

Faith And The Calendar (Part One)

Is God Faithful in His Oversight?

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Today I am going to begin a sermon series in regard to the calendar. I am going to revise the original article that I wrote in 1994 entitled "The Cancerous Calendar Controversy," and then add to it the material that has come to mind since that time.

In researching that first article, I came to the conclusion on my own that there is no calendar in the Bible. I have since found confirmation of that in several places, but without ever saying that directly in that original article, it nonetheless became the basis for much of the material that was in that article. But there is one other major issue. In fact it is *the* issue for us, and it is this issue that I want to add to that article, and is going to be a major part of this message that I give today.

At the Feast I asked you for help in resolving this thing, and I want to thank all of those of you out there who responded, because your help was, I feel, very effective.

Some people have the mistaken idea that Herbert Armstrong was uninformed regarding the calendar, but that is very far from the truth. There is nothing new under the sun. The church, like mankind, keeps going through the same general tests over and over again with the same general material, and in each case where we are tested on this material, it is a test of our faith. The material for these tests is simply re-presented about every 20 to 40 years or so, and it seems new to those who have never heard it before. There is a saying that "what goes around comes around." There is another saying that "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Both of these generalities are generally true, and thus some are led to think that Herbert Armstrong's contact with the calendar was passing at best

because they feel that it took place so long ago, and that these things that have come up in the last, let us say, year or two are new, and that he never had to face them. Oh, yes, he did.

That he came into contact with the calendar they do not doubt. They believe that neither he nor anybody else with him was qualified to really evaluate the matters bearing on whether or not this issue is valid. But again, this is not the case. He, and those helping him, saw right through to the heart of the issue, and in looking back on these things from my perspective, I have to smite myself because I was so slow to pick up on what is the central issue here.

First of all, I want you to remember that Herbert Armstrong was baptized all the way back in 1927, and he fellowshipped with the Church of God, Seventh Day, and continued to fellowship and cooperate with them all the way up into the late thirties and into the early forties. He was introduced to the calendar by them, because they kept Passover on the 14th day of Nisan according to the calculated Hebrew calendar.

Furthermore, he came to understand that he was to keep the holy days very early in his conversion, and for seven years he and Loma kept them according to the dates on the calculated Hebrew calendar. In fact, until he found differently, he followed it so closely that he kept Pentecost on Sivan 6, according to the Pharisaic custom. When he discovered that was an error, he changed when he was keeping Pentecost by counting more accurately, but he did not change the calendar.

Then late in 1939 and in early 1940 the calendar itself arose as an issue because an elder of some prominence in the Church of God, Seventh Day, published a date for the first day of the year different by one month from what the Church of God, Seventh Day, officially published. The members inquired of Herbert Armstrong as to who was right. Now Herbert Armstrong inquired of the man as to how he arrived at these dates. The man replied that he got them from researching secular sources such as encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries and so forth. In the meanwhile, the Eugene church, other interested parties, and Herbert Armstrong researched into it privately as well.

In the *Good News Letter* of 1940, a full report of Herbert Armstrong and this whole experience is given. This letter is quoted by Herman Hoeh in a *Good News* magazine article of April 1981. If any of you are able to get that article, and you are interested and concerned regarding the calendar at all, I would urge you to get that. Dr. Hoeh, quoting Herbert Armstrong, writes:

In conclusion, unless God has preserved His sacred calendar through the Jews, then we do not know how to figure Passover or any of the holy days this year. For there is no authority any other way. There is no Bible authority whatsoever for figuring the first day of the first month from the new moon nearest the spring equinox.

"As soon as I learned," Mr. Armstrong continued, "of [the man's] published dates for the festivals this year, I sent him a telegram asking his authority for his dates. His reply is that he bases his method of figuring on certain statements of profane history found in encyclopedias." He [the other man] replies, 'In some Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, or Jewish encyclopedia, I read something like this: "The ancient reckoning of Passover was from the actual sight of the new moon nearest the vernal equinox." '

Dr. Hoeh continued, "After quoting various views from sources then extant, Mr. Armstrong concluded:

Surely we can see that profane history only contradicts itself, is inaccurate, cannot be depended upon and has no authority whatever. There is no Bible authority for any of it. God did not commit His oracles, or the preservation of His times, to profane history. . . . they have been preserved by the Jews.

