply ask that the results of our study be accepted in the spirit and attitude in which they are presented. 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. We believe that we have arrived at such a position.

The Issues

The natural place to begin is where we left off—by identifying the issues. On one hand, this has proven to be the easiest part of the project. Getting agreement on the answer to the issues has proven to be much more difficult.

There are no new questions which have arisen about the calendar. Mr. Armstrong addressed the same issues in 1940. After an intensive study, which included the assistance of members in the Eugene congregation, he came to the conclusion that the current Hebrew calendar should be accepted by the Church of God. While some have disagreed with that position (and some disagree today), the Church of God, as a whole, has consistently used the Hebrew calendar to establish the dates for observing the Holy Days. Although Mr. Armstrong made a number of changes over the years (Sivan 6 Pentecost, Monday Pentecost, and Sunday Pentecost—all observed at various times), he consistently supported the Hebrew calendar as the basis to be used for the Holy Days. The date for the observance of Pentecost is really not a calendar issue, even though some have confused it as such. All proponents use the same calendar, but simply differ on the method of counting the 50 days. The question is asked about the Jewish observance of Pentecost on Sivan 6 and why the Churches of God have generally not accepted this date. The implication is that if you accept the Hebrew calendar you should also accept Sivan 6 for Pentecost and Nisan 15 for Passover. 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.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

We have no reason to believe that the Church has ever used anything but the Hebrew calendar through the centuries. The observance of the New Testament Passover on the 14th of Nisan can be verified in Scripture and in history. Anicetus, who was bishop of Rome circa 155 C.E.,¹ tried, around the year 160 C.E., to outlaw the observance of Passover as a method of avoiding the charge of Judaizing Christianity. His opposition to this effort came in the person of Polycarp, who lived in Asia Minor at that time. Polycarp was a disciple of the apostle John and was well known throughout the Roman Empire of the second century. Polycarp claimed to observe the Passover because it was taught to him by the apostle John, who got it from Christ Himself. The tradition of observing the Passover on the 14th of Nisan was held fast by Polycarp. An interesting quote regarding the Passover controversy during the time of Polycarp is recorded by the Palestinian historian Epiphanius (315-403 C.E.):

The controversy arose after the exodus of the bishops of the circumcision [A.D. 135] and it has continued until our time.²

The fourth-century church historian, Eusebius, records this controversy in his *Ecclesiastical History* (265 to 340 C.E.):

And when the blessed Polycarp went to Rome, in the time of Anicetus, and they had a little difference among themselves likewise respecting other matters, they immediately were reconciled, not disputing much with one another on this head. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it, because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated... The bishops indeed of Palestine, whom we have just mentioned, Narcissus and Theophilus, and Cassius with them, the bishop of the church at Tyre, and Clarus of Ptolemais, and those that came together with them, having advanced many things respecting the tradition that had been handed down to them by succession from the apostles, regarding the passover, at the close of the epistle, use these words: "Endeavor to send copies of the epistle through all the church, that we may not give occasion to those whose minds are easily led astray."³

There were 15 Jewish-Christian bishops who managed the remnant of the Jerusalem church until 135 C.E. They observed the Passover on the 14th of Nisan in accordance with the *Apostolic Constitutions*. This was a document that purported to date from the time of the original apostles. Epiphanius shows that during this period the Passover was observed according to the calendar of the Jews. While the Jews today eat the meal on the evening at the beginning of the 15th, they still recognize that the Passover lambs were slain on the 14th of Nisan.

¹ Common Era.

² Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses* 70, 10, *Patrologiae Graeca* 42, 356, quoted in Samuele Bacchiocchi, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives, 1995), 101.

³ *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1955), 210–211.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

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.⁴

An interesting side point in the above quote from Epiphanius is the issue of “calculation.” While the statement may have no deep significance, there is a huge difference between developing a calendar from calculations and developing a calendar from observation. One of the issues that must be addressed is whether the calendar of the first century was established by observation or calculation. What “calculations” are being referenced, and what is meant by “you shall not change...” in reference to those calculations? The original source for these statements is purported to be a document that dates from the time of the apostles.

Those who reject the Hebrew calendar by and large offer alternatives that range from a keeping of the current calendar without the rules of postponement to a formulation of alternative calendars based on their interpretation of a wide array of material. It is certainly fair to say that there is little consensus when discussing a solution among those who reject the validity of the Hebrew calendar.

Our study actually began with a gathering of material to ensure that we properly understood the questions. Here is a listing of the major questions and issues that had to be studied to arrive at an answer:

- 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?
- Did God reveal a calendar to Moses when He brought Israel out of Egypt?
- Is there truly a “sacred” calendar? Does the Bible support such a concept?
- Romans 3: What is included in the oracles? Can we prove that the calendar was or was not a part of these oracles?
- What part did the Jews play in the development and maintenance of the calendar?
- What about the rules of postponement? When were they developed? Are they a valid part of the calendar or merely a pharisaic addition?
- Do the rules of postponement “move” the Holy Days?
- 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?
- When is the “new moon”? Is it the crescent or the astronomical conjunction? When did calculation replace visual observance, or has calculation been used from the beginning in determining the calendar?
- What about the leap years and the cycle of leap years? Who should make this determination?

