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GOD DID NOT INSTITUTE ANY 19-YEAR CYCLES

A lot of people in God's Church have heard a lot about "19-year cycles", and how important they supposedly are in determining the correct calendar. Those cycles are, after all, what the present Jewish calendar is based on. Most of the people who have referred to 19-year cycles, including people like Mr. Herbert W Armstrong himself, don't or didn't actually understand very much about these cycles.

For example, anyone who cannot repeatedly on his or her own, without help from anyone else, correctly work out the Jewish calendar dates for random years in the past clearly does not understand very much about that calendar. If you can't tell us how it works, how and why the postponement rules are applied, etc., how can you possibly have an opinion about the validity of that calendar?

And if you can work out the Jewish calendar for yourself, then you will immediately realize that **it could not possibly have existed before the Julian calendar was established**, because it depends on Julian calendar data. But if you can't work out the Jewish calendar for yourself, then you also don't comprehend why the present Jewish calendar could not possibly ever have existed before 45 B.C., the year when the Julian calendar came into being.

Yet, in spite of not knowing very much about the Jewish calendar, many people have made confident assertions regarding those 19-year cycles supposedly having been ordained by God.

So the question is: how much do **you** understand about 19-year cycles?

Do you believe that God instituted 19-year cycles? The title of this article is a giveaway regarding where I stand on this issue, right? I have written about these cycles for the past 20 years, but without ever focusing in detail just on these 19-year cycles themselves. In the past my statements regarding 19-year cycles have mostly been incidental comments, while discussing some other calendar question.

So let's examine these 19-year cycles themselves more closely.

THE BIG PICTURE

King David said that he "considered Your (God's) heavens" (Psalm 8:3). Let's do the same; let's consider the universe, and our solar system. We find **a multitude of cycles** in the heavens. We have the moon's cycle around the earth, and the earth's cycle around the sun, and the cycles of the various other planets in our solar system around the sun, and some of them have their own moons. And there are many other cycles in our galaxy.

The cycles of the other planets don't affect us directly. But the cycle of the moon around the earth determines the length of a lunar month, and the earth's cycle around the sun determines the length of a solar year. These things affect how a correct calendar for us today should be established.

So when we consider these heavenly cycles, what do we have? Do you know?

We have imperfection!

Did you think our present cycles are good and perfect?

All of the present cycles in our universe are imperfect and flawed. None of our present cycles reveal the hand of a **God whose standard is perfection**.

Be you therefore perfect, even as **your Father which is in heaven is perfect**. (Matthew 5:48)

So I repeat: none of the present cycles we find in the heavens reflect perfection. In other words, none of the present heavenly cycles reflect something that God intended to produce! They all reflect something that is **far from perfect**.

None of the present cycles are compatible with Genesis 1:31.

And God saw **every thing that He had made**, and, behold, **it was very good**. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)

Genesis 1:31 cannot possibly apply to our present monthly and yearly cycles, because **they are a mess!** And that also includes the 19-year cycles; they too are a mess! The fact that we argue and squabble about the calendar **proves** that the present cycles are a mess, with everyone trying to present a solution for how to deal with this present mess! If the present heavenly cycles really were good and perfect, then we wouldn't have so many arguments about the calendar. The divisions amongst us over the calendar question prove that the present cycles are not perfect at all.

Here are some facts for "periods of 19 years", expressed in the number of days, hours, minutes and seconds for each 19-year period. **The present solar year** is the standard against which **other calendar models** will be evaluated for accuracy. After first considering some available calendar models I will also present the data for "**19 Perfect Years**". Here is what we have:

- true present solar years (i.e. the earth's journeys around the sun)
- the Julian calendar
- the Gregorian calendar
- the present Jewish calendar's 19-year cycles
- 19 Perfect Years

The concept of 19-year cycles is based on the premise that 19 solar years are exactly equal to 235 lunar months. However, 19 solar years are not exactly equal to 235 lunar months, as we will see in the data below.

As far as the Jewish calendar is concerned: 235 months in the Jewish calendar are about 8 seconds longer than 235 actual lunar months. This amounts to less than half a second per year, or to more than 170,000 years before the difference between these two periods of 235 lunar months amounts to 1 full 24-hour day. So in our context we can ignore this very minute difference, and assume that 235 months in the present Jewish calendar do represent 235 real lunar months.

