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THE GREEK WORD 'LOGOS' AND 'LOGION' - UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF 'THE ORACLES OF GOD'

Any number of assertions have been made regarding the expression "the oracles of God", as used in Romans 3:2, in order to justify the claim that the present Jewish calendar is "God's sacred calendar". But none of those assertions are correct! They were all based on wrong assumptions, which were never proved.

What conclusions would you draw from the following situation.

WHEN PEOPLE TRY TO SUPPORT AN OLD ARGUMENT WITH "NEW EVIDENCE"

Picture the following situation:

- 1) People have a very clear idea of what they want to believe and teach. They then look for ways to prove their idea.
- 2) So they present all the supposed evidence for their particular ideas. Without this "evidence" they would not have been able to claim any validity for their ideas in the first place. They consider the "evidence" they have presented for their ideas as rock-solid and water-tight in proving their case.
- 3) THEN it can be shown very conclusively that "all the supposed evidence" they presented for their case is not only terribly flawed, but their own "evidence" turns out to be IRREFUTABLE evidence that their position is in fact wrong. What they had presented as evidence FOR their cause actually turns out to be real evidence AGAINST their cause.
- 4) Do they then give up and throw in the towel and acknowledge that their own evidence has proved the position they had taken to be wrong? CERTAINLY NOT!
- 5) In most such situations THEY FIGHT ON! Now they have a frantic scramble for some NEW EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THEIR OLD POSITION!
- 6) With this approach they are very clearly showing that they are starting out from the premise that their original position is true and correct, IN SPITE OF ALL THE EVIDENCE AGAINST IT! They now work from the premise that "there must be some OTHER evidence we can present" which will prove our original position to be true.
- 7) The ORIGINAL evidence, which turned out to be completely wrong, made it possible to introduce their wrong ideas in the first place. Without that flawed evidence their ideas would never have gotten off the ground. They could never have introduced these ideas to people.
- 8) But once those unproven ideas have for a period of time enjoyed some acceptance, THEN they no longer need a justification to present those ideas. THEN they feel that they need to do nothing more than find some NEW PROOF that those OLD IDEAS are correct after all. This is only made possible by the fact that the false evidence was for a period of time accepted as valid, before it was in fact shown to be conclusive evidence AGAINST the very points it was supposed to prove true.

9) So the original evidence, which turns out to be completely wrong, makes it possible for people to start out from a premise that should never have been accepted in the first place. This obviously makes their task of trying to prove their position much easier than if they had to start out from scratch, having to prove every statement they make. They are able to start the presentation of their ideas from an unjustified premise and platform, because their original evidence for that premise was in fact conclusively shown to be wrong.

10) This process happens in many areas of life. It happens in politics. It happens in discussions about ethics and morality. It even happens in many areas of scientific endeavour (e.g. supposed proof for evolution, etc.). And it has also happened in the discussion about the acceptance of the present Jewish calendar. It is a very commonly used method for supporting a position for which no real proof at all has been put forward. It happens all the time!

The question is: would YOU be impressed by such "new evidence" for some position, where the "original evidence", when it is correctly understood, clearly demands a rejection of the position that has been taken? Don't you find it strange that someone could "intuitively" put forward a correct position based on nothing more than TOTALLY INCORRECT supporting evidence? The original answer was supposedly right, even when ALL of the evidence presented for it is shown to be completely wrong. Isn't that somewhat strange?

What something like that always tells me is this:;

The fact that people presented an idea based on nothing more than completely wrong evidence shows that they were not able to come to a correct conclusion in the first place. That has surely happened to all of us at one time or another. So that isn't necessarily a major problem. But when they then try to hold fast to the idea which was proved WRONG from the evidence they themselves had presented, THEN it exposes that they have AN ENORMOUS BIAS in favour of the wrong position they had originally taken. Looking for new evidence to defend an old position which has already been proved wrong, also calls their willingness to accept proven evidence which contradicts their own ideas into question.

In plain language, what something like that shows very clearly is this:

People will always believe what they really want to believe. And if you destroy the foundation on which their beliefs have been built, then they will simply find a new foundation for their old beliefs. That's the way it works in many areas of life, not just with the Jewish calendar.

Let's now examine the evidence that the Church has presented over the years in favour of the present Jewish calendar.

BACKGROUND TO THE CLAIMS ABOUT "THE ORACLES OF GOD"

IN 1940

The first time Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong ever wrote anything about the calendar was in the GOOD NEWS letter of 1940. In that letter Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong made the following statements:

"The true sacred calendar is no more lost than the weekly Sabbath. Then WHO HAS PRESERVED THIS TIME, this sacred CALENDAR? To whom did God give it? To whom were "the oracles of God COMMITTED?" To ISRAEL AND JUDAH, of course! Israel LOST the Sabbath, LOST time, LOST even her national name and identity. But JUDAH NEVER DID. Judah has kept TIME in respect to the weekly SABBATH. The Jews rejected Christ. They apostatized in doctrine, BUT THEY WERE STRICT, STICKLERS FOR THE LETTER. Would such a people have lost their CALENDAR?" (Mr. Armstrong's

own emphasis)

"God did not commit His oracles, or the preservation of His TIMES to profane history, or to the Roman Catholics, but to the Israelites. And they have been preserved BY THE JEWS!" (Mr. Armstrong's own emphasis)

MY COMMENTS:

In this letter Mr. Armstrong paraphrased the key phrase from Romans 3:2, but did not even bother to cite the location of this Scripture. It wasn't really part of Mr. Armstrong's PROOF for the Jewish calendar.