⁴ Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses* 70, 10, *Patrologiae Graeca* 42, 356, quoted in Bacchiocchi, *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*, 101.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

While there will be no attempt to address all these issues in this brief paper, each one is worthy of addressing. It is hoped that, over the course of time, papers and articles can be written to more fully explain what we know of each of these basic issues. In some cases, our knowledge is limited. Only the Bible can be considered ultimately reliable. All other sources must be viewed in this context. That is not to say that other sources won't be used or haven't been used (even with this article), but that the ultimate test is God's Word.

Nature of the Calendar

One of the core issues in any discussion has to be the very nature of the calendar. If the Bible does not provide us with a definitive calendar, where should we turn? Certainly all the elements of a calendar can be found in Scripture. We know which month is the first month of the year (Exodus 12:2). We know that there are normally 12 months in the year (Esther 3:7). We even have the evidence of a 13th month (leap year) having been added in the time of the Old Testament. This can be found by a careful reading of Ezekiel 1-8.

In order to make progress in this discussion, we must recognize that there are many things the Bible simply doesn't tell us. Many terms are not defined and we are left with trying to determine what Moses and others meant when they wrote the words recorded in Scripture. To understand all nuances of a language from hundreds of years ago in the light of the 20th century isn't easy. The term "new moon" isn't clearly defined, even with an understanding of the Hebrew language. There are two Hebrew words translated "moon" in the Old Testament: *yereah* and *l'banah*. When referring to the "new moon," the biblical authors use the term *hodesh* meaning "newness" rather than either of the other two standard terms for moon.⁵ Does this 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. Even the word *hodesh* doesn't always mean "new moon." There are a number of occurrences where it should clearly be translated as simply "month" or "months" (e.g., Exodus 13:4; Leviticus 27:6; Numbers 3:22; Numbers 11:20; 2 Kings 24:8; Ezekiel 39:12).

It is assumed by many that the Hebrew calendar was based on observation as late as the end of the Second Temple period (70 C.E.). But there are other sources that dispute this claim. Reference is made to the Jewish scholar Saadya Gaon (882-942 C.E.) in the book *Essays on Saadya*: "As is well known the Gaon asserted that even in Biblical times the calendar rested on the system of calculation."⁶ This quote was in the context of a

⁵ Paul J. Achtemier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1985), s.v. "Moon."

⁶ *Saadya Studies*, ed. Erwin I.J. Rosenthal (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1943), 228.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

dispute with the Karaites (a schism of the Jews about the eighth century who believed in observation rather than calculation). The Karaites quoted Genesis 1:14 “showing that it rested on observation. The Gaon retorted that the subject of *wehayu* was *day and night* and not *luminaries*.”⁷ These statements would be consistent with Josephus’s comments about Abraham and his astronomical skills:

He was a person of great sagacity, both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions.... a man righteous and great, and skilful in the celestial science.⁸

Speaking of Seth’s children, Josephus makes the following comments:

They also were the inventors of that peculiar sort of wisdom which is concerned with the heavenly bodies, and their order.⁹

Evidence of a calendar can be found throughout the Old Testament. In fact there are many references to an established calendar even before the Holy Days are discussed in Exodus and Leviticus. The following references clearly show some sort of calendar in existence: Genesis 7:11, “the second month, the seventeenth day of the month”; Genesis 8:4, “Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month”; Genesis 8:14, “And in the second month, the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried.” Josephus records the same information in his *Antiquities of the Jews*:

This calamity [the Flood] happened in the six hundredth year of Noah’s government, (age,) in the second month, called by the Macedonians *Dius*, but by the Hebrews *Marchesuan*; for so did they order their year in Egypt; but Moses appointed that *Nisan*, which is the same with Xanthicus, should be the first month for their festivals, because he brought them out of Egypt in that month: so that this month began the year as to all the solemnities they observed to the honour of God, although he preserved the original order of the months as to selling and buying, and other ordinary affairs.¹⁰

There is no doubt that the knowledge for calculating a calendar was available hundreds of years prior to the birth of Christ. Evidence of a calendar engraved on a stone tablet was found at Gezer in 1908. While the translation is somewhat uncertain, it does appear to have been inscribed by a schoolboy in the 10th century B.C.E. This calendar shows evidence of 12 months divided according to the harvests: “Two months of storage. Two months of sowing. Two months of spring growth. Month of pulling flax. Month of barley harvest. Month when everything (else) is harvested. Two months of pruning (vines). Month of summer fruit.”¹¹ This calendar is known as the Gezer Calendar and, in addition to having 12 months, it began the year in the fall. The Babylonians had a calendar that consisted of 12 lunar months with a 13th month added every two or three

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book I, Chapter VII, 1-2 (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981).

⁹ Ibid., Book I, Chapter II, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., Book I, Chapter III, iii.

¹¹ *The New Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1962), s.v. “Calendar.”

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

years. As was mentioned earlier, the evidence for a 13th month can also be found in the book of Ezekiel. Is it possible that the Hebrew calendar of that day was determined by calculation? This would be an interesting discovery since many claim that the only method used at that time for determining the calendar was observation.