The problem is not the difference between the length of 235 months in the Jewish calendar and 235 real lunar months. That minute difference can be ignored in our context. The problem is that 235 months (Jewish or real lunar) are not equal to 19 solar years.

The following list is structured **from the shortest to the longest** period for the first 3 calendar models trying to work with the present solar cycles. Then I present the data for 19 Perfect Years. Here is what we have.

1) **19 present solar years** = 6939.601782 days

= **6939** days + **14** hours + **26** minutes + **33.9648** seconds

2) **19 Gregorian calendar years** = 6939.6075 days

= **6939** days + **14** hours + **34** minutes + **48** seconds

3) **19 Jewish calendar years (235 Jewish months)** = 6939.689622 days

= **6939** days + **16** hours + **33** minutes + **3.3408** seconds

4) **19 Julian calendar years** = 6939.75 days

= **6939** days + **18** hours

5) **19 Perfect Years** = 6840 days

= **6840** days + **ZERO ANYTHING**

In this list the "present solar years" are the standard by which all other current entities are assessed. The **solar years** represent "**the standard**" in our present age context.

The "**Perfect Years**", on the other hand, represent God's standard of perfection. They are based on the data God has revealed in the Bible, namely every month has 30 days, and every year has 12 months, for a total of 360 days. In biblical prophecies no length other than 30 days is ever revealed or implied for a month, and everybody who talks about the calendar knows that this is true.

The "present solar years" represent for our present age what the other 3 calendars should ideally be identical to, or at least they should be as close as possible to this standard.

In evaluating the above data: the further away a calendar model is from the solar years, the more quickly it will drift away from the equinoxes as the years pass, and the more frequently it will be in need of correction.

It is immediately apparent that for a 19-Year period the present solar years and also all of the present calendar models are **between 99 days and 100 days longer** than "the Perfect 19 Years". This discrepancy is an expression of our present realities, and none of the options available to us today can lay claim to representing "a perfect calendar".

PERFECTION

Perfection would be if the 19 solar years consisted of exactly 6840 days, with zero hours, minutes and seconds. That would represent exactly 360 days for every year in that 19-year period, with exactly 30 days for every month.

But that would not be "a 19-year cycle"!

That would really only be "**a 1-year cycle**", because the lunar months would always be in harmony with the solar year, year after year after year. From an astronomic point of view every year would be identical to the previous year, with every **lunar** month always beginning on the same day in the solar year as in previous years. That would be perfection, worthy of the perfect Creator God.

So there is something we should understand.

As far as the orbits of the earth around the sun and of the moon around the earth are concerned: any time you need **more than exactly one year** to harmonize those two cycles, **you don't have perfection!**

So if it requires 19 years (assuming for the moment that 19-year cycles are accurate) for the sun, earth and moon to come back into the precise alignment that they had exactly 19 years earlier, then **you still don't have perfection!** You don't have perfection, from a godly perspective, because in years 2, 3, 4, 5 ... 18 of that "cycle" you do not have the same precise alignment you had in year 1.

Put another way:

Assuming for the moment that there actually were **perfect 19-year cycles**, then this would still mean that **individually all 19 years are imperfect!** Individually none of those 19 years can be perfect, because "a perfect year" cannot be followed by an imperfect year.

I realize that this may be a little heavy going, but any time you need "a cycle of a number of years" to achieve perfection (be it 7 or 10 or 19, etc.), it means that **individually** you don't have perfection. You need to string together a specific number of consecutive years, in order to then achieve "a cycle that will repeat itself in a predictable way".

In the new heaven and the new earth there will not be any "19-year cycles" for heavenly bodies to get back into alignment. If anything, there will be "cycles of 1", meaning that perfect alignment (if that should be an issue, which is obviously highly questionable) will be achieved **at every possibility**, not only at every 3rd or 9th or 19th possibility. Perfection means that **every time something comes around it will be perfect**, not that we have to wait for it to come around 2 or 5 or 10 or 19 times before it is once again perfect. But in such a case we only have "cycles of 1".

