

Faith And The Calendar (Part Two)

Who Is Responsible for the Calendar?

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This sermon is connected to the previous one on the calendar in that it follows the theme that our faith in the faithfulness of God is a critical dimension in regard to the calendar. The critical dimension is not any technical mathematical computations. It is not the postponements or any suspicions that we may have personally in regard to the Jews. We will see as we go along what the critical issue is a little bit more thoroughly.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

This verse shows in one brief succinct statement how vastly important faith is to us. Without it we cannot please God. The phrase—"must believe that He is"—is somewhat misleading. It, at first glance, gives the impression that all one must do is believe that God exists. But understanding this phrase properly shows a great deal more, and it cannot be lifted from its overall context within the entirety of the chapter.

Now listen to this quote from the *Adam Clarke Commentary* regarding this phrase:

The man who professes that it is his duty to worship God must, if he act rationally, do it on the conviction that there is such a being, infinite, eternal, unoriginated, and self-existent. The cause of all other being on whom all being depends, and by whose energy, bounty, and providence, all beings exist, live, and are supplied with the means of continued existence in life. He must believe also that He rewards them that diligently seek Him, that He is not indifferent to His own worship, that He requires adoration, and religious

service from men, and that He blesses and especially protects and saves those who in simplicity and uprightness of heart seek and serve Him.

This kind of faith is not a shallow, passing fancy, but a living, devoted, and disciplined conviction that carries through to every aspect of one's life in an effort to be like Him, because that is what "seeking Him" means. We must always remember that because God calls and reveals Himself to "the called," that, biblically, "seeking Him" does not mean to look for Him in the hope that one might find Him, but to search, in order to be *like* Him. This kind of faith brings honor to Him. It enables one to worship Him in spirit and produces works that are similar to those that are described in the remainder of this chapter.

In regard to faith and the calendar *per se*, we are not dealing directly with Scripture as to the rules of the calendar's operations. Rather, we are dealing with faith in the assignment of responsibilities God has given within Scripture. The oracles of God have been committed to the Jews, and the calendar is included within the oracles of God. Our faith is in God's sovereignty, in His right to assign responsibility, and His oversight of those He has assigned the responsibility to. In other words, He's on the job.

A more specific description: Our responsibility is ascribed in the Bible as to be *faithful* to what *we* have been given. Last week I read to you I Timothy 6: 20-21, and I said to you that this is something that is directed to every minister. It is directed to me, but please do not think because it is directed to me that it does not apply to you. Everybody has to do this, but there is a special responsibility given to the ministry that God is going to hold the ministry to. If we are going to be a faithful steward to what we have been given, we are going to make sure that you have this available to you, and then you have to follow through and do what the ministry does.

I Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy! Guard [protect, preserve] what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Pray tell, what is Paul talking about? What is Timothy to guard? Timothy was to guard what Paul the apostle had given him in the way of preaching.

Now do you believe that Herbert Armstrong was an apostle? Was he used of God to raise up the church at the end time? Do you think God had oversight of Herbert Armstrong and that He was able to watch over him so that he would pass on to us the things that we need for salvation? Certainly that includes the calendar. If you believe that he was an apostle of God, then we are commanded, on the authority of I Timothy 6, to guard what we have been given. Another way of saying it would be a little bit different sense—to guard what we have received.

I also used Hebrews 10 in that sermon last week, where we are commanded there to hold fast to the profession of our faith. Now ask yourself this: When you came into the church under the man who had been given the responsibility of bearing the message at that time, what calendar were you given in order that you might worship God on His Sabbath and holy days? A simple question, but much arguing, and I must say, quite a bit of avoiding or failing to pay attention to scriptures that bear on that responsibility.

I will tell you that it is the very same calendar which the church has been using for at least 1600 years, and has probably (I say "probably," because all of the evidence is not in yet) been in use at least two millennia of time. I can say that confidently because no child of God can afford to be in doubt that God has been faithful in providing him with what he needs to please God in his obedience to Him as a child.

God has had plenty of time to change this calendar that we received, but He has not done so either in this era of the church, or in any previous one. But some have gotten it into their minds that God has been just waiting for *them* to do it. But this very act calls God's faithfulness into question, given the evidence we have available to us—the action saying that God did not care about all of those people in the past who have had to live with a so-called defective calendar, and that He has been in effect leading these people into sin by failing to correct their ignorance.