Postponements—The Crux of the Issue

A close scrutiny of the Hebrew calendar will reveal a high level of accuracy in its calculation. The following excerpt from Avraham Finkel points out just how accurate it is:

The calculation of the calendar was transmitted to the sages in an unbroken chain going back to Moses.... According to the ancient calculations, the exact time between one new moon and the next is 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 *chalekim* “parts of an hour” (the hour is divided into 1080 parts). In other words, one lunar month has 29.53059 days. It is interesting to note that according to NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), the time between one new moon and the next is 29.530588 days. Of course, NASA has at its disposal the most advanced and sophisticated telescopes and computers. Nevertheless, the difference between NASA’s figures and that used by Hillel II, which originated more than 3000 years ago, is .000002 or two millionths of a day, calculated for the period of one month.¹²

Most of those who study the calendar are willing to accept the accuracy of its calculation. The majority of questions on the calendar revolve around objections to all or some of the rules of postponement, which are seen by some as unbiblical and later pharisaic additions. The use of the postponements is viewed by some as leading to the observance of God’s festivals on the wrong days. Some claim that the postponements actually move the Holy Days from their intended days.

What are these postponements? According to *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar* by Arthur Spier, the four rules of postponement (called the Dehiot) are:

- When the Molad of Tishri occurs on a Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the following day.
- When the Molad of Tishri occurs at noon (18h) or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day (or, if this day is a Sunday, Wednesday or Friday, to Monday, Thursday or Sabbath because of Dehiah 1).
- When the Molad of Tishri of a common year falls on Tuesday, 204 parts after 3 a.m., i.e., 3d 9h 204p or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to Wednesday, and because of Dehiah 1, further postponed to Thursday.

¹² Avraham Yaakov Finkel, *The Essence of the Holy Days—Insight from the Jewish Sages* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1993), 141.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

- When, in a common year succeeding a leap year, the Molad of Tishri occurs on Monday morning 589 parts after 9 a.m., i.e., 2d 15h 589p, or later, Rosh Hashanah is postponed to the next day.¹³

Most of the questions seem to revolve around whether these rules of postponement were a part of the Hebrew calendar from the beginning or were added later, and by whose authority? This argument must be viewed in the context of the things we do accept from the Jews. 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.”¹⁴ 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. In 1940, after extensive study, Mr. Herbert Armstrong came to this conclusion. But we must ask ourselves, what is the biblical evidence for such a finding?

The Biblical Evidence

After extensive study, it was recognized that the three major areas of concern which need addressing are:

- Rules of postponement
- Sequence of intercalary years (addition of 13th month)
- Molad of Tishri and how it is determined

While there are other issues worthy of addressing, these seem to be key to understanding the subject of the calendar. We accept the fact that everyone who has presented material on this subject is sincerely searching for God’s will on these issues. We have carefully considered all the views presented and are prepared to answer these issues from the pages of God’s Word. But where do we begin and where can the answers be found?

There are any number of approaches that one could take with this subject. The presentation of papers by a significant number of people demonstrated the wide variety of ways to look at the subject of the calendar. After an exhaustive study, it became clear that the real answer must lie in the pages of Scripture. Are there dates provided in Scripture that can be verified and that will offer evidence of the type of calendar and its application during the time of Christ? If so, we can resolve the three major issues listed above.

There are a number of misconceptions about the first century and the use of the calendar. Some assume that the calendar of Christ’s day was established strictly by

¹³ Arthur Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, 3d rev. ed. (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1986), 15.

¹⁴ Achtemier, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Time.”

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

observation. It is true that observation was used during the time of the Second Temple, which came to an end in 70 C.E. This would have included the time of Christ. But there is a question as to whether the calendar was set by calculation and then confirmed by observation, or set by observation and then confirmed by calculation. There is certainly no question about the determination of the Holy Days during this period. The Sanhedrin confirmed the dates and then announced them to the Jewish population. Yet, the Bible implies that calculation was used prior to the time of Christ.¹⁵

We know from the biblical record that Jesus and the disciples kept the Holy Days on the same days as the established temple practice of their day (John 7:2). There is no record of Christ condemning the Jews of His day regarding calendar matters. It simply doesn't seem to be a question. Yet there was controversy in the first century. The Pharisees and the Sadducees, while agreeing on the type of calendar, did not always agree on the interpretation of the calendar. Note the following:

In general, the Jewish calendar in NT times (at least before AD 70) followed the Sadducean reckoning, since it was by that reckoning that the Temple services were regulated. Thus the day of Pentecost was reckoned as the fiftieth day after the presentation of the first harvested sheaf of barley, *i.e.* the fiftieth day (inclusive) from the first Sunday after Passover (*cf.* Lv. 23:14f); hence it always fell on a Sunday, as it does in the Christian calendar. The Pharisaic reckoning, which became standard after AD 70, interpreted "sabbath" in Lv. 23:15 as the festival day of Unleavened Bread and not the weekly sabbath; in that case Pentecost always fell on the same day of the month (an important consideration for those in whose eyes it marked the anniversary of the law-giving) but not on the same day of the week.¹⁶

These two groups did not agree on a number of issues during this period, but they did agree on which calendar to use. *The New Bible Dictionary*, in its article on the Hebrew calendar, states that during the first century the Jewish calendar was the authority for observing the Holy Days. There is simply no reason to believe that Christ followed anything but the standard calendar of His day.

For the most part, however, the NT writers measure time in terms of the current Jewish calendar (or calendars). The record is punctuated by reference to Jewish festivals and other sacred occasions. This is especially so in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁷

There are a number of references to the Holy Days in the New Testament. Can we go through any of these passages and make a determination as to when they occurred and which calendar (or type of calendar) was being used? The above quote references the book of John as containing many passages relevant to the Holy Days.