How do I know that these figures ($12 \times 30 = 360$ days for every year) represent "perfection"? I know this because these are the very figures God Himself uses in the Bible, when speaking about months and years. You should be familiar with 1260 days being equal to three-and-one-half years (i.e. a time, (two) times and half a time, see Revelation 12:6-14), where 360 multiplied by three-and-a-half is equal to 1260.

So in the Bible God actually reveals what "perfection" in calendar terms looks like.

Perfection means that every month has exactly 30 days, and every year has exactly 12 months, for a total of exactly 360 days in every year. **That is perfection!**

Yes, in the Bible we see perfection spoken about. But up **in the sky above us we see nothing remotely approaching perfection.**

When today 19 solar years amount to 6939 days + 14 hours + 26 minutes + 33.9648 seconds, instead of 6840 days exactly, then that represents **an imperfect annual cycle.**

When the average lunar month is 29.53059375 days long, instead of 30 days exactly, then that likewise represents **an imperfect lunar cycle**.

But God never creates anything that is imperfect! Never! Imperfection is always the result of sin, or even **the penalty for sin**. But imperfection never represents an original creation by God. Imperfection is a consequence of free moral agents using their free will to go against God's instructions and wishes.

THE PROBLEMS WITH THESE 19-YEAR PERIODS

Coming back to the five 19-year periods we have looked at:

The first thing we should notice is that the actual 19-year cycles in the heavens are currently **almost 100 days longer than perfection**. That is a problem.

Next, it is this currently established imperfect cycle, expressed as data for a 19-year period, that any "19-year cycles" should accurately reflect. In plain language:

For us to claim that there is such a thing as a 19-year lunar cycle, we have to have 235 lunar months which are exactly equal to 19 solar years. They must be equal to exactly **6939 days + 14 hours + 26 minutes + 33.9648 seconds**.

If we do not find a cycle in the heavens where 235 lunar months are equal to exactly 6939 days + 14 hours + 26 minutes + 33.9648 seconds, **then "19-year cycles" don't really exist!** If 235 lunar months are not equal to this exact period of time, then so-called "**19-year cycles**" are **only approximations!**

In that situation they are only approximations because **these "cycles" do not stay constant in the seasons**. Over the centuries they will drift away from the equinoxes, the equinoxes being determined by the solar years.

True cycles should not really produce a seasonal shifting away from the equinoxes. **True cycles imply that everything is identical** to the previous cycle; and everything being identical includes an identical relationship to the equinoxes, as it existed in previous cycles. But that is simply not the case. Therefore these present "19-year cycles" cannot possibly be true cycles.

Now let's assess the facts about all these cycles.

EVALUATING THE DATA

In order to stay true to the annual seasons, any calendar model should be identical to, or at least as close as possible to the current solar year cycles. The more a calendar model deviates from the current solar cycles, the quicker it will wander away from the equinox.

Here is what we find:

1) **Every calendar model** (i.e. Julian calendar, Gregorian calendar, and the present Jewish calendar) **is longer** than the present solar yearly cycles.

2) Here is what this looks like:

A) The **Julian calendar** drifts away from the equinox by **1 day** for every **133.33 years**. This calendar was started in 45 B.C.

B) The **Jewish calendar** drifts away from the equinox by **1 day** for every **216.30 years**. This calendar was started in 359 A.D.

C) The **Gregorian calendar** drifts away from the equinox by **1 day** for every **3,322.84 years**. This calendar was started in 1582 A.D.

If all three of these calendars ran concurrently for a period of 2000 years, then the errors accrued would be as follows:

A) In 2000 years the **Julian** calendar drifts **15 days** from the equinox.

B) In 2000 years the **Jewish** calendar drifts over **9 days** from the equinox.

C) In 2000 years the **Gregorian** calendar drifts only less than **15 hours**.

By staying within less than a 1-day drift over a 2000 year period, the **Gregorian calendar** is clearly the most accurate one in our group.

The **Julian calendar** clearly had a problem, which problem was recognized and as far as possible fixed by the Gregorian calendar.

The present **Jewish calendar** has the identical problem as the Julian calendar, just to a slightly smaller degree (i.e. for a 2000-year period only 9 days in error instead of 15 days). When it has a 9-day drift in a period of 2000 years, this means that every single year in a 19-year cycle will have drifted to 9 days later in the solar year than 2000 years earlier (i.e. provided the sequence of leap years is never changed). The Jewish community is well aware of this problem, and they periodically have discussions about calendar reform, to deal with this problem. But so far nothing has happened.