No, the "proof" Mr. Armstrong presented in this first article he ever wrote about the calendar consisted of references to the wave-sheaf (Leviticus 23:10-14) and to Tabernacles having to be at the "tekufah" of the year (Exodus 34:22-23) and to the feasts all having to be in their correct seasons. For all of these points Mr. Armstrong quoted the Scriptures concerned. But for the reference to "His oracles" Mr. Armstrong didn't even bother to tell his readers which Scripture he was referring to.

Nor did Mr. Armstrong in any way try to examine what the Apostle Paul actually was talking about in Romans chapter 3. Nor did he bother to examine the word "oracles" in either English or the Greek word "logion". He simply, without any kind of hint from the Scripture itself or from its context, chose to associate "oracles of God" with "not losing time" and "the Sabbath" and "the calendar". In so doing Mr. Armstrong simply lifted the phrase "oracles of God" COMPLETELY OUT OF ITS CONTEXT and assigned it the meaning he felt it should have.

Mr. Armstrong himself repeatedly said: "Don't believe me; believe your Bible!" And that is advice I believe we should ALWAYS follow. Later I will show irrefutable proof that Mr. Armstrong did NOT have God's guidance when he lifted this phrase "the oracles of God" out of its context and assigned it a meaning HE felt it should have.

It is not questioned that the Jews have indeed preserved "the oracles of God". The problem Mr. Armstrong created here was that he himself ASSIGNED A MEANING TO THE EXPRESSION "THE ORACLES OF GOD", A MEANING THAT IS NOT SUPPORTED BY THE SCRIPTURE INVOLVED! Nor is this meaning supported by the word "logion", which is here translated as "oracles". [Comment: Logion is the singular and logia is the plural.]

IN 1953

An appeal to "the oracles of God" does not appear again until 13 years later, in 1953, in Kenneth Herrmann's calendar article. There Mr. Herrmann wrote in the March 1953 GN on page 9, at the bottom of column III:

"Notice what Paul asks himself: "What advantage hath the Jew?" Then he answers in part, "Much every way: chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God." (Romans 3:1,2) The Jews alone were left to preserve the Scripture, the Sabbath AND THE CALENDAR."

MY COMMENTS:

Kenneth Herrmann now quotes the Scripture with its source reference. However, he has done nothing other than stating Mr. Armstrong's previous claims in a neater and more compact way. This claim that "the oracles of God" refer to "the Scripture, the Sabbath AND THE CALENDAR" has been repeated ever since then by those who support the Jewish calendar. In years gone by I myself have also done this. But the Bible does NOT support this claim.

Kenneth Herrmann also did not really examine the phrase "the oracles of God" or its context. He simply accepted the meanings Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong had assigned to this phrase 13 years earlier.

HOWEVER, he did not present this as his main proof for the Jewish calendar. NOT AT ALL! Mr. Herrmann presented TWELVE Scriptures in that article to make his point, and Romans 3:1,2 was his concluding Scripture. What he presented as his PROOF was Scriptures like Genesis 1:14, Leviticus 23:27-32, Exodus 12:2, Numbers 28:11, Exodus 13:10, etc. He used Romans 3:2 for no other purpose than to TIE TOGETHER ALL THE OTHER SCRIPTURES he had already presented. They were the real "proof" for the position he was expounding.

IN FEBRUARY 1957

This article was run again in 1957 with all the same Scriptures, with one difference. After presenting ten of the previously used Scriptures, Kenneth Herrmann then introduced A NEW SCRIPTURE into the defence. And that was Acts 7:38 ("lively oracles"), following this with Romans 3:1,2. But it was still AT THE END OF THE ARTICLE!

IN OCTOBER 1957

Mr. Kenneth Herrmann wrote another calendar article for the Good News Magazine. But now he dropped all the Scriptures he had previously presented to show that the Jewish calendar (supposedly) meets biblical requirements. Instead he quoted only two Scriptures, and they were Romans 3:1-2 and Acts 7:38. References to "oracles" had become the only defence for the Jewish calendar. Perhaps Mr. Herrmann did not feel a need to repeat the Scriptures he had used 8 months earlier?

At any rate, this represented a major change in focus from the way the Jewish calendar had always been justified. The old "evidence" had been quietly dropped from the discussion.

IN 1981

Then in 1981 Dr. Hoeh wrote an article in support of the Jewish calendar for the April 1981 Good News Magazine. By that time the Church had clearly become aware of the fact that the Jewish calendar is in violation of some of the claims that Mr. Armstrong made in his 1940 letter, and the claims that Mr. Herrmann had made in his 1953 and 1957 articles.

So Dr. Hoeh's defence of the Jewish calendar was accordingly modified. For a start, Dr. Hoeh only quoted six Scriptures in his whole article. All the other Scriptures Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Herrmann had appealed to were dropped, because they had been shown to expose the real problems with the Jewish calendar.

Now Dr. Hoeh STARTED OUT with an appeal to "oracles". That was Mr. Herrmann's October 1957 focus. That appeal by Dr. Hoeh consisted of presenting Acts 7:38-39 ("lively oracles") and Romans 3:1-4 up front in the article. THIS WAS FULLY IN LINE WITH MR. HERRMANN'S OCTOBER 1957 ARTICLE, THE DEFENCE STRATEGY FOR THE JEWISH CALENDAR HE HAD ADOPTED AT THAT POINT IN TIME!

What had in the past been a concluding Scripture, intended to bolster all the other Scriptures presented as evidence, had NOW become the main evidence itself! But even then the actual Scripture itself (Romans 3:2) was never at any stage examined. It was simply presented as supposed proof for specific ASSERTIONS! There is a considerable difference between "asserting" that a specific Scripture means something, and "proving" that a certain Scripture means something. We always need to be on our guard when we are confronted by assertions in place of real proof.