¹⁵ The account of David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20 implies the use of calculation; otherwise, how could David know when a new moon would occur in advance of the event? How could a celebration be planned if there wasn't advance knowledge of the new moon? Notice the statement in 1 Samuel 20:5: "And David said to Jonathan, 'Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at evening.'"

¹⁶ *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Calendar."

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

The book of John provides us with a wonderful resource for studying the Holy Days in a New Testament setting. And there is one particular reference that will be very helpful in addressing the issues revolving around the calendar. It is in John 7–9 that we read of Christ’s last Feast of Tabernacles prior to His crucifixion. A careful examination of this section of Scripture will reveal that Christ’s observance of the Holy Days was consistent with the Hebrew calendar.

The Feast of Tabernacles—John 7–9

John 7 begins by describing a Feast of Tabernacles which is called the “Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles.” There can be no doubt that Christ is about to observe the same Feast as that being observed by the Jews of His day.

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand [John 7:1-2].

His brothers urge Christ to join the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to keep the Feast, but He chooses not to go up with them at this time. But He leaves for the Feast shortly after they do.

“You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.” When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret [John 7:8-10].

Christ begins teaching in the temple and He attracts considerable attention.

Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, “How does this Man know letters, having never studied?” [John 7:14-15].

Christ openly discusses the plans that were being formulated for His death. This should be put in the context of the year prior to His death. Christ will be slain at the next Passover.

Jesus answered them and said, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?” The people answered and said, “You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?” Jesus answered and said to them, “I did one work, and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” [John 7:16-24].

Christ continues teaching in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles and, while there is much upset, no one is willing to lay a hand on Him or even try to stop Him.

Then Jesus cried out, as he taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.” Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. And many of the people believed in Him, and said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?” [John 7:28-31].

A number of people are so impressed that they begin to believe on Christ as a result of His teaching. But the Pharisees send officers to check things out and bring Christ to them for questioning.

The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. Then Jesus said to them, “I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come.” Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What is this thing that He said, ‘You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come’?” [John 7:32-36].

We now come to what is called “the last day, that great day of the feast.” Christ teaches a particular message on this day. A traditional ceremony took place at this time among the Jews. It involved the collection and pouring out of water in the temple area. Christ’s message clearly ties in with this ceremony.

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” [John 7:37-44].

It is interesting to study the traditional ceremony that the Jews practiced on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (the seventh day, by tradition). It was called the water ceremony. In his book *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, Alfred Edersheim has a

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

whole section on this ceremony and another tradition of lighting up the temple area with brilliant illumination. It is quite interesting that Christ used both analogies—“rivers of living waters” and “light of the world.” Both of these elements (water and light) were very much in evidence during the Feast, and in particular on the seventh and eighth days (the eighth day was a separate festival, a holy convocation).

While the morning sacrifice was being prepared, a priest, accompanied by a joyous procession with music, went down to the Pool of Siloam, whence he drew water into a golden pitcher, capable of holding three log (rather more than two pints).... As he entered by the “Watergate,” which obtained its name from this ceremony, he was received by a threefold blast from the priests’ trumpets. The priest then went up the rise of the altar and turned to the left, where there were two silver basins with narrow holes.... Into these the wine of the drink-offering was poured, and at the same time the water from Siloam.... For though that ceremony was considered by the Rabbis as bearing a subordinate reference to the dispensation of the rain, the annual fall of which they imagined was determined by God at that feast, its main and real application was to the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as predicted—probably in allusion to this very rite—by Isaiah the prophet. Thus the Talmud says distinctly: “Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water?” Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” ...On every one of the seven days the priests formed in procession, and made the circuit of the altar, singing.... But on the seventh, “that great day of the feast,” they made the circuit of the altar seven times.... We can now in some measure realize the event recorded in John vii. 37. The festivities of the Week of Tabernacles were drawing to a close. “It was the last day, that great day of the feast.” It obtained this name, although it was not one of “holy convocation,” partly because it closed the feast, and partly from the circumstances which procured it in Rabbinical writings the designations of “Day of the Great Hosannah,” on account of the sevenfold circuit of the altar with “Hosannah;” and “Day of Willows,” and “Day of Beating the Branches,” because all the leaves were shaken off the willow boughs, and the palm branches beaten in pieces by the side of the altar. It was on that day, after the priest had returned from Siloam with his golden pitcher, and for the last time poured its contents to the base of the altar...a voice was raised which resounded through the temple.... It was Jesus.¹⁸

Following this powerful message and the reaction from the people, the officers who were sent by the Pharisees return to the leadership empty-handed. There is great fear to do anything to Christ at this time.

Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?” The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” [John 7:45-46].

After this discussion between the Pharisees and the officers, we have an interesting statement in verse 53. This provides evidence for the timing of the events. The

¹⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans’ Publishing Company, 1978), 277–281.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

verse simply states that everyone returns to his home. Edersheim discusses the flow of events on the seventh day of the Feast:

In the words of the *Mishnah*, the order of the services for that feast was as follows: “They went first to offer the daily sacrifice in the morning, then the additional sacrifices; after that the votive and freewill-offerings; from thence to the festive meal; from thence to the study of the law; and after that to offer the evening sacrifice; and from thence they went to the joy of the pouring out of the water.”¹⁹

The water ceremony no doubt sets the stage for Christ’s message as recorded in John 7:37. The timing of the ceremony is not clearly defined. Christ’s message could have been at the very end of the seventh day or even possibly at the beginning of the eighth day. We are told that everyone returned to his house. This would be after the evening sacrifice and the water ceremony. This marks the end of the Feast of Tabernacles and the beginning of the final Holy Day of the year.

