

Did God Give a Calendar?

Did God really give His people a Calendar to follow so they would know the accurate time of the months and annual Holy Days and Festivals? One church says the answer cannot be known from the Bible, and so the author concludes we must either “follow the Jewish” modern calendar or be lost in total confusion among a welter of conflicting human ideas and opinions. What is the truth of the matter?

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A man wrote to me saying, “I was given an article, “Did God Give a Calendar?”, and would like to hear your comments on it. I follow the New Moon calendar, but he raises some interesting points. Here is the article. What is your opinion?”

The article was very interesting. It stated that since we cannot “know” for certain God’s original calendar, not enough information is available, we MUST trust the Jews and observe their calendar dates.

But is that really true? Can we really know God’s original calendar or must we follow the fixed JEWISH calendar?

Are we literally “STUCK” between a rock and a hard place?

Can we KNOW God’s calendar, and KNOW we know it?

Paul’s Run Ins with the Jews

Before attempting to answer this question, notice what the apostle Paul says about the Jewish religious leaders, even in his day, before the time when Hillel II changed the Hebrew calendar to one of fixed mathematical calculation which “averages” new moons and therefore the beginning of months, and which adds many “postponements” to the beginning of a year, which literally ignore their own calculations.

Paul wrote that the Jews of his time “killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, who harassed ourselves, who offend God and oppose all men by hindering us from speaking words of salvation to the Gentiles. So they would fill up the measure of their sins to the last drop! But the Wrath is on them to the bitter end!” (1 Thess.2:15-16, Moffatt).

Those are powerful words – and Jewish religious leaders in Israel today still harass and persecute Messianic believers in Christ, with threats, beatings, arson, burning Bibles, and setting off a bomb!

We should be very careful who we follow, and WHY!

Paul wrote these things even though he also said, “Oh for their salvation, brothers! That is my heart’s desire and prayer to God! I can vouch for their zeal for God; only, it is not zeal with knowledge. They would not surrender to the righteousness of God, because they were ignorant of his righteousness and therefore *essayed to set up a righteousness of their own*” (Rom.10:1-3, Moffatt).

Paul writes elsewhere, admitting that the Jews were “entrusted with the scriptures of God.” But he adds, “Even supposing that some of them have proved UNTRUSTWORTHY, is their faithlessness to cancel the faithfulness of God? Never! Let God be true to his word, though every man be perfidious – as it is written, That thou mayest be vindicated in thy pleadings, and triumph at thy trial” (Rom.3:3-4, Moffatt).

The truth is, God has NOT left His people helpless, without the knowledge necessary to know His true months, holy days, and calendar! God is not faithless – giving us commandments to keep His law and annual Sabbaths, but then hiding the knowledge of when they occur, leaving us helpless, like putty in the hands of faithless men!

“Rules of Postponement . . . Essential”?

Of course our book on the Calendar covers the whole subject, including postponements. The article you sent to me, by Leon Walker, of the United Church of God (so-called) says right in the beginning that “The rules of postponement . . . are an essential element in the Hebrew calendar.”

That statement alone shows the falseness of his approach and devious nature of his article. “Essential”? Pray tell, WHY? This is the worst sort of equivocation and false representation. He never explains “why” they are essential, and the truth is, some of them were merely added to create new “traditions” or “rules” affecting the Sabbath days, so Yom Kippur would no longer fall the day before or after a weekly Sabbath, and the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles would never fall on a Sabbath. Others were added to make the “fixed” calendar come closer to visual new moons than simply following the estimated/calculated new moon conjunctions, since the sighting of a new moon crescent would generally be about one day *after* the conjunction.

I consider the article in question to be very disingenuous and therefore dangerous for people to read, because its basic premise is wrong – and if you start out with a false premise, then even the “best” of reasoning will lead you to a false conclusion!

The author says the fundamental question is, “Does the Bible provide us with the specific elements needed for a calendar?” He implies the answer is “either it does” or “it does not” – either/or, with no middle ground. But that is pure arbitrary sophistic reasoning. It is not a case of “all or nothing.”

The real question is: “Does the Bible provide us with enough evidence that together with Jewish input, from their ancient history, that we have enough evidence to discover the true Biblical calendar?”

The answer is an overwhelming ‘YES.’