Paul said, "My God shall supply *all your need* according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ." And James says that God does not tempt man. He

does not lead His children into sin, but rather we are drawn away by our own lusts. Hebrews 12 says that God corrects His children, and He would be leading His people into sin by failing to correct this so-called defective instrument that is vital to our obedience over centuries of time. Let us not forget we are not the only era of God's church.

Brethren, all the years of silence on God's part, combined with the good fruit that calendar has produced, ought to tell us that He is pleased to accept its use in our worship of Him. Nobody in the history of the Worldwide Church of God and Herbert W. Armstrong, who attempted to change the calendar, has prospered as God has prospered Herbert W. Armstrong.

Matthew 7 tells us, through Jesus Himself, that we are to judge those prophets by their fruits. Well, God has provided for us. You judge the fruits. That is your responsibility.

The sermon is going to take a little bit of an angle here. There is another aspect to this issue that is very good to consider, and we are going to go back to the book of Malachi to a very familiar scripture. Everybody ought to know this.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

This verse is a parallel of Hebrews 13:8, which says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. But I want you to turn to Romans 11 where there is another parallel scripture. If you are familiar with the book of Romans, chapter 11 is concluding Paul's argument—his revelation as it were—of what is going to happen to Israel, and all of Israel is going to be saved. That is basically what He said without saying it directly in Malachi 3:6.

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The gifts are all of those things that God has given to Israel in the past—covenants and promises, as well as all of the economic blessings. And so he says, "For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable." He is saying that He will not go back on His Word that He gave to Abraham.

These verses are not saying that God never changes His mind. They are saying that He is consistent to His purpose. He is saying that He will always act in accordance with His purpose (which is to save Israel, which is to bless Abraham), and with His own personal character.

The sum of this is that because He is consistent, He can be trusted. In regard to this verse, it means that ever since Abraham and the promises given to him, it has been God's purpose to save Israel. That purpose holds true right down to this very second even though it seems as though He has made a digression into the church, or as the Protestants say, "the church dispensation."

But has God forgotten Israel? Is Israel dangling somewhere? No, not at all. Because God is consistent to His purpose, that is why they and we (Israel and the church) are not consumed, even though God has had ample opportunity and a huge number of justifiable reasons for wiping them and us out. God's faithfulness in this results in Him acting in consistent patterns toward those who have made the covenant with Him, and if He did not do this, we could never ever trust Him.

God reveals throughout His Word a consistent pattern in His relationship with Israel and with the church. Now see if you do not agree with this. God raises someone up to establish His way. The person is effective, and the people repent to some degree. God then relents, and things go well for awhile, but degeneration then sets in and the people depart wholesale from His way.

How many times has that happened? Hundreds! I do not think that I am exaggerating that it might be up in the thousands of times that this has occurred. But we will be conservative. We will just say "hundreds of times." But His mercy toward Abraham and his descendants keeps right on rolling on, because He is confident that in the end He is going to be able to save Israel. He is able to carry out what He has promised to do.

This happens, and the people degenerate, and they begin departing wholesale from His way, and God then sends somebody else, and the pattern is repeated.

Turn to Jeremiah 7. We are going to spend a little bit of time here in Jeremiah. Think of this in relation to the church. Or we will think of it in relation to the church secondarily, because in the immediate context here he primarily has Israel in mind.

Jeremiah 7:11-12 "has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the LORD. "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, . . ."

What He is referring to here is that when Israel came into the land under Joshua, the Tabernacle was first set up at Shiloh. I do not know whether any of you have seen any picture of Shiloh today, but I have. It has been a number of years, but nobody even builds there. It is an absolute desert. That is what He is referring to. He is reminding these people that His tabernacle used to be there in Shiloh, and this is where they came to keep the feast.

"You came here for the Days of Unleavened Bread. You came here for Pentecost. You came here for the Feast of Tabernacles." Now He is reminding these people seven hundred years after they came into the land, "I want you to remember what Shiloh is like today." Why is Shiloh like that today? I am sure that it was a desert in Jeremiah's day.

