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Frank W. Nelte

A CANDID REPLY TO THE UCG STUDY PAPER TITLED 'SUMMARY OF THE HEBREW CALENDAR'

In February 1997 UCG published a Doctrinal Study Paper entitled "Summary of the Hebrew Calendar". I have only now had the opportunity to devote some time to carefully assessing this article. And I cannot hide the fact that I am deeply disappointed by the whole approach that is taken in that paper.

The paper represents a classic example of prejudice and bias in favour of "traditions". As such it amounts to exactly the same thing as Jesus Christ stated to the Pharisees:

And he said unto them, FULL WELL YE REJECT the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. (Mark 7:9)

Does that sound too strong?

I will show in the rest of this reply that the Study Paper of the Doctrinal Committee of UCG clearly amounts to A REJECTION OF THE TRUTH IN FAVOUR OF HOLDING FAST TO TRADITIONS!

The paper is the work of "the Doctrine Committee" of UCG. As such it does not necessarily represent the views of every member of the Council of Elders. Nor is it necessarily a final official doctrinal statement for the United Church. The paper seems to imply in places that there is room for possible modifications. Nevertheless it is thus far the closest the United Church has come to stating the official doctrine for the Church regarding the calendar issue.

I believe that unless the flaws in this paper are CLEARLY EXPOSED, it will end up being the one and only official statement UCG will make on this subject. After Mr. Raymond McNair's (GCG) articles stating the official views of the Global Church, I wrote a reply in which I exposed the flaws and weaknesses in his presentation. But it was perhaps not stated forcefully enough to motivate the Global Church to actually come to grips with the obvious flaws in its official statement concerning the calendar, since Global has done nothing since then to correct the flaws that were pointed out, and I do know that Mr. McNair has read my response to his articles.

With this reply to the UCG Study Paper I am going to be more direct. If I expose the weaknesses so clearly that they simply cannot be denied, I feel that there is some hope that the United Church will at least feel compelled to actually confront the flaws with the present Jewish calendar in an open and honest manner.

For the sake of brevity I will at times just use the reference "UCG", on the understanding that the work I am actually evaluating is only the work of "the Doctrine Committee". So where I do use the expression "UCG" please take that as a reference to "the Doctrine Committee of the United Church of God".

THE APPROACH IN THE UCG CALENDAR PAPER

The approach of the Doctrine Committee seems to be as follows:

What is the best way we can REJECT and sweep off the table ALL OF THE 50 PAPERS we have received?

Is that not the only conclusion possible when all 50 papers are lumped together and treated as if they all represent the same information? A smattering of bad points or weak points from some of the papers is alluded to, and these allusions are used to justify the rejection of ALL 50 PAPERS!

The valid points from some of those papers are never acknowledged, and the difficulties with the present Jewish calendar, which these valid points raise, are simply glossed over.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS, WHICH CLEARLY EXPOSE THE FLAWS WITH THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR, ARE CAREFULLY AVOIDED!

For years the Church of God has been at the receiving end of exactly this kind of treatment! People would justify rejecting the teachings of God's Church by comparing our teachings to the teachings of OTHER churches, saying that we are like the Mormons because of ..., or we are like the Jehovah's Witnesses because of ..., or we are like the Adventists because of ..., etc.. But what people did NOT do is compare our teachings to the Scriptures! They didn't say we are wrong because they could PROVE us wrong from the Bible; no, they merely compared us to others who have wrong ideas.

Now UCG uses exactly the same approach on those who have made the effort to confront errors in our past biased and biblically unsupported opinions. Now UCG rejects ALL the information presented to them on the basis of finding faults with "SOME" of those papers.

What if 45 of those 50 papers are TOTALLY WRONG AND UNBALANCED, does that justify rejecting the valid points in the remaining 5 papers? So you can wax eloquent about the errors in the 45 papers, and you quietly reject the things in the other 5 papers which challenge your position, and FOR WHICH YOU HAVE NO ANSWER. Is that the approach God desires to see us implement?

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

In the opening section of the UCG paper it is stated:

"... it was deemed important that we come to a clear consensus for the sake of a unified celebration of God's Holy Days, consistent with the Word of God."

Is "CONSENSUS" deemed more important than "TRUTH"? This approach reveals a willingness to compromise, for the sake of "unity". But the truth is something that is NOT NEGOTIABLE! You don't ever give in and compromise with the truth just so that you can keep the peace!

THE TRUTH DOES NOT DEPEND ON "CONSENSUS"!

And, as I will show, the present Jewish calendar is NOT at all "consistent with the Word of God".

THE ISSUES AS SEEN BY UCG

The UCG paper asserts:

"There are no new questions which have arisen about the calendar. Mr. Armstrong addressed the same issues in 1940."

THAT IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE!

Frankly, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE for Mr. Armstrong in 1940 to evaluate the correctness of the 19-year cycles, and specifically the effect of the sequence of leap years within each cycle. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE

for Mr. Armstrong to assess whether the calendar of Hillel II in the 350's A.D. was in agreement with the clear principles revealed in the Bible. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE for Mr. Armstrong in 1940 to verify the application of the 70-weeks prophecy in the Book of Daniel to the timing of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Mr. Armstrong NEVER AT ANY TIME made a study of what the Hebrew word "tekufah" actually means. Mr. Armstrong HAD NO IDEA WHATSOEVER what actually happens in the calculations of the present Jewish calendar; he didn't understand that THE ONLY THING those calculations do is establish a date for the start of the Jewish year IN TERMS OF THE JULIAN CALENDAR. Thus Mr. Armstrong COULD NOT POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND that it was impossible for the Jewish calendar calculations to have been devised before the existence of the Julian calendar. Mr. Armstrong's own 1940 article proves that Mr. Armstrong had NO UNDERSTANDING of the real purpose of the postponement rules in the Jewish calendar. It is clear that Mr. Armstrong NEVER AT ANY TIME heard of the "Seder Olam" and the evidence this Jewish document sheds on the development of the Jewish calendar. In 1940 Mr. Armstrong didn't even understand A MOST BASIC FACT about the Jewish calendar, that in that calendar the year REPEATEDLY starts in the winter, and so for decades after that Mr. Armstrong kept stating that the Jewish calendar starts the year IN THE SPRING, blissfully unaware of the fact that even today 25% of the time the Jewish year still starts in the winter.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN: NO NEW QUESTIONS HAVE ARISEN?

This statement by UCG is nothing more than an attempt to sweep EVERY OBJECTION to the Jewish calendar off the table with the reasoning: "All your objections are old hat; Mr. Armstrong looked at them already, and rejected your ideas. So there!"

THE FACTS ARE:

NOBODY in 1940 showed Mr. Armstrong that when Hillel II established his calendar in the 350's A.D., then for the next 800 years THE ENTIRE FEAST OF TABERNACLES was placed squarely into the summer in a predictable pattern of repetitions.

NOBODY in 1940 showed Mr. Armstrong that Hillel's decision repeatedly placed the Passover well INTO THE WINTER, and thus far too early in the year for there to be any ripe barley for the wave offering during Unleavened Bread.

NOBODY in 1940 pointed out to Mr. Armstrong that, just because Hillel's calendar was in agreement with God's requirements for 15 years in every 19-year cycle, that does not make the calendar right for the OTHER 4 years in each cycle, when the dates for the Feasts are clearly TOO EARLY!

NOBODY in 1940 pointed out to Mr. Armstrong that during the first century A.D. the Jews commonly observed the Day of Atonement on a Friday and on a Sunday; that therefore the Jewish calendar did NOT have any postponement rules at that point in time.

NOBODY in 1940 pointed out to Mr. Armstrong that the 19-year cycles in the Jewish calendar are in fact about 2 hours and 4 minutes TOO LONG, as compared to 19 solar years (i.e. 19 years in which the seasons stay at constant dates). This means that the Jewish calendar DRIFTS! It drifts away from the seasons to the tune of 1 day for every 216 years. Nobody told Mr. Armstrong that there is NOTHING we can do to prevent that drifting away; it can only be accommodated by not having a fixed sequence of leap years. This is something Mr. Armstrong didn't remotely understand.

NOBODY in 1940 explained to Mr. Armstrong how thoroughly pagan many of the Jewish customs and traditions are. Nobody presented Mr. Armstrong with a long list of statements where the Bible CLEARLY contradicts Jewish traditions, as expounded in the Talmud. IF Mr. Armstrong had understood that the Jewish religion is just as much a part of this world's religions, as are all of the so-called "Christian"

churches, then Mr. Armstrong would also have been much more on his guard against accepting something just because it is "Jewish".

NOBODY in 1940 showed Mr. Armstrong that Exodus 34:22 requires the entire Feast of Tabernacles to always be in the autumn, which starts on September 23. Nobody explained to Mr. Armstrong that the Jewish calendar FREQUENTLY starts the Feast of Tabernacles in the summer.

NOBODY in the Church in 1940 understood that the Jewish molad calculations are only "averaged out" and that they frequently place the molad as much as 15 hours after the time of the lunar conjunction, AND THEN they may still "postpone" that new moon by as much as two days. Nobody showed Mr. Armstrong that the Jewish calendar frequently places the Day of Trumpets ON THE WRONG DAY!

These are just a few of the questions and issues Mr. Armstrong never had to face in 1940. The claim that there are no new questions is obviously contrived. The only effect of this claim is to bias the reader against the valid questions which have indeed been raised.

THE UCG APPEAL TO "TRADITION"

The paper states:

"The Church of God, as a whole, has consistently used the Hebrew calendar ..."

and ...

Mr. Armstrong ... "consistently supported the Hebrew calendar".

and ...

"We have no reason to believe that the Church has ever used anything but the Hebrew calendar through the centuries."

Those arguments would be fine IF they were not being presented in an attempt to NEGATE clear biblical revelation! It is because of statements like this that I quoted Mark 7:9 at the start of this article.

When you really have a sound and valid point, then you FIRST show how and why your point has biblical support, AND THEN you may refer to the Church's traditions and the examples of various leaders as support. But the biblical proof and support must ALWAYS come first; it must be the foundation on which you build your case.

THIS UCG HAS NOT DONE!

Would you have used the example of the Apostle Peter's conduct in Antioch (see Galatians 2:11-12) to justify "withdrawing yourself from contact with the non-Jews"? FIRST you present biblical justification for withdrawing, and THEN you may refer to Peter's conduct to support your case (in this instance Peter was actually wrong, and he had to change).

Don't we understand the principle of:

AND THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT; BUT NOW COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERY WHERE TO REPENT: (Acts 17:30)

It doesn't matter for how many generations or how many centuries people "MAY" have done something a

certain way, when we come to CLEARLY see that "that way" is not right, THEN that is the time that God requires us to change! Appealing to what others may have done for centuries has no value at all, when we can clearly see that that is not really what God tells us to do.

If you are a married man: if your wife were to tell you that it is okay with her if you want to have sex with another woman, does that therefore make it okay? Of course not! And it doesn't help for you to appeal to the time when "it was okay" (it wasn't really!) for Abraham because it was Sarah who told him to have sex with Hagar.

Is it okay for you to have more than one wife today, simply because it was okay for many of God's servants in Old Testament times to do this?

Is it okay for you today to have personal slaves whom you literally own, just because that was okay for Abraham?

The example of what people have previously done can NEVER be the primary support for a position. The primary support must come from the Bible.

BUT THIS UCG HAS AVOIDED DOING!

THE MAJOR QUESTIONS LISTED IN THE PAPER

The UCG paper lists 10 "major questions and issues that had to be studied to arrive at an answer".

After listing the ten questions, the following statement is made:

"While there will be no attempt to address all these issues in this brief paper, each one is worthy of addressing."

THAT IS AN ABSOLUTELY STAGGERING STATEMENT!

First it is acknowledged that these questions HAVE TO BE STUDIED IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT AN ANSWER, and then it is calmly stated: **BUT WE ARE NOT GOING TO DO THAT IN THIS PAPER!**

THAT'S UNBELIEVABLE!

The first of those 10 questions, as posed by the paper, is:

"WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE CALENDAR?"

That is the first and most important question alright, but it is never addressed in the paper! **WHY IS THIS QUESTION AVOIDED?**

I'll tell you why the UCG Study Paper avoids this question. It is because **THE BIBLE DOES NOT AGREE WITH THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR!**

Look, if there was any hint of BIBLICAL support, it would have been presented in great detail. But, because the Bible actually shows up THE FLAWS in the present Jewish calendar, THEREFORE any reference to "what the Bible says about the calendar" is carefully avoided.

The paper talks about Jewish customs and traditions; the paper quotes Bible dictionaries and the Jewish historian Josephus, it quotes Arthur Spier's book about the calendar, **BUT IT NEVER TELLS US WHAT**

THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE CALENDAR!

Without the foundation of what God reveals about the calendar in His Word, all of these quotations are without any value. It is only as they back up the Bible that these quotations should even be looked at.

As God tells us in Isaiah 8:20:

To the law and to the testimony: IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, [IT IS] BECAUSE [THERE IS] NO LIGHT IN THEM. (Isaiah 8:20)

This makes clear that "this Word", THE BIBLE, must provide the foundation. So let's look at what the Bible tells us about the calendar.

THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE CALENDAR

It is true that the Bible does not in so many clear words spell out exactly how the calendar should be constructed. However, the Bible does make quite clear that the correct calendar must meet certain criteria. Let's look at them.

1) The months of the year must take the lunar cycles into consideration. Each month should begin with the new moon. Whether this means the invisible calculated conjunction or whether this means the first visible faint crescent is a secondary question.

2) Exodus 12:2 makes clear that the first month is to be in the spring, when God brought Israel out of Egypt. This verse is a clear reference to a calendar.

This month [shall be] unto you the beginning of months: it [shall be] THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR TO YOU. (Exodus 12:2)

This makes clear that the Jewish custom ("tradition") of calling the Day of Trumpets "New Year" is in violation of the Word of God. There is absolutely no justification, apart from "the traditions of the elders", for calling the first day of Tishri "New Year"!

3) The seasons must stay consistent in this calendar. This means that THE FIRST MONTH MUST ALWAYS BE IN THE SPRING. It is not right to start the year in the winter. That should be the most basic point of all!

The correct calendar must not allow the seasons to drift, so that the first month either moves ahead into the summer, or regresses into winter. It must stay in the spring.

The next point refines this further.

4) On the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread the priest was to wave a wavesheaf of barley before God. This is stated in Leviticus 23:10-11.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and SHALL REAP THE HARVEST THEREOF, then ye shall bring A SHEAF OF THE FIRSTFRUITS OF YOUR HARVEST unto the priest: And HE SHALL WAVE THE SHEAF before the LORD, to be accepted for you: ON THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH the priest shall wave it. (Leviticus 23:10-11)

THIS PLACES A CLEAR RESTRAINT ON THE CALENDAR!

Based on this instruction from God, it means that the first month may NEVER start so early that it would be utterly impossible to have any barley available on the Sunday during Unleavened Bread. When the First Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a Sunday (e.g. in 2001 A.D.), then the wavesheaf would theoretically have to be available on that Sunday, the 15th of Nisan.

THEREFORE the calendar must be constructed in such a way that the 15th of Nisan is NEVER earlier than the earliest date at which barley could be expected to be ripe in the Middle East. Never starting the year before the first day of spring (March 21) takes care of this requirement.

As a matter of interest:

When is barley ripe in the Middle East? When reaping is done by hand as opposed to reaping with machinery, then the moisture content of the grain can still be somewhat higher at the time of reaping, than is the case for mechanized reaping. Reaped by hand, the sheaves could be left in the fields for further drying. Thus the barley can be reaped earlier by hand than by machines.