The Jewish calendar's problem lies between the other two calendars. Thus: **compared to the Julian calendar**, the Jewish calendar can actually seem to be pretty good. But **compared to the Gregorian calendar**, the Jewish calendar's flaw lies exposed.

This phenomenon is demonstrated when the present Jewish calendar is applied to **hypothetical Julian calendar dates for B.C. years** (i.e. for a time before the Julian calendar was even established). In that situation the present Jewish calendar (which also did not yet exist at that time) can actually look good. But that illustrates the foolishness of comparing dates for two different calendars which both have significant flaws, when **neither one of those two calendars even existed in the hypothetical years which are being compared**.

In our present age it is impossible to have a perfect calendar!

You cannot have a perfect calendar built on the foundation of imperfect annual cycles. You cannot have perfect months within the year, when the foundation consists of imperfect lunar cycles.

You cannot build a perfect system on a foundation of imperfection.

WHAT ABOUT 19-YEAR CYCLES?

God has shown us that He uses the numbers 3 and 7 and 10 and 12. They are all significant numbers in God's scheme of things. When these numbers are multiplied with one another we get:

- $3 \times 10 = 30$, the number of days in a perfect month.
- $30 \times 12 = 360$, the number of days in a perfect year.
- $360 \times 7 = 2520$, the number of days in a perfect 7-year period.
- $1260 =$ half of that perfect 7-year period.

Yes, these numbers (3, 7, 10, 12) all have a major significance in God's plan and purposes.

But what on earth does the number 19 picture?

Why on earth would God ever want to do anything exactly 19 times? Or do anything in multiples of 19? Why? What message is that supposed to send?

There is no way that before God the number 19 is intended to represent anything that is good and worthwhile! Can we understand that?

The number 19 represents destruction and confusion and imperfection!

The number 19 appears exactly twice in the whole Bible, and **never** in any connection with God. In Joshua 19:38 (hey, that's multiples of 19) it speaks about "19 cities" for the tribe of Naphtali, though 19 does not agree with the number of cities mentioned for Naphtali in that context. And then in 2 Samuel 2:30 it speaks about 20 of David's servants who were killed in a skirmish with Abner's men. But that number of "20" is broken down in the account of this incident into "19 men plus Asahel", the youngest brother of Joab.

There is no other reference or hint or suggestion of the number "19" anywhere in the Bible. Nowhere does God use the number 19.

So when we see **imperfect 19-year cycles in the sky**, what is that supposed to tell us? Anything? Nothing? Does God think of 19 as representing perfection?

What is the message?

Not only do 19-year cycles picture confusion and imperfection, but those cycles themselves are imperfect, because each 19-year cycle is over 2 hours and 6 minutes too long! It is fitting that a cycle with a number that pictures imperfection (i.e. 19) is itself imperfect (i.e. over 2 hours too long).

That is a **double-whammy for imperfection!**

There is nothing good, ever, about the number 19. We need to recognize that God is telling us something with these flawed "19-year cycles".

ESTABLISHED vs. IMPOSED

When we consider the present monthly and yearly cycles in the heavens, then we see what is **almost** a

19-year cycle. And so some people rashly conclude: "God **established** these 19-year cycles **to regulate the calendar**". And some people are actually naive enough to want to lead these flawed 19-year cycles all the way back to Moses, or even to Adam. I guess they, along with "the scoffers", are also saying: "since the fathers (i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) fell asleep, **all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation**" (see 2 Peter 3:3-4).

The truth is: no, God did not at all "**establish**" these imperfect 19-year cycles to regulate the calendar!
The truth is:

God **imposed** these flawed 19-year cycles **as a penalty** for human sins!

These flawed cycles are not good! **They are bad!**

They make life more difficult. They destroy regularity. The year never starts with the start of spring. Sometimes the year starts 20 days into spring, and sometimes only 10 days into spring, and occasionally only 1 or 2 days into spring. The new moon days are never constant within the solar year. That's bad! That is what a penalty from God looks like.