After thorough study of the Bible, of the Hebrew calendar, of history and every angle—after going into the matter with all of the Eugene brethren and other brethren who have made a special study of this question, we have unanimously agreed that the Hebrew Calendar has been preserved correct by the Jews.

In addition to this, we must also remember that all of this took place before Ambassador College was founded. After Ambassador College was founded, Herbert Armstrong was joined by men who had the academic background in mathematics, and even in astronomy, to assist him. Perhaps most notably, Kenneth Hermann, whose training was in mathematics and astronomy, Herman Hoeh, and later on when we get into the computer era, John Kossey. They all kept arriving at the same answer.

Now listen to this. The issue on the calendar is not a mathematical /astronomical one, but like everything else in the lives of those who are called, it is a biblical *faith* issue.

Let me summarize what Herbert Armstrong said in this article. He clearly saw that there are not enough rules in the Bible to establish a calendar.

A calendar is not the simple device that you and I tend to think of, as just something that you hang up on the wall. A calendar must operate on full days, but the heavenly bodies upon which the calendar is based do not operate on full days. They have their own schedules.

You are very familiar with the solar year, which is $365\frac{1}{4}$ days long. What do you do with that one-quarter day? Every four years you have to add it to the calendar to make sure that the chart on the wall matches the heavenly bodies that are up there circling around. But the Hebrew calculated calendar is much more complex because it also involves the movements of the moon, and the movements of the moon are far more irregular than the movements of the earth around the sun.

The moon in its orbit we will say averages 29 days and a little over a half of a day. Again, it is not a full day. But when you are keeping a calendar you have to operate with full days, and that half a day has to be made up somewhere, in some way, in order to keep the chart on the wall accurate with what the heavens are doing up there. Putting the moon in makes things a great deal more difficult, so you need a lot of rules in order to keep the chart on the wall accurate with the heavenly bodies that are spinning around up in there.

Herbert Armstrong saw that there are not enough rules given in the Bible to say that there is really a calendar in the Bible.

1. He clearly saw that there are not enough rules in the Bible to establish a calendar.
2. He saw that God had given no authority to anyone outside the Bible to establish a calendar. And brethren, this even includes you and me, as we will see later on in this sermon.
3. He saw that it was to the Jews that the oracles of God had been committed.

What if one feels that the Jews made some mistakes in their past handling of the calendar? Well, let us let the Bible give a simple and a basic answer to that.

Acts 7:38-39 This is he [meaning Moses] that was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the living oracles to give unto us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.

There are just two things I want to pick out of that verse there. One is the term "living oracles." A better translation would be *living sayings*. Remember that. "Living sayings." It will mean something again a little later in the sermon.

The second thing that I want you to note here in verse 39 is, "whom our fathers would not obey." We are dealing with a faithless people here who were given the "living sayings" of God, but they would not obey. They were a faithless people—a people who were prone to make (we will call them) mistakes. So you do not trust the Jews because they make mistakes. They are human.

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because that to them were committed the oracles of God.

They had these *living oracles* given to *them*.

Romans 3:3 For what if some did not believe? ...

We have got faithless Jews who are handling the *living oracles* of God. What if they do not believe, and what if they sin, and what if they make mistakes?

Romans 3:3-4 ...Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! ["Let us not even think of that!"]
Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That you may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when you are judged."

What if the Jews were without faith and they made mistakes? Shall their lack of faith make the faithfulness of God of none effect? No. God is going to be true regardless of what people do. People to whom God gives responsibility can sin in not being faithful to that responsibility, but that does not change God. And in this case, regardless of the sins of these people, He will preserve His oracles in spite of them.

Tell me something: Has God preserved the Old Testament? Do you realize that the preservation of the Old Testament, from everything that these scholars are able to tell, is more accurate than the preservation of the New Testament? In spite of all these things about the Jews and their sin, God somehow managed to preserve it, and He preserved the calendar, as we are going to see as we go along.

Now what happens if a people that God has entrusted responsibility with do these kind of things? Well, God has several alternatives that He can go to.

He can work with the person to get him to repent. If that does not help, He can get somebody else to do it, can He not? Well He did not do that in the case of the Jews. He worked with them in spite of them.

Turn to I Samuel 16. God's hands are not bound by what men do.