The next Scripture Dr. Hoeh presented (Leviticus 23:26-32) was presented with the explicit intention of JUSTIFYING THE JEWISH POSTPONEMENT RULES! For the first 40 years of writing about the Jewish calendar no writer had ever felt A NEED to attempt to justify those postponement rules, because initially those writers were not even aware of the fact that the Jewish calendar postpones the new moon day away from "inconvenient" days. They (Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Herrmann) had accepted and defended the Jewish calendar without even knowing that the Jewish calendar will postpone the new moon day away from inconvenient days of the week.

After that Dr. Hoeh presented two Scriptures (Numbers 28:11 and 1 Chronicles 23:31) to show that the months are to start at the new moons. This the previous articles had also done. It was not mentioned that the Jewish calendar in fact ignores real new moons in its determination for when to start the year. So these very Scriptures actually call the Jewish calendar into question.

And then Dr. Hoeh did something very interesting. He again used a Scripture that Mr. Armstrong had used in his 1940 letter, but which Kenneth Herrmann ignored in his three articles. So in 1981 Dr. Hoeh brought Exodus 34:22 (Tabernacles at the 'tekufah' of the year) back into the calendar discussion. Dr. Hoeh went so far as to state unequivocally that THIS SCRIPTURE states a very clear requirement for the calendar. In so doing Dr. Hoeh clearly did not understand that by HIS (i.e. by Dr. Hoeh's) own standards the calendar of Hillel II violated this requirement in a repeating pattern for over 800 years after Hillel's time. So this Scripture also calls the Jewish calendar into question.

So in order to give the appearance that he was not basing the acceptance of the Jewish calendar exclusively on the appeals to "oracles", Dr. Hoeh attempted to present TWO FEATURES that are a requirement for a correct calendar (months are to start with the new moons, and Tabernacles must always be in the autumn) with the assumption that the Jewish calendar is in full compliance with these biblical requirements. However, the Jewish calendar violates both of these requirements, and Dr. Hoeh seems not to have realized this at the time.

So what had started out in 1940 and in the 1950's as an explanation of what the biblical requirements for a correct calendar are, had by 1981 been turned into A FAITH ISSUE, and a defence of the postponement rules. Scriptures that were previously used to explain a correct calendar were now TOTALLY IGNORED!

IN THE 1990's

In the late 1990's many of the new church of God organizations published their respective defences of the Jewish calendar. Depending on their level of understanding the real conflicts between the Jewish calendar and biblical requirements, they included more or less of these biblical requirements in their articles.

Those who understood less, naively presented some of the exact biblical requirements which the present Jewish calendar has violated since its inception by Hillel. Those who actually understood these real conflicts between the Jewish calendar and what the Bible requires of a calendar were very careful to avoid any references to ANY biblical requirements. Their efforts were all directed at attempting to persuade us that we simply MUST look outside of the Bible for a correct calendar. So the approach taken by different organizations in their defence of the Jewish calendar actually reveals the degree to which they are aware of the real problems with the Jewish calendar. Those who POINT-BLANK refuse to examine ANY of the biblical requirements for a correct calendar have the highest level of understanding regarding what those problems are.

TODAY

Today we have reached the situation where all those who still attempt to provide a defence for the present Jewish calendar have firmly ensconced themselves behind ONE Scripture, and that one Scripture is Romans 3:2.

Today the most informed defenders of the Jewish calendar have dropped all appeals to the Jewish calendar supposedly being in agreement with stated biblical requirements, because they know better. Their only biblical justification for looking OUTSIDE OF THE BIBLE for a correct calendar is an appeal to Romans 3:2. They know that any appeals to biblical requirements for a correct calendar will only result in a total demolition of the present Jewish calendar supposedly having God's approval.

And it seems rather strange that people attempt to use the Bible to justify looking OUTSIDE of the Bible for instructions?

So all the Scriptures Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Herrmann used have gone out the window. They are not only useless in a defence of the Jewish calendar; they are actually very detrimental to any attempt to justify the present Jewish calendar. AND THIS IS NOW WELL-KNOWN!

Romans 3:2 is the last bastion of defence for those who want to hold to the Jewish calendar!

So now let's examine this subject of "ORACLES".

In order to establish the correct meaning for Romans 3:1-2, we should do the following things:

- 1) Establish the correct meaning of THE GREEK WORD involved in this phrase.
- 2) Examine EVERY OTHER PLACE in the New Testament where the Greek word translated "oracle" is used, and see what it means in each of those places.
- 3) Examine THE CONTEXT of Romans 3:2 to see what the Apostle Paul meant, when he used this phrase in this epistle.

When we put all the information from these three steps together, then we should have a pretty good indication of what this phrase is supposed to tell us, without having to read our own ideas into this Scripture. Then we are "RIGHTLY dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

So let's move on.

THE MEANING OF THE GREEK WORD FOR "ORACLES"

The Greek word translated as "oracles" is "LOGION" (plural is "logia"). In Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, one of the most authoritative reference works available, this word "logion" is described as follows:

"Logion: oracle, especially one preserved from antiquity". Then a number of references for different authors who have used this word is given. The authors listed include: Herodotus (484-408 BC) and Euripides (480-406 BC) and Plutarch (died 120 AD). It then states that this word is used "more frequently in the plural".

I went to the main university here in Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand (known as "Wits") and contacted the Department of Classics. There one of the professors helped me to find these quotations in the works of Herodotus and Euripides and Plutarch (he had all of these works and hundreds more right on the bookshelf in his own office). These quotations CONFIRM that "logion" does

indeed refer to SHORT SAYINGS.