God did not "establish" the present lunar month and solar year back in Genesis! The present cycles were not even "established" at the time of Moses. No, the present cycles were imposed by God as a penalty for our sins, and they were imposed at some point **well after the time of Moses**, but before Judah went into captivity to Babylon.

Now what is the essence of "a penalty"?

Is a penalty to be seen as a standard, as something to be admired and looked up to and respected? No, of course not!

A penalty is supposed to be unpleasant! The message of a penalty is: here is what you deserve. Now deal with it!

Until people come to understand that the flawed 19-year cycle (symbolizing confusion and imperfection) is a penalty from God, they will never see that imperfect cycle from the right perspective. To adapt Nathanael's statement "**can there any good thing come out of 19?**" (see John 1:46).

Don't try to glorify the penalty that God has imposed on us in this age. For the hardness of our hearts God has given us this clumsy, flawed 19-year cycle for this present age. There's nothing good about that cycle. And any attempts to see good in multiples of that cycle (e.g. one hundred 19-year cycles after event A God did event B, etc.) are foolish! Something is always happening, and so there is always "something" that happened 1 or 10 or 50 or 100 cycles after a previous event, unless the entire world went through that particular year in a coma. But seeking to connect that "something" to an earlier "something" is foolish, and overwhelmingly incorrect. Looking for significance in going from 1934 to 1953 to 1972 (and on to 1991 and to 2010?) was foolish! God does not identify with 19-year cycles.

Of course, something happened in every one of those years. But then so did things happen in the other years, like in 1951 and in 1956 and in 1970 and in 1973, etc. We could just as easily find "significant things" in 18-year cycles or in 20-year cycles or in "whatever-year cycles".

Understand that **19 is not a good number before God!** God has not planned to carry out anything in multiples of 19 years. And if you cannot see that, then I can't help you.

The truth is: the imperfect 19-year cycles we find in the heavens today have been imposed on us by God

as a penalty for our sins! They are not to be held up as standards! No, God requires us to try to deal with this penalty in the best possible way, **to do the best we can with an imperfect reality.**

WE DON'T NEED 19-YEAR CYCLES

God's people don't need 19-year cycles! God's people have never, at any time, needed 19-year cycles. There is only one reason why 19-year cycles have been so very important to us. Do you know what that reason is?

The reason we have placed great importance on 19-year cycles is because **we want to predict the future!** We want to know years in advance when the annual Feasts and Holy Days are going to be. We want to make predictions and plans into the future. And the prophecy venture capitalists amongst us want to know precise dates in advance, to predict Jesus Christ's second coming.

But wanting to know future dates in advance was never an issue for Israel at any time during the Old Testament, that they would have wanted to know precise dates for Feasts and Holy Days 2, 3, and 4 years in advance.

Besides, since the Julian calendar had not yet been established in B.C. centuries (i.e. before 45 B.C.), therefore the only thing they could know in advance was that Tishri 1 will be on Tishri 1 next year and every year thereafter. That's like me saying: I can tell you now in advance that January 1 will always fall on January 1 for the next 10 or 50 or 100 years. But that doesn't tell you anything you didn't already know.

Israel didn't need any 19-year cycles. The only rule they ever needed was: The first month of every year will start with **the first new moon on or after the spring equinox** (Northern Hemisphere). With that knowledge nobody ever needed to be told whether the year would have 12 months or 13 months. The year will have just as many months as there will be new moons between two consecutive spring equinoxes.

If there are 13 new moons from one spring equinox to the next, then that year will have 13 months. And if there are only 12 new moons from one spring equinox to the next, then that year will have only 12 months.

That is how God expects us to deal with the penalty of imperfect annual and monthly cycles. In this way the sequence of which years will have 12 months and which years will have 13 months will take care of itself, without us needing any specific rules or instructions. And that sequence will change on its own with the passage of the centuries; it is a self-regulating system.

No calculations ever needed to be done by anybody! **God has never at any time required His people to calculate in advance when the Feasts and Holy Days must be observed in future years!** All God's people have ever been required to do is ensure that they could correctly identify the first new moon in the spring (Northern Hemisphere), and then count to seven new moons for the fall festivals.