I Samuel 16:1 NOW the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."

If need be, God will, as we would say today, "fire him." He will simply prune away those who are making the errors if they will not repent, and He will replace them with someone who will faithfully follow through.

Now this is just one example, but there are multitudes of them. When the Northern Ten Tribes rebelled, God pruned them off. Not forever, but He pruned them off, and He worked solely through Judah. And Judah alone, instead of all twelve tribes, retained the oracles. God will do this to an individual, to a group, or even a nation.

Brethren, the calendar is at least partly a sovereignty issue. Do we trust God's sovereignty over His creation? Does God rule His creation? His church? Can men put something over on Him?

I do not know whether you are aware of it, but the Jews officially rejected the New Testament as Scripture in a conference in a little town called Jedna in Judea in AD 90. I only bring this up, because in this case they did not have the opportunity. Once they rejected it, God turned to somebody else. Now who preserved the New Testament? The Greeks. Right?

Now let us ask something. Have the Greeks been more faithful in their responsibility than the Jews? The answer to that is "no!" Probably even less so, but does that change the faithfulness of God? Not at all. God preserved the New Testament in spite of the Greeks. He preserved the Old Testament—all of the oracles committed to the Jews—in spite of them. And so you can read Old Testament and New Testament, and have confidence in the things

that are there because of the sovereignty, the faithfulness, and the providence of God for His people.

The Jews then are responsible to God for the calendar, and the reason is because the holy days cannot be kept without it. In other words, the calendar is an attachment to the Old Testament. But even though there is no calendar *in* the Old Testament, the calendar is a necessary attachment to it if the holy days are going to be kept on the correct dates. And so the preservation of neither the Old Testament, the week, nor the calendar has been given to the church, or anybody else, but to the Jews, and they have done it in spite of themselves, because God is overseeing the responsibility.

This whole issue is a question of government, whether God is capable of ruling, whether God can intervene in the affairs of His people to correct their errors. So can we have faith in God's faithfulness?

Did God correct the leadership of the Worldwide Church of God regarding Pentecost? He did, did He not? But He had fifty years to correct the calendar while there was an apostle alive, and He did nothing. That ought to tell us something. What has God shown us in the way of a calendar that He is pleased to accept?

It is interesting, but Herman Hoeh says something in that April 1981 *Good News* article that I want to read here. It is on page 28. He said that God corrected those who were failing to preserve the calendar correctly. He says this:

The Romans finally put an end to visual observation of the new moons by the Jews. The Jews' chief leader, Hillel II, whose responsibility it was to regulate the calendar, was **forced** to issue a decree for the year AD 358-359 to (re)institute the authority of the fixed calendar we know today as The Hebrew Calendar. (emphasis ours)

"Forced" is very interesting. There is a little bit of history background behind that statement, but again, if you can find that article I think that you will find it quite informative.

We are getting close now to one of the major issues regarding the calendar, and I have used the word recently, reading from Herbert Armstrong's article from 1940. That word is "authority." What authority does an individual have to devise a new calendar? What authority does the church, as a body, have to do the same thing?

I want to read a major portion of a letter that I have here in my hand. How I came to have this letter is kind of interesting. It was given to me in 1969 when I was a local elder in the Long Beach congregation. It was given to me by a member who wrote a question to Kenneth Hermann at Ambassador College, and what I have here is Kenneth Hermann's reply. Do not ask me why I chose to save this letter. It is an obscure, esoteric subject that I would not be ordinarily doing it, especially back in 1969. But I tell you, I honestly believe that God made me save it, because He knew that it was going to be an issue in my life and your life at some time.

Kenneth Hermann catches the essence of this problem about as well as anybody I have ever seen. He begins:

The problem of producing a calendar from astronomical observation is not at all a simple one. Mr. [Dave] Albert brought in your letter and we discussed a number of the variables that enter in. It is easy to look at a table and conclude that *maybe* God's church is keeping holy days several days late. But consider the basis of timekeeping. When would *you* begin a day? At sunrise, noon, midnight, sunset, 6 p.m. when the sun is due west? Or 6 a.m. when the sun is due east?

Revelation is needed. We need an Oracle from God to keep time His way. What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way (Romans 3).