Multiplied Calendars

It is true that many groups have gone off in one direction or another, constructing their own ideas of what they think the Bible Calendar ought to be like. And they have failed. They have constructed many different calendars as a result, as they cannot even agree on the definition of a “new moon,” when it begins, or when the year itself begins. Some foolishly reject the Jews’ knowledge or calendar totally, and then strive to come up with their own calendar, based on their opinions – and of course have no authority to do so.

A man I know insists the true calendar **MUST** go by the monthly conjunction of the moon, and the new moon begin at the “dark” of the moon, when no moon is visible to the human eye! He is adamant, and nothing will convince him otherwise. He insists that going by the first visible “crescent” of the moon is **MOON WORSHIP** and **IDOLATRY!**

Leon Walker, and the United Church of God, on the other hand, embraces the “fixed” Hillel II Jewish calendar *in toto* – *completely, with no reservations*. He accepts without any proof the Jewish postponements, and the very fact of a calendar based on “mean averages” for new moons, fixed by astronomical data, and rejects along with modern Jews the very idea of an “observed” new moon calendar – he just “follows tradition,” and Jewish innovations which compensated for the **LOSS** of an observed calendar.

History proves, however, that the Jews *changed their approach* to the calendar from an observed calendar to a calculated one, in 358 A.D. because of pressure from the Roman Empire which forced them to disband the Jewish authority, the Sanhedrin. And, as the Jews were scattered, they no longer had a central authority, and took the “easy” way out and took ancient mathematical principles and used them to formulate an “approximate” calendar.

In no way was it the original Biblical calendar – unless you believe God gave man permission to **CHANGE** His Torah, His Law, and His statutes!. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 says plainly He gave man no such permission. God commanded: “**DO NOT ADD TO**

WHAT I COMMAND YOU AND DO NOT SUBTRACT FROM IT, *but keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I give you*" (Deut.4:2, NIV).

Much of Walker's article is a review of basic knowledge of what is a "day," "month," and "year," and "sunset." These are things we all know. He admits that "chodesh" means both month and new moon. But, he says, the Bible does not define when a new moon begins. He is right. It doesn't.

But THE JEWS DO!

In their history, they have always declared that it begins with the first faint sliver of crescent seen by a man, who reports it to the Sanhedrin, or authority, and it is verified and pronounced. This therefore should not be an issue. Simple logic shows us the Jews are right: chodesh = new moon, and a "New" moon would be one just beginning to be visible to the eye – NOT an "invisible" moon, as some today teach, going by the conjunction, rather than what is first 'seen' by an observer.

We should ACCEPT what the Jews state, as the authority on things so long as they do not disagree with Scripture. History shows us how the Jews reckoned the new moons, in their literature, and YESHUA AND THE APOSTLES NEVER DISAGREED WITH THE NEW MOONS BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST VISIBLE CRESCENT.

In fact, Yeshua said the scribes and Pharisees "sat in Moses seat," so we should follow them so long as they do not teach contrary to the Law of Moses (Matt.23:2-3). He never upbraided them for figuring the new moons incorrectly. So the Jewish Sanhedrin was carrying on its responsibility correctly in this regard.

Therefore, we also should follow the Jewish reckoning by observation of the new moons, as Christ Himself did, setting us an EXAMPLE! (I John 2:6; I Peter 2:21).

Today, it is easy. In Israel, the Karaite Jews do this, and sight the new moon each month from Jerusalem or nearby. And now the new Jewish Sanhedrin has also begun sighting the new moons and taking testimony from witnesses!

So really, Leon Walker and the United Church of God, are following a bogus calendar which often deviates from God's true holy days, causing people to work on them, and to keep "near by" days instead – to keep "holy" days that are not and never were "holy"! They have reasoned themselves astray, into a false path.

God DID give His people Israel the gift of a calendar (Exo.12:1-2). He Himself appointed the MOON to determine "seasons" or "appointed times" – festivals! He declared, "The MOON marks off the seasons" (Psalm 104:19, NIV).

When the Jews changed the calendar, from 358 A.D. to about the eleventh century (as they continually made revisions – see the Judaica Encyclopedia article "calendar"), they got AWAY from the Biblical commandments, and no longer used the sighting of the

new moons, as they had always done, and as Scripture approved, as well as Christ and the apostles, who never faulted them for so doing.