HOWEVER, even assuming the most favourable circumstances, there is no way that in Palestine the farmers would have been able to have ANY mature barley available before about one week into the month of April (as calculated in the Gregorian calendar, NOT in the Julian calendar!). And even then, it is an extremely optimistic view that expects to find some ripe barley towards the end of that first week of April.

THIS IS A FACT WHICH CAN BE DEMONSTRATED!

So by starting the year not earlier than March 21, it means that Nisan 15 never falls before April 4. And that is still extremely early. Today farmers in Israel start reaping their barley in the latter part of April; so expecting ripe barley by April 4 is still extremely optimistic.

5) In Exodus 34:22 God tells us something about the timing of the Feast of Tabernacles. Notice:

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and THE FEAST OF INGATHERING AT THE YEAR'S END. (Exodus 34:22)

The Hebrew expression in this verse is: "at the tekufah of the year" (or tequphah or tekuphah as variant transliterations). The Hebrew word "tekufah" refers to exactly TWO THINGS. This can be shown over and over in books and reference works authored by Jewish writers. The word "tekufah" refers first of all to 4 specific days in the year (2 equinoxes and 2 solstices), which are the only days in the solar year that can be precisely pinpointed in advance. Secondly, the word "tekufah" refers to the 4 seasons which start on each of those 4 days.

The meanings of this word "tekufah" exactly parallel the meanings of the Hebrew word "chodesh". This word "chodesh" also has two meanings: first it refers to the day of the new moon, and secondly "chodesh" refers to the months which start on those new moon days. The Hebrew word "chodesh" would never refer to: the last part of one month plus the new moon date plus the first part of the new month after that new moon date. NEVER! And likewise the Hebrew word "tekufah" would NEVER refer to: the last part of one season plus the day of the equinox (or the day of the solstice) plus the first part of the new season that follows that day of the equinox (or solstice). NEVER!

This expression "at the tekufah of the year" in Exodus 34:22 can theoretically refer to both, the autumn equinox in the northern hemisphere AND also to the season of autumn, which starts on that equinox day. Now in Exodus 34:22 it is the context that makes clear that here it is NOT THE DAY of the autumn equinox that is being addressed, but THE SEASON of autumn which starts with that equinox day!

EXODUS 34:22 IS A VERY CLEAR REFERENCE TO THE SEASON OF AUTUMN! THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IS AN AUTUMN FESTIVAL! IT IS NOT A SUMMER FESTIVAL!

The reason should be obvious. God intended for the farmers to gather in their crops BEFORE they would go to the Feast of Tabernacles!

Exodus 34:22 requires that the Feast of Tabernacles NEVER STARTS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 23 (Gregorian) at the very earliest! If the First Day of Tabernacles falls before the autumn equinox, then Tabernacles is being observed in the summer BEFORE "the year's end", and that would be a violation of Exodus 34:22.

[Later I will discuss the argument that Exodus 34:22 is fulfilled as long as at least the SEVENTH Day of Tabernacles reaches the equinox. The flaw in that argument can be easily pointed out.]

SO THE QUESTIONS ARE:

- 1) IS THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD PREPARED TO ADMIT THAT EXODUS 34:22 PLACES A RESTRAINT ON THE CALENDAR, WHICH RESTRAINT MUST ALWAYS BE OBSERVED?
- 2) IS THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD PREPARED TO ADMIT THAT LEVITICUS 23:10-11 ALSO PLACES A RESTRAINT ON THE CALENDAR, WHICH MUST ALSO ALWAYS BE OBSERVED?
- 3) WHY DO THESE SCRIPTURES NOT FEATURE IN UCG's ASSESSMENT OF THE HEBREW CALENDAR?

THESE SCRIPTURES should certainly have been discussed in what THE BIBLE has to say about the calendar.

There is no need to INITIALLY even bother with "the 4 postponement rules". There is no need to INITIALLY worry about whether the new moons should be calculated or whether they should be visually observed. There is no need to INITIALLY worry about the sequence of leap years in the Jewish calendar.

The very first thing that should be done is this: We should ask:

DOES THE JEWISH CALENDAR COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IMPOSED BY EXODUS 34:22 AND BY LEVITICUS 23:10-11? HAS THE JEWISH CALENDAR ALWAYS, SINCE THE TIME OF HILLEL II, COMPLIED WITH THESE SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENTS? DID HILLEL II, IN CONSTRUCTING THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR, EVEN TAKE THESE TWO PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE INTO CONSIDERATION?

That is all we need to ask to start with!

IF it then turns out that the Jewish calendar does NOT meet these scriptural requirements, and has in fact NEVER met them since the time of Hillel II, THEN some of these other questions need to be addressed!

But we CANNOT skip to those other questions UNTIL we have squarely faced and addressed these scriptural requirements in Exodus 34:22 and in Leviticus 23:10-11.

The United Church of God, in its Study Paper on the Hebrew calendar, has thus far AVOIDED THESE SCRIPTURES! These Scriptures were clearly presented in some of the papers they examined, yet they

chose to reject them together with everything else in those 50 papers. But these verses will not go away! They are a part of the inspired Word of God!

It is ONLY AFTER the Jewish calendar has been evaluated against the requirements of these two Scriptures that THEN we can try to look at an example from the ministry of Jesus Christ, from which we "MAY PERHAPS" be able to "infer" certain things?

Exodus 34:22 and Leviticus 23:10-11 are VERY CLEAR STATEMENTS, which require no interpretations! The account in John chapters 7-9, on the other hand, requires major assumptions, as I will point out shortly. And you cannot play the speculated and highly theoretical deductions from the account in John's gospel AGAINST the CLEAR statements in Exodus and in Leviticus. The calendar in use during Christ's ministry MUST have complied with Exodus 34:22 and with Leviticus 23:10-11 in order to receive God's approval. No other conclusion is possible!

Now Dr. Hoeh in his 1981 Good News article about the calendar freely acknowledged the limitation Exodus 34:22 imposes on the calendar (though he claimed that this Scripture is fulfilled if at least THE SEVENTH DAY OF FoT reaches the autumn equinox, something I will look at later). Mr. Raymond McNair, in his calendar article for the Global Church, also freely acknowledged the requirement Exodus 34:22 imposes on the calendar. The reason both of these men were willing to acknowledge the scriptural requirement of Exodus 34:22 is that neither one of them realized that an acknowledgment of Exodus 34:22 as a requirement for the calendar AUTOMATICALLY CONDEMNS THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR!

It is because those who wrote the Doctrinal Study Paper for UCG REALIZE that to acknowledge Exodus 34:22 amounts to an automatic rejection of the present Jewish calendar, THEREFORE they simply avoided this Scripture! I know that, because this Scripture was clearly presented to them in at least one of the 50 papers they so carefully examined, and I suspect that Exodus 34:22 featured in MORE than just one of those 50 papers.

In plain English:

IF YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT EXODUS 34:22 APPLIES TO THE CALENDAR, THEN I HAVE GOT YOU CORNERED AND YOU SIMPLY CANNOT GET AWAY!

IF YOU REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT EXODUS 34:22 IMPOSES A CONDITION ON THE CALENDAR, THEN YOU ARE REJECTING A PART OF GOD'S WORD IN ORDER TO HOLD FAST TO YOUR "TRADITIONS"!

If that sounds like strong speaking, then I will just say that I am not prepared to let UCG off the hook! To the law and to the prophets, if they speak not according to this Word (the Bible, including Exodus 34:22!), it is because there is no light in them!

So now the questions are:

WILL UCG ADMIT THAT EXODUS 34:22 IMPOSES A RESTRICTION ON THE CALENDAR, NAMELY THAT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES MUST NOT START BEFORE THE EQUINOX?

WILL UCG ADMIT THAT LEVITICUS 23:10-11 ALSO IMPOSES A RESTRICTION ON THE CALENDAR, NAMELY THAT THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD MUST NEVER BE EARLIER THAN WHEN AT LEAST SOME BARLEY IS RIPE IN THE AREA OF PALESTINE?

It is easy to look at Christ's admonition to the Pharisees, where He said: "Full well ye reject the

commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:9), and to say: "Well yes, that applies to the traditions OF THE PHARISEES". But the fact we need to understand is that ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE very readily REJECT God's commandments in favour of keeping their own traditions. It is a very common HUMAN trait, which applies to you and me just as much as it applied to the Pharisees. WE (!) very easily hold fast to OUR OWN TRADITIONS, whatever they may be, rather than eagerly letting go of our traditions in order to accept and to hold fast to the truth of God.

Other people's traditions are wrong, certainly; but OURS? OUR traditions are just fine, thank you very much! That's how we reason. We're no exceptions to this natural human tendency. It takes REAL EFFORT on our part to LET GO of the past, something the Apostle Paul did very deliberately! As he said:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I COUNT ALL THINGS [BUT] LOSS for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ, (Philippians 3:7-8)

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but [this] one thing [I do], FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (Philippians 3:13)

Can we do that?

It is our "tradition" of "always" having accepted the present Jewish calendar that chains us down and prevents us from openly acknowledging: yes, there are problems with the Jewish calendar; yes, the Jewish calendar actually violates God's instructions as per Exodus 34:22 and Leviticus 23:10-11. We think of all the good Christians (like Mr. Armstrong) who all their lives never understood that there are problems with the Jewish calendar, and we reason: "IF God chose not to correct this matter during Mr. Armstrong's lifetime, WHY is it such a big deal NOW? WHY would God possibly hold it against us if we simply continue with this Jewish calendar, just as we were taught by Mr. Armstrong?"

And we forget that ...

... THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (Acts 17:30)

It is NOW (!) that God commands us to repent! "Repent" means: to change the way we think! It is NOW that God commands us to change the way we think!

But that is a hard thing to do, to change the way we think. But God REQUIRES it of us. This is something God has required of His people in EVERY age, because that is the real test of repentance. Repentance does NOT mean that we will accept keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days. Repentance really means that we are willing to change the way we THINK. Are we willing to RENEW our minds? Are we willing to LET GO of our past MINDSET?

Understand that starting to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days and tithing BARELY SCRATCHES THE SURFACE, when it comes to "changing our mindset". Changing our mindset really requires that we LET GO of our past "traditions", our past way of viewing life, our past set of values and conforming EVERYTHING in our minds to the way God wants us to think and speak and behave. It involves bringing EVERY thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). There is no room here for "holding fast" to ANYTHING that is in conflict with the truth of God.

So:

What is the leadership of UCG going to do with Exodus 34:22 and with Leviticus 23:10-11? Those Scriptures will not go away!

SOME MORE WEAKNESSES IN THE UCG CALENDAR PAPER

1) The Paper quotes from Epiphanius, a quotation presented in Bacchiocchi's book on the festivals. He is referred to as "the Palestinian historian Epiphanius". The quote reads:

"You shall not change the celebration of the time, but you shall celebrate it at the same time as your brethren WHO CAME OUT FROM THE CIRCUMCISION. WITH THEM OBSERVE THE PASSOVER."

Here are some facts about Epiphanius, from the Encarta 95 Encyclopedia:

"Epiphanius, St (c. 315-403), Christian prelate and FATHER OF THE CHURCH, born in Palestine. He lived in Egypt in his youth and on his return home was ordained A PRIEST. In 335 HE FOUNDED A MONASTERY near Eleutheropolis, which he directed for 30 years. In 367 he was nominated bishop of Constantia (formerly Salamis) in Cyprus and held office until his death. HE ENCOURAGED THE GROWTH OF MONASTICISM, SUPPORTED TRADITIONAL ORTHODOXY against the heresies of the time, and attended the synods of Antioch (376) and Rome (382)."

So here we have a Roman Catholic priest who encouraged men to become monks and who supported the TRADITIONAL (note!) orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. He himself had founded a monastery when he was only 20 years old. He is one of the Catholic "CHURCH FATHERS". He is in fact called "A SAINT" in the Catholic Church. He was writing about 300 years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This picture puts the man in a somewhat different light than the mere description as "a Palestinian historian".

And this CATHOLIC priest Epiphanius is quoted in order to support the use of the JEWISH calendar. Note the following things:

A) Hillel II CHANGED the Jewish calendar in the 350's A.D., shortly before Epiphanius wrote those words. The calendar Epiphanius was referring to in the latter part of the 4th century A.D. was NOT the same one that had been in use during the ministry of Jesus Christ!

The United Church acknowledges this fact because they knowingly apply A DIFFERENT SEQUENCE OF LEAP YEARS to the time of Christ's ministry from the sequence they apply to the time of Epiphanius.

B) Even IF the calendar at the time of Epiphanius included the 4 postponement rules, that does not at all prove that therefore those 4 rules were also in existence during Christ's ministry, an insinuation that UCG attempts to draw out of that quotation.

If a CATHOLIC priest were to sanction the JEWISH postponement rules for the Jewish calendar, does that prove that therefore GOD also sanctions those postponement rules? Not at all!

C) The UCG claim that the Jews "still recognize that the Passover lambs were slain on the 14th of Nisan" is extremely MISLEADING!

The Jews do NOT accept the truth of the Bible, which shows that the lambs were slain AT THE START of the 14th of Nisan! They only accept their unbiblical TRADITION that the lambs were slain AT THE END of the 14th. And that has been the universal custom since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Prior to that the Sadducees actually kept the Passover AT THE BEGINNING of the 14th of Nisan, as can be seen quite clearly in the Passover article of the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia.

Furthermore, by the time of Epiphanius the Jews were NOT DOING ANYTHING AT ALL ON THE 14TH OF NISAN! Do we understand this? Even IF they academically acknowledged that the lambs were (supposedly) slain at the end of the 14th, YET THEY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING ON THE 14TH! The Jews do not have any "Pesach" activity on the 14th! They have NO PASSOVER ACTIVITY BEFORE THE 15TH OF NISAN STARTS!

And so when Epiphanius urged his readers to observe the Passover "WITH THE JEWS", then this clearly means that his readers would have observed something on the 15th of Nisan, because there was ABSOLUTELY NOTHING that the Jews "OBSERVED" on the 14th of Nisan in the fourth century A.D.! Nothing at all!

D) Furthermore, it should be absolutely self-evident that this Catholic "church father" was not writing to or for truly converted Christians! True Christians at that time had NOTHING to do with that monk! He was writing to his own followers. And anyone who would have kept the Passover "WITH" the Jews, would have had to keep it on the 15th day, because that is when the Jews observe their passover.

SO THE QUOTATION FROM EPIPHANIUS IS MEANINGLESS AND WORTHLESS, WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR!

Referring to Epiphanius' statement, the UCG paper states:

"An interesting side point in the above quote from Epiphanius is the issue of 'calculation' ..."

It is well-known that from Hillel II's time onwards, calculation was the only method used. So Epiphanius, writing AFTER Hillel's calendar had come into usage, makes a reference to "calculation". So what does that prove about what had been the practice 300 years earlier, during the ministry of Christ? It again proves nothing at all!

I am not against calculation. But the Catholic "church father" Epiphanius, living after Hillel II instituted his calendar, referring to "calculation" proves nothing at all. Whether the calendar was based on observation or on calculation is a secondary issue anyway. FIRST we need to make sure that it does not violate clearly stated biblical points, a question UCG has very scrupulously avoided facing up to.

2) The UCG Study Paper also presents a number of quotes from the Jewish historian Josephus, in an attempt to establish some antiquity for the Jewish calendar.

Firstly, Josephus is NOTORIOUSLY UNRELIABLE when it comes to sticking to the facts. He was a Pharisee who went over to the Romans in order to save his own life. I have documented at length how the Pharisees fabricated their traditions in my recent article titled "Judaism and Baal Worship". Many of the same errors that are found in the Talmud are also found in the writings of Josephus.

