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SCRIPTURES THAT HAVE BEEN USED AS A BASIS FOR ACCEPTING THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR

It makes an interesting study to examine THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS on which the present Jewish calendar was accepted by the Church of God in this present age. When Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong first came into contact with the Church of God Seventh Day, they based the timing of their observance of "the Lord's Supper" on the present Jewish calendar. Mr. Armstrong did not in any way question the validity of using the Jewish calendar for this "Lord's Supper" observance.

So note very carefully! The Jewish calendar was accepted into the Church in this present age BECAUSE ANOTHER CHURCH WAS ALREADY USING IT! This should tell us that this is A WRONG FOUNDATION!

Consider this!

When Mr. Armstrong first came into the Church, he carefully checked every single doctrine before he accepted it. And while he started out with wrong understanding in certain areas, over the years those things were sifted out and removed, because he made a study into those things. The expression "the Lord's Supper" is a good example in this regard.

Mr. Armstrong was well into the 1940's before he mostly dropped the term "Lord's Supper" for the correct term "Passover". In the GOOD NEWS LETTER 20/3/1944 Mr. Armstrong still wrote: "The LORD'S SUPPER, or PASSOVER will be observed this year on Thursday night, April 6th, after sundown." As late as 1968 Mr. Armstrong wrote in the CO-WORKER LETTER of 28/4/1968: "However, I did want to visit our office in Jerusalem, established just before the war. And I had the experience of partaking of the Passover -- 'Lord's Supper' -- as Jesus introduced it for the New Testament, commemorating His death for us, on the very anniversary of that event, IN JERUSALEM, and in our own office-residence there!" Using the term "Lord's Supper" to refer to the Passover is based on a misunderstanding of what the Apostle Paul was actually saying in 1. Corinthians 11:20. The Passover has NEVER been "the Lord's Supper", and it is not a term the Bible encourages us to use in reference to the Passover.

But the Jewish calendar, how it works, what its features are, whether or not it meets biblical requirements for a correct calendar, etc., those are things that Mr. Armstrong NEVER AT ANY TIME actually looked into. He always approached the calendar question with the ASSUMPTION that the Jews must obviously have preserved "God's calendar". And it was Mr. Armstrong himself who taught us that most errors in understanding are due to unproved assumptions carelessly taken for granted.

That applies completely to how the present Jewish calendar came to be accepted in the Church in this present age.

At the time Mr. Armstrong came into contact with the Church of God Seventh Day, it didn't occur to him to examine the present Jewish calendar on its own merits, even as he examined every so-called "Christian" teaching on its own merits. There were many things that he did not yet understand correctly (e.g. he also continued to think that God was a trinity, etc.), and we today have the benefit of being exposed almost immediately to all the correct teachings which Mr. Armstrong had to learn over several decades. I mention this to make clear that I am not trying to criticize Mr. Armstrong for "not knowing it all" right away; we have the benefit of the explanations of the correct doctrines that he wrote up, we don't

have to labouriously sift them out of the Bible for ourselves. I am simply trying to make an objective factual assessment, not a value assessment. Nor do I mean to imply that "we know it all".

So when Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong then saw that we should also be keeping the annual Feasts and Holy Days of Leviticus chapter 23, he simply ASSUMED that these days should be kept based on the present Jewish calendar. There was simply no other choice for him to consider; he saw no other options or possibilities. It was not till 12 or 13 years later, in 1940, that he was forced into examining which of two possible new moons should be used for the start of the year. This study was FORCED UPON HIM because "Brother Dodd" had stated that the year should start one new moon EARLIER than the Jewish calendar was going to start the year. See the "GOOD NEWS letter" of 1940 for more details.

This brings us to 1940.

From 1940 onwards the Church has at different times attempted to explain THE SCRIPTURAL REASONS for why we have accepted the present Jewish calendar. I have gone through all the literature available to me and compiled a list of the SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS on which the Jewish calendar has been accepted or defended over the years. These I will now list.