A necessity for calculations is evidence of a penalty from God! Calculations only become a necessity when things become complex. We never have "to calculate" when the next Sabbath Day will be here ... it is very easy to count to seven. And the same is true for counting new moons, starting with the first new moon in the spring.

For the record:

If we today do need to calculate Feast dates in advance, then the only thing we need is an accurate prediction for the first new moon in the spring. And with the tools of modern astronomy the new moon dates and times can be calculated in advance very precisely. But that does not require any 19-year cycles.

Each year stands on its own "new moon legs", so to speak. And the Jewish 19-year cycle sequence does not feature in those predictions in any way. And **the simple calculation** here is to establish the date and time for the new moon that follows the last new moon of the current year (which will be either 29 days or 30 days later). So we can then make feast plans for venues, etc. without needing any information other than new moon dates and times, which are freely available on a number of different websites. 19-year cycles are not a consideration in this process.

Can we understand that **we don't ever need 19-year cycles**?! Can we understand that we don't ever need any calculations to establish a correct calendar, other than accurate new moon data?

The only thing that 19-year cycles can possibly do is: **they can mislead us!**

When you have calculations for 19-year cycles, what do you do when you can establish beyond a doubt that a **real new moon** will be on the next **Monday**, but your **calculations** tell you that it will be on the **Tuesday**? Who do you believe the real factually correct new moon date, or the date that your calculations tell you?

Why, if you are like most people, you are going to believe your calculations, and **to hell with the real new moon**, right??

While the Jewish calendar calculations are fairly good for a period of 235 new moons, they never precisely calculate any specific new moon in that period. All those calculations do is calculate **average new moons**. But no two consecutive monthly moon cycles are of equal length, time-wise (that's part of the mess). So calculating "average new moons" is useless for wanting to establish a precise date and time for any specific new moon in the future. This feature of only calculating average new moons makes the Jewish calculations useless for establishing any real new moons.

And for all those who accept the Jewish calendar, it will fairly commonly be a case of real new moons disagreeing with the Jewish calendar calculated new moons (plus postponements), and in those cases those people will also be saying: I'm sticking with the Jewish calendar dates and to hell with the real new moons.

And if the 19-year cycles say that the next new moon will be **the new moon of the first month**, but astronomical reality tells you that the next new moon will still be in the winter, then once again "cycle believers" will stick with their calculations and their 19-year cycles, and they couldn't care less whether that next new moon is still in the winter or not. Their cycles and their calculations are always right, and who cares about a little technicality like starting the first month in the winter?

God has never at any time given anybody any calculations, as far as the calendar is concerned. No Jewish writer and no Jewish text has ever claimed to present any calculations that were supposedly "preserved from Old Testament times". The evidence that the basic calculations underlying the Jewish calendar have come from Greek astronomers is obvious, and this is readily acknowledged by Jewish authorities. And the necessity of including Julian/Gregorian calendar data in the Jewish calendar calculations precludes these calculations from having originated in Old Testament times.

Church of God people who defend the use of the Jewish calendar are **the only people in the world** who

claim, without any kind of evidence, that the Jews supposedly "preserved" calculations that were supposedly given to them by God. At no stage since Mr. Armstrong's time in the 1930's has anyone in the Church of God ever attempted to provide any proof for this claim. For the past 80 years no proof has ever been offered, that the calculations supposedly originated with God. And **all proof to the contrary has always been stubbornly rejected.**

No, God has not "given" us 19-year cycles! God has "imposed" imperfect 19-year cycles on us, and God tells us: this is your penalty; now you sort out this mess for yourselves, because I am taking perfect cycles away from you. And I am not reestablishing perfect cycles until Jesus Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God. And when I reestablish perfect monthly and yearly cycles, **that will be the time when "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken"** (see Matthew 24:29).

For a correct calendar we do not ever need any 19-year cycles. All we need is to accurately establish the dates for **every first new moon in the spring**. And modern astronomy can very accurately predict the first new moon in the spring. With that knowledge the rest of the year takes care of itself, without any kind of calculations, other than counting up to the seventh new moon for the dates for the fall Holy Days. **19-year cycles never enter the picture.**

And 19-year cycles aren't perfect cycles anyway; they are only imperfect approximations, which over the centuries unavoidably drift away from the equinoxes, creating a seasonal shift. So don't try to glorify the number 19.

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