For example, Euripides' use of this word in "The Heracleidae" is rendered into English in this sentence: "I've had all oracles, all old and well-known or confidential forecasts analyzed to find out what to do." Plutarch's use of the word referred to the oracle at Delphi, as found in this sentence: "... and Theseus, when he learned the fate of the young man (who had just committed suicide by drowning), and what had caused it, was grievously disturbed, and in his distress called to mind a certain oracle which he had once received at Delphi." Herodotus' use of "logia" is a reference to ... "where an oracle has already foretold our victory."

The point is that all the references we care to look at refer to SHORT sayings or utterances, be they well-known or be they confidential in nature. This applies to both, the singular use and the plural use of this word "oracle". "Oracle" never refers in classical Greek or even in biblical Greek, to "the whole big book"! It is always just a small part of some larger context.

When it comes to biblical Greek, the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament by Joseph H. Thayer is also one of the better reference works. This lexicon of biblical Greek defines the word "logion" as follows:

"Logion: DIMINUTIVE OF LOGOS, elsewhere neuter of logios, properly: A LITTLE WORD, A BRIEF UTTERANCE, in prophetic authors a divine oracle (doubtless because oracles were generally brief), in the Septuagint for the breast-plate of the high priest, which he wore when he consulted Jehovah."

This is in full agreement with the definition in Liddell & Scott's lexicon. The high priest would likewise have received short answers from God, not the whole Old Testament all in one go.

The etymology of "logion" is as follows:

The neuter noun "logion" is formed from the neuter form of the adjective "logios", which means "eloquent". This adjective "logios" in turn is derived from the noun "logos" meaning "a collection, a collecting or gathering together in the mind and expressed in words, etc." [We tend to think of "logos" as "the Word or Spokesman", based on its use in John 1:1.] The noun "logos" is formed from the verb "lego" which means "to say or speak". This verb is a root word, i.e. it is not derived from another word.

Thayer's statement that "logion" is the diminutive of "logos" is certainly borne out by the way these two words (logos and logion) are used in Greek writings. To understand this more fully, it is helpful to see how the parent-word "logos" is used in the New Testament. So let's now examine the use of "logos" in the New Testament.

"LOGOS" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The word "LOGOS" is used 330 times in 316 verses of the New Testament. John 1:1 is the best-known verse with this word. Here are some other places where it is used. In each case I have rendered its translation in capital letters for easier recognition.

1) SPEAKER

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius (Greek = Hermes), because he was the chief SPEAKER. (Acts 14:12)

2) CAUSE

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for THE CAUSE of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery. (Matthew 5:32)

3) ACCOUNT

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take ACCOUNT of his servants. (Matthew 18:23)

For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give AN ACCOUNT of this concourse. (Acts 19:40)

Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your ACCOUNT. (Philippians 4:17)

4) DOCTRINE

Therefore leaving the principles of THE DOCTRINE of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, (Hebrews 6:1)

5) SHOW

Which things have indeed A SHEW (NKJ = APPEARANCE) of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. (Colossians 2:23)

6) DEALINGS

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have TO DO (NKJ = to whom we must GIVE ACCOUNT ... i.e. "pros hon hemin HO LOGOS"). (Hebrews 4:13)

7) TREATISE

The former TREATISE have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, (Acts 1:1)

8) REASON

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you A REASON of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (1 Peter 3:15)

And when Paul was now about to open [his] mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O [ye] Jews, REASON would that I should bear with you: (Acts 18:14)

9) MATTER

Thou hast neither part nor lot in this MATTER: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. (Acts 8:21)

10) INTENT

Therefore came I [unto you] without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what INTENT ye have sent for me? (Acts 10:29)

11) FAME

But so much the more went there A FAME abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. (Luke 5:15)

12) RUMOUR

And this RUMOUR of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. (Luke 7:17)

13) THE WORK

For he will finish THE WORK (LOGOS), and cut [it] short in righteousness: because A short WORK (LOGOS) will the Lord make upon the earth. (Romans 9:28)

14) COMMUNICATION

But let your COMMUNICATION be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil. (Matthew 5:37)

15) SAYINGS

Therefore whosoever hears these SAYINGS of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (Matthew 7:24)

And every one that hears these SAYINGS of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: (Matthew 7:26)

16) UTTERANCE

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of UTTERANCE, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: (Colossians 4:3)

As we should readily be able to see, this Greek word "logos" has a FAR GREATER RANGE OF MEANING than we generally tend to think of. And this range is found right here within the pages of the New Testament. This is a word with a large scope! I expect many of us may be somewhat surprised by the great range of this word "logos" right here in the pages of the New Testament. Most of us would in our own minds probably have limited this word "logos" to "The Word, Jesus Christ". But the range is far greater than that.

And "logion" is THE DIMINUTIVE of this word "logos".

Having now seen the word "logos", let's compare the use of the following two phrases in the New Testament. They are: 1) THE LOGOS of God, and 2) THE LOGION of God.

THE EXPRESSIONS "THE LOGOS OF GOD" AND "THE LOGION OF GOD"

The expression "the LOGOS of God" is used 37 times in the New Testament. It is usually in the form "ton logon tou theou" (i.e. the accusative singular of logos with the genitive singular of theos).

The expression "the LOGION of God" is used 3 times in the New Testament. In Romans 3:2 it is "ta logia tou theou" (the accusative plural of logion), in 1 Peter 4:11 it is "logia theou" (same as in Romans 3:2 but

without the definite articles), and in Hebrews 5:12 it is "ton logion tou theou" (the genitive plural of logion).