A comment about "scriptural foundations for the calendar":

By "scriptural reasons" for accepting the Jewish calendar I mean Scriptures that either speak directly about the calendar or else they state very clearly that certain things were to happen either in a specific month or else in a specific season. If the Bible states that something is to occur in a specific season, then I take that to be a SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENT for a correct calendar. The authors who presented these Scriptures did exactly the same thing; they too accepted at that time that these Scriptures were clear scriptural REQUIREMENTS for the calendar.

I am here not examining Scriptures of a general nature, which an author may apply to the calendar issue, but which really don't make any specific statements that set limitations upon the calendar, such as Scriptures about faith or about loyalty or about God's sovereignty, etc.

So let's now examine the scriptural support that has been presented for the present Jewish calendar over the years. We'll start with Mr. Armstrong's 1940 letter.

GOOD NEWS LETTER OF 1940 by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong

Leviticus 23:10-14 = the wave-sheaf

Leviticus 23:39 = Feast of Tabernacles

Exodus 23:14-17 = feasts in their seasons

Exodus 34:18; Exodus 34:22-23 = Feast of Tabernacles at the TEKUFAH of the year

Deuteronomy 16:9, 13, 16 = 3 feasts in their seasons

Leviticus 23:4 = feasts in their seasons

Numbers 28:2 = offer in their seasons

Exodus 13:10 = in its season

1 Chronicles 12:32 = men of Issachar for the calendar

Esther 1:13 = men who "knew the times" in the Persian Empire

MY COMMENTS:

In his first ever closer look at the calendar question, 13 years after coming into the Church, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong clearly examined the Bible for SCRIPTURAL guidelines that the correct calendar would have to fulfill. That should be easy to see from the above collection of Scriptures. He quoted everything he could think of that might possibly apply to the calendar. It is clear that in doing this he was on the right track.

However, he also ASSUMED that these scriptural requirements were all being met by the present Jewish calendar. Notice that Mr. Armstrong felt VERY CLEARLY that God requires certain things to take place in certain seasons! He very clearly focused on Exodus 34:22 and also on the wave-sheaf having to be ready during the Days of Unleavened Bread. He was also quite emphatic about things taking place IN THE RIGHT SEASONS!

Mr. Armstrong further used the Scriptures to claim that men from the tribe of Issachar were "the calendar specialists", thus not the Levites or the tribe of Judah! It seems clear to me that Mr. Armstrong did not really grasp the ramifications of appealing to men from a tribe other than Levi being "calendar specialists". One obvious ramification of such an appeal is that therefore the calendar was NOT given to the priesthood to "administer" or to somehow "preserve".

It is quite evident that Mr. Armstrong did not realize at that time that the present Jewish calendar in fact TRANSGRESSES the very scriptural requirements he (Mr. Armstrong) was stating. This means one thing:

**MR. ARMSTRONG ACCEPTED THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR ON FALSE PREMISES,
WHICH WE ALL NOW KNOW ARE FLAWED!**

Here is something to consider:

In 1940 Mr. Armstrong was still VERY TEACHABLE, and willing to change on MANY things! He changed his own views about MANY THINGS in the next 10 to 15 years! I suspect that there is a very high probability that, had Mr. Armstrong realized back in 1940 that the present Jewish calendar actually TRANSGRESSES biblical requirements, then he would have done something to rectify those areas in which the present Jewish calendar transgresses biblical instructions. But unfortunately Mr. Armstrong didn't find out about these problems with the present Jewish calendar until about 1968.

One other point to notice is that while Mr. Armstrong made reference to "the oracles of God", he did not even bother to state the reference for this quotation. So Mr. Armstrong did not even bother to appeal to Romans 3:1-2 for "biblical clout"! This tells us that Romans 3:1-2 wasn't really as important to Mr. Armstrong in 1940 as were some of the BIBLICAL requirements for a calendar, which he was careful to quote.

Let's move on to the next article and the scriptural support for the calendar presented in that article.