We find that Christ doesn’t return to His dwelling, but rather chooses to go out to the Mount of Olives. We can only speculate as to what He does that evening. Possibly He spends the evening in prayer and meditation. We simply don’t know. But we do know that early the next morning He returns to the temple. Why does He return? We have now reached the morning of the eighth day, the Last Great Day. Christ has returned to teach the people. We continue the story in John 8.

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them [John 8:1-2].

The next event is one of the better-known ones in the pages of Scripture. Christ is approached by the Pharisees with a woman caught in adultery.²⁰ This is a ploy by the Pharisees to trap Christ and discredit Him in front of the people. But Christ actually discredits and embarrasses those who have forced the issue. The event concludes with Christ continuing His teaching. This is clearly the same day, and after the disturbance Christ continues to instruct the people.

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” [John 8:12].

It is interesting that the second major ceremony during the Feast was the lighting of the temple area. Edersheim provides a vivid description of the brightness of the area:

¹⁹ Ibid., 283.

²⁰ Note on John 7:53-8:11 from *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985) states that many textual scholars believe that these verses were not part of the original manuscript of the Gospel of John. Other scholars hold a contrary view. Regardless of the view taken, this issue does not affect the chronology of this section of Scripture. For more discussion on the subject and an exposition of the passage, see the appendix before the bibliography for the book of John in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

At the close of the first day of the feast the worshippers descended to the Court of the Women, where great preparations had been made. Four golden candelabras were there, each with four golden bowls, and against them rested four ladders; and four youths of priestly descent held, each a pitcher of oil, capable of holding one hundred and twenty log, from which they filled each bowl. The old, worn breeches and girdles of the priests served for wicks to these lamps. There was not a court in Jerusalem that was not lit up by the light of “the house of water-pouring.”²¹

The illuminating of the temple area hearkened back to the time of Moses when the cloud of fire led Israel in the wilderness and the *Shechinah* descended on the tabernacle and later the temple.

It will have been observed that the two most important ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles—the pouring out of water and the illumination of the Temple—were of post-Mosaic origin. According to Jewish tradition, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night had first appeared to Israel on the 15th of Tishri, the first day of the feast. On that day also Moses was said to have come down from the Mount, and announced to the people that the Tabernacle of God was to be reared among them. We know that the dedication of Solomon’s Temple and the descent of the *Shechinah* took place at this feast.²²

After an extensive discussion with the people, things begin to get out of hand and there is an effort to find stones to kill Christ. But he secretly makes His way through the crowd and leaves the temple area. The message Christ delivers about being the light of the world can clearly be linked to the theme of the eighth day.

Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by [John 8:58-59].

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 that the man go and bathe in the pool of Siloam. This all takes place as Christ is departing from the temple, still on the eighth day.

“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing [John 9:1-7].

This is all very upsetting to the Pharisees. Next we find an interesting statement being made by John.

²¹ Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, 283.

²² *Ibid.*, 286.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes [John 9:13-14].

This discussion and story continues to unfold through the 9th chapter of John and even into the 10th chapter. The events recorded in John 8–9 occur on a Sabbath day, which corresponds to the eighth day of the Feast. 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. In a later setting, John refers to the first day of Unleavened Bread as a “high day” (John 19:31). Christ was accused of violating the Sabbath by healing the blind man. For the Pharisees, there was nothing more sacred than the Sabbath. The Sabbath prohibitions took precedence over the Holy Days, since food preparation and some work (not servile) could be done on the annual days (with the exception of Atonement).

Scholars seem to be almost equally divided on the day these events took place. Some feel that the events being described took place on the seventh (and last) day of the Feast of Tabernacles, based on the water ceremony, while others believe it was the eighth day of the Feast, the annual Holy Day. Following are two examples from different sources, both commenting on John 7.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

7:37. The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with certain festival rituals. One was a solemn procession each day from the temple to the Gihon Spring. A priest filled a gold pitcher with water while the choir sang Isaiah 12:3. Then they returned to the altar and poured out the water. This ritual reminded them of the water from the rock during the wilderness wanderings (Num. 20:8-11; Ps. 78:15-16). It also spoke prophetically of the coming days of Messiah (cf. Zech. 14:8, 16-19). The Feast’s seventh and **last** day was its **greatest** (cf. Lev. 23:36). **Jesus stood**, in contrast with the Rabbis’ usual position of being seated while teaching. **Said in a loud voice** (cf. John 1:15; 7:28; 12:44) was a way of introducing a solemn announcement. His offer, Come to Me and **drink**, was an offer of salvation (cf. 4:14; 6:53-56).²³

Commentary on the Whole Bible, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown:

37-39. the last day, that great day of the feast—the eighth (Lev. 23:39). It was a sabbath, the last feast day of the year, and distinguished by very remarkable ceremonies.²⁴

As you can see from these two quotes, the scholars are not in agreement as to the placement of this event, although they all agree that this took place either on the seventh

²³ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985).

²⁴ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961).