Walker claims questions arise as to when did the calendar begin, and what point on earth should be used for the sighting of the new moons. This is in my opinion subterfuge. It is disingenuous. There really is no problem to determine this point!

Of course, when Israel was in Egypt, they used the new moon as seen from Egypt. After God gave them their inheritance in Canaan, the point of reference was the holy land – Israel. When God established His name there, at the Temple and in Jerusalem, it became the central authority and reference point for all mankind!

When Christ returns, He will rule from Jerusalem (Luke 1:32). God has sanctified *Jerusalem* and placed His name THERE, so that is where observations must be made (see Isa.2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4).

To think that God would leave His people in the dark, without true knowledge needed to obey Him, is to call God a Monster – a Jokester – a Supreme Practical Joker!

The Bible, plus a little history from the Jews, and common sense, gives us all the knowledge we need to obey God and keep His commandments, and His TRUE holy days!

As Paul wrote, “For God is not the author of CONFUSION” (I Cor.14:33, NKJV). God never has left His people helpless or without the knowledge we need.

God has not left us in IGNORANCE! We don’t just have to “go along” with the Jews – or any church – or anyone else – when they deviate from God’s Word and ADD man-made traditions and unbiblical “postponements” and IGNORE the real, visible NEW MOONS, and therefore often keep the holy days anywhere from 1 to 3 days off the mark, or on the WRONG DAYS!

Where the Bible itself is silent (such as whether the year can begin before the spring equinox, or must begin after), the JEWS give us the answer in their own history, in the records of the Talmud, Mishnah, and other ancient commentaries. We do not need to be in ignorance. There is no excuse for professing “ignorance”! Be sure to read our articles, “When Does the Year Begin?” and “Can Passover Occur Before Spring?”)

Either . . . Or?

Walker states, “Therefore we have two options: either we accept the Hebrew calendar *in its entirety* or we choose one of the calendars created by one of the several who have created their own calendars in recent years.”

Clearly, Walter attempts to make the calendar issue an “either or” question, claiming that we either “accept the Jews’ conclusions COMPLETELY” or we “cannot

accept their evidence AT ALL"! This is simply not true. Rather, we must sort out the truth carefully, sifting out truth from error, fact from fiction, holding onto the truth and rejecting error. As the apostle Paul said, we must "TEST ALL THINGS; hold fast what is GOOD" (I Thess.5:21, NKJV).

Claiming that we must follow the Jews completely, or not at all, is nonsense! It is a form of religious EXTREMISM! It is a clever but specious argument and falls flat on its face. It is like saying, "We have to follow the Jews, right or wrong."

As Paul wrote, "*PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD*" (I Thess.5:21, KJV). We are *commanded* to sort these things out. We must follow the Jews WHEN THEY FOLLOW GOD. But when they go astray, or begin to deviate, and go their OWN way, then we must follow GOD. And that includes any and all churches and fellowship groups as well! It is a principle that applies to ALL churches and religious institutions!

As the apostle Peter said to the Jewish leaders, "WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN" (Acts 5:29).

Here at Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God), we accept the Hebrew calendar, WHERE IT IS RIGHT, but not where it goes wrong. We do not accept the new calendars created by various men based on their own ideas and assumptions.

The Bible itself defines a "month" as a "new moon" (chodesh). The history of the Jews plainly shows that this was based on the first visible crescent of each spotted new moon or defaulted to a 30 day month if the crescent was invisible due to cloud cover.

The present Jewish calendar IGNORES THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF "NEW MOONS" WHICH DETERMINE THE DATES OF HOLY DAYS. Therefore it is in serious error. As a result, Holy Days are often observed a DAY OR TWO DIFFERENT from the true date based on the real visible New Moon as it is sighted in Israel!

The Karaites, and now the new Sanhedrin in Israel, both observe the New Moons each month. Therefore all the different churches and men have NO EXCUSE!

They will be JUDGED by Almighty God for their flagrant disobedience and false teaching and leading their congregations ASTRAY from the laws of GOD! Write for our free articles and book:

"When Does the Year Begin"?

"What Is the New Moon?"

"Can Passover Occur Before Spring?"

"What's All This about Postponements?"

"A New Look at God's True Calendar."