GN MARCH 1953: GOD'S SACRED CALENDAR by Kenneth Herrmann

Genesis 1:14 = use sun and moon for the calendar

Leviticus 23:27-32 = days go from sunset to sunset

Exodus 12:2 = year to start in the spring

Numbers 28:11 and 1 Chronicles 23:31 = months start at the new moons

Leviticus 23:4 = feasts in their seasons

Exodus 13:10 = in its season

Exodus 23:14-17 = feasts in their seasons

Deut. 16:9-16 = feasts in their seasons

Numbers 28:2 = offer in their seasons

1 Chronicles 12:32 = men of Issachar for the calendar

Romans 3:1,2 = oracles of God

MY COMMENTS:

In 1953 Kenneth Herrmann still worked with exactly the same assumptions on which Mr. Armstrong had based his whole line of reasoning, that the present Jewish calendar actually MEETS ALL BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A CORRECT CALENDAR! So we see Kenneth Herrmann actually EXPANDING on the biblical requirements for a correct calendar. He added Genesis 1:14 to prove that the calendar must be in harmony with the movements of the moon around the earth and also with the movements of the earth around the sun.

Kenneth Herrmann also ADDED Exodus 12:2 to show unequivocally that the year is to start in the spring. This means he obviously didn't realize that this is not always the case with the present Jewish calendar. Kenneth Herrmann further introduced the actual reference to Romans 3:1-2.

What Kenneth Herrmann's open references to all these biblical requirements for a correct calendar tell us is this:

HE TOO ACCEPTED AND DEFENDED THE PRESENT JEWISH CALENDAR ON FALSE PREMISES, WHICH WE ALL NOW KNOW ARE FLAWED!

Let's move on to the next time the Church published material about the calendar.

GN FEBRUARY 1957: WHICH IS THE CALENDAR CHRIST USED? by Kenneth Herrmann

Genesis 1:14 = use sun and moon for the calendar

Leviticus 23:27-32 = days go from sunset to sunset

Exodus 12:2 = year to start in the spring

Numbers 28:11 and 1 Chronicles 23:31 = months start at the new moons

Leviticus 23:4 = feasts in their seasons

Exodus 13:10 = in its season

Exodus 23:14-17 = feasts in their seasons

Deut. 16:9-16 = feasts in their seasons

Numbers 28:2 = offer in their seasons

Acts 7:38 = lively oracles

Romans 3:1,2 = oracles of God

MY COMMENTS:

This is a rerun of the article published four years earlier. All of the scriptural requirements that are listed are identical to the earlier article, except that NOW Kenneth Herrmann has DROPPED his reference to "THE MEN OF ISSACHAR" being the calendar specialists, and he has added Acts 7:38 with reference to "the lively oracles".

So while Kenneth Herrmann was in February 1957 still under the delusion that the present Jewish calendar actually meets all scriptural requirements, he realized that there was a conflict between claiming that "the men of Issachar" were somehow the calendar specialists and "the oracles of God" being the specialty of the priesthood and/or the tribe of Judah.

This tells us that:

NOTHING MUCH HAD CHANGED BETWEEN 1953 AND 1957 AS FAR AS REAL
UNDERSTANDING IS CONCERNED!

Let's move on to the next statement about the calendar.

GN OCTOBER 1957: PROVE GOD'S CALENDAR CORRECT! by Kenneth Herrmann

Romans 3:1-2 = oracles of God

Acts 7:38 = lively oracles

MY COMMENTS:

Published only 8 months after the previous article, this one is based on some Church members having written in with calendar questions. It is interesting to note that Kenneth Herrmann chose not to cite ANY of the biblical calendar requirements in this article. Perhaps that is because he realized that everyone was familiar with his most recent previous article? But at any rate, the calendar had NOW become A FAITH ISSUE, faith in the Jews having faithfully preserved a God-given calendar. He now used the expression: "oracles of God = Scriptures + Sabbath + Calendar". He also FOR THE FIRST TIME TRIED TO DEFEND THE JEWISH POSTPONEMENT RULES.