Jeremiah 7:12-14 "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these works [all these wicked works]," says the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer, therefore I will do to this house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh."

Is that a warning or what? It is. Now was God silent while all this deterioration of degeneration was going on? God did not speak to these people personally, but He did speak through prophets. The prophets got up early in the morning and they started preaching, and they started calling the

people to repentance, but the people did not answer. Some few did undoubtedly. On the basis of that little bit of repentance and on the basis on His holy character, His own mercy, He would relent.

Jeremiah 7:25-26 "Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they [the people] did not obey Me, or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers."

Do you think I am exaggerating when I say that this probably happened thousands of times? I do not think it is an exaggeration. Is God patient, or what?

Now what is happening in the church? Are we not repeating this pattern? We surely are. We are repeating what those people did.

Jeremiah 25:3-4 "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear."

What this pattern does is that it captures the essence of God's urgent tenderness for the well-being of His people.

Go to Zephaniah 3. Notice the contrast.

Zephaniah 3:7 I said, "Surely you will fear Me [God is ever hopeful!], you will receive instruction—so her dwelling would not be cut off, despite everything for which I punished her [however He did it]. But they rose early [They got up at the same time the prophet did.], and corrupted all their deeds."

So they got up early to do evil. The reason they had to repent ought to be obvious. They had wandered from what they had been given. They wandered from what they had received. That is the way it was from the very beginning. God created Adam and Eve. God breathed the breath of life into them. God was His own spokesman. He taught them things that they needed for life. He revealed Himself to them. But then a dissenting voice—a false prophet arose—with a different angle, a different view, a different perspective on things in the person of Satan. They lost their trust in God and departed from what they received. Simple, is it not? And so God kicked them out of the Garden.

Can you name the first man named in the Bible as a prophet? It is Enoch. His name being named as a prophet does not occur until the book of Jude—the next to the last book in the Bible. Enoch was the seventh from Adam. What did he prophesy of? He prophesied of judgment. And what did the judgment turn out to be? It turned out to be the Flood. It was not revealed apparently to Enoch what the judgment was going to be. At least it does not say. But the very fact that this occurred with Enoch gives us a pattern so that we can understand when prophets are going to arise, and why they arise.

There were no prophets in the beginning. Enoch is the first one. A prophet arises as judgment is on the horizon you might say, and God in His mercy sends someone in order that these people might repent and the judgment does not have to be made. The prophet will continue to prophesy before and during, at the very least, and sometimes even after the judgments falls, as in the case of Jeremiah. And so if a prophet arises, we know why, because God will follow that pattern. He never will deviate from that. He always gives His people a warning. He gives them an opportunity to repent so that the judgment does not have to fall.

Let us go back to the book of Jeremiah again and I am going to show you in a very succinct statement here the content of their preaching, and as it applies to us. I want you to consider this counsel from God that He gives through Jeremiah within the time context that Jeremiah gave it, and then apply it to what the church is going through.

When did Jeremiah prophesy? He began prophesying during the days of Josiah. We just read that. Josiah was the last good king that Judah had. He may have been the very best king spiritually that Judah ever had, including David. But when Josiah died, Jeremiah knew "that's all she wrote." "This is it." And he wrote Lamentations right on the heels of that. Jeremiah then continued prophesying all the way through. So just before—BOOM!—the ax came down from God while it was being done, and then in this case, even after.

Now listen to this message in Jeremiah 6. Here comes God's counsel to His people:

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the LORD, "Stand you in the [old] ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls." But they said, "We will not walk in it."

What did He tell them to do? He told them to go back to what they had been given—the *old* ways. "Go back to what you received—the old ways." What is God's counsel to us today? God's pattern never changes. We are not scattered like this because we are A+ students. We are not scattered because we have all kinds of righteous character. We are scattered because we have been a very grave disappointment to God, and He scattered us in order to save us. If we had continued the way we were, we would not be fit for His Kingdom.

Let us go to Jeremiah 18. Notice this wording. It is Old Testament wording.

Jeremiah 18:15 "Because My people has forgotten Me, they have burned incense to worthless idols, and they have caused themselves to stumble . . .