So the expression "the LOGION of God" is used only in the plural in the New Testament. This is to be expected, as the singular use of "logion" would have to be a reference to ONE SMALL SPECIFIC AND PINPOINTED REVELATION FROM GOD, such as God on one specific occasion speaking to one specific prophet or servant of His. As soon as an author wishes to speak about such revelations in a general or collective way, he will of necessity have to use the plural form of "logion". But the plural of the word "logion" IN NO WAY CHANGES THE MEANING OF THE SINGULAR WORD "LOGION"! The plural is simply a reference to "more than one" of the same thing being referred to. But the plural has no "added meanings", as some people have tried to imply.

One other Scripture we should also look at does not have the expression "the oracles OF GOD", but it does instead have the expression "the LIVELY oracles". This is in Acts 7:38, where the expression is "logia zonta" (the accusative plural of logion with the present active participle in the accusative plural form of the verb "zao" meaning "to live"). The use of the participle of this verb basically puts it into the form of "a verbal noun" and it is here translated into English by the adjective "lively".

Now here is something helpful for us.

In each of the books in which this phrase "the LOGION of God" (the oracles of God) is used, the author ALSO used the expression "the LOGOS of God". This means that we can examine how THE AUTHOR differentiated between "the logos of God" and "the logion of God" within the context of the same letter.

So here are the facts:

1) In the Book of Hebrews:

- in Hebrews 5:12 we have "the logion of God"
- in Hebrews 4:12 we have "the logos of God"
- in Hebrews 13:7 we also have "the logos of God"

2) In Peter's epistles:

- in 1 Peter 4:11 we have "the logion of God"
- in 1 Peter 1:23 we have "the logos of God"
- in 2 Peter 3:5 we also have "the logos of God"

3) In the Book of Romans:

- in Romans 3:2 we have "the logion of God"
- in Romans 9:6 we have "the logos of God"

4) Since Paul is the author of the phrase "the logion of God" in Romans 3:2, it might be good to mention that Paul also uses the phrase "the logos of God" in 8 other places in addition to the references listed above. These 8 references are: 1 Corinthians 14:36; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 4:2; Colossians 1:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:5; 2 Timothy 2:9; and Titus 2:5.

So Paul used the expression "the logos of God" 11 times and the expression "the logion of God" 2 times. If we are still unsure of what Paul meant by "the logos of God" after examining the 3 occurrences in Romans and in Hebrews, then we can still examine the other 8 places where Paul also used the expression "the logos of God". In that way it will become clear that Paul did not intend the expressions "the logos of God" and "the logion of God" to be interchangeable synonyms. Paul did NOT use the one phrase when he really meant the other.

Are we going to accept that the authors did NOT mean for us to use the phrases "the logos of God" and "the logion of God" as being interchangeable? These phrases are not the same! Yet all those who have ensconced themselves behind Romans 3:2 MUST try to convince us that these expressions mean the same thing. But that is simply not true.

EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES INVOLVED

Let's start with Peter's use of these two expressions.

1 PETER 1:23 READS: "Being born again (ASV reads "having been begotten again" which is the correct translation of "anagennao" in this passage), not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, BY THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God), which lives and abides for ever."

2 PETER 3:5 READS: "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that BY THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water."

1 PETER 4:11 READS: "If any man speak, let him speak AS THE ORACLES OF GOD (the LOGION of God); if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

So what did the Apostle Peter mean when he used the phrase "the logos of God", and what did he mean when he used the phrase "the logion of God"?

When Peter used the expression "the logos of God" he was referring to God's total revelation to us, as recorded in the Old Testament. But in 1 Peter 4:11 he was speaking about a minister, or even any man, giving a sermon or a religious message to a group of God's people. A SHORTER MESSAGE than the whole Bible is clearly implied in 1 Peter 4:11.

Next, notice that 1 Peter 4:11 is an instruction to those who speak IN CHURCH. They are not necessarily "Jews", yet they are to speak "as the oracles of God". The speakers in Church can only do this if they KNOW the oracles of God. So Peter didn't think that "the oracles of God" involved access to any kind of knowledge outside of the Bible, something that was (about 300 years before Hillel II made the calendar calculations public) supposedly secretly preserved by the Jews. With his instruction here Peter clearly meant that ministers are to base their speaking ON THE BIBLE. Nothing additional to the Bible is in any way inferred in this Scripture. Peter's application of this phrase "the oracles of God" to ministers in the Church cannot possibly be a reference to something outside of the Bible which the Jews supposedly had access to, SINCE NOT ALL MINISTERS WERE JEWS, and would therefore not have had access to material outside of the Bible that was supposedly limited to the Jews.

Peter's use of this phrase PROVES that it cannot be a reference to "extra-biblical material"!

Let's now look at Paul's use of these two expressions in Hebrews.

HEBREWS 4:12 READS: "For THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the

joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

HEBREWS 13:7 READS: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God): whose faith follow, considering the end of their conduct."

HEBREWS 5:12 READS: "For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of THE ORACLES OF GOD (the LOGION of God); and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

Here in Hebrews it is quite clear that Paul also uses the term "logos of God" to refer to the whole Bible. The expression "the first principles" in Hebrews 5:12 is translated from the Greek "ta stoicheia tes arches", and this literally means "the elements of the beginning", and is so translated in Young's Literal Translation (YLT). So Paul uses the expression "the logion of God" in the context of telling THE JEWS IN THE CHURCH (note!) that they need someone to teach them again "the logion of God", the basics of Christianity, the basic doctrines he begins to list about three verses later.

So here in Hebrews we see Paul using the expression "the logos of God" to refer to the whole Bible, and the expression "the logion of God" to refer to just the basic six doctrines he lists in Hebrews 6:1-2. This use of the word "logion" is perfectly compatible with the way this word was understood in the Greek world, referring to a part of the whole revelation of God as "logion". Again, no extra biblical information is in any way implied in this use of "logion" here in Hebrews 5:12. There is not the slightest hint that "logion" could possibly include "the week" and "the calendar".