The UCG paper then mentions a number of references in Genesis and states that these references "clearly show some sort of calendar in existence".

"SOME SORT OF CALENDAR"??

Some sort of calendar indeed! But it is NOT the calendar the Jews have today! And that was also pointed out in one or more of the 50 papers they examined. Notice these Scriptures:

Genesis 7:11 = 600th year 2nd month 17th day (of Noah's life)

Genesis 7:24 = a period of EXACTLY 150 days passes

Genesis 8:3 = this period of 150 days is again mentioned

Genesis 8:4 = 7th month and 17th day

So we have the following equation:

2nd month 17th day + 150 days = 7th month 17th day.

The conclusion is inescapable; the 5 months that had passed consisted of EXACTLY 150 DAYS!

It should be quite clear that THE BIBLE reveals a calendar in the days of Noah where EVERY MONTH HAD EXACTLY 30 DAYS!

But that is NOT the Jewish calendar we have today! In the Jewish calendar of today the equation is:

2nd month 17th day + 147 days = 7th month 17th day.

What the Scriptures in Genesis make clear is that in the days of Noah there was A FIXED CALENDAR! These 30-day months were NOT based on "observation". It was a fixed calendar where there were 12 months, each with 30 days, making every year EXACTLY 360 days long! That is exactly the same year length which God consistently uses in the prophecies, a year of exactly 360 days. I would say that a year of 360 days is "A PERFECT YEAR", the length God would have INTENDED a year to have.

The evidence of inspiration for 5 months being equal to exactly 150 days in the days of Noah is irrefutable, unless you reject that the Book of Genesis is inspired. But for the Jewish calendar and its starting date there is not one shred of evidence of inspiration. Its only evidence is "tradition".

It is claimed that the Jewish calendar has "a high level of accuracy in its calculations". Really? Then WHY is it fairly common that the calculated molad of the Jewish calendar is as much as 15 HOURS AFTER THE LUNAR CONJUNCTION, and then the Jewish calendar will frequently still apply a two day postponement? The facts are that the Jewish calculations are not accurate at all! They are nothing more than "hit and miss", as far as accuracy is concerned.

But appeals to the calendar in Genesis are flawed for a very basic reason.

THE MOST BASIC POINT ABOUT THE JEWISH CALENDAR

Most people in the churches of God who write about the Jewish calendar actually know very little about that calendar. Now here is a very, very, very basic fact!

The entire calculations of the Jewish calendar have one purpose and one purpose only. Do you know what that purpose is?

THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THE ENTIRE JEWISH CALENDAR CALCULATIONS IS TO ESTABLISH A DATE FOR TISHRI 1 IN TERMS OF ANOTHER CALENDAR!

That's right, ANOTHER CALENDAR!

The Jewish calendar calculations are based on doing TWO things:

The first calculation is designed to establish THE DAY OF THE WEEK for Tishri 1. This calculation presupposes the existence of the weekly cycle.

The second calculation is designed to establish THE DAY OF THE MONTH for Tishri 1. This calculation presupposes the existence of the Julian calendar, which was enacted around 45 B.C. by Julius Caesar on the advice of the Alexandrian astronomer Sosigenes.

It should be totally obvious that THE ONLY WAY to establish "the day of the month" for Tishri 1 is IF THERE IS ANOTHER CALENDAR THAT TAKES PRIORITY OVER THE JEWISH CALENDAR!

Can you understand this?

On a scale of Tishri 1 to Tishri 30, how would you possibly work out the day of the month for Tishri 1?? Would you ever decide that Tishri 1 should be on Tishri 2 or on Tishri 3?? That just doesn't make sense, does it?

Can you understand that the Jewish calculations, designed to establish "the day of the month" for Tishri 1, ONLY MAKE SENSE if the entire calculations are aimed at establishing a date for Tishri 1 in another calendar? That's what happens today in the Jewish calendar calculations; they establish a date for Tishri 1 in terms of THE ROMAN CALENDAR, i.e. they determine a date for Tishri 1 in either September or in October IN THE ROMAN CALENDAR.

Can you understand that the entire Jewish calendar calculations were TOTALLY USELESS AND IMPOSSIBLE TO USE AND COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE EXISTED BEFORE THE ROMAN JULIAN CALENDAR CAME INTO EXISTENCE?!

When the UCG paper attempts to link the present Jewish calendar to a calendar in Genesis, they are expecting their readers to believe that already back in Genesis God made provisions for the calendar Julius Caesar would introduce several thousand years later, because that Jewish calendar is TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE EXISTENCE OF THE JULIAN CALENDAR!

Do you really buy the idea that God back in Genesis gave people some "calculations" which would establish a date for Tishri 1 in terms of a calendar that Julius Caesar would only introduce thousands of years later? We know that in Isaiah 45:1 God spoke about Cyrus long before Cyrus was ever born. Do you think that God did the same thing with the Julian calendar, by giving people calculations based on that calendar long before it ever came into existence? If you do, you sure have a fertile imagination. And those calculations were impossible to use as long as there was no Julian calendar.

Isn't there anybody in the UCG leadership, who is so embarrassed by UCG's claim that the present calculated Jewish calendar supposedly goes back to Old Testament times, who understands the utter impossibility of those calculations predating the existence of the Julian calendar, that he can at least persuade the authors of this doctrinal statement to simply drop any and all appeals to a supposed B.C. existence of the calculated Jewish calendar?

Jewish astronomers would be totally embarrassed by the claim that their present calculated calendar supposedly predates the existence of the Julian calendar, because they know that such a claim is an utter impossibility! That is why NO JEWISH ASTRONOMERS will make such claims.

Is there really anybody amongst those who authored the UCG calendar paper who actually understands the real purpose of the Jewish calendar, how it is calculated and how it works? Surely the first requirement for anyone who desires to defend the Jewish calendar must be a thorough and in-depth understanding of all aspects of that calendar. But ANY argument that appeals to the present Jewish calendar supposedly having existed in B.C. centuries immediately exposes a lack of understanding regarding the real purpose of the entire calculations for the present Jewish calendar.

Let's move on in our examination of the UCG paper.

AVOIDING THE REAL EVIDENCE

The UCG paper states:

"After an exhaustive study, it became clear that the real answer must lie in the pages of Scripture. Are there DATES provided in Scripture that can be verified and that will offer evidence of the type of calendar and its application during the time of Christ?"

THAT IS A TOTALLY BIASED AND ILLOGICAL APPROACH!!!

It sounds really good; it seemingly says that we are going to let the Bible tell us what the calendar should be like.

But in actual fact that statement says that they are NOT GOING TO LOOK TO THE BIBLE AT ALL! They don't want any biblical instructions or biblical constraints for the calendar! No, all they want to do is LIFT SOME THEORETICAL DATE OUT OF THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE, and then present that theoretical date in an argument of support for the totally unbiblical features of the present Jewish calendar.

Listen!

What's the point of showing that some event which is mentioned in the Bible could THEORETICALLY have been achieved with the present calculated Jewish calendar, when all along that same date WAS ALSO ACHIEVED BY SIMPLY VISUALLY OBSERVING THE FIRST CRESCENT OF THE NEW MOONS?

So what if theoretical calculations (which are proved to be INACCURATE!) plus some postponements reach the same answer as visual observations of the new crescents? That coincidental agreement with the results based on visual observations does not in any way prove the existence of the present calculations plus postponements. It is an enormous, gargantuan leap in logic to then INFER from such theoretical calculations that therefore they must have been in use at that time.

The UCG approach simply says:

WE ARE ONLY GOING TO LOOK EXACTLY WHERE WE WANT TO LOOK! ALL OTHER SCRIPTURES WILL BE IGNORED! WE WILL LIMIT OURSELVES TO AN ACCOUNT DURING CHRIST'S MINISTRY, WHICH WE KNOW WE CAN INTERPRET TO FIT IN WITH OUR "TRADITIONS"! APPEALS TO ANY OTHER SCRIPTURES ARE NOT PERMISSIBLE!

The UCG statement really says: we do not believe that there are CLEAR guidelines which have to be observed in the construction of any calendar. THEREFORE WE DON'T NEED EXODUS 34:22 OR LEVITICUS 23:10-11 or any other Scriptures that may call the present Jewish calendar into question.

Furthermore, appealing to DATES is totally illogical, as well as being totally theoretical. All arguments about dates are NON-BIBLICAL arguments! Simply because an argument is about some date that applies to some event mentioned in the Bible, that does not make that argument "BIBLICAL evidence". Not at all! So UCG is reducing the entire calendar question into a secular argument, with a deliberate refusal to look at all the scriptural statements that apply to the calendar.

Thus:

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a historical event. But any appeals to the supposed DATE OF THE CRUCIFIXION is nothing more than a non-biblical argument, since the Bible very evidently does not provide any Julian calendar date for the crucifixion. On the other hand, appeals to Exodus 34:22 that the Feast of Tabernacles must always be in the autumn very clearly represent a BIBLICAL argument.

Next, this approach allows UCG to make deductions that they want to make, since they don't have to pay attention to any particular parameters or limitations. In this way they can use REASONING to supersede clear statements, which other people (like Dr. Hoeh and Mr. Raymond McNair) made the mistake of including in their presentations.

In their "EXHAUSTIVE STUDY" the UCG writers of the paper have seen IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE of situations where the present Jewish calendar has VIOLATED GOD'S PLAIN INSTRUCTIONS! They KNOW that Hillel's calendar moved the whole Feast of Tabernacles back INTO THE SUMMER in a repeating pattern for over 800 years!

But they don't really want to know that kind of evidence!

For example:

In 360 A.D. (just after Hillel's calendar reform!) according to the present Jewish calendar THE PASSOVER was on FRIDAY MARCH 17! That was a full 4 days before the end of WINTER! Spring only started on March 21.

The wave offering would have been required on Sunday MARCH 19, also still in the winter!

How can anyone POSSIBLY claim divine inspiration and support for a calendar which has moved both, the Passover and the date for the wave offering back into THE WINTER?

In the face of this kind of evidence how can the United Church say: "Are there SOME DATES we can deduce from the time of Christ's ministry, which will show support for the Jewish calendar?" Let's face the truth: they have only searched the Bible with the goal of finding support for the present Jewish calendar. They have NOT been open to evidence that challenges the present Jewish calendar.

It is because of the refusal to accept this kind of evidence that I say Mark 7:9 is an admonition to the leadership of the United Church.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. (Mark 7:9)

Does the United Church of God not accept the premise that GOD does not want the Passover to fall in the winter, that the Passover MUST take place in the spring?

In 379 A.D. and in 398 A.D. and in 417 A.D., etc. the Passover AGAIN fell into the winter according to the present Jewish calendar! I can present long lists of years where the present Jewish calendar CLEARLY violated God's instructions! Whether some of God's people in the 300's and 400's and 500's, etc. kept the Holy Days at the wrong times simply because they may not have known any better has nothing to do with this. It is simply that:

IT IS WRONG FOR THE PASSOVER TO OCCUR IN THE WINTER! AND IT IS WRONG FOR THE ENTIRE FEAST OF TABERNACLES TO OCCUR IN THE SUMMER! IT IS WRONG! THAT'S ALL! NO COMPROMISE!

When we kept Pentecost on a Monday, it was wrong! Our ignorance didn't make it any less wrong. God had never set apart a Monday for the observance of Pentecost. Our inability to correctly understand God's instructions was OUR problem; it wasn't God's problem. We didn't have a wrong attitude about observing Pentecost, but we were still wrong.

The real test only came when God showed us that we were wrong. THEN God was watching our response. The same is true today. Once again God is watching our response to what we have come to understand.

DATING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

In the Study Paper UCG has pinned its entire justification for staying with the present Jewish calendar on the issue of dating the ministry of Jesus Christ by using one specific incident in the gospels.

No other biblical "proof" for retaining the present Jewish calendar is offered in the paper. This means that UCG has placed all its eggs in one basket, as far as the calendar issue is concerned. And that basket is about to crash down onto the ground!

HERE ARE THE FACTS!

1) Yes, God certainly DOES want us to date the ministry of Jesus Christ! Towards that end God has inspired certain information to be recorded and preserved in His Word.

QUESTION:

EXACTLY HOW DOES GOD WANT US TO DATE THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST? HAS GOD PINPOINTED CERTAIN DATES IN HIS WORD, OR DOES GOD WANT US TO MAKE SOME VERY INVOLVED AND SPECULATIVE DEDUCTIONS TO ARRIVE AT THE DATES FOR CHRIST'S MINISTRY?

ANSWER:

1) GOD DEVOTED ONE WHOLE PROPHECY TO THE EXPRESS SUBJECT OF TELLING US HOW TO DATE THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST!

2) IN ADDITION TO THIS SPECIFIC PROPHECY GOD ALSO SAW TO IT THAT THE BIBLE RECORDS OTHER SPECIFIC DATES WHICH WILL CORROBORATE THE FULFILMENT OF THAT ONE PROPHECY!

God specifically gave the 70-weeks prophecy so that we would be able to PRECISELY date the ministry of Jesus Christ! That is the only purpose for that prophecy, to date Christ's ministry! If that prophecy is not going to be used to date Christ's ministry, then it may as well not be in the Bible, because it serves no other purpose.

Look at these specific statements in the Bible:

SEVENTY WEEKS ARE DETERMINED UPON THY PEOPLE and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and TO MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR INIQUITY, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. (Daniel 9:24)

KNOW THEREFORE AND UNDERSTAND, [that] from the going forth of the commandment to restore

and to build Jerusalem UNTO THE MESSIAH THE PRINCE [SHALL BE] SEVEN WEEKS, AND THREESCORE AND TWO WEEKS: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. (Daniel 9:25)

AND AFTER THREESCORE AND TWO WEEKS SHALL MESSIAH BE CUT OFF, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:26)

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: AND IN THE MIDST OF THE WEEK HE SHALL CAUSE THE SACRIFICE AND THE OBLATION TO CEASE, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. (Daniel 9:27)

So here God tells us: "KNOW THEREFORE AND UNDERSTAND", but the United Church says: "We can't do that; we can't really understand that prophecy to the point of RELYING on it. It is only inconclusive evidence." Yet Almighty God has said to His servants: KNOW THEREFORE AND UNDERSTAND!

Daniel 9:25 is a clear, indisputable reference to the ministry of the Messiah! But it doesn't feature in UCG's attempt to date the ministry of the Messiah. Why not? Well, it isn't referred to because IT CALLS A 31 A.D. CRUCIFIXION DATE INTO QUESTION!

Let's face it! IF the 70-weeks prophecy would give even the slightest hint that Christ might have been crucified in 31 A.D., THEN this prophecy would have featured like a trump card in UCG's presentation. If the Doctrinal Committee had been able to find a flaw in my explanation of the 70-weeks prophecy, THEN they surely would have presented this prophecy in their paper. It is because this prophecy indicates a 30 A.D. rather than a 31 A.D. crucifixion date, that THEREFORE it is omitted. And their omission of the 70-weeks prophecy is a tacit admission that they could not flaw that explanation.

It is NOT that the leadership of UCG does not understand this prophecy; it has been quite clearly understood by the Church for a long time already. And it was vigorously promoted as long as it SEEMED to firmly support a 31 A.D. crucifixion date! However, once the flaw in that approach was exposed, THEN the 70-weeks prophecy was suddenly dropped. And the search was on for another way of coming up with a 31 A.D. crucifixion date.