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

day of the Feast or the separate festival, the eighth day. There are really only two possible explanations for when the events in John 7–9 took place:

1). Christ began speaking on the seventh day of the Feast (or possibly on the night at the beginning of the eighth day). This would fit the reference to water, since the Jews would have performed the water ceremony that very day. If this is the case, then Christ went out to the Mount of Olives and returned to the temple area on what would have been the eighth day or Last Great Day. The events of John 8 and 9 must occur in a one-day time span. This day is called the Sabbath day. It was also the eighth day, a Holy Day.

2). John 7:37 is referring to the eighth day. If this is the case, then John 8–9 must have taken place the next day, which is called the Sabbath. This means that the healing of the blind man took place the day after the eighth day and it was also on a Sabbath.²⁵

Given all these factors, together with the possible calendrical scenarios (see accompanying chart), the first option seems more plausible. Christ is speaking on the seventh day of the Feast (or the beginning of the eighth in the evening) and all the events in John 8 and 9 occur on the eighth day (during the day). This day is clearly called the Sabbath. How does this affect our understanding of the calendar?

This was the last Feast of Tabernacles Christ kept before His crucifixion (a fact that is widely accepted). By checking the days when the Holy Days occurred in the first century, we can arrive at some rather interesting conclusions. Finding the year Christ was crucified will be much easier if we can establish specific dates for the Holy Days. In which year did the eighth day of the Feast fall on a Sabbath or the day before a Sabbath? We have provided a chart to go along with this paper, which will show the results of such a search. If you take a look at the chart you will see that the only years within a reasonable time frame where the eighth day of the Feast could have occurred on a Sabbath are 27, 30, 31, 33 and 34. This conclusion is reached by using both calculation methods (with postponements, without postponements) and observation. But if we add the next factor to the equation, the crucifixion of Christ on a Wednesday the following year, we narrow the possibilities to only one year. Only the year 30 C.E. satisfies both needs as the year for Christ's observance of His final Feast of Tabernacles.

The interesting thing about the year 30 C.E. is that you can forget postponements altogether. Without postponements you would arrive at the same conclusions about this year—Trumpets, the first day of the Feast and the eighth day of the Feast all fell on the Sabbath. Only the year 30 C.E. will satisfy all these parameters. This places the crucifixion of Christ in 31 C.E.—the next Passover after this Feast of Tabernacles. In

²⁵ In our booklet, *God's Holy Day Plan*, this statement can be found on page 52: "Jesus apparently spoke these words on the 'eighth day,' described in the last part of Leviticus 23:39. This day immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles but is a separate festival with its own distinct meaning." This phrase represents the differences of opinion that exist among scholars. But, as we establish in this paper, the more likely explanation is that Christ spoke these words on the seventh, or last, day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

order to arrive at a Wednesday date for Passover in 31, you must employ intercalation and postponements. This, of course, implies a fixed calendar. What are the facts?

One important fact is that the knowledge of how to perform accurate calculations involving the sun and the moon has been available for thousands of years. We have evidence of Babylonian and Egyptian calendars dating from prior to the sixth century B.C.E. We find an incredible degree of accuracy in these calendars. The Gezer calendar can be shown to date from as early as the 10th century B.C.E.

While the insertion of a 13th month to the Hebrew calendar is technically not a postponement, it does effect a change in the timing of the Holy Days in reference to the weekly cycle. No matter when you add a 13th month, you will either be too early (not quite 30 days off) or too late (more than 30 days off). This result is inevitable because the accumulation of time is not in evenly divisible amounts. You cannot arrive at an exact 30-day shortfall at any time because of the length of a lunar month in comparison to a solar year. But everyone agrees that without the intercalated month, the Holy Days would soon be out of season. And when you add an additional 30-day month to the previous year, you will “move” the Holy Days two days in the week from where they would have fallen (if Trumpets is on Thursday *without* intercalation, it will be on the Sabbath *with* intercalation). Most find this to be not only acceptable, but absolutely necessary. It is also true that the Bible demands such a solution to prevent the Holy Days from drifting out of season. It is simply a fact that leap years are essential to the integrity of the calendar.

It is apparent that intercalation existed prior to the time of Christ. The Babylonians clearly used the insertion of a 13th month to their calendar. While some speculate that the Jews obtained their calendar from the Babylonians, is it not possible that the Babylonians obtained *their* calendar from the *Jews*? Remember the statements made in Daniel about the wisdom of these young Jewish men. It is true that the pattern for intercalation has changed through the years, but since the calendar is a physical tool used to establish a method for the unified observance of God’s Holy Days, it should not surprise or shock us that it has been in need of adjustment over the centuries. There is no calendar in existence that has not needed adjustment down through the years. All of the above leads us back to a 30 C.E. Feast of Tabernacles (John 7–9) and a 31 C.E. crucifixion date (Wednesday Passover) as shown in a careful reading of the Gospels.

Christ died on Wednesday afternoon in the year 31 C.E. This is the only scenario that fits the accounts as recorded in the Gospels. There were two Sabbaths the week that Christ died—an annual Sabbath (the first day of Unleavened Bread) and the weekly Sabbath. It wasn’t until after the weekly Sabbath that the women journeyed to His tomb. Christ observed the Passover the night before He died, but He died on the afternoon of Nisan 14 when the Jews were making preparations for their observance of the Holy Day (Nisan 15). This establishes Christ’s last Feast of Tabernacles in the year 30 C.E. This date can be confirmed by calculation (see accompanying chart). It is also true that the Holy Days fall on the same days with or without postponements for that particular year.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

This is not true of 31 C.E. To arrive at a Wednesday Passover in 31 C.E., you must invoke some form of postponement, and specifically postponement rule # 1.