NOTE! THIS IS A MAJOR CHANGE IN DIRECTION!

Where previously the appeal had been to scriptural justifications for the Jewish calendar, somebody had presented facts that showed that the Jewish calendar was in fact in violation of those scriptural requirements. THEREFORE appeals to scriptural justifications for the Jewish calendar were dropped by Mr. Herrmann. Instead from here onwards acceptance of the Jewish calendar became A FAITH ISSUE! The appeal to FAITH was the only option to dealing with the unscriptural Jewish postponement rules.

A careful examination of the article shows that Kenneth Herrmann did still try to tie the Jewish calendar to first visibility of the new moon crescents. So he was still working at least to some degree under some wrong ideas about the Jewish calendar.

Let's move on to the next article.

REPRINT ARTICLE OF 1974: GOD'S SACRED CALENDAR

Genesis 1:14 = use sun and moon for the calendar

Exodus 12:2 = year to start in the spring

Numbers 28:11 and 1 Chronicles 23:31 = months start at the new moons

MY COMMENTS:

This reprint is based on Kenneth Herrmann's 1953/1957 article. But notice that by 1974 ALMOST ALL the scriptural requirements for a correct calendar have been COMPLETELY OMITTED! The things that remain, however, are that the year MUST start in the spring (Exodus 12:2) and that the months must start with the new moons (Numbers 28:11; etc.).

There is clearly A REASON WHY Kenneth Herrmann edited out all of his scriptural references to biblical requirements for a correct calendar, before having his original article turned into a reprint article. I suspect that "THE 1968 LETTER FROM KENNETH HERRMANN", which John Ritenbaugh has in his possession, and which he referred to and quoted from in his January 1, 2000 calendar sermon, has something to do with this omission of previously freely quoted Scriptures.

But it should be clear that by 1974 acceptance of the Jewish calendar had become TOTALLY A MATTER OF FAITH! The clear calendar scriptures are conspicuous by their absence.

Let's look at the next article.

GN APRIL 1981: THE HEBREW CALENDAR - AUTHORITATIVE FOR GOD'S CHURCH TODAY! by Herman L. Hoeh

Acts 7:38-39 = lively oracles

Romans 3:1-4, 7 = oracles of God

Leviticus 23:26-32 = to justify the postponement rules

Numbers 28:11 and 1 Chronicles 23:31 = months start at the new moons

Exodus 34:22 = Feast of Tabernacles must be in the autumn

MY COMMENTS:

By 1981 "the oracles" had become THE MAIN JUSTIFICATION for using the present Jewish calendar. They are the first Scriptures quoted in an attempt to claim divine inspiration for the present Jewish calendar. The original scriptural reasons for the calendar have been shoved into the background in comparison to the appeal to FAITH IN THE JEWS!

By 1981 MANY Church members had heard of "postponements" (even if they may not have clearly understood them), and so Dr. Hoeh then presents the PHARISAICAL justification for these postponement rules. By appealing to Leviticus 23:26-32 it is supposed to discourage us from seeing through THE VERY CARNAL AND SHALLOW reasons for these humanly devised postponement rules. Actually Leviticus 23:26-32 does not in any way justify "postponing" the Day of Atonement away from "awkward" days of the week. And this postponement wasn't introduced until CENTURIES AFTER the ministry of Jesus Christ. There were no "postponement rules" during the first century AD. During the first century Atonement DID fall on Fridays and on Sundays.

One "slip-up" Dr. Hoeh made in this defence of the present Jewish calendar (and I say "slip-up" because it actually exposes a flaw in the Jewish calendar), is that he quoted Exodus 34:22. This had not been quoted in any calendar articles since Mr. Armstrong had quoted it in his 1940 GOOD NEWS letter. It is not clear whether Kenneth Herrmann realized that the Feast of Tabernacles sometimes starts before the end of summer in the present Jewish calendar, or whether he simply overlooked this verse Mr. Armstrong had mentioned