It means they have given their devotion to vanity, to useless things. Often this word is translated "idolatry," or "idolatries."

Jeremiah 18:15 "They have burned incense to worthless idols, and they [the idolatries] have caused themselves to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths . . .

The idolatries have caused them to stumble in their ways from what? From the old things that we were given. But they are "passé," see. "We're smarter than that now." No, we are not.

Jeremiah 18:15 ". . . to walk in pathways and not on a highway."

"A highway"—something that is clear of obstruction. It has no impediments on it. The "straight and the narrow way" is the highway.

Let us go to Jeremiah 31. This is a tenderhearted, passionate appeal from God.

Jeremiah 31:20 "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still [I love him!]; therefore My heart yearns for him; . . .

His stomach was churning, as it were. He had diarrhea, again as it were, because He's putting His feelings into human terms.

Jeremiah 31:20-22 "I will surely have mercy on him," says the LORD . "Set up signposts, [signs, arrows that say "This is the way. Walk you in it. Go in this direction."], make landmarks [piles of rocks, or whatever, that will point out the way to go, and give direction]; set your heart toward the highway, the way in which you went [meaning the way that you formerly went, the way you used to go]. Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities. How long will you gad about ["How long will you wander? Get back on the highway!"], O you backsliding daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—a woman shall encompass a man."

That is what I am trying to do here today—set up sign posts. Brethren, what the church is going through, what we have experienced beginning actually long before Mr. Armstrong died in 1986, we can look back on that now and see the church was headed off the track. "Got to get the church back on the track." Mr. Armstrong never succeeded. He did a good job, a valiant effort, but it never really truly got back on, and he knew it. That's why not too long before he died he said, "Get the church ready." He knew it wasn't ready. I sincerely believe, even though I was not all that close to him where I was able to talk to him easily or frequently, he was afraid to die because he was afraid of what was going to happen to the church after he died.

What the church is going through is not new. History keeps repeating itself over and over and over again, even in the church, because human nature never changes. So the cycle goes on. When it occurs, it always, *always* features doctrinal changes from what we have been given to get the people to believe something different. That is what you have to do to scatter the people of God.

Now God does not mince words. He calls these false teachings "idolatries." That is what drove us apart, and so God's counsel is that we retrace our steps back to what was departed from.

Let us just review a little bit in the New Testament here. Go to Revelation 3 to the Philadelphia church.

Revelation 3:11 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown."

Is that advice up to date? Does it fit in with Jeremiah? You had better believe it! It fits in with every prophet, because every prophet said basically the same thing. "Go back (or hold on to what you have) that is good." So what we have here then is a warning that somebody is going to try to take what we are supposed to hold fast to away from us, and it will be things that are of the spirit, the heart, and the mind—our belief system.

We could go to a multitude of scriptures that will change the wording a little bit, but they are saying essentially the same thing—"Go back to what you

received." "Hold fast." "Guard the truth." "Give more earnest heed to the things which you have heard." "Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." Every apostle said something very similar to that.

The sermon is going to take a little bit of a turn here, because I want to hit this from another angle. Maybe you never thought of this one, but in I Corinthians 4 is a very interesting principle.

I Corinthians 4:9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

Paul begins this by saying that he thinks that it is entirely possible that God has a purpose in mind that is going to call for the death of the apostles, and he says, "We have been made a spectacle." Do you know what that word "spectacle" is? It is the Greek word from which we get our word "theater." Paul is saying it is almost as if the apostles were made like a sideshow in a circus—a spectacle. That is what he is talking about. That is the way apostles seem to be valued in the eyes of the people in the world. They are a sideshow.

In verse 10 Paul becomes quite sarcastic, because he aims this now at the church members—this very immature group of people who are in Corinth. He says:

I Corinthians 4:10-16 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We [apostles] are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we [apostles] are dishonored! To the present hour we [apostles] both hunger and thirst, and are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat [actually, it means, "encourage." They turned the other cheek.]. we have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you [I plead with you. I beg you.], imitate me.

Do you understand what was happening here? These people who thought that they were so great, so smart, and probably had a lot of people with a lot of degrees after their name, were following after liars rather than the man—"their father in the faith"—who had given them the truth. Paul saw this badly divided congregation going through a type of a teenage rebellion against the family, and that they needed to be faithful to him, their father in the faith. They were thinking wrongly, that because they knew a little that they knew a lot.