The fact that there is controversy regarding the year of Christ's crucifixion must not be ignored. Scholars have debated this question for hundreds of years, but most of those who have questioned the validity of the Hebrew calendar accept a Wednesday crucifixion, which would require either a 30 C.E. or a 31 C.E. date. They reject the traditional view of a 33 C.E. date, when Passover took place on a Friday. An interesting article appeared in the journal *Nature* back in 1983. The article was written by Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, and deals with this very subject. The article quotes from Tacitus and declares that the only possible dates for the crucifixion are 26 to 36 C.E.

Tacitus agrees with the four gospels that the Crucifixion took place during the period when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judaea, between AD 26 and AD 36.²⁶

The article concludes that the date for the crucifixion is the traditional 33 C.E., but, in so doing, it provides some interesting information regarding the full moon and an eclipse of the moon. In their research the authors state that there was most likely an eclipse of the moon the evening after Christ was crucified. Various sources are quoted for proof of this event:

Since the darkened Sun occurred at the Crucifixion it is reasonable to suppose that "the Moon turned to blood" occurred that same evening, "before that great and glorious day", the Resurrection. This interpretation of Acts 2:20 is supported by F.F. Bruce [*The Acts of the Apostles*, Inter-Varsity, 1952]. Other documentary evidence suggests that on the day of the Crucifixion, the Moon appeared like blood. The so-called "Report of Pilate", a New Testament Apocryphal fragment states that at the Crucifixion "the Sun was darkened; the stars appeared and in all the world people lighted lamps from the sixth hour till evening; the Moon appeared like blood." Although much of the Apocrypha cannot be used as primary historical evidence, Tertullian records that Pilate wrote a report of all the events surrounding the Crucifixion for the Emperor Tiberius. The manuscript fragments of the "Report of Pilate" are all of later date, but may be partly based on the lost original.²⁷

In the article, the authors include a table of all lunar eclipses between the years 26 and 36 C.E. There were no eclipses recorded for the years 28, 30 and 34. There were two eclipses in the year 31 C.E. The earliest eclipse recorded for that year occurred on the evening of April 25 (Julian calendar, midnight to midnight reckoning). Interestingly this is the date established for the Passover in the year 31 using calculation, the rules of postponement and the intercalary month. While this evidence is sketchy and cannot be taken as absolute proof, it is interesting that the authors of the article, in attempting to prove the year 33 C.E. for the crucifixion, provide the information that can be used to

²⁶ Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington, "Dating the Crucifixion," *Nature* 306 (December 1983): 743.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 745.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

confirm (by their logic) the year 31, and a Wednesday, April 25, date! (The authors do not recognize 31 C.E. as an intercalary or leap year, and therefore have the Passover falling on Tuesday, March 27, for that year.) All this is based upon their belief that there was a lunar eclipse the night after Christ's crucifixion. There is no confirmation of this event in Scripture, nor can it be proven that Peter was referring to such an event in his Pentecost sermon. This is certainly speculative, but it provides an interesting possibility. The table of eclipses of the moon between 26 and 36 C.E., as it appears in the article, is reproduced below:

Lunar eclipses visible from Jerusalem A.D. 26-36²⁸

Date*	Day+	Magnitude++	Time Eclipse Started
15 Aug. A.D. 26	Friday	50%	23.16
31 Dec. A.D. 27	Wednesday	70%	23.45
14 June A.D. 29	Tuesday	Total	20.45
9 Dec. A.D. 29	Friday	45%	20.92
25 April A.D. 31	Wednesday	35%	21.58
19 Oct. A.D. 31	Friday	25%	4.82
3 April A.D. 33	Friday	60%	Rising Moon
27 Sept. A.D. 33	Sunday	85%	4.88
11 Feb. A.D. 35	Friday	55%	4.91
7 Aug. A.D. 35	Sunday	60%	20.30
31 Jan. A.D. 36	Tuesday	Total	Rising Moon
26 July A.D. 36	Thursday	Total	22.23

*Julian calendar.

+Julian day (from midnight to midnight, as distinct from the Jewish day).

++Fraction of the area of the moon covered at the midpoint of the eclipse.

What Does All This Mean?

We must ask ourselves some important questions about the Hebrew calendar. One such question is, does it follow the phases of the moon? The answer is, yes it does. Only one Holy Day occurs at the time of a new moon—the Feast of Trumpets. Observation (since you can't see an actual conjunction, you must calculate it) can only be accomplished within a 15- to 30-hour window of the actual conjunction. The article by Humphreys and Waddington states: "Hitherto it has been customary to assume arbitrarily that the sickle of the new Moon would be invisible to the unaided eye until a certain length of time (usually 30 hours) had elapsed since conjunction."²⁹ The article goes on to say that this has been slightly altered in recent times (but there is no true record of less than 15 hours). Obviously, with calculation we can be much more accurate, but the new moon is fundamental to the Feast of Trumpets. Two Holy Days occur on a full moon

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 744.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

(which can be observed, depending on weather conditions): the evening of the first day of Unleavened Bread and the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. If the moon is visible (no clouds or other obstructions), no matter what part of the world you reside in, you will see a full moon on the evening at the beginning of these two Holy Days—even though one is in the spring and the other is in the fall.