Let's continue with the problem. When would *you* begin the week? With which day? It would have to be revealed. No? When would *you* begin the month? With full moon or new moon? With the sunset (or 6 p.m.) that preceded the Molad (the conjunction or the

astronomer's new moon) or with the sunset that followed it? Man can observe but he is going to need revelation to carry out timekeeping God's way.

Search out the problem further. When would *you* begin the year? With the spring equinox? With the summer solstice? With the fall equinox? With the winter solstice? Or with the new moon preceding (or following) which of the above four? Or would you allow the Passover to 'wander forty days in the wilderness' of the other days of the year as is the present rule?

Now another problem: The tropical year, (the year of the return of the seasons) is a fairly stable quantity though it changes slowly with time. The average synodic month (from new moon to new moon) is also a fairly stable quantity though it also changes slowly over the centuries. *But* this 29.53059 *average* synodic month is an average. 'The length of the synodic month may vary as much as thirteen hours, chiefly because of the eccentricity of the orbit and the consequent nonuniformity of motion.'

And then he tells where that came from. Continuing the quote:

Before we come to the answer let's expand the problem a bit further. Knowing now that the average synodic month is 29.53059 and that *each* synodic month has *a different length*, how many days are you going to put in *each* month? The present series of 30, 29, 30, 29, 30 for the first seven months of the Sacred Calendar would obviously be at times just a bit out of step with the astronomical observance. [Correct.]

I also read in another technical book that it is mathematically possible to have five 30-day months in a row. Figure that one out! The moon is sinister in its operation!

Now continuing the quote:

And the insertion of a 13th month is another problem. Would any two church members agree as to when to add a thirteenth month, how many days should it have, whether to insert this extra month just before Nisan or the twelve other possible places? Do you see the problem?

The problem is, if we do not have revelation from God, if He has not assigned this responsibility to someone, every man is going to do what he thinks is right on his own. You are going to have chaos.

Again, continuing the quote:

The conclusion is inescapable, there is no way to avoid it. If man is to have any calendar at all it must come from Authority. Apart from Authority on the calendar and Sabbath every man would go his own way, and the calendar that has been intended to give unity to mankind would disintegrate into thousands of conflicting designs.

The principle is clear. Now all that remains is the question of *why* the new moon dates on God's Sacred Calendar will at times follow a day or two after the astronomical new moons. The question of *whether* God's church might just be keeping God's holy days a day or two days or a month late is *just not a proper question*. God's church follows the Oracle that God guides the Jews to preserve.

Kenneth Hermann caught the major portion of the essence of this issue for us, that despite the clouds of reasoning being put forth by those seeking a calendar change, the central issue for us is to find to whom God has given the authority to construct and preserve a calendar, and then for us to have faith in *God's* faithfulness.

Turn to Lamentations 3. I am going to string three scriptures together because we are looking at the major issue here now in a nutshell.

Lamentations 3:21-22 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed. . .

Apply that principle there to this issue, that we are not consumed by this issue of the calendar, consumed by confusion, consumed by doubt, having no conviction about whether we are doing things right.

Lamentations 3:22-23 . . . because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

There is the issue, as we will continue to show. Let us go now to the New Testament to Hebrews.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

He is faithful. He has not left us without a calendar. Let us go back to Romans 3 and read verses 1 and 2 again.

Romans 3:1-2 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.

Considering these three verses, and of course much more besides, I cannot for the life of me look out into God's creation and understanding how marvelously thorough He has been providing for His creation down to the most infinite detail. He generously provides for the irrational birds and beasts of the field all that they need for life. He has equipped them so that they can survive.

He has created some animals that have symbiotic relationships so that one cannot live without the other, and yet, there they are together so that they can survive. He has done this so that we will understand how lovingly thoughtful and providential He is. And yet somehow we are led to believe that He did not provide a calendar for the very pinnacle of His created efforts—His own children—to use to worship Him. Or that if He did one time bring forth a calendar, He somehow allowed it to lapse into disuse because the Jews pulled the wool over somebody's eyes or did something when He was not looking.

Did He let down in His oversight of the affairs of the church? What kind of a God is this who leaves the church, His children, without a calendar to worship Him for at least 1600 years?