How does this apply to us? We have a responsibility to be faithful to *our father in the faith* too. Who is your "father in the faith"? Herbert W. Armstrong.

But just in case you think this does not hold water with God, we are going to go back to the book of Jeremiah again. There is some very interesting instruction here in Jeremiah 35. While you are there, I am going to read another scripture to you, and this is going to be in Luke 10. I want you to think of this in regard to Herbert Armstrong. Just imagine Jesus saying this to him:

Luke 10:16 "He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects Him [My Father] who sent Me."

We are messing around with serious stuff here.

When those people in the wilderness moved to reject Moses, all they saw was Moses the man. Moses saw right through it, and he says, "Why do you rebel against God?"

There is a very interesting thing here in Jeremiah 35:

Jeremiah 35:1-3 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, "Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink." Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son

of Habaziniyah, and his brothers and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites.

So then Jeremiah followed through. He took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniyah, who represented the whole house of the Rechabites.

Jeremiah 35:6-8 But they said, "We will drink no wine [Why?], for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever. You shall not build house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these; but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you were sojourners.' Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters."

Jeremiah 35:13-15 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not receive instruction to obey My words?" saith the LORD . The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; for to this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment. But although I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you did not obey Me [their spiritual Father]. I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; and you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.' But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me." '

Jeremiah 35:18-19 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever." ' "

Loyalty goes up and down. Herbert Armstrong was required to be loyal to the Father, and to pass onto us his understanding of the Scriptures. Our responsibility then was to be loyal to the Father, and to Herbert Armstrong as well. Faithfulness to a father is very highly respected by God, even in doing something that was not unrighteous to do, like drinking wine.

The sermon is going to take another turn. I am trying, brethren, to chop the legs off every argument that has been put forward by those who want to change the calendar. Let us look at this yet from another angle.

Are we to be subject only to those things—people or institutions—that we feel are perfect or good? Consider civil authorities.

Daniel 2:20-21 Daniel answered and said, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And he changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding."

We are touching on His sovereignty.

Daniel 4:32 "And they shall drive you [Nebuchadnezzar] from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and give it to whomever He chooses."

Sometimes, as He says, He gives it to the basest of men. Now are we supposed to be subject to those base men?

Daniel 4:35 "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand, or say to Him, What have You done?" ["God, what are You doing here?"]

Go now to Romans 13 to a very familiar section on Scripture.

Romans 13:1-4 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister [or servant] to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

And then he goes on to tell us even to pay taxes.

I Peter 2:13-16 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

Again let me ask: Are we to be subject only to those people, or laws, that *we* judge to be just and righteous? Sometimes what these people do frequently has very grave impact on our lives, and Scripture assigns us to be faithful to God by being subject to them.

Luke 2:49-51 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

It says very plainly here that Jesus, knowing who He was, was *subject* to His parents. Now we consider His awesome understanding. He subjected

Himself to *them*. In addition to that, He would not impose Himself into civil affairs, which begins to become very interesting. For instance, He would not render a civil judgment.

You might recall that at the time two of His disciples (it says "two of His company") came to Him, and the one asked Him to make a judgment about the inheritance. Jesus' response to them was, "Who made Me a judge or a ruler over you?" That was something that would have had to been decided in a civil court, and so He withdrew Himself from it despite His awesome ability to read men's minds, look right into their hearts, and understand who was telling the truth here. He did not do it. It was a civil affair, and He withdrew Himself.

In John 8 we find Him there being confronted by the Jews who tried to trick Him into making a civil judgment by bringing the woman taken in adultery to Him. They were trying to trick Him into making a judgment and have her put to death on His word. But He got out of that pretty slickly, did He not? He refused again to render a civil judgment there, even though He did tell the lady she was a sinner and she needed to repent and not sin anymore. What I am getting at here is that He would not impose Himself in those responsibilities that were assigned to others.

Let us go to John 19. I bring this up because I want you to see that sometimes what civil authorities do has very serious consequences for us.