First of all: Whether Jesus Christ was crucified in 30 A.D. or in 31 A.D. is totally immaterial, as far as establishing WHAT CALENDAR WAS USED THAT YEAR is concerned! When visual observations of the new crescents arrive at the same date as the theoretical calculations plus postponements for such a year, then it means the calculations WERE NOT NEEDED to arrive at the correct answer! All the available Jewish historical documents and references make quite clear that in the first century the Jewish calendar was determined based on the reports of reliable eyewitnesses. No reliable Jewish authors would dream of claiming that the present calculations plus postponements were used by the Jews at that time.

Next, as far as the 70-weeks prophecy is concerned, when GOD tells us:

"from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks ..."

THEN GOD IS TELLING US:

I AM GIVING YOU THIS INFORMATION SO THAT YOU CAN ACCURATELY PINPOINT THE START

OF THE MINISTRY OF THE MESSIAH!

God is saying: From ... to ... shall be exactly 69 weeks (or $69 \times 7 = 483$ years). This is not disputed by UCG.

Given this divinely revealed information WE ONLY NEED ONE THING! We don't need any involved reasoning; we don't have to make any involved deductions; we don't need to be able to relate any events in the calendar to any specific "days of the week"; we don't need to know which calendar the Jews were using at what time; we don't even need to interpret any ambiguous passages in the Bible; we don't need to know anything about real or supposed eclipses at the time of the crucifixion; we don't need to make any assumptions.

WE ONLY NEED TO KNOW EXACTLY WHEN THE DECREE, THAT MARKS THE STARTING POINT FOR THAT 483 YEAR PERIOD, WAS MADE! THAT'S ALL!

But UCG is not very keen on wanting to know the exact date for that decree. It is more convenient to hide behind the excuse: "we can't really be certain about that date".

If this seems to be a bit hard on the UCG leadership, I will just point out that this information was clearly presented to them in one of those 50 papers they so "exhaustively studied".

Here are some facts!

1) Already in his 1959 booklet "The Crucifixion was not on Friday" Dr. Hoeh CORRECTLY gave the date for the death of Xerxes as "late December 465 B.C." (page 24).

2) Dr. Hoeh also CORRECTLY stated that from December 465 B.C. until the spring of 464 B.C. was the accession year of Artaxerxes, which "was regarded as completing the last regnal year of the previous king".

3) Dr. Hoeh also CORRECTLY stated that "according to the Persian spring-to-spring reckoning of regnal years --- as these business documents CLEARLY SHOW --- Artaxerxes' first year extended from APRIL, 464 TO APRIL 463 B.C."

4) THERE IS NO DISPUTE ABOUT WHEN THE FIRST YEAR OF ARTAXERXES OCCURRED!

5) Therefore it is also clear that his 7th year went from April 458 - April 457 B.C.

6) THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT DR. HOEH THEN WANTED TO ASSIGN EVENTS FROM ARTAXERXES' 7TH YEAR INTO HIS 8TH YEAR! THIS REASONING BY DR. HOEH WAS NOT JUSTIFIED BY THE FACTS!

7) This information that Xerxes died in December 465 B.C. is beyond doubt because, as far as the period of time which the 70-weeks prophecy covers is concerned, ALL THE NEW MOONS IN BABYLON WERE METICULOUSLY RECORDED! They cover a total of over 8600 new moons, spanning a period of 700 years! And I have a copy of the dates of all those 8600 new moons in my files. And based on those extensive new moon records it has been possible to accurately relate the reigns of all the rulers during those 700 years to a B.C./A.D. scale!

In 1956 Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein wrote a book entitled "Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. to A.D. 75". This was published by Brown University Press, Providence, Rhode Island, USA.

In this book Parker and Dubberstein present the new-moon tables of Karl Schoch, as found in "The Venus Tablets of Ammizaduga" by S. Langdon and J. K. Fotheringham (published in London in 1928). Parker and Dubberstein checked all the new-moon tables. Then they published the date of every single new moon from Nisan 626 B.C. to the new moon of Adar in 76 A.D.

There is no doubt that their dating of the death of Xerxes is correct! Therefore it is equally clear that their dating of the reign of Artaxerxes is also correct, and it is these CORRECT dates which Dr. Hoeh presented in his 1959 booklet.

Therefore:

WHY DOES UCG NOT ACCEPT THE DATES OF APRIL 464 B.C. TO APRIL 463 B.C. FOR THE FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF ARTAXERXES?

They accepted those dates for Artaxerxes' first year as long as Dr. Hoeh's wrong reasoning still allowed them to hold to a 31 A.D. crucifixion date. But now that I have exposed the flaw in Dr. Hoeh's presentation, NOW they don't want to know those dates any longer.

So God's main way of telling us how to date the ministry of Jesus Christ leads to the year 26 A.D. for the start of that ministry. That is: 458 B.C. (7th year Artaxerxes) + 483 years = 25 A.D. IF THERE WAS A YEAR "ZERO" between B.C. and A.D. Since there is no year "zero", therefore this means that it leads us to $25 + 1 = 26$ A.D.

And a 26 A.D. start for the ministry of Jesus Christ leads to a 30 A.D. crucifixion date. In 30 A.D. the Passover was on a Wednesday, irrespective of which calendar variation people may follow. No postponements were required that year. It follows that a 30 A.D. crucifixion does NOT provide any support for the 4 Jewish postponement rules, AND THEREFORE a 30 A.D. crucifixion date is not desirable for UCG; such a date cannot possibly support their position.

Next, the 30 A.D. crucifixion date, established by applying the 70-weeks prophecy, is also corroborated by several other historically verifiable events. These were all presented in Dr. Hoeh's old booklet, but the correct data he presented was misinterpreted. Thus:

A 30 A.D. crucifixion date is ALSO indicated by the following historical events:

- A) dating the ministry of John the Baptist;
- B) dating the death of king Herod;
- C) dating the governorship of Pontius Pilate.

Note! The information that these three events require is provided in books, the authors of which in most cases accept a crucifixion date OTHER THAN 30 A.D. So they cannot be accused of slanting their information towards a 30 A.D. crucifixion date, something they themselves don't necessarily accept.

So we have the following situation:

- 1) The year of Christ's crucifixion can be accurately pinpointed by applying the God-given 70-weeks prophecy to available historical data. It is 30 A.D.
- 2) This date is further supported by carefully checking:

A) the date for the start of John the Baptist's ministry;

B) the date for the death of king Herod; and

C) the dates for the governorship of Pontius Pilate.

The start for the ministry of John the Baptist is carefully recorded IN THE BIBLE! Luke 3:1-2 tells us that John started his ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar. We can accurately date the reign of Tiberius Caesar, and therefore this ALSO gives us an accurate dating for Christ's ministry.

3) YET UCG ACCEPTS NONE OF THESE BIBLICALLY-BASED WAYS OF DATING THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST!

4) Instead they have decided to focus on one particular account which took place on the Last Great Day in the year before Christ's crucifixion. They have based their dating EXCLUSIVELY on their interpretation of John chapters 7-9. In so doing they obviously REJECT the dating the Bible provides through the 70-weeks prophecy and through the ministry of John the Baptist, as well as the historical information available about king Herod and about Pontius Pilate.

5) In the account in John chapters 7-9 NO DATES OF ANY KIND ARE GIVEN! This is important to understand! The dating has to be DEDUCED without having access to any reference points which could:

A) precede those events; or

B) precisely date those events; or

C) follow those events.

John chapters 7-9 give no indication on a B.C./A.D. scale of when these events occurred! They can only be indirectly dated within the context of Christ's ministry. We can know at what point of Christ's ministry they took place, but that does not provide us with any way to date Christ's ministry itself! To date Christ's ministry itself we have to look to the 70-weeks prophecy, which is why God gave that prophecy.

So "deduced" dates are used by UCG to contradict or to reject plainly STATED dates. The 7th year of Artaxerxes and the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar are plainly stated dates in the Bible. But for John 7-9 the Bible does NOT plainly state any date. Thus reasoning is held in higher esteem by UCG than factual biblical statements.

6) As zealous a supporter of the present Jewish calendar (he has posted MANY messages on the Internet in support of the present Jewish calendar!) as Mr. Ken Burrell wrote the following on August 4, 1996 in his "First Rebuttal Article" directed at my calendar article:

(START OF QUOTATION FROM MR. KEN BURRELL'S PAPER)

"NELTE:(while referring to Herman Hoeh's obsession with 31AD)

'A.D. 29 = Saturday, April 16

A.D. 30 = Wednesday, April 5

A.D. 31 = Wednesday, April 25

A.D. 32 = Monday, April 14

A.D. 33 = Friday, April 3

What he does not point out is that of those five dates ONLY the 30 A.D. date is not the result of a postponement! Without postponements (the existence of which is not proved for the time prior to 250 A.D. in ANY records that are available!) these dates would look as follows (all observed the previous evening):'

ANALYSIS: Here I agree with Nelte that 30AD is more likely the year of our Lord's death. He gives a longer analysis on other historical points with which I have no disagreement." (END OF QUOTATION FROM MR. KEN BURRELL'S PAPER)

Note that this ardent supporter of the present Jewish calendar (and I believe a member of UCG) stated the following things:

- A) He referred to "Herman Hoeh's OBSESSION with 31 A.D."
- B) He agreed with my conclusion that 30 A.D. is the "MORE LIKELY YEAR" for the crucifixion.
- C) He had no disagreement with the HISTORICAL POINTS I presented.

I wonder what Mr. Burrell is saying NOW about "THE OBSESSION" of the UCG leadership with 31 A.D.? His is actually a very good assessment, that some people are "OBSESSED" with 31 A.D. And that evaluation is certainly applicable to the UCG leadership, since they have based their decision TOTALLY AND ENTIRELY ON 31 A.D. being the year of the crucifixion!

Mr. Burrell had "no disagreement" with the historical points in my article, which was one of those 50 papers UCG studied so "exhaustively". What DISAGREEMENTS did UCG find with those points, that may have escaped Mr. Burrell's scrutiny? Or did they just dismiss all those points out of hand because of their "obsession"? Understand that Mr. Burrell is one of the most vocal supporters in UCG for the present Jewish calendar; he wasn't necessarily trying to support my views. He was (and presumably still is?) on the side of the UCG leadership. So when Mr. Burrell concedes that 31 A.D. is "an obsession" with some people, then that can be viewed as a fairly impartial assessment by someone who has nothing to gain by admitting this fact.

Let's move on and examine the account in the gospel of John.

THE ACCOUNT IN JOHN CHAPTERS 7 - 9

A great deal is made in the UCG paper about "THE JEWISH TRADITIONS" for the 7th Day of Tabernacles. As I will show, the reasoning UCG presents in regard to these traditions is TOTALLY FALSE! It is not just "partially" wrong; it is TOTALLY WRONG!

The paper states:

"It is interesting to study the TRADITIONAL CEREMONY that the Jews practised on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (the seventh day by tradition). It was called THE WATER CEREMONY. ..."

... and the paper then goes on to imply that some of the things Jesus Christ said and did were specifically directed at this "traditional water ceremony".

THAT LINE OF REASONING IS UTTERLY ABSURD!!

Who is the man on the committee which put this UCG paper together, that is responsible for claiming that Jesus Christ was somehow SHOWING APPROVAL FOR TOTALLY UNBIBLICAL JEWISH TRADITIONS? Where on earth does UCG get the idea from that Jesus Christ "fell in line with" Jewish traditions, which have their origins in paganism?

The paper boldly asserts:

"The water ceremony NO DOUBT SETS THE STAGE FOR CHRIST'S MESSAGE as recorded in John 7:37."

So UCG now claims that Jesus Christ tailored His messages to tie in with the unbiblical customs of the Jews!

The paper quotes Alfred Eldersheim's book "The Temple, Its Ministry and Services" as claiming that there were "FOUR golden candelabras", each with "FOUR golden bowls" and against them "FOUR ladders".

WHERE DID ALL THIS COME FROM?

That's not what God SO VERY CAREFULLY spelled out in the time of Moses; and it's not from the time of Solomon either. Where did all this come from?

The paper states (quoting Eldersheim):

"It will have been observed that THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT CEREMONIES OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES --- THE POURING OUT OF WATER AND THE ILLUMINATION OF THE TEMPLE --- WERE OF POST-MOSAIC ORIGIN. ACCORDING TO JEWISH TRADITION, THE PILLAR OF CLOUD BY DAY AND OF FIRE BY NIGHT HAD FIRST APPEARED TO ISRAEL ON THE 15TH OF TISHRI, THE FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST. ON THAT DAY ALSO MOSES WAS SAID TO HAVE COME DOWN FROM THE MOUNT, AND ANNOUNCED TO THE PEOPLE THAT THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WAS TO BE REARED AMONG THEM."

WHAT A LOAD OF GARBAGE!!!

It is absolutely STAGGERING to me that a group of ministers in UCG, who have between them studied the Bible for well over one hundred years, can actually in all seriousness quote a load of garbage like that!

Truly, as Jesus Christ said to the Jews:

"FULL WELL YE REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR OWN TRADITION".

Here the Jews have made up a custom which VIOLATES THE INFORMATION GOD REVEALS IN THE BIBLE!

A small child, doing the Y.E.S. lessons of God's Church, ought to be able to tell you that the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night had NOTHING to do with Tabernacles! They "FIRST APPEARED" during the Days of Unleavened Bread!

Read Exodus chapter 13!

And the LORD went before them BY DAY IN A PILLAR OF A CLOUD, to lead them the way; and BY NIGHT IN A PILLAR OF FIRE, to give them light; to go by day and night: (Exodus 13:21)

HE TOOK NOT AWAY THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD BY DAY, NOR THE PILLAR OF FIRE BY NIGHT, [from] before the people. (Exodus 13:22)

It is only in the next chapter, Exodus 14, that we have the account of Pharaoh chasing after Israel.

It is absolutely STAGGERING that UCG, in its effort to make a case for their 31 A.D. crucifixion date, will actually quote a Jewish custom which REJECTS plain biblical revelation, and then IMPLY THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS IN AGREEMENT WITH THIS CUSTOM WHICH REJECTS THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE!

That's unbelievable!

That Jewish custom comes out of paganism, no matter how "reasonably" it is presented!

The idea that Moses came down from the mount on the 15th of Tishri is equally ABSURD! Any minister of God's Church ought to know that! Every MEMBER of God's Church ought to know that!

Here is the proof!

1) The 10 commandments were given at Pentecost, which always occurs within the first 10 days of the THIRD month.

2) Moses went up to the mount for two periods of 40 days each, with only one day between those two periods (see Exodus 32:15; Exodus 32:30; Deuteronomy 9:9-18, 25; etc.).

3) From Pentecost to the 15th of Tishri is a period of OVER 120 DAYS! It is over 4 months from (around) the 10th day of the 3rd month to the 15th day of the 7th month.

4) This unbiblical Jewish tradition implies that Moses was up on the mount alone with God for Trumpets and for Atonement (since he only came down after 40 days), thus missing two Holy Days he would have been expected to provide leadership on for the people of Israel. Those would have been THE VERY FIRST TIMES that Trumpets and Atonement would have come around, and Moses was supposedly away from the people.

5) Moses must have come down from the mount for the second time AT LEAST 40 days (i.e. over 120 days less 81 days) BEFORE the 15th of Tishri!

Thus we have here two very clear examples of the Jews REJECTING the Word of God in favour of "their traditions".

A) The pillar of fire and the pillar of the cloud have nothing to do with Tabernacles.

B) Moses CERTAINLY did not come down from the mount on the First Day of Tabernacles.

And the UCG paper has the audacity to claim that Jesus Christ was showing ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL of these "traditions", which a Y.E.S.-aged child should be able to tell are contrary to clear biblical revelation!

Don't they UNDERSTAND what Jesus Christ had to say about "the traditions of the elders"?