Now if you are at all familiar with the calendar arguments that are going on, you will understand why I said 1600 years. It has to do with when the Hillel II calendar was published in 358-359 AD Every reference that we are able to find of the true church from that period on to the present, we find them celebrating—observing—at least Passover on the same date as the Jews. What calendar, pray tell, were they using? Oftentimes they were confused with being Jews because they were keeping that date.

Did God mislead His people by giving them a calendar that was not applicable to worshipping Him? One that He was displeased with, that He let it go on for 1600 years while they were out there sinning left and right, trying to keep the holy days, and God never corrected it till now—until this latest, smartest generation came along?

The issue here brethren is *do we see God*? Has He been left out of the picture? Brethren, do we see all things pertaining to our life since God has called us have to do with faith and the faithfulness of God? That is the issue—our trust in the faithfulness of God

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith.

Brethren, we are never going to have enough proof from the world that this calendar that we are using is accurate. Do you understand? It is always going

to be a faith issue (your faith) in Romans 3:1-2 and other scriptures which I am going to continue to show you. You trust that because God has said He has given His oracles to them, that He is going to watch over them, and His church is going to be able to worship Him by the dates that are given on that calendar.

Go to Ephesians 2, where there is a companion scripture to again remind us over and over again how important faith is to our lives.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are you have been saved through faith.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.

So where is our faith when we allow ourselves to be drawn away into an area of mathematical technicalities? It is no different from the addictive power of any other sin, except that it tends to be a more intellectual rather than a "fleshly" one. God's faithfulness over the entire link of His purpose is the bottom line. Do you understand that He had to have these people produce a calendar that would work all the way back however far you want to go, and would still be valid and accurate at the time that Jesus Christ returns?

And this calendar that we are using now, I feel from the things that I am able to see in God's Word, has been in operation since at least the days of Hezekiah. I have recently been shown by reading an article that was written by a man with a church of God connection, showing that there is the possibility that it goes all the way back to the beginning, at least before the Flood.

Back to Romans 3:1 again. Brethren, my faith is in the fact that God did, and has, provided and preserved the calendar for His church today in the end-time. If you want to look it up, and it would probably be good for you to refresh your memory in this, but God assigned Temple responsibilities to the Levitical families, and it has never passed from them. He has never rescinded those things—everything, including the sacrifices and the offering of the incense. All of those things, including the calendar, have never been rescinded.

You understand, you know that in the book of Ezekiel there are indications that it is going to be reinstated, at least for a period of time, during the Millennium, because, as He said, they did not do it right the first time. And who is going to do it? The same families that He gave the responsibility to before. The church is now the Temple, but the Levites are still responsible for setting the calendar. That has not been taken from them, and the Levites of course became part of the nation of Judah, and they are ensconced with them, and bunched together with them.

Now some would like to limit this word "oracles" in Romans 3:2 to "writings." But the word simply does not mean "writings." It is the diminutive of the Greek *logion*. It means sayings, utterances, declarations; even little or small words that might be understood as "whispers" or "inspiration." Every synonym for this word has to do with what is spoken. It is only by extension that it includes "writings," because some of what God originally spoke was indeed written by men; thus, the Scriptures. In other words, the word "oracles" is broad enough to include not only what is written, but what does not necessarily *appear* in writing, but is nonetheless inspired of God.

I want you to notice something. We will not notice it too much here because you will have to study this one out yourself. But Paul did not really finish what he started here in Romans 3:1-4, because at the end of verse 4 there begins what is probably the longest digression in the Bible. Paul does not get back to this subject again until Romans 9:4, where he says:

Romans 9:4 Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.

Think of the word "oracles" and the definitions, the usages, I gave of that word. It has to do with the sayings of God. It can even include the "whispers" or "the inspirations of God." Now you apply that to "the service of God" that is in this verse, because to the Israelites was given the service of God. Does God inspire and speak through and to those who are in His service? It does not matter whether a person is a minister. If God is using him, God will inspire that person. God will speak to that person. They are

"sayings of God" to that person. Now to just give you a little bit of proof of that, let us go back to Exodus 31.

Exodus 31:1-6 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting of jewels for setting, and in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, indeed I, have given with him Aholiab the son of Ashisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all of the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you."

Does God speak to those who are serving Him? Absolutely He does. In this case it did not matter whether they were a seamstress, or somebody who was working in jewelry.