But notice carefully that Paul here uses the expression "the oracles of God" in reference to THE 6 BASIC DOCTRINES he proceeds to list three sentences later.

Now let's look at Luke's use of "logion" in Acts.

ACTS 7:38 READS: "this is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received THE LIVELY ORACLES (the lively LOGION) to give unto us."

ACTS 4:31 READS: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) with boldness."

ACTS 6:2 READS: "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God), and serve tables."

ACTS 13:5 READS: "And when they were at Salamis, they preached THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister."

ACTS 13:44 READS: "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God)."

ACTS 17:13 READS: "but when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) was preached of Paul at Berea, they came there also, and stirred up the people."

ACTS 18:11 READS: "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) among them."

These references make quite clear that when Luke was thinking of the whole Bible, then he used the

expression "the LOGOS of God". And when Luke was thinking of Moses at Mount Sinai receiving A PART OF the Old Testament, then he used the expression "the lively LOGION". This is again fully compatible with the way we find the word "logion" used in the Greek world of that time.

Notice also that in this Scripture it was MOSES who received "the lively oracles" and he was to give them to ALL ISRAEL, not just to Judah. The "lively oracles" Luke was talking about here in Acts 7:38 became the PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENTIRE NATION. No additional secret knowledge is in any way implied by Luke. Whatever Moses had received as "lively oracles" he was to give ALL OF IT TO THE WHOLE NATION. There was nothing that he was to hold back from the people as a whole.

Now let's look at Paul's use of these two expressions in Romans.

ROMANS 9:6 READS: "Not as though THE WORD OF GOD (the LOGOS of God) has taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

ROMANS 3:2 READS: "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed THE ORACLES OF GOD (the LOGION of God)."

Again it is clear that Paul here uses the expression "the logos of God" to refer to the whole Bible. That is easy enough to see.

So what was "given to the Jews"? If this is supposed to refer not only to the entire Old Testament, but ADDITIONAL REVELATION AS WELL, making this expression "the logion of God" BIGGER than the expression "the logos of God", then this:

- A) CONTRADICTS what Peter had to say about "the oracles of God",
- B) CONTRADICTS what Luke had to say about "the lively oracles",
- C) CONTRADICTS what Paul himself meant by "the oracles of God" in Hebrews, and
- D) CONTRADICTS what the word "oracles" meant in the Greek world at that time!

To understand what Paul meant here in Romans 3:2, we should now examine the context of this verse.

THE CONTEXT OF ROMANS 3:2

For a start, Paul was writing this letter to non-Jewish converts. These non-Israelites knew EXACTLY what the word "oracle" meant in the Greek world. Oracles were a well-known part of the ancient world. Everyone at that time was familiar with the concept of oracles. When you used the word "oracles" back then, you did not have to explain what you meant. The concept was as well understood as today in our age the concept of "horoscopes", that appear in newspapers and in magazines, is understood.

In writing to this Roman congregation Paul simply could not have afforded to use the word "oracles" with any meaning other than the one that was universally understood. If he had indeed intended a meaning different from "short brief utterances of divine revelation", then he would have had to clearly spell this additional meaning out to his Roman readership. And Paul certainly did not attach "his own meanings" to this word, which was already so familiar to his readers.

Next, in Hebrews 6:1-2 Paul listed 6 basic doctrines, which he had earlier referred to as "the first principles of the oracles of God", or "the beginning elements of the oracles of God", the basics of establishing a right relationship with God. THIS IS THE ONLY OTHER PLACE WHERE PAUL USED

THE WORD "ORACLES"! When Paul used the word "oracles" in Romans 3:2 did he mean THE SAME THING that he meant in Hebrews 5:12, or did he somehow mean something totally different in Romans 3:2 from what he had meant in Hebrews 5:12? Was Paul CONSISTENT in the meaning HE HIMSELF attached to the word "oracles", or did he mean one thing when he used this word in Hebrews 5:12, and something altogether different when he used this word in Romans 3:2?

Did Paul use the word "oracles" to convey different things at different times?

The 6 basic doctrines Paul lists in Hebrews 6:1-2 are: repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands (i.e. how to receive the Holy Spirit), resurrection, and eternal judgment. These doctrines are what Paul had meant by "oracles" in Hebrews 5:12.

Earlier I quoted Hebrews 6:1. There is an interesting phrase in this verse; so let's look at it again.

Therefore leaving the principles of THE DOCTRINE of Christ (the LOGOS OF CHRIST), let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, (Hebrews 6:1)

So while Paul in this context did not use the expression "the logos of God", he nevertheless did use the expression "the logos OF CHRIST", which we have in the KJV translated into English as "THE DOCTRINE of Christ".

Compare these expressions Paul used only 3 verses apart:

Hebrews 5:12 = "ta stoicheia (the elements) tes arches (of the beginning) ton logion (of the LOGION) tou theou (of God)."

Hebrews 6:1 = "tes arches (of the beginning) tou Christou (of Christ) logon (the LOGOS)."

Here in plain language is what Paul is telling us in these verses:

- 1) The Jews in the Church had forgotten the basics of Christianity.
- 2) These "basic doctrines" Paul refers to as "the beginning of the LOGION of God" in Hebrews 5:12.
- 3) Three verses later Paul refers to "the beginning of the LOGOS OF CHRIST", and he proceeds to list the 6 basic doctrines.
- 4) These 6 basic doctrines are EXACTLY what Paul had in mind 3 verses earlier when he spoke about "the LOGION of God".

Now let's look at Romans.

When we look at the Letter to the Romans, we find it is not really a personal letter to a specific congregation, as much as it is a general treatise, expounding the basic doctrines of Christianity. The first 11 chapters of Romans comprise this treatise, which in Romans 11:36 is concluded with "Amen". From chapter 12 onwards this letter has some personal details that applied to people in Rome.