Don't they understand Jeremiah 10:2?

Thus saith the LORD, LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. (Jeremiah 10:2)

On what AUTHORITY did the Jews "ADD" these two ceremonies to the 7th Day of Tabernacles? Does God permit us to add any cute "ceremonies" to HIS Holy Days? Would GOD say: "That's a really nice ceremony. I wish I had thought of it Myself. It really rounds out My Feast very nicely, thank you very much."?

Furthermore, it is also CONTRARY TO THE BIBLE to imply that these unbiblical ceremonies on the SEVENTH day are "the two most important ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles".

THAT IS AGAIN UNBELIEVABLE, APPEARING IN A PAPER OF THE CHURCH OF GOD!

It was GOD who singled out THE FIRST DAY of Tabernacles as the most important day of that 7-day period! But the Jewish traditions have turned the SEVENTH day into the most important day of Tabernacles.

Listen! God's instructions are very clear! All of God's instructions for the Holy Days are found in Leviticus chapter 23. So here is what GOD tells us about Tabernacles.

About 10 verses are devoted to discussing Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. They are Leviticus 23:34 - 43.

Three times "the FIRST day is mentioned by God, in verses 35, 39 and 40. By contrast the SEVENTH day is NOT SINGLED OUT AT ALL!

Notice Leviticus 23:35.

ON THE FIRST DAY [shall be] an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [therein]. (Leviticus 23:35)

And Leviticus 23:39.

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: ON THE FIRST DAY [shall be] a sabbath, and on the eighth day [shall be] a sabbath. (Leviticus 23:39)

The only day of Tabernacles GOD singles out for special attention is THE FIRST DAY! But according to Jewish "tradition" the highlight of Tabernacles is THE SEVENTH DAY!

So who do YOU believe: God or Jewish tradition?

To make Jesus Christ fall in line with these Jewish "traditions", the UCG paper actually allows people to believe that what THE BIBLE shows took place on the EIGHTH DAY could perhaps have taken place on the SEVENTH DAY! Notice this statement from the paper:

"Scholars seem to be almost equally divided on the day these events took place. SOME FEEL that the events being described took place on the seventh (and last) day of the Feast of Tabernacles, BASED

ON THE WATER CEREMONY ..."

WHO are those "scholars", who obviously don't believe the Bible? Are they also within UCG? One UCG "scholar" recently accused me of "misquoting" the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, because what the encyclopedia states contradicts what he "feels".

Where do we get the idea from that Christ was in harmony with some pagan "water ceremony"? The Jewish "water ceremony" is not a GODLY custom! It comes from elsewhere! Just like Christmas with the so-called "Christian" churches is not a godly custom either.

How can people who have God's Spirit dwelling within them possibly filter their understanding of clear biblical statements through "Jewish traditions"? The Bible clearly says:

IN THE LAST DAY, THAT GREAT [DAY] OF THE FEAST, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (John 7:37)

Where does the Bible EVER refer to the SEVENTH day of Tabernacles as "that GREAT day of the Feast"? Where does THE BIBLE single the SEVENTH day of Tabernacles out for special attention? NOWHERE!

God emphasises the beginning of Tabernacles, but Jewish tradition emphasises the end of Tabernacles. So if you want to believe "scholars", who are hooked on Jewish traditions, THEN, I suppose, you will interpret John 7:37 to be a reference to the 7th Day of F.o.T. But THE BIBLE provides no justification for reaching that conclusion.

Notice also this false reasoning presented in the UCG paper:

"For the Pharisees, there was nothing more sacred than the Sabbath. The Sabbath prohibitions took precedence over the Holy Days, since food preparation and some work (not servile) could be done on the annual days."

NONSENSE!

First of all we need to remember that, if you believe Jesus Christ, the Pharisees were HYPOCRITES! In Matthew's gospel alone Jesus Christ is recorded as calling the Pharisees "hypocrites" exactly NINE TIMES, seven times alone in one chapter, chapter 23.

The Pharisees themselves were two-faced about their Sabbath-observance, with countless clever tricks to get around the restrictions they imposed on other people.

Secondly, what the Pharisees may or may not have considered the "most sacred thing" is not the issue! If they could have found fault with Christ over "the second most sacred thing", they would not have said: "this is only the second most important thing, so I guess it's no big deal".

The UCG claim that something (weekly Sabbath observance) was THE MOST SACRED THING to the Pharisees DISTORTS the whole question. That is what is normally known as "loading the deck"! It leads to THE ASSUMPTION that the issue here simply HAD TO involve their "most sacred issue". But that assumption is not really warranted. The Bible shows that they ENVIED Jesus Christ and the prestige Jesus Christ enjoyed amongst the common people. And envy does not limit itself to "the most sacred thing". The Pharisees were not approaching this matter from a position of "cool, clear logic". They were coming from a position of envy and hatred! They clearly were looking for excuses to kill Christ!

If healing people on the Sabbath was a violation of "the most sacred thing" to the Pharisees, WHY did they not speak out about this when Jesus Christ asked them point-blank? Notice:

And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH DAY? (Luke 14:3)

How did they respond?

AND THEY HELD THEIR PEACE. And he took [him], and healed him, and let him go; (Luke 14:4)

They didn't even answer a question about something that would have violated their "most sacred thing". This took place in the house of ONE OF THE CHIEF PHARISEES! See Luke 14:1. If this really was such a major offence to the feelings of the Pharisees, how come did this CHIEF Pharisee not stomp out of the meal in indignation and offended anger? The meal just continued after this Sabbath healing as though nothing had happened. Notice Luke 14:7 ...

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, (Luke 14:7)

They continue to partake of the meal. No one has walked out to avoid (from a Pharisee's point of view) being contaminated by the presence of such a sinner who had just blatantly broken the Sabbath by healing someone.

Notice another situation with a Pharisee.

And the ruler of the synagogue ANSWERED WITH INDIGNATION because that JESUS HAD HEALED ON THE SABBATH DAY, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. (Luke 13:14)

While this Pharisee was "indignant", I don't get the impression that in this Pharisee's eyes Jesus Christ had just committed THE WORST POSSIBLE SIN. If that would have been the case, he would more likely have been livid with anger and hatred.

But notice the next verse.

The Lord then answered him, and said, [THOU] HYPOCRITE, DOTH NOT EACH ONE OF YOU ON THE SABBATH LOOSE HIS OX OR [HIS] ASS FROM THE STALL, AND LEAD [HIM] AWAY TO WATERING? (Luke 13:15)

Here Jesus Christ called the Pharisees hypocrites in regard to SABBATH KEEPING! They were actually willing to do certain things, like taking care of animals. Not every house had a well on the property. The nearest well may have been some distance away. Yet they were willing to do these things. So how "sacred" was the Sabbath to them really?

Thirdly, this was not the only time when Christ had healed people. Those healings took place at whatever time of the week or the year it happened to be when Jesus Christ was confronted by sick people and was moved with compassion for them and for their suffering. The gospels only record a very small number of those healings. The times when most healings took place are simply not recorded. Since we do not have a record of every Holy Day during the ministry of Jesus Christ (at least 21 Holy Days; if Christ's ministry started on the First Day of Tabernacles then that would make it 23 Holy days for His entire ministry), there is no reason to believe that if Jesus Christ had been confronted by some sick people on any of those 21 or more Holy Days, that He would not have had compassion on them and

healed them. And the Pharisees would have criticized that also.

Here we have an example of Christ healing on a Holy Day, the Last Great Day. Other previous healings may also have occurred on Holy Days. There is no way that the Pharisees would have shown approval for healings on a Holy Day, and only been upset by healings on a weekly Sabbath day.

So the slant provided by claiming that the Sabbath took precedence over the Holy Days is not warranted.

THE REAL FACTS ABOUT THE WORD "SABBATH" IN THE GOSPELS!

Most people tend to assume that when the word "Sabbath" is used in the gospels, it must refer to the weekly Sabbath days. In the gospels the word "Sabbath" appears 50 times in 45 different verses.

Let's look at some examples:

1) And now when the even was come, because IT WAS THE PREPARATION, that is, THE DAY BEFORE THE SABBATH, (Mark 15:42)

Read that verse carefully!

QUESTION: What distinguishes THIS SABBATH DAY from a regular weekly Sabbath day?

ANSWER: NOTHING AT ALL!

If you did not know that the crucifixion took place on a Wednesday, there would be NOTHING to make you believe that this is speaking about anything other than a regular weekly Sabbath.

Notice very carefully that this HOLY DAY was preceded by a PREPARATION DAY! This sounds IDENTICAL to the description of a weekly Sabbath day. However, the "Sabbath" referred to in this verse is a THURSDAY!

2) And THAT DAY WAS THE PREPARATION, AND THE SABBATH DREW ON. (Luke 23:54)

QUESTION: What distinguishes THIS ACCOUNT from the description of a regular weekly Sabbath?

ANSWER: NOTHING AT ALL!

Again, if you did not have inside information, that this is speaking about WEDNESDAY as being "the preparation" and a THURSDAY as being "the Sabbath", then you would simply HAVE TO ASSUME that this was speaking about a Friday and a Saturday.

QUESTION: How concerned were Mark and Luke to make totally clear to their readers that in these verses (Mark 15:42 and Luke 23:54) they were speaking about ANNUAL Sabbath days?

ANSWER: They were not concerned about that at all! The way these two verses speak about the Holy Days, pointing out that they were ALSO preceded by "preparation days", makes quite clear that neither Mark nor Luke considered annual Holy Days any differently from weekly Sabbath days. They use the same terminology, and readers are forced to guess whether the "Sabbaths" they mention are weekly or annual.

If these two verses (Mark 15:42 and Luke 23:54) were not speaking about the crucifixion week, WE WOULD BE FORCED TO ASSUME THAT THEY WERE SPEAKING ABOUT WEEKLY SABBATH

DAYS! We would have no way of knowing otherwise. There are no clues of any kind to tell us that the weekly Sabbath is NOT what is being discussed. It is OUR INSIDE KNOWLEDGE, that Christ must have been crucified on a Wednesday, that makes clear beyond a doubt that a Thursday Holy Day is really the subject of these verses.

QUESTION: Could any of the references to "the Sabbath" in the gospels PRIOR TO THE CRUCIFIXION WEEK actually be references to Holy Days?

ANSWER: CERTAINLY! The fact that Mark and Luke didn't bother to differentiate a Holy Day from a weekly Sabbath day by the way they describe it in the two verses we have looked at, makes it a distinct possibility that prior references to "Sabbath days" could equally well have been references to annual Sabbath days. We simply have no way of knowing. And that means that God did not put any great stress on making sure that we would always correctly know the difference.

Now let's look at a verse in John's gospel.

3) The Jews therefore, because IT WAS THE PREPARATION, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross ON THE SABBATH DAY, (for THAT SABBATH DAY WAS AN HIGH DAY,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away. (John 19:31)

QUESTION: How does John refer to this annual Holy Day which fell on a Thursday?

ANSWER: EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS MARK AND LUKE! He refers to it as "the Sabbath day", and he points out that it was preceded by a "preparation day".

IT IS ONLY JOHN'S PARENTHETICAL STATEMENT THAT PROVIDES THE CLUE THAT WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH A FRIDAY/SATURDAY SITUATION!

Without that parenthetical statement (which Mark and Luke did not feel essential to add) and without the inside information of a Wednesday crucifixion, you would also have to think of this verse as a Friday/Saturday situation.

QUESTION: Can we always assume that the only times the word "Sabbath" refers to an annual Sabbath is when the author includes such a parenthetical statement?

ANSWER: OF COURSE NOT!

The very fact that in this verse the explanation, that this Sabbath was in fact a Holy Day, is given in parenthesis, like an afterthought, makes very clear that JOHN WAS IN THE HABIT OF REFERRING TO HOLY DAYS AS "SABBATH DAYS"!

4) IN THE END OF THE SABBATH, as it began to dawn toward the first [day] of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. (Matthew 28:1)

The Greek phrase here translated "in the end of the Sabbath" is "opse de sabbaton", which is the genitive plural, and thus means: "in the end OF THE SABBATHS". We have understood this for a long time.

QUESTION: Does Matthew give any indication that he considered annual Holy Days different from weekly Sabbath days?

ANSWER: NO! By lumping one annual Holy Day (i.e. a Thursday) together with a weekly Sabbath day,

and referring to both collectively as "SABBATHS", Matthew is also not really differentiating between weekly and annual Sabbath days. Matthew 28:1 gives you NO CLUE that the phrase includes a reference to an annual Holy Day! It is only our inside understanding that makes this clear to us.

Matthew also shows that the annual Holy Day was preceded by a "preparation day". Notice:

Now THE NEXT DAY, THAT FOLLOWED THE DAY OF THE PREPARATION, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, (Matthew 27:62)

The priests and Pharisees went to Pilate on the Holy Day. But that Holy Day had been PRECEDED by a preparation day. So we see that the annual Holy Days have preparation days too, just like the weekly Sabbath days have Fridays as preparation days.

It is clear from all four gospels that the authors usually did not bother to differentiate the Holy Days from the weekly Sabbath days. The one parenthetical comment in the gospel of John only reinforces this point that NORMALLY the readers were expected to consider weekly Sabbath days and annual Holy Days as both simply being "Sabbath days".

A careful examination of these verses I have presented here makes clear that there is NO WAY we can assume that the word "Sabbath" in the gospels must mean a weekly Sabbath day, simply because the author did not add a parenthetical explanation that it is actually a reference to an annual Holy Day. It is clear that the gospel writers were quite free in using the word "Sabbath" to refer to annual Holy Days.

With the gospel writers so freely using the word "Sabbath" to refer to Holy Days, without even bothering to point out the finer details (i.e. that a day was an ANNUAL Sabbath day), what is the likelihood that the Pharisees made a really major issue out of healing on a weekly Sabbath day, but treating healing on an annual Sabbath day as being only a minor issue? For all we know, on SOME of the occasions recorded in the gospels, when they took exception to what Christ did "on the Sabbath day", the Pharisees may in fact have been criticizing Jesus Christ for what He did ON A HOLY DAY! That possibility cannot be ruled out, once we understand how the gospel writers used the word "Sabbath".

Now let's go back to UCG's treatment of John chapters 7-9.

BACK TO UCG's INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 7-9

The UCG paper stakes all its hopes for the present Jewish calendar on trying to show that the healing on that Last Great Day took place on a WEEKLY Sabbath Day. If that could be proved beyond doubt, then it would supposedly lead to a 31 A.D. crucifixion date, which in turn would supposedly prove the present Jewish calendar to have been used.

BUT THAT CLAIM CANNOT BE PROVED!

In fact, it can actually be DISPROVED! That's right, the facts show that in 30 A.D. the Last Great Day could not possibly have been a Saturday. Here are the facts.

1) THE JEWISH MOLAD CALCULATIONS FOR 30 A.D. ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A) The molad (the supposed conjunction) of Tishri is calculated to have been at 33 seconds after 2:19 a.m. on Saturday, September 16. That day had started over 8 hours earlier, at sunset on Friday, September 15.

B) Because the molad fell on a Saturday, therefore no postponements were enacted, and that day was

declared to be the Day of Trumpets.

C) Thus, according to the present Jewish calendar calculations, the Day of Trumpets in 30 A.D. went from sunset Friday, September 15 to sunset Saturday, September 16.

D) Note that this Jewish calculation, instead of postponing anything actually started the Day of Trumpets 8 hours BEFORE it actually CALCULATED the conjunction to take place.

2) THE ACTUAL NEW MOON CONJUNCTION & FIRST VISIBILITY FOR 30 A.D.:

A) The actual lunar conjunction for the seventh month in 30 A.D. took place at 5:34 a.m. Jerusalem time on Saturday morning, September 16. This was more than 3 hours AFTER the Jewish molad calculation had placed the conjunction.