John 19:7-11 The Jews answered Him, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to him, "You are not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release you?" Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

Jesus understood well, and He submitted to the principles of governmental authority. He would not intervene in any way to countermand what was

ordained of His Father. Instead, He said, "Not My will, but Yours be done." And that will was expressed in the Old Testament. He believed it, and He lived by it.

It jars our sense of justice. It does not seem fair that One so good, One so righteous should not only die, but die so viciously and ignominiously before people so depraved as to be devoid, it seems, of even normally decent feelings and respect for life.

Well, the calendar fits into this scenario, because it is the calendar *of Israel*. It is not in the Bible. It is the calendar of Israel. The responsibility for it was given specifically to the Levites, and the Jews in general, and they are responsible to God for its maintenance and the setting and the proclaiming of the holy days on it, and we are subject to that assignment by God. It is the *assignment* that is in Scripture, not the calendar.

The church cannot be neatly excised from the nation of Israel as if Israel no longer exists, or believe that each exists totally independent of the other. I am talking about the Israel to whom God gave His laws and promises and used in His service.

Let us be reminded what Paul said in Ephesians 2, speaking to the Gentiles.

Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, . . . that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Near to what, brethren? Near to this hope that we have. Near to the covenants of promise. Near to God. Near—part of—the commonwealth of Israel. They are no longer aliens. They are citizens, and subject to that calendar. We were all Gentiles in the flesh spiritually.

As I said, it is not the calendar that is in Scripture; it is *the assignment of the responsibility* that is in Scripture, and God gave His oracles to the Jews, not to the church. The Jews are responsible for the preservation of the Old

Testament, not the church, and the oracles include the calendar, because the calendar cannot be separated from the Old Testament or the New Testament, because the calendar is necessary to keep the holy days. It is not even the church's responsibility. It is the Jews' responsibility, and most specifically the Levites' responsibility.

The church does not exist in a vacuum. It is still very largely existing and operating within Israel, and you know that this is true. I want you to look at a scripture in the book of Amos.

Amos 9:9 For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations [Has that happened, brethren? Is it even maybe still happening?], as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain fall to the ground.

As astounding as it might seem to our finite minds, He knows where every Israelite is—buried or still alive. Is He able to watch over a calendar? Is God faithful, or what? He is going to save Israel, and the church exists within it. It is part of the commonwealth of Israel. So God has not lost track of where Israel is, because His purpose is continuing to be worked out whether or not they are aware. But *we* must know, *we* must be aware of where Israel is, because it is essential for us to understand. It is a faith-building thing.

We have got to learn that God does not think like we do, and that is the major problem between us and Him. That is why faith is very important to our relationship with Him, because He wants us to come to the place where we *do* think like Him, and because we do, we will then live, on a human level, as He lives as God, because we live what we think.

The practical result of not thinking like God is that when there appear then in our lives numerous anomalies, and when these things occur, our faith is very severely tested. "Surely God wouldn't want me to tithe when I have all of these bills." "Surely God wouldn't want me to lose my job because of keeping the Sabbath." "Surely He wouldn't want me to humble myself before sinners." And so we begin to say, "Well, here's the way *I* see it." And that is just simply a takeoff on Proverbs 14:12, that "there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Far too many do not understand faith and government, and almost invariably end up fighting the ministry, accusing them of seeking power. And again, the calendar fits into this scenario. "Surely people wouldn't want me to obey something that seems so wrong," and so conscience issues arise.

Do you want a conscience-bender? You have not faced anything like this:

Genesis 22:1-2 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

I will tell you, here is one very difficult anomaly, and it is only for those who are of great faith. But if Abraham was only living by sight, he could easily come up with arguments as to why he should not do this, because this is the God who clearly said, "You shall not kill." In addition to that, Abraham knew that He was totally opposed to human sacrifice in the worship of any god. And thirdly, here he was ordered to kill as a sacrifice the very one that He Himself had designated and provided by a miracle as the heir of the promises, and given in good faith to Abraham.

"Surely God wouldn't require this of me. How can He possibly be pleased by my being obedient to something so vile?" You talk about having a conscience problem! I will tell you, this thing with the calendar is nothing in terms of conscience compared to this. You see, Abraham did not let it sit. He knew God pretty well.