Now what is interesting about this 11-chapter treatise is that it is basically AN EXPOSITION OF THE FIRST 4 OF THE 6 BASIC DOCTRINES OF HEBREWS 6:1-2 (which 6 doctrines Paul referred to as "the oracles of God" in Hebrews 5:12). Let's briefly look at an overview of the Book of Romans.

1) Romans 1: This provides the purpose statement for the whole book, and then proceeds to describe a world filled with evils. This lays the foundation for presenting the basic doctrines.

2) Romans 2-3: This section first shows the need for repentance (Doctrine #1 of Hebrews 6), and then this is followed up with the explanation that repentance requires obedience to God.

3) Romans 4: This explains that faith (Doctrine #2 of Hebrews 6) enables us to have our past sins forgiven.

4) Romans 5: With the possibility of our past sins being removed, it means that reconciliation with God is now possible.

5) Romans 6: This explains baptism (Doctrine #3 of Hebrews 6) and its symbolism.

6) Romans 7: God's law still has to be kept after baptism. This chapter contrasts a repentant mind with a carnal mind and explains the mental struggle in a repentant mind.

7) Romans 8: This discusses the effect the Holy Spirit has on the mind (i.e. the doctrine of the laying on of hands, focusing on THE EFFECT the laying on of hands has) (Doctrine #4 of Hebrews 6). The chapter explains that the Holy Spirit provides needed help, and also explains what it will ultimately achieve.

Paul then departs somewhat from the doctrines he outlined in Hebrews 6. Instead, the next 3 chapters explain God's plan to ultimately give all humanity access to salvation.

8) Romans 9: This explains that God's plan for mankind is based on selection.

9) Romans 10: This explains that Israel as a whole is not responding to God in this age, with the result that some non-Israelites have now been given access to salvation.

10) Romans 11: Ultimately Israel as a whole will also respond and be saved. This is God's great mystery.

This concludes the treatise-part of Romans. Thus the use of "Amen" at the end of Romans 11.

Now consider:

IS IT NOTHING MORE THAN COINCIDENCE that the only two times Paul uses the word "oracle" (logion) it is to introduce what Paul considered to be "the basic doctrines of the Bible"? He used the word "oracles" in Hebrews 5:12 to introduce the 6 basic doctrines of Hebrews 6:1-2, and he used the word "oracles" in Romans 3:2 to introduce THE FIRST FOUR of these 6 basic doctrines, found in the first 8 chapters of Romans.

Is that a coincidence? Or did Paul ALSO understand the word "oracles" in exactly the same way everyone else in the Greek-speaking world around him understood this word? Did Paul, when speaking about "the oracles of God", consistently apply the same meaning to this expression?

Furthermore, having now considered an overview of the first 11 chapters of Romans, it should be quite clear that "the preservation of the Sabbath" or "the preservation of the week" or "the preservation of the calendar" HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE BOOK OF ROMANS!

The subject of the Sabbath and of the calendar is NEVER considered by Paul anywhere in the entire Book of Romans. What was on Paul's mind when he used the expression "the oracles of God" in

Romans 3:2 was THE BASIC DOCTRINES he was in the process of explaining in the first 8 chapters. Peter's statement in 1 Peter 4:11 ("if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God") was certainly also something PAUL had to be mindful of; it is a statement that applies to every man who "speaks to the people of God". And by expounding the first 4 basic doctrines, Paul was fulfilling Peter's injunction in 1 Peter 4:11.

So here is a summary of how the word "oracles" is used in the New Testament:

- 1) Luke in Acts 7:38 used this word to refer to A PART OF the Old Testament, the part that Moses received at Mount Sinai.
- 2) Peter in 1 Peter 4:11 used this word to refer to a minister sticking to the Word of God in his preaching.
- 3) Paul in Hebrews 5:12 used this word to refer to the 6 basic doctrines he proceeds to list three verses later.
- 4) Paul in Romans 3:2 used this word to refer to the first 4 of the 6 basic doctrines he had listed in Hebrews 6:1-2.
- 5) All these authors (Paul, Peter and Luke) always used the word "LOGOS" when they wanted to refer to the totality of God's revelation to man. They clearly used the word "LOGION" when they wanted to refer to only a part of that total revelation to man.
- 6) This is in full agreement with the way EVERYBODY in the Greek-speaking world at that time understood the commonly used word "LOGION".
- 7) "The calendar" and "the weekly cycle" have nothing to do with any of these Scriptures.

THE CLAIM THAT "ORACLES" REFERS TO MORE THAN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS COMPLETELY CONTRARY TO THE FACTS!

Such a claim is also "willingly ignorant" of the fact that a diminutive is always SMALLER than its parent-word; a diminutive is never bigger than its parent-word.

Let's now examine further proof that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was certainly not "inspired" to assign his own meaning to the expression "the oracles of God".

BACK TO MR. ARMSTRONG'S 1940 GOOD NEWS LETTER

We saw earlier that in his 1940 GOOD NEWS letter Mr. Armstrong simply asserted that the term "the oracles of God", in addition to the obvious meaning of "the Scriptures", had to refer to "the calendar" and "the Sabbath".

People might argue:

"Okay, so Mr. Armstrong didn't make a thorough study of this expression 'the oracles of God'. But he was nevertheless God's apostle, and God therefore inspired him and used him. And therefore God simply put this into Mr. Armstrong's mind that this expression 'the oracles of God' really SHOULD include 'the Sabbath' and 'the calendar'. God would have put this thought into Mr. Armstrong's mind because He wanted His people to be unified by the use of the Jewish calendar."