B) About 13 hours later the sun set, and that was clearly still too early for the new crescent to be visible. That sunset started Sunday, September 17.

C) Since the new crescent was NOT visible in Jerusalem after sunset on the Saturday evening, it means that FIRST VISIBILITY of the new crescent was only possible immediately after sunset on Sunday evening. And that was then the start of the Monday, September 18.

D) The Jewish evidence is unanimous in stating that at that time months were established based on reliable eyewitnesses having seen the new crescent. So the only possibility is that in 30 A.D. the Day of Trumpets was MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28!

E) Therefore in 30 A.D. the Last Great Day was also A MONDAY!

F) The simplistic approach of simply extrapolating the present Jewish calendar back to 30 A.D. and then arriving at a Saturday Day of Trumpets is based on TOTALLY IGNORING REALITY!

G) The problem should be easy to recognize: for the year 30 A.D. the Jewish calendar established a molad that was OVER 3 HOURS TOO EARLY ... and then they still pronounced the 8 HOURS BEFORE THAT as being part of the Holy Day. So in 30 A.D. the Jewish calendar actually started the Day of Trumpets OVER 11 HOURS BEFORE THE NEW MOON CONJUNCTION!

H) If any Jew in Jerusalem had gone outside his house that evening of Friday, September 15, and stayed outdoors until it got dark, he would actually have looked at the sky 10 HOURS BEFORE THE LUNAR CONJUNCTION ... and UCG wants us to believe that he would have called that evening "the Day of Trumpets"!

I) This illustrates a common problem with the Jewish calendar calculations. Sometimes their molad calculation actually PRECEDES the new moon conjunction, and then they DON'T have any postponements, and therefore they make that day, which may have started as much as 15 hours earlier retroactively the Day of Trumpets. At other times the molad is as much as 15 hours AFTER the actual lunar conjunction, and then they still POSTPONE the Day of Trumpets by two more days! The Jewish calendar determinations err on both sides of the real new moons.

J) Anyway, in a time when eyewitnesses searched the sky for the new crescent in order to pronounce the start of a new month, it is utterly inconceivable that the month of Tishri would have started 11 hours BEFORE the lunar conjunction, and 48 hours BEFORE first visibility of the new crescent was possible. So in 30 A.D. the Last Great Day was NOT A SATURDAY! NO WAY!

Anyway, let's now get back to John's account of that Last Great Day.

John wrote in John 9:14:

And IT WAS THE SABBATH DAY WHEN JESUS MADE THE CLAY, and opened his eyes. (John 9:14)

The above-stated astronomical facts for the year 30 A.D. make clear that in that year the Last Great Day could not have been a Saturday. A Saturday is just too far removed from the reality of the new moon that year. And in 29 A.D. according to the present Jewish calendar calculations the Day of Trumpets would have been Tuesday, October 18, and according to the time of first visibility of the new moon crescent in Jerusalem that would have been Wednesday, October 19.

So neither 29 A.D. nor 30 A.D. had a Last Great Day on a Saturday. John's reference in this verse is to an ANNUAL SABBATH DAY, because that is precisely what it was, the Last Great Day!

Keep in mind that John did NOT put the chapter divisions into his gospel account! What he wrote was all one continuous story. So when he had told us in John 7:37 that it was the Last Great Day (the evening part of it at the start of the day), he did not bother to elaborate that the next morning (John 8:2) was the daylight part of the Last Great Day. As he continued to describe the events of that one particular day, when he came to John 9:14, he did NOT feel the need to add a parenthetical statement, as he would later do in John 19:31, because his readers should have known that he was speaking about an ANNUAL Sabbath day. He had already told them that. There really was no need for John to write something like:

"And it was the sabbath day (FOR THAT SABBATH DAY WAS AN HIGH DAY) when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes." (John 9:14, the way some people would expect to see it to make clear that a Holy Day is being talked about as "the Sabbath day"; compare John 19:31)

However, keep in mind that when, in John 19:31, John DID later say: "And it was the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was a high day)", that we know that then he was referring to a Thursday! So here, in John 9:14, John KNOWS he has already told his readers that he is describing "an high day", and so he simply states: "and it was the sabbath day" (which in 29 A.D. fell on a Tuesday or Wednesday, and in 30 A.D. on a Monday) to show that the Pharisees were upset about a healing on an annual Holy Day.

If in John 19:31 the author so casually called a Thursday "the Sabbath day", why could he not just as casually in John 9:14 have called a Monday or a Tuesday or a Wednesday "the Sabbath day", when in both cases he was OBVIOUSLY referring to Holy Days?

The free way Holy Days are referred to as "Sabbath days" should make clear that transgressions of Holy Days would also be viewed and spoken of as transgressions of Sabbath days.

In view of the clear way the 70-weeks prophecy points to a 30 A.D. crucifixion; and in view of the way the dating of the ministry of John the Baptist also points to a 30 A.D. crucifixion; and in view of the free and unelaborated way the word "Sabbath" is used for both, weekly and annual Sabbath days, there is simply NO WAY that the word "Sabbath" in John chapter 9 can be forced into the meaning of WEEKLY Sabbath. The facts of astronomy and of history both contradict that interpretation.

Furthermore, there is no support for the claim that the Jews viewed the transgression of the weekly Sabbath days as being more serious than the transgression of the annual Sabbath days. The only source such an assumption could be based on is the Talmud, the oral law, though the UCG Study Paper does not even offer any support for this claim. What people may or may not have written in the Talmud several hundred years after the ministry of Christ does not in any way tell us how they may have viewed the same matter in 29 or in 30 A.D. The claim is nothing more than an attempt to stack the deck in favour

of the point they wish to make, because there is really no proof for their point.

Let's move to another point.

REFERENCES TO "AN ECLIPSE OF THE MOON"

In an effort to find some support for a 31 A.D. crucifixion date, the UCG paper appeals to an article written by Colin J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington in the December 1983 edition of "Nature", and titled "Dating the Crucifixion". The UCG paper states:

"In their research the authors state that THERE WAS MOST LIKELY AN ECLIPSE OF THE MOON THE EVENING AFTER CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED. VARIOUS SOURCES ARE QUOTED FOR PROOF OF THIS EVENT."

That is ridiculous!!

They quote from page 745 of the "Nature" journal as follows:

"Since the darkened sun occurred at the Crucifixion IT IS REASONABLE TO SUPPOSE THAT "THE MOON TURNED TO BLOOD" OCCURRED THE SAME EVENING, "before that great and glorious day", the Resurrection. THIS INTERPRETATION (!) of Acts 2:20 is supported by F.F. Bruce [The Acts of the Apostles, Inter-Varsity, 1952]. Other documentary evidence SUGGESTS that on the day of the Crucifixion, the Moon appeared like blood."

... and then an apocryphal fragment of a spurious and forged document called "Report of Pilate" is appealed to for support by Humphreys and Waddington.

What a lot of baloney!

An evaluation of the "Nature" article:

1) The authors TOTALLY MISAPPLY the Scripture! The Scripture they quote, Acts 2:20, refers to THE SECOND COMING. That "great and notable day of the Lord" is NOT a reference to THE DAY Jesus Christ was resurrected. It is a reference to the second coming!

2) It is ABSURD to expect the expression "the Moon turned to blood" to be a reference to A LUNAR ECLIPSE! That is just ridiculous!

To be consistent it would have to mean that the expression "the sun shall be turned into darkness" would have to refer to a solar eclipse! But solar eclipses are at opposite ends of the lunar cycle to lunar eclipses; they are about 2 weeks apart.

IF the first expression is not a reference to a solar eclipse (solar eclipses are impossible at the Passover, the full-moon phase of the lunar cycle), THEN WHY should the second expression possibly be a reference to a lunar eclipse?

3) The authors are ignorant of the fact that the crucifixion did NOT occur on a Friday. So in their article they try to "FIT" their "lunar eclipse", based on the fragment of a spurious and forged document (i.e. it was never written by Pontius Pilate!), into either Friday night (i.e. what they call "the day of the Crucifixion") or into Saturday night (i.e. what they mean by "before the great and glorious day of the Resurrection").

4) The authors also make their data "FIT" a 33 A.D. crucifixion date, which the UCG paper clearly points out is the wrong date. So their whole argument does NOT apply to what UCG is trying to prove. It is the wrong year!

HOWEVER, note HOW EASY it is to find "lunar eclipses" when you need them to support your point! They have found one for 33 A.D. which took place on April 3 at 5:13 p.m. Jerusalem time.

So here is the point about the article by Humphreys and Waddington.

A lunar eclipse on April 3 in 33 A.D. is based on a new moon date (which happened to also be a solar eclipse!) of March 19 at 1:02 p.m. Jerusalem time. But in 33 A.D. the equinox was still at March 23! So that new moon date of March 19 is actually 4 days before the end of winter that year. THEREFORE Humphreys and Waddington have chosen the wrong new moon for 33 A.D., although I don't suppose that it would have bothered them to start the year in the winter.

But anyway, what does that prove for 33 A.D.?

NOTHING AT ALL!

SO WHAT if there really was perhaps another lunar eclipse at the Passover in 31 A.D., what does THAT prove about 31 A.D.?

NOTHING AT ALL! A LITTLE ECLIPSE IN 31 A.D. HAS NO MORE SIGNIFICANCE THAN A BIGGER ECLIPSE IN 33 A.D.!

Regarding the 31 A.D. lunar eclipse, the UCG paper states:

"While this evidence is sketchy and cannot be taken as absolute proof ..."

WHAT? It is not "PROOF" of any kind at all! You better believe that it is "SKETCHY"! Lunar eclipses have NOTHING to do with Christ's crucifixion!

The sentence quoted above continues:

"... as absolute proof, it is interesting that the authors of the article, in attempting to prove the year 33 C.E. for the crucifixion, provide the information that can be used to confirm BY THEIR LOGIC the year 31, and a Wednesday, April 25, date!"

What does "THEIR LOGIC" have to do with THE TRUTH?

NOTHING AT ALL!

Furthermore, in 31 A.D. the actual new moon conjunction for Nisan was 1:56 p.m. on April 10. This made April 12 the day of first visibility of the new crescent. And based on first visibility that year a Passover on Wednesday, April 25 is THE ONLY POSSIBILITY! You don't need any postponements, and you don't need any Jewish calendar calculations to arrive at that date. All you would have had to do is watch for that first new crescent of the moon, and Wednesday, April 25 was the inevitable result for Passover.

But I would like to know the following:

WHY is it that this UCG Study Paper will quote information that comes from people who use illogical reasoning? They quote Jewish traditions, which contradict the Bible; they quote fragments of fraudulent

documents; they quote Catholic "church fathers"; they use any amount of reasoning to try to determine the date of the crucifixion, BUT THEY DON'T USE THE DATES WHICH GOD PINPOINTS IN HIS WORD? Why is that?

What exactly is an appeal to eclipses? Do you know?

IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO BRING GOD'S SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION DOWN TO PHYSICALLY EXPLAINABLE PHENOMENA! IT IS A WAY OF REJECTING THE MIRACULOUS NATURE OF GOD'S INTERVENTION!

Here are some points about "eclipses":

- 1) A period of 223 lunar months is known as a "saros" and it is just barely over 18 years in length.
- 2) In the space of 1 saros there are usually a total of 70 eclipses: 29 lunar eclipses and 41 solar eclipses.
- 3) The maximum length for a total solar eclipse is about 7 minutes and 30 seconds, though usually a total eclipse is no longer than 3 minutes.
- 4) The maximum length for a total lunar eclipse is 2 hours, though this is very rare. Partial lunar eclipses are considerably shorter. The 60% lunar eclipse claimed for 33 A.D. would have been a lot shorter than 2 hours, and the only 35% lunar eclipse claimed for 31 A.D. would have been still a lot shorter than the one in 33 A.D.
- 5) What kind of "a witness" is A PARTIAL LUNAR ECLIPSE anyway? Does THE BIBLE tell us to attach special significance to lunar eclipses, or to the approach of Halley's comet, or to solar eclipses?

NO, IT DOES NOT! It is the people who...

"ARE DISMAYED AT THE SIGNS OF HEAVEN" (see Jeremiah 10:2)

... that look to eclipses and to comets for special significance.

- 6) Eclipses are really quite common, with about 70 of them in every 18 years. It should be easy to see that you have a good chance of finding one (if you just use the right and favourable calculations) in just about any year that you desire to find them.
- 7) When you understand how COMMON such eclipses are, and when you then see how SELDOM, by comparison, they feature in historical writings, like Josephus, then it should be clear that these authors MISSED OUT on reporting a great many other eclipses that also took place, but which don't feature in their works.

So now consider the following:

Understanding that an eclipse of the sun usually lasts no longer than about 3 minutes should make ABSOLUTELY CLEAR that the THREE HOURS OF DARKNESS at Christ's crucifixion (see Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44) had nothing to do with any phenomena which has a natural physical explanation. IT WAS A DIVINE MIRACLE!

Now people don't claim that this darkness was a solar eclipse. But the point is: after acknowledging a powerful miracle for the darkness, WHY would the reference to "the Moon turned to blood" suddenly be something that has A QUITE NATURAL EXPLANATION? (Besides the fact that this Scripture is not

speaking about the time of Christ's crucifixion anyway.)

The Scripture mentions the sun and the moon in one breath, as it were. The first event is acknowledged as a divine supernatural miracle, but the second is supposedly only a reference to something that occurs naturally and frequently. That doesn't make sense.

Let's try to view the whole situation of Christ's crucifixion FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW!

Most people are awake during the day and asleep during the night, especially before we had access to electric lights. So God decided to forcefully punctuate the events of Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection with events that people would not be able to deny were a manifestation of the power of God.

So what did God do?

God brought about a period of THREE HOURS OF DARKNESS during the day, while Jesus Christ was dying on the stake. That was an absolute miracle, which most people would not have been able to avoid noticing, and it was a miracle which defied any physical explanation. At the time of Christ's resurrection God provided another miracle which also defied any physical explanation; some known people who had died in recent months or years were resurrected to physical life (see Matthew 27:52-53).

Then, so some people (Humphreys and Waddington, etc.) reason, God decided to add "another witness" for those people who spend their nights outside, perhaps to punctuate the THREE WHOLE HOURS OF DARKNESS THEY HAD ALREADY WITNESSED?? God decides, that since there was going to be a TINY lunar eclipse ANYWAY (only about one third of the moon was covered for A FEW MINUTES, less than half an hour), that He would just "INCLUDE" that as part of the "special events" surrounding the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There was not going to be anything special or supernatural about that lunar eclipse. It doesn't seem like God could have made it a TOTAL eclipse FOR THREE WHOLE HOURS, but since it was in line to occur ANYWAY (they are more common than one per year), therefore God reasoned: "and on top of all these other miraculous events they even have a naturally occurring lunar eclipse to let them know something special has occurred." Of course, all those people who were already asleep or who were indoors for those few minutes would have missed out on seeing the small lunar eclipse, but hopefully A FEW would have seen it and deduced that something special must have taken place on the day preceding that eclipse.

QUESTION: DOES THAT REALLY MAKE SENSE?

ANSWER: NO, IT DOES NOT!

QUESTION: Do you REALLY understand what this effort to find some eclipse at the time of Christ's crucifixion or resurrection actually is??

ANSWER: IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO REDUCE GOD'S MIRACULOUS INTERVENTIONS IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS WORLD DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF MICKEY MOUSE!!

It is a carnal, absurd and faithless attempt to seek some physical explanation for what God clearly reveals have been (or will be!) SUPERNATURAL MIRACLES WHICH DEFY PHYSICAL EXPLANATIONS!