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac shall your seed be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Genesis 22:10-12 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" and he said, "Here I

am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

God said, "Now I know." You put that together with Hebrews 11 and that tells me that as far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead. No thought can be withheld from God. He read Abraham's mind! Isaac was dead, and that is why He stopped him. Abraham cleared his conscience because he knew God so well, he knew that even though he did not understand, everything that God does is righteous and good, everything that God requires of us is consistent with His character. Everything that God requires of us is consistent with His purpose. He never deviates from His patterns, and therefore Abraham knew that the defect was in his own mind, in his own feelings, not in God's command.

Do you suppose there might be defects in people's feelings about the calendar? Well, I think there are, because it is saying, "God, You can't provide. You can't set a table in the wilderness. You've ignored Your people for 1600 years or so in failing to correct it. Now correct it now."

Summary:

God has made many assignments. He gave an everlasting priesthood to Phinehas. He gave the kingly line to David. He gave Temple responsibilities to the Levites. The preservation and overall administration of the oracles of God He gave to Judah. All of these things are aspects of God's sovereignty, and we have no legal right to change them. We are to faithfully respect them.

Let me show you an example of a man who did not respect what God had set forth. This is speaking of Uzziah, one of Judah's better kings.

II Chronicles 26:16-21 But when he [Uzziah] was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him eighty priests of the LORD—valiant men. And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are

consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God." Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out from that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death.

This is why nobody who has ever attempted to change the calendar, and also had a connection with the church of God, has prospered. God does not kill these people. He just takes away their effectiveness.

In Matthew 11:19 it says "but wisdom is justified by her children." "Children" is synonymous with "fruit." What fruit has the calculated Hebrew calendar as compared with those of others? Everybody that has used *it* has been united by it. Everybody who deviates away from it, even so far as we know amongst the Jews, divides in confusion.

Now is there not some wisdom shown from that track record? It is not the calendar. It is God who will not permit them to prosper as a faithful witness to us because He is on the job, protecting and providing.

Now compare that to the fruits of Herbert Armstrong's ministry. If Herbert Armstrong was an apostle, and there is absolutely no pure sacred calendar in the Bible, and God gives every appearance of being pleased with Herbert Armstrong's decision to use that calculated Hebrew calendar, through prosperity and unity, both spiritual and numerical growth, for over fifty years, does it not appear to be wisdom to use it? Does it not seem foolishness to try to change it, especially in light of the fact that it was a multitude of changes that drove us into this scattered condition? Another change is just going to drive us further apart.

Now spiritually, the issue is our faith in the faithfulness of God. And just as surely as we must live by faith, trusting God in relation to civil authorities, we must also trust Him in regard to the calendar. "Now faith comes by

hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We must live by faith, and that faith is derived from what is written in God's Word, and if we understand that sequence of scriptures in Romans 10, we also see the words of which our faith is based, are also delivered by one God has sent bearing a message.

The issue is not the calendar *per se*. In some ways that is a minor affair. The issue before God is our faith in the sovereignty, the providence, and the faithfulness of God, because the calendar is not in the Bible. What *is* in the Bible are the principles of government that we are to have faith in. And so the one bearing the message in our era gave us the calculated Hebrew calendar, and this same one is "our father in the faith," and so we owe responsibility to him as well. He gave us a calendar that has been in use by the church of God unchanged for at least 1600 years, even though God had every opportunity to change it.

Incidentally, evidence is building that it has been in continuous use by the Jews much longer than that. The time points to sometime around the time of Hezekiah in the 8th century BC. So God has already assigned that responsibility, and we have no legal right to form one on our own.

II Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast [do not move] and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

The very fact that "word" there does not have the definite article "*the*" in front of it [*the* word] means he is not talking about the Bible. His epistles *were* Scripture. He is talking about things that he *said*.

This word "traditions" encompasses more than Scripture. It encompasses the whole thing that we have been given.

II Thessalonians 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

He has already provided us with a calendar, and He has witnessed in many ways that He is pleased to accept our worship of Him through it. The issue for us is always going to be our faith in the faithfulness of God.

Lamentations 3:22 Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

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

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the Lord, I do not change."

Lamentations 3:23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.