While there are some important considerations and legitimate questions about the Hebrew calendar, it does serve as a tool which has been preserved by the Jews. Its origin 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 fourth century. We simply don't have enough information to substantiate that claim. However, with the biblical account, the practice of Christ and the apostles, coupled with the information that is available to us, it has been determined that the Hebrew calendar is the correct calendar for our use today.

Some quote the Talmud (or the Mishnah) in an effort to prove that the Jews were not using rules of postponement during the period of the second temple (515 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.). There is simply no way to prove this with certainty. The Mishnah is “a collection of rabbinic laws arranged in sixty-three tractates and six orders which cover agricultural tithes, public feasts, marriage (especially economic arrangements), torts, sacrifices at the Temple, and ritual purity. Created about A.D. [C.E.] 200 in Palestine under Rabbi Judah the Prince, the text underwent some evolution and was interpreted and its teachings modified by the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds.”³⁰

The Talmuds (Palestinian and Babylonian) are commentaries on the Mishnah. The Palestinian Talmud covers the first four orders of the Mishnah and was completed in the mid-fifth century C.E. The Babylonian Talmud covers the Mishnaic orders of feasts, women, damages and sacrifices, and was completed in the mid-sixth century C.E. “The Babylonian Talmud was more fully edited than the Palestinian, and became authoritative for most of Judaism because of the dominance of the Babylonian community well into the Islamic period.”³¹ All of these documents postdate the period of the Second Temple and were compiled by the Pharisees and their descendants. There are only passing references to the calendar in these documents, and nowhere can you find a detailed accounting. It is also true that contradictory statements can be found within the confines of the Talmud. Here is an example: It was alleged by one Rabbi Simeon that Rabbi Akiva, first to second century, while in prison, intercalated three years in succession. This would have happened after the fall of the Second Temple. “The Rabbis, however, retorted.... The court [of the Sanhedrin] sat and intercalated each year at its proper time.”³² Whose word should one believe? Was it possible for a rabbi in prison to calculate intercalary years apart from the Sanhedrin?

³⁰ Achtemier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Mishnah.”

³¹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Talmud.”

³² “Sanhedrin 12a,” in *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1935), 53.

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

Summary—Rules of Postponement

The sequence of events in John 7–9, i.e., Last Great Day (eighth day) being on a weekly Sabbath, can only be satisfied by a 30 C.E. date (in order to accommodate a following-year Passover on Wednesday—see accompanying chart). 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 C.E. Based on the evidence presented in the Gospel accounts, it appears impossible to obtain the aforementioned results without the use of rules of postponement in the first century. Therefore, while the Bible does not reveal specific rules of postponement, they are validated by the biblical account and the example of Jesus Christ. In all of our studies, we have found no other way to explain what the Bible clearly says regarding these events in Christ’s life.

Summary—Molad of Tishri

Another difficult area of the calendar revolves around the determination of the first day of Tishri and from there the first day of Abib (the first month of the year). The rules of postponement address one aspect of this issue, but what about observation versus calculation? Observation requires the sighting of a crescent to be acceptable (either the final crescent prior to the darkness of the conjunction, or the first crescent following the darkness). The sighting of the crescent can only occur several hours after the actual conjunction. The definition of *Molad* according to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* is the renewal or “birth” of the moon.³³ Based on available sources of observation, there are no years within a reasonable time frame (see accompanying chart) that would accommodate both the Feast of Tabernacles as outlined in John 7–9 and the Passover week of Christ’s crucifixion, except 30–31 C.E. Apparently, calculation and observation were used to determine the date for Tishri 1 during this period. 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.

Summary—Sequence of Leap Years

The questions about intercalary years and their sequence of use are also addressed by the understanding of John 7–9 in conjunction with events of the week of Christ’s crucifixion. An accurate understanding of this section of Scripture requires the use of an intercalary month for the year 31 C.E. in order to accommodate a Wednesday crucifixion (actually added to the end of the previous year). Without an intercalary month, the Passover in 31 C.E. would have occurred on a Monday, which is not permissible based on

³³ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), s.v. “Calendar.”

Summary of the Hebrew Calendar

Doctrinal Paper

the biblical evidence. Therefore, the use of an intercalary month (resulting in a leap year), was a normal part of the calendar calculations of the first century and is in harmony with the historical record of leap year sequences that has been passed down to us. Because of the irregularities of the solar and lunar cycles, periodic adjustments to leap year sequences have been made to compensate over the years.

Conclusion

After a study of all the issues and papers, the Council of Elders 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. While the major issues seem to revolve around the four rules of postponement (Dehioth), the conclusion of the Council is to accept the calendar using the current calculations and rules. The rules of postponement are used in the establishment of the first day of Tishri. Once the first day of Tishri is established, then the calendar can be set, and the first day of Abib can be determined. This, in turn, makes it possible to establish the dates for the Holy Days. It is incorrect to refer to the rules of postponement as "moving" the Holy Days. While we must always be willing to listen and learn, in the absence of any new information, the Council has chosen to confirm its support for the use of the Hebrew calendar as the official position of the United Church of God, *an International Association*.