Carnal man is impressed by "eclipses", but God does not attach ANY significance to eclipses at all! They are naturally occurring phenomena, which can be calculated and predicted, even as sunrise and sunset can be predicted. So an eclipse occurs, SO WHAT?

Looking for a natural lunar eclipse at the time of Jesus Christ's death is just as carnal an attempt to lower God's powerful interventions in this world down to the level of something that has a natural explanation, as is the attempt to explain manna in the desert as "some secretion from some insects" and to explain the parting of the Red Sea as nothing more than the wind blowing over some SHALLOW sea of reeds (see "The Bible as History" by Werner Keller; original title in German is "Und die Bibel Hat Doch Recht"). It is the carnal mind that seeks physical explanations for God's supernatural power.

So the facts are: there is no indication in the Bible that the time of Christ's crucifixion had anything to do with any lunar eclipse. The dating of lunar eclipses is totally irrelevant to the question of dating the ministry of Jesus Christ. But the 70-weeks prophecy is not at all irrelevant to this matter!

Let's move on.

WHAT HILLEL'S CALENDAR REFORM ACTUALLY ACHIEVED

Those who have acknowledged the binding effect Exodus 34:22 has on the construction of the calendar (e.g. Dr. Hoeh), have usually claimed that the scriptural requirement is met if at least A PART of F.o.T. (meaning the 7th Day) falls on or after the equinox.

Is this correct? WHY do such people make this claim? Do they get this understanding FROM THE BIBLE? What is their motivation?

You need to understand what happened when Hillel II made his calendar reform. Here are some facts:

In the 350's A.D. the spring equinox was still at March 21. So the Julian dates are fine to analyze; we do not need to make any adjustments to accommodate a shifting equinox.

There was a full 19-year cycle from 344 A.D. to 362 A.D., inclusive reckoning. This was cycle number 217. Hillel's calendar reform took place in the middle of this very cycle. So let's examine this particular cycle and understand exactly what Hillel authorized.

APPLYING THE SEQUENCE OF LEAP YEARS WHICH IS USED TODAY, AND WHICH IS CREDITED TO HILLEL II, TO THAT CYCLE.

The 4 years with the EARLIEST Holy Days in that cycle would have been:

360 A.D. = 1st Day UB = March 18; 1st Day F.o.T. = Sept. 11;

349 A.D. = 1st Day UB = March 21; 1st Day F.o.T. = Sept. 14;

357 A.D. = 1st Day UB = March 22; 1st Day F.o.T. = Sept. 15;

346 A.D. = 1st Day UB = March 25; 1st Day F.o.T. = Sept. 18.

[Comment: The dates for 349 A.D. include a 1-day postponement, and for 346 A.D. a 2-day postponement. Without such postponements, which very likely would NOT apply in the next 19-year cycle or in the cycle after that one, the dates would be one and two days earlier still respectively. With all of these years Nisan 1 was still in the winter.]

What can we learn from this data?

1) HILLEL II CLEARLY SET THE ENTIRE FEAST OF TABERNACLES SQUARELY BACK INTO THE

SUMMER FOR THREE DIFFERENT YEARS IN THE 19-YEAR CYCLE! (And two cycles later without postponements it was four whole years.)

[In 346 A.D. the 7th Day of F.o.T. would have been on September 22 without a 2-day postponement, as was the case 38 years later in 384 A.D. "Postponements" can only mask a problem with early dates for one or two cycles; then you reach a point where no postponements can be invoked.]

2) While the Passover dates may not look "too bad" (since only one takes place in the winter), it is at the Feast of Tabernacles side of the year that the problem becomes really obvious! There is no question that for those years Hillel's calendar placed the Feast FAR TOO EARLY!

3) There was no justification of any kind for Hillel to select the sequence of leap years which he did select. His sequence of leap years repeatedly BROKE GOD'S CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS!

4) IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT HILLEL'S CALENDAR REFORM TOTALLY IGNORED THE SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENTS OF EXODUS 34:22 AND LEVITICUS 23:10-11! Those biblical requirements didn't even enter the picture in the calendar he sanctioned and made publicly known. They didn't enter his considerations any more than the Bible enters the picture when the Jews have a custom which states that the pillar of fire first appeared to Israel on the First Day of Tabernacles. God's instructions in the Bible simply don't feature! And that is just a fact!

5) Specifically: Hillel didn't care two hoots whether "at least the 7th Day of F.o.T. reached unto the equinox". That didn't enter his considerations as he kept the Feast on September 11 in 360 A.D.

It is only modern Church of God people who want to do their utmost to justify Hillel's UNSCRIPTURAL decision, to move F.o.T. back into the summer, that appeal to "AT LEAST the 7th Day reaching the equinox".

Consider the following: we may be on the verge of seeing ANOTHER GROUP TODAY doing exactly what Hillel did 1600 years ago, move the Feast back into the summer! That may have its advantages from a carnal point of view. It's probably nicer to keep the Feast in the late summer than to keep it at the end of October, when it can be quite cold already. But by no stretch of the imagination can such a move into summer be claimed to have God's approval.

Keep in mind also that GOD emphasises the FIRST Day of Tabernacles; it is the Jewish traditions which emphasize the SEVENTH Day of Tabernacles as the high point.

There is really no justification for reading Exodus 34:22 to mean that God only wants the SEVENTH day to reach unto the equinox. Besides, in that situation it will always be the case that the First Day of UB will be TOO EARLY for any barley to be ripe.

These two biblical requirements complement each other: Leviticus 23:10-11 makes clear that Exodus 34:22 must apply to the entire Feast of Tabernacles being AFTER the autumn equinox. Otherwise there will be no ripe barley.

Notice what the UCG Study Paper states in regard to these sequences of leap years:

"Because of the irregularities of the solar and lunar cycles, PERIODIC ADJUSTMENTS to leap year sequences HAVE BEEN MADE to compensate over the years."

This shows that UCG full well understands the drift of 1 day for every 216 years, something most earlier Church of God authors did not take into account in their presentations.

What do they mean by "PERIODIC" adjustments? We are only aware of ONE "adjustment", when Hillel II introduced the presently used sequence. But what is important to note is:

THAT ONE "ADJUSTMENT" WAS WRONG! IT WAS IN VIOLATION OF GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS! IT TOTALLY IGNORED GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS! THERE IS NO WAY THAT GOD'S APPROVAL CAN BE CLAIMED FOR THAT "ADJUSTMENT"!

What it means is that from Hillel's time onwards, if not earlier, the people of God were NOT bound by Hillel's calendar, any more than God's people today are bound to follow WCG if they decide to move their "feast" into the summer! God's people are no more bound to follow Hillel's calendar than God's people were bound to follow king Jeroboam when he moved his "feast" into the 8th month. Hillel's calendar stands exposed as violating God's instructions.

DATING THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR

The Study Paper states the following:

"While some speculate that the Jews obtained their calendar from the Babylonians, IS IT NOT POSSIBLE that the Babylonians obtained THEIR calendar from the JEWS?"

That is a weird suggestion!

Some comments here:

1) It is A FACT that all of the names of the months in the Jewish calendar are BABYLONIAN! It is A FACT that Ezra, upon his return from Babylon, gave the months these Babylonian names. WHY? Please explain WHY Ezra changed all the good Hebrew names of "God's calendar" (like Abib, etc.) for Babylonian names (like Tishri and Tammuz, etc.)?

2) It is really stretching it to suggest that the Babylonian calendar (with pagan names for the months, like Tammuz, etc.) is something the Babylonians copied from a slave people whom they had conquered!

However, let me now present irrefutable PROOF that the present Jewish calendar is, AT THE VERY OLDEST, FROM THE 2ND CENTURY A.D.! If I prove to you, that the present Jewish calendar does not go back further than a full century AFTER the time of Christ's ministry, will you accept that the present Jewish calendar is neither sacred nor inspired?

The following steps present the proof. I expect that some people will argue with this proof, as they have done with the information previously presented. But this PROOF is clear and easy to follow. So here goes:

Step 1:

"The Seder Olam Rabbah" is a midrashic work from the 2nd century A.D. or later. The title basically means: "The Greater Account of the Order of the World".

While the authorship of this work is not totally certain, it is generally ascribed to the second-century "tanna" Jose b. Halafta, on the strength of a comment by the third-century Palestinian teacher R. Johanan. Other scholars feel that R. Johanan himself may have been the author of the Seder Olam Rabbah. To us the authorship is of no consequence. Its earliest authorship is the 2nd century A.D., though it may in fact only be from the 3rd century A.D. It can't be earlier than 135 A.D. because it records events up to that date.

This work is a chronological record extending from Adam to the revolt of Bar Kokba (132 - 135 A.D.) in the reign of emperor Hadrian, consisting of 30 chapters, each 10 chapters forming a section or "gate". The work attempts to date all major events in Old Testament times. Notice what the Encyclopedia Judaica has to say about the author of the Seder Olam Rabbah:

"Utilizing the biblical chronology and reconstructing post-biblical history AS WELL AS HE COULD, the author arrived at the conclusion that the world was created 3828 years before the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. According to this calculation the destruction took place in the year 68, WHICH IS IN CONTRADICTION TO THE ACCEPTED CHRONOLOGY that it took place in the year 70 C.E."

The point is this: It is this Seder Olam which placed the creation of Adam in the year 3760 B.C. The flaw in this should be immediately obvious when it is pointed out that the Seder Olam compresses the Persian period of over 200 years into only 34 years. There are other similar errors in the Seder Olam. It is easy to show that the Seder Olam is in error by more than 200 years in the chronology it presents.

THE REASON WHY the Jewish author of the Seder Olam deliberately squashed the entire Persian period into only 34 years is discussed at some length by Larry Pierce in his essay on the Seder Olam (see Online Bible, Essays on Chronology by Larry Pierce). Larry makes a compelling case that the Talmudic rabbis of the second century deliberately falsified the record of their history in order "to conceal the fact that the Daniel 9:25 prophecy clearly pointed to Jesus of Nazareth as its fulfillment and therefore the long awaited Messiah, and (also) to make that Seventy Week of years prophecy point instead to Simon Bar Kokhba". Larry has very likely hit the nail on the head in this regard. The Jews simply did not WANT Daniel 9 pointing to Christ's ministry!

Step 2:

It is based on THIS flawed Seder Olam that the Jewish calendar employs as its starting date the molad of Tishri for the year 3761 B.C. (i.e. the molad of Tishri BEFORE the supposed creation of Adam). There is no other significance of any kind to the date 3761 B.C., other than the fact that it is based on this very inaccurate Seder Olam. Various documentary works will acknowledge this, that the molad of Tishri for 3761 B.C. is supposedly the molad of Tishri for the year BEFORE Adam's creation, and it is the Seder Olam that asserts that Adam was created in 3760 B.C.

This 2nd century A.D. Seder Olam is THE ONLY WORK that has provided this date of 3760/3761 B.C., and it is a totally erroneous date.

Step 3:

THEREFORE it follows that the calculations for the present Jewish calendar MUST HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AFTER THE SEDER OLAM WAS WRITTEN!

Step 4:

Now here is the clincher regarding the Jewish calendar! Consider this very carefully.

The present Jewish calendar is built on a foundation of a historic record that was DELIBERATELY FALSIFIED FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF TRYING TO DESTROY THE LINK BETWEEN THE 70 WEEKS PROPHECY IN DANIEL AND THE START OF JESUS CHRIST'S MINISTRY!

How is that for a nice godly FOUNDATION for the present Jewish calendar? The whole calendar is built on a foundation of trying to discredit the ministry of Jesus Christ! That is the express purpose of the 3761

B.C. starting molad!

You still don't want to believe me when I tell you that God says without mincing words:

“YOUR CALENDAR and your appointed feasts MY SOUL HATES ...!” (Isaiah 1:14)

The Hebrew word “chodesh”, in the KJV translated as “new moons”, is the only possible word for “calendar” in Old Testament Hebrew. In this verse God is very clearly speaking out AGAINST the Jewish calendar. And that shouldn't surprise you, once you realize that the foundation of that calendar is an attempt to obscure the fact that Jesus Christ's ministry fulfilled the 70-weeks prophecy.

Step 5:

Nobody before the Seder Olam was written could possibly have thought of giving the Jewish calendar the starting date of 3761 B.C. Because that is a totally inaccurate date, therefore nobody else could have thought of this date.

Specifically, it is impossible for anyone during the time of Ezra to have constructed the calculations on which the present calendar is based, BECAUSE AT THAT TIME THEY KNEW FULL WELL THAT THE PERSIAN PERIOD WAS MUCH LONGER THAN 34 YEARS! And with that knowledge it is impossible to arrive at the date 3760/3761 B.C. for the creation of Adam.

Similarly, it is impossible for anyone in the 2nd century B.C., at the time of the Maccabees, to have constructed the calculations for the present calendar, because at that time it was ALSO still known full well that the Persian period was much longer than 34 years, and without that flaw one could not arrive at the dates 3760/3761 B.C. Also, at that time nobody had a motive in wanting to obscure the dating of the Messiah's ministry.

Even at the time of the Jewish historian Josephus (2nd half of the 1st century A.D.) it was still known quite well that the Persian period was much longer than 34 years.

Yet, by the time the Seder Olam was written, i.e. any time after 135 A.D., this knowledge was deliberately hidden and obscured. And so the author of the Seder Olam simply compressed the entire Persian period into 34 years.

THE ONLY POSSIBILITY is that the calculations for the present Jewish calendar were devised at some stage AFTER THE SEDER OLAM HAD BEEN WRITTEN!

This obviously ties in perfectly with someone like Hillel II in the 350's A.D. being responsible for devising these calculations, since the Seder Olam had enjoyed a great deal of acceptance for many decades by then. The later "Seder Olam Zuta" (i.e. the Smaller Seder Olam) is based on the Seder Olam Rabbah; and the Seder Olam Zuta was only written somewhere from the 6th to the 8th century A.D. So the Seder Olam Rabbah enjoyed a long period of acceptance and respectability, but only from at least 100 years after the ministry of Jesus Christ onwards. It seems to have been fully accepted at the time of Hillel II.

Step 6:

The conclusion is inescapable:

THE STARTING DATE OF 3761 B.C. FOR THE CALCULATIONS OF THE JEWISH CALENDAR REVEALS UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT THE AUTHOR OF THOSE CALCULATIONS WAS BASING THEM ON THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE SEDER OLAM RABBAH, WHICH INFORMATION HE

ACCEPTED AS TRUTH! THE STARTING DATE OF 3761 B.C. IS A GIVE-AWAY!

Step 7:

From this it follows that there cannot be any claim to either divine inspiration for this present calendar, or for continuity from the time of Christ's ministry. The present calendar calculations simply could not have been constructed without knowledge of, and reference to, the Seder Olam Rabbah of the 2nd century A.D. (or later).

And the very fact that the starting date of 3761 B.C. is based on A DELIBERATE DISTORTION OF THE HISTORICAL FACTS should make quite clear that there is NOTHING "inspired" about this calendar. God does not "inspire" errors in understanding. That starting date is an expression of hostility towards God!

Step 8:

As far as the "highly accurate data", on which the calculations for the Jewish calendar are based, is concerned: it is a simple task to establish that this data had been available from the time of the Greek astronomer named Hipparchus. Around 146 B.C. Hipparchus made some more accurate calculations of the synodic (lunar) months than had been available previously (i.e. since the time of Meton). Hipparchus calculated the 235 lunations at 6939 days plus 16 hours plus 33 minutes plus 3,3 seconds. This is the EXACT figure which is employed in the calculation of the Jewish calendar! And Hipparchus didn't get those figures from "some Jews" in 146 B.C.; they were the result of his own research. And while those figures from Hipparchus are not perfectly correct, they are nevertheless pretty close! And so the Jewish calendar calculations likewise are also not perfect, but averaged out they too are pretty close. But when applied to specific new moons then the errors are brought to the fore. Averaged out calculations simply don't tell you when new moons REALLY take place!