Let us go to Ezra 1. I am just doing this so that you will understand the usage of the word "oracle." It is very broad and includes far more than simply the Old Testament.

Ezra 1:1-2 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

God inspires more than the ministry, because the church, the body of Christ, is more than the ministry.

In Romans 3, "Jew" is being used in a national sense. It includes all Israelites living under or within the tribe of Judah. The Levitical family was assigned Temple responsibilities by God, but by the time that this was written here in Romans 3, they were living basically in Judah. So they are still assigned those Temple functions, and should the time come when they are needed for more than proclaiming holy days, they will be ready to sacrifice, or to carry out Temple responsibilities, or furniture, or whatever.

In Amos 9:9, God said He is going to scatter Israel all over the world, but He said, "I'm not going to lose one kernel." He knows where everybody is. He knows where the Levites are. He knows where the Jews are. He knows where every Israelite is. And just understanding His mind, He knows where everybody is—everybody on earth!

Amos 9:9 For surely I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain fall to the ground.

I just said something that is very interesting. I used the word "proclaim." Let us go back to Leviticus 23. Now remember to whom this book is written.

Leviticus 23:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say unto them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My feasts.' "

Leviticus 23:4 These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.

The Levites were to *proclaim* when those days were, year by year, because they were keeping track of the calendar. You know from your own experience that the calendar is different from year to year, and so every year it had to be proclaimed when the holy days were so that people could mark it

on their own little charts and be fully aware of when the days were coming. We are still doing it today. They are still proclaiming it. It was the Levites' responsibility to keep track of time, and then to tell people "when."

The simplicity that is in Christ on this issue is that God has already provided a calendar. It is that simple. We do not have to go about devising one that we think is better. God has already provided one that suits His purpose. He has already taken care of that through the Levites, and we are wasting our time seeking one that we think is better, because He has already shown through past practice that *He has not blessed those who have changed it.*

That is a little bit of an aside, but it is true. Nobody who has ever attempted to change the calendar away from that calculated Hebrew Calendar and used another calendar has prospered. I do not mean that God strikes them dead. I only mean they simply fade from view and become ineffective to the church.

Some people find the Chaldean names on the calendar to be offensive. Are you aware of how they got there? Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Jews, and they went into captivity. Whom did they take with them? They took away real brains, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel, and others. God then stirred up the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar and made sure that those young men were right in the government.

Who do you think revealed the calendar to the Babylonians? I think we have got a pretty good indication that it was Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who revealed it first to the Babylonians, and the Babylonians said, "Hey! This is a better calendar than we have," and so it became their calendar too. And then when Cyrus the Persian conquered the Babylonians, who was number two in government? Daniel was, and the Persians adopted the same calendar. Most of those people spoke Aramaic, the Chaldean language, and so the names became attached. Instead of Abib, we have Nisan. You get the point. That is all it was.

I want to expand on at least one more point here.

Romans 3:1 What advantage then has the Jew? . . .

This is kind of interesting. Let us go back to Genesis 49. Most of us are aware that these are the prophecies that were given to and through Jacob of the direction that his children as tribes were going to go.

Genesis 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah.

What does "scepter" mean? It means, or it is a symbol of authority. It is the staff of authority. "The staff of authority shall not depart from Judah." Remember, ordinarily these things may have gone to Reuben. He was the firstborn, but he defiled his father's bed, and he was bumped from that responsibility. And then God split the blessing into two. He made Joseph the firstborn, and so Joseph had right of inheritance in terms of nationalistic material things, but He made sure and He prophesied through Jacob that the scepter would not depart from Judah. Judah is going to be *the ruling tribe*. Remember, the oracles were given to Judah.

Genesis 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, [lawgiving includes the calendar] until Shiloh come; [Shiloh is a veiled reference to Jesus Christ.] and to Him [Shiloh] shall be the obedience of the people.

Now are the Israelites scattered, or gathered? Well, we are still scattered. We have not been gathered. What is this verse saying? It is saying that the staff of authority shall not depart from the tribe of Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Christ returns. "And to Him [Shiloh] shall the gathering of the people be."

In other words, Judah, as a tribe, has been given that authority by God to be the chief administrator of His law. The Levites administrated one area—things involving the Temple—but Judah's responsibility was not only over the Temple, i.e., religious affairs, but over civil affairs as well. They had the overall administration of the law of God.