This reasoning is flawed for the following reasons.

In this 1940 "study into the calendar" MR. ARMSTRONG SIMPLY DID NOT HAVE GOD'S GUIDANCE! THIS IS PROVED BY THE FACT THAT THIS STUDY RESULTED IN A WRONG WAY OF FIXING THE DATE FOR PENTECOST!

At the end of this 1940 GOOD NEWS letter Mr. Armstrong wrote: "Pentecost this year is JUNE 17th, sunset, until sunset June 18th, instead of June 12th as erroneously figured on our calendar printed three years ago."

This was precisely the time when Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong changed the observance of Pentecost from Sivan 6 (which SOMETIMES is actually on a Sunday, the correct day) to always being on a Monday (which is NEVER the correct day). There was no guidance from God here. Rather, it was just like the Israelites in the days of Joshua not seeking God's guidance before being deceived by the Gibeonites (see Joshua 9:3-15).

To be exact, this change of Pentecost in 1940 actually contained A TWOFOLD ERROR! Firstly, Mr. Armstrong came to the wrong day of the week (a Monday). Secondly, in switching from always keeping Sivan 6 to counting to a Monday, he ALSO on occasions started his count from the wrong Sunday. This applied specifically to those years where the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread was a Saturday (e.g. 1950, 1954, 1974), and where Mr. Armstrong started the count from the Sunday AFTER the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread. In fact, 1974 was the first year when this error was corrected. That year a twofold correction to the observance of Pentecost was instituted: the day was changed from a Monday to a Sunday, and the counting method was changed to ALWAYS start the count towards Pentecost from the Sunday WITHIN the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Instead of letting the Scriptures guide him and speak for themselves, Mr. Armstrong read HIS OWN MEANING into the expression "count unto you FROM ..." in Leviticus 23:15. And he then proceeded to interpret EVERY OTHER SCRIPTURE in a way where it had to fit in with his own ideas of "counting from ...". Thus he was forced to interpret the expression "even unto the morrow after the seventh SABBATH" in Leviticus 23:16 to mean "even unto the morrow after the seventh WEEK", etc.. To uphold his own wrong interpretation of the biblical instructions in Leviticus 23:15-16, Mr. Armstrong was forced to go along with the Jewish TRADITIONAL explanation that "Sabbath" can also mean "week", even though IN THE BIBLE the word "Sabbath" NEVER means "week"! The Jews have developed this "traditional" meaning for the word "Sabbath" for the explicit purpose of justifying THEIR wrong way of determining Pentecost.

At exactly the same time as Mr. Armstrong read his own meaning into the expression "count unto you FROM ...", he ALSO read his own meaning into the expression "THE ORACLES OF GOD"!

It is very clear, beyond any doubts whatsoever, that Mr. Armstrong did NOT have God's guidance when he determined what the expression "count unto you FROM ..." had to mean. The evidence I have presented in this article proves that he ALSO did not have God's guidance when he, at the very same time, determined what the expression "the oracles of God" had to mean.

It was THE EVIDENCE that Ernest Martin presented in the early 1970s that forced Mr. Armstrong to acknowledge in 1974 that HIS WAY of counting for Pentecost was biblically incorrect. And it is likewise THE EVIDENCE which I have presented here that proves that it was also biblically incorrect for Mr. Armstrong to assign "the calendar" to be included in the term "the oracles of God".

Furthermore, it should be clear that when, back in his 1940 study into the calendar, Mr. Armstrong did not have God's guidance in understanding the expression "count unto you FROM ...", that he didn't somehow have God's guidance when he arbitrarily assigned various things to "the oracles of God", when all the evidence proves that these things were NOT what the Apostle Paul meant by this expression.

God didn't somehow inspire Mr. Armstrong to understand that "the calendar" should really be considered to be a part of "the oracles of God", but at the same time leave Mr. Armstrong clueless as to what the expression "count unto you FROM ..." really means, and thus allow Mr. Armstrong to reach a wrong conclusion, one that he would not rectify until 34 years later.

That is simply not compatible!

You can't claim God's guidance for one thing, when AT THE VERY SAME TIME AND CONCERNING THE SAME SUBJECT (the calendar) God's guidance is OBVIOUSLY LACKING with another thing.

This removes all possible justifications for claiming that Mr. Armstrong was somehow "inspired" to include "the calendar" in "the oracles of God". He was doing nothing more than interpreting the phrase "the oracles of God" in a way "that seemed right to him", even as his own understanding of "count unto you FROM ..." also "seemed right to him". Sometimes Proverbs 16:25 applies to all of us, even in God's Church, and not just to people in the world.

SO WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE THE JEWISH CALENDAR?

Those who defend the use of the present Jewish calendar have staked everything on "the oracles of God" in Romans 3:2. This is the one verse they retreat to when faced with irrefutable evidence that the present Jewish calendar in fact transgresses clear biblical requirements for the calendar. This one verse is their "Masada", their last rock of refuge in the face of insurmountable evidence against the use of the present Jewish calendar.

With the evidence I have presented in this article about "the oracles of God" this last refuge has also fallen. There remains therefore no justification for retaining the present Jewish calendar with its postponements, and its other flaws, as the one God's people should use to determine when to observe God's Feasts and God's Holy Days.

The very obvious way in which the defence of the Jewish calendar has CHANGED from presenting all the Scriptures that apply to biblical requirements for a correct calendar, to deliberately avoiding all of these Scriptures, and instead appealing to nothing more than faith, appealing to nothing more than an incorrect application of Romans 3:2 ... THAT CHANGE is likewise a clear acknowledgement that the Scriptures that really do apply to the calendar actually condemn the present Jewish calendar.

Frank W. Nelte