If God had divinely inspired the figures to be used in the calendar calculations: would God have "inspired" the exactly correct data, or would God have "inspired" the exact same very small error as is contained in the data of Hipparchus?

Step 9:

Case proved! The calculations employed in the present Jewish calendar cannot possibly be construed to have been used prior to the middle of the 2nd century A.D.

For those who have never manually calculated the Jewish calendar:

You need to realize that THE STARTING DATE is an indispensable part in the calculation of the Jewish calendar. If you do not have the EXACT MOLAD FOR AN EXACT YEAR FROM WHICH TO START YOUR CALCULATIONS, THEN YOU ARE STUCK!!

Step 10:

The entire purpose of the Jewish calendar calculations is to find A STARTING DATE FOR TISHRI 1 IN TERMS OF ANOTHER CALENDAR! I have already discussed this earlier. But the present calculations employed by the Jewish calendar could not possibly have existed before the Julian calendar was enacted by Julius Caesar.

So what will UCG and the other Churches of God do with THIS information? It can be clearly demonstrated that the calculations on which the present Jewish calendar is based cannot possibly be

older than AT THE EARLIEST 100 years AFTER the time of Christ's ministry?

Well, there's a lot more I could discuss. But if the facts I have already presented in this article don't suffice to show up the major flaws in the UCG Study Paper on the Hebrew Calendar, then another 20 or 30 pages won't do it either.

So let's summarize the main points.

IN SUMMARY:

- 1) It is not true that there are no new questions since Mr. Armstrong addressed the calendar question 57 years ago. I have listed a number of the things Mr. Armstrong never had to address.
- 2) The appeal to "the tradition of the Church" is not valid when it is used to negate Scriptures and clear facts that cannot be refuted. We should realize that the principle of "God winks at the times of ignorance" applies to every age.
- 3) It is claimed that the UCG paper is based on the Bible; but in fact the paper ignores all biblical information about the calendar in favour of interpreting one single passage, John chapters 7-9.
- 4) The truth is that there are at least two very clear biblical requirements, which the right calendar has to meet. Exodus 34:22 makes clear that the Feast of Tabernacles must not precede the autumn equinox. And Leviticus 23:10-11 makes clear that the First Day of UB must never fall so early that there will not be any ripe barley in the area of Palestine. Taken TOGETHER, these two Scriptures show that the ENTIRE Feast of Tabernacles must fall at least on or after the autumn equinox. And the first month of the year must never start before the spring equinox.
- 5) Many of the issues people raise about the calendar need not be addressed to start with. FOR A START the only point that needs to be addressed is: does the calendar we have actually comply with the biblical requirements or not? If it does NOT comply, THEN all the other questions can be addressed from the MORE CORRECT perspective of not assuming that the elements of the Jewish calendar have God's approval. But all those questions come later.
- 6) All of us have "traditions", which we are reluctant to let go of. Repentance and the development of godly character require that we "renew" our minds. We should never value our traditions higher than clearly provable facts from the Word of God.
- 7) The example of the calendar we see in the Book of Genesis is one where a year has 12 months, and each month has exactly 30 days. That is also the calendar God has used repeatedly in His prophetic statements. It seems clear that God is not just playing some academic game or that God is doing that for the purpose of simplifying the mathematics involved, making prophetic predictions far less complicated. God uses a 360-day year (which really is a PERFECT year!) in His statements because such a 360-day year MEANS SOMETHING TO GOD!
- 8) Hillel's calendar reform had the result that the Passover was (in some years of every cycle) moved back into the winter, and the Feast of Tabernacles was moved totally into the summer. If you have the eyes to see it, that is not unlike what king Jeroboam did in moving the Feast to the 8th month.

THIS FACT CANNOT BE REFUTED!

What Hillel did was wrong, and it certainly did not have God's approval.

9) It is correct that, with our present imperfect solar and lunar cycles, it is impossible to have a PERMANENT calendar which may never be adjusted, which will go according to the cycles of the moon, and which will never experience a seasonal shift. It is also correct that minor adjustments which will counter the imperfections in the present cycles can be achieved by the occasional (every 500 to 1500 years or so) change in the sequence of leap years within a 19-year cycle.

10) I have previously shown the evidence for the Babylonian origin of the Jewish calendar. It is overwhelming, even as the more "authoritative" Talmud is the BABYLONIAN Talmud. A Babylonian origin does not automatically make it a wrong calendar, since God's servant Ezra certainly endorsed the calendar in use at his time. It must be evaluated on its own merits, without the assumption of being viewed as "GOD'S SACRED calendar".

11) God provided a very precise way for us to date the start of the ministry of Jesus Christ. That is the 70-weeks prophecy. If we cannot use that prophecy, which God gave for the explicit purpose of dating Christ's ministry, then we are wasting our time trying to date it by any other methods. The starting date of the Jewish calendar is a deliberate attempt to obscure the fulfilment of the 70-weeks prophecy.

12) The attempt by UCG to date Christ's ministry based totally (as far as looking to the Bible is concerned) on the account in John chapters 7-9 is very flawed. It means UCG has opted to ignore all other biblical references and guidelines. It is an attempt to "hold fast" to the traditions of the fathers, in this case the Jewish fathers.

13) The non-biblical points UCG also presents include: Jewish traditions which reject the truths of the Bible, statements from one of the Catholic "church fathers", people who have written from a prejudiced perspective of trying to prove a 33 A.D. crucifixion and who try to "fit" the crucifixion with some lunar eclipse, quotations from forged apocryphal documents ("the report of Pilate") and references from the Jewish historian Josephus (whose character in our modern context would very clearly be labelled as: "a traitor" who went over to the enemy).

14) An examination of the use of the word "Sabbath" in the four gospels makes clear that the four writers were not really very concerned at all with distinguishing between a weekly Sabbath and an annual Holy Day. It is only our "inside understanding" that enables us to correctly decipher references to "Sabbaths" during the last week of Christ's ministry. We have no guarantee at all that references to "Sabbaths" for the time preceding Christ's last week on Earth are in fact always references to WEEKLY Sabbath days. We simply tend to assume that, and that is fine because God chose not to inspire the four authors of the gospel accounts to really put a difference between weekly Sabbaths and annual Holy Days, except as occasional parenthetical comments.

15) It follows that UCG's interpretation of the word "Sabbath" in John chapter 9 cannot be correct because it flies in the face of what God tells us through the 70-weeks prophecy, and what God tells us about dating the ministry of John the Baptist. And we already know that it was indeed an ANNUAL Sabbath day, the Last Great Day. Also neither in 29 A.D. nor in 30 A.D. was the Last Great Day on a weekly Sabbath day. The facts of astronomy prove this.

16) It is an easy matter for me to present LONG LISTS of years when the present Jewish calendar violated the principles laid down in the Bible. EVEN TODAY, in this present 19-year cycle, there are STILL years when the Jewish calendar demands that the Feast of Tabernacles should start before the autumn equinox, and that the First Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a date BEFORE any barley can be expected to be ripe (e.g. in 2013 A.D. F.o.T. will start on the evening of September 18; in 2002 A.D. F.o.T. will start on the evening of September 20; etc., IF the present Jewish calendar is followed). And that is in spite of the fact that there have been "NO ADJUSTMENTS" for over 1600 years, since the time of Hillel II. That should give you an idea of how bad Hillel's decision really was!

[Comment: Without any adjustments over the past 1600 years, all of the Holy Days for every year in a 19-year cycle have moved to 7 or 8 days later in the year, due to the shift of 1 day for every 216 years. So today Hillel's calendar actually looks "7 days better" than it did at Hillel's time; but in some years F.o.T. will STILL start as early as the evening of September 18, and therefore the 1st Day of UB will be as early as March 26 (starting at sunset on the 25th). Thus Hillel's calendar STILL does not meet the biblical requirements.]

17) I have proved that the calculations of the present Jewish calendar were devised at the very earliest in the middle of the 2nd century A.D., a full 100 years after Christ's ministry.

18) The fact that the Jewish calendar calculations require the existence of the Julian calendar also means that they could not possibly have existed before the Julian calendar was introduced by Julius Caesar.

Well, now you have my "candid reply" to the UCG calendar paper.

A FINAL NOTE

For those of you who may have read my other articles on the calendar, you may feel I am being rather hard on UCG in this article. You may feel that, compared to this article, my response to Mr. Raymond McNair's article (Global Church) was rather mild and gentle.

That may be so.

Understand this!

It is now about one year that I have been involved in researching into the calendar and in responding to various articles by other authors.

I KNOW THAT I HAVE PRESENTED EVIDENCE WHICH NONE OF THE PROPONENTS OF THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR CAN REFUTE!

I also know that people prefer to simply not face the evidence that is presented to them. It is hard to let go of preconceived ideas and opinions and "traditions". We will rather grasp at a straw than face the unpleasant truth that we will have to change in some way. Change is very often perceived as a threat.

The people who promote the present Jewish calendar are certainly not "united" in the reasons they provide for doing so. In fact, in many cases they contradict each other.

Thus Dr. Hoeh (WCG) and Mr. Raymond McNair (GCG) were both willing to admit that Exodus 34:22 is a definite requirement for the calendar. But UCG has not been prepared to acknowledge this. UCG, on the other hand, pins all its hopes on a 31 A.D. crucifixion date. Yet Mr. Ken Burrell, an equally ardent supporter of the present Jewish calendar, dismisses appeals to a 31 A.D. crucifixion as an "obsession". Mr. Burrell in turn, first based his acceptance of the Jewish calendar on the "Seder Olam", a shockingly inaccurate Jewish document, which purports to provide an accurate chronological record from the creation of Adam to the second destruction of Jerusalem around 135 A.D.. When the flaws of the Olam Seder were exposed, then Mr. Burrell switched his approach to appealing to mathematics, but other mathematicians again exposed his lack of logic. The United Church has acknowledged this by very meticulously avoiding to present any of the reasoning Mr. Burrell presented in defence of the Jewish calendar.

Dr. Hoeh had written a booklet in which he appealed to the 70-weeks prophecy and additional historical

support to imply that the crucifixion took place in 31 A.D. Many people quoted that booklet. Now that I have pointed out the flaws in Dr. Hoeh's presentation, all appeals to the reasoning he presented have stopped. This is a tacit acknowledgment that his reasoning was faulty, which means that his conclusions were faulty. While being very careful not to refer to any of the lines of reasoning Dr. Hoeh originally presented, UCG nevertheless attempts to reach THE SAME CONCLUSION, while rejecting the way that Dr. Hoeh reached that conclusion.

That's a strange way of reasoning, tacitly admitting that the way someone else attempted to prove a 31 A.D. crucifixion is flawed, AND YET wanting to use some other way to reach that same conclusion! The logical thing to do when Dr. Hoeh's reasons for claiming a 31 A.D. crucifixion were proved wrong would be to conclude that therefore the crucifixion did NOT take place in 31 A.D.!

Put another way: IF UCG really feels that 31 A.D. IS the correct year for the crucifixion, THEN there simply MUST be a way for the 70-weeks prophecy to lead to that 31 A.D. date! You cannot have a 31 A.D. crucifixion date, and at the same time feel that the 70-weeks prophecy should be ignored in proving that 31 A.D. date.

But the Churches of God have not responded with "logic" to the challenge to their traditions, in the form of the Jewish calendar. That is usually the case, that we don't respond logically when our traditions and our values are challenged. We respond emotionally; we "feel" that what we have always done must be right.

Now before UCG published the calendar paper, they were in a totally different position from all the people who had defended the Jewish calendar before them. They actually had the opportunity to carefully study about 50 different papers, many of which pointed out flaws with the Jewish calendar, flaws that UCG simply could not answer.

But they did not squarely face those difficulties and draw the appropriate conclusion that there is simply NO WAY that the present Jewish calendar is something GOD caused the Jews "TO PRESERVE"! NO WAY!

Instead they decided that:

"IT WAS DEEMED IMPORTANT THAT WE COME TO A CLEAR CONSENSUS FOR THE SAKE OF A UNIFIED CELEBRATION OF GOD'S HOLY DAYS ..."

"Truth" does not depend on "consensus"! Can a man who has been a minister for twenty or thirty years not put his foot down and say:

"YES! I CAN SEE THAT THIS IS TRUE! I CAN SEE THAT THE JEWISH CALENDAR IS FLAWED! AND UNLESS EVIDENCE IS PRESENTED WHICH TOTALLY NULLIFIES THIS UNDERSTANDING I HAVE NOW COME TO, I SIMPLY WILL NOT BUDGE!! UNITY OR NOT ... CONSENSUS OR NOT! TRUTH IS TRUTH AND THAT DOES NOT DEPEND ON CONSENSUS!" ??

When Mr. Stephen Flurry (PCG) wrote his article on the calendar, he didn't have access to those 50 papers. When Mr. Raymond McNair (GCG) wrote his articles on the calendar, he too did not have access to the research that had gone into those 50 different articles. They can be excused for not having had SOUND REASONING presented to them before they decided to write their articles.

BUT UCG IS DIFFERENT!

UCG had the opportunity to very carefully go through a mountain of information. And they did indeed

take careful note of many (if not even all?) of the problems that do exist with the Jewish calendar. The careful way they have AVOIDED committing themselves on certain issues, while discreetly acknowledging a problem for which they have no answer, makes this quite clear! For example, their very fleeting reference (last sentence, second last paragraph of the whole paper!) to "PERIODIC ADJUSTMENTS TO LEAP YEAR SEQUENCES" reveals that they have grasped one of the problems with the Jewish calendar!

BUT THEY HAVE REFUSED TO STATE THE INEVITABLE CONCLUSION TO THIS PROBLEM! THEY HAVE REFUSED TO COMMIT THEMSELVES, EVEN WHEN THEY KNOW THAT THINGS ARE NOT RIGHT WITH THE JEWISH CALENDAR!

That approach I don't have any time for! And that is why I have with this article backed UCG into a corner! And I will not let them off the hook! People can call me arrogant, proud, haughty, conceited, who do I think that I am anyway, etc., etc. ... **BUT I WILL NOT LET UCG GET OFF THE HOOK!**

I have presented the truth on this subject for about one year, and the Churches of God have refused to face the facts. I have answered questions from a variety of different quarters, and those who support the Jewish calendar can't even agree amongst themselves as to WHY they support the Jewish calendar! What one party presents as proof for why to keep the present Jewish calendar another party rejects or willingly ignores. None of the Churches of God have even attempted to disprove the FACTS I have presented where the Jewish calendar is in violation of the principles revealed in God's Word. They have just quietly avoided commenting on those facts. Every new justification that the Churches have presented for keeping the Jewish calendar I have exposed as flawed, like the present UCG paper appealing to JEWISH TRADITIONS WHICH THE BIBLE EXPOSES AS LIES!

Whether those who criticize the Jewish calendar agree among themselves as to what is the best solution or not, has got nothing to do with the fact that **THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR!**

FIRST acknowledge the facts, that there are problems! **THEN** we can see about how to remedy those problems! Arguing about the inherent problems contained in the different possible remedies for a disease will never make the disease itself go away!

As far as the calendar is concerned:

EITHER PROVE THE MAIN POINTS I HAVE PRESENTED HERE WRONG ... OR ADMIT THAT THE JEWISH CALENDAR IS FLAWED!

Frank W. Nelte