Now if you are wondering where Paul got that idea there in Romans 3, you are beginning to see why he said that the oracles were committed to Judah,

and nobody else. They were given to Judah because it is their responsibility. It is also interesting of course that David came from that tribe, and of course Jesus Christ came from that tribe as well.

Psalm 60:7 Gilead is Mine [Gilead was a portion of Manasseh], and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver.

Judah's influence is intended by God to be felt by all the institutions of the land. This of course has been greatly diminished by the scattering of both Israel and Judah, but the principle is clear, and God's Word remains firm, and we have to recognize that. The oracles have been given to them.

Psalm 78:67-72 Moreover He [God] rejected the tent of Joseph, and not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. And He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has established forever. He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes that had young He brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

You begin to see verses like this and you can understand why Paul said what he did.

Turn now to Psalm 114. This one really brings it home. It is succinct. It is so poignant.

Psalm 114:1-2 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became His sanctuary.

Judah was His sacred dwelling place. Judah is the principal tribe where power is to be concentrated, and from which the Messiah is to proceed. The oracles were given to Judah. It is the church's responsibility to recognize that, and to have faith in it, and to conduct ourselves accordingly.

Let us go to Ephesians 2. You will recall what Paul said there in Romans 9 about "to Israel was given the covenants," and so forth, and so I wanted to read this because it is written directly to Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:11-12 Therefore remember that you once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

...

Once a Gentile is converted, in the eyes of God he is no longer an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. He is now *part* of Israel. Everything in God's purpose, once He called Abraham, is being worked out through Israel, of which Judah is the dominant tribe.

Ephesians 2:12 That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants. . .

Why? Because the covenants were given to Israel, and to participate in those covenants they have to become a part of Israel. They are a part most of all of spiritual Israel, but that spiritual Israel is not completely disconnected from physical Israel.

Ephesians 2:12-13 . . . having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near [part of] by the blood of Christ.

So within the commonwealth of Israel is the lawgiver, Judah.

Let me summarize. I think that you can clearly see that we are not going to make any change. We are going to hold fast to what we have been given, because it is *right* .

The two most significant pieces of understanding that I feel regarding this issue are:

1. There is no calendar in the Bible.
2. The real issue is God's faithfulness.

And closely attached is that the oracles have been given to Judah. It is specifically the Levites' responsibility, but Judah is responsible for the administration of those things. Because God is Supreme Sovereign, He can watch over what is going on and make sure that His church has the necessary information on which to operate so that we can worship Him in a way that is pleasing to Him. He did provide.

We are not dealing here directly with *a* Scripture about when we should observe any of the days on an already existing calendar. We are dealing in this issue with the changing of the *entire calendar*, which will affect all the holy days. That, brethren, is something that is *not* within our authority, because that authority has already been given to others, and God expects us to respect *His* authority to do that. So we have no legal authority before God to establish or change something that He has assigned to others. To do so is to call God's oversight into question.

Ken Hermann said something very interesting at the tail end of that letter. He said to this man to whom he wrote the letter, "It's not our responsibility to steady the ark." Do you know what happened to the man who tried to steady the ark? It is our responsibility to be faithful to what we have been given.

Let us close on this thought in I Corinthians 4. We are just going to pluck this principle out of here and apply it to the church; apply it to the calendar.

I Corinthians 4:6-7 Now these things, brethren, I have in a figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you be puffed up on behalf of one against another. For who makes you differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Everyone of us is in the church because of what we received through Herbert Armstrong. Was God faithful? Or was Herbert Armstrong someone He could not control?

Let us look at a command that is given to me as a minister.

I Timothy 6:20 O Timothy! Guard [preserve] what was committed to your trust. . .

What was committed to *my* trust? That which I received.

I Timothy 6:20-21 . . . avoiding profane and idle babblings, and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

That is what the issue is here.

And now something for all of us.

Hebrews 10:19-29 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who

has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

That same Jesus Christ, who inspired the Old Testament and made sure that a workable calendar was given to His people in the Old Testament and continues right on through. He is the One that we would trample all over if we reject what He has been faithful in providing us with. That may seem strong to you, but I feel it very firmly, that I am on solid ground in saying things like this.

Hebrews 10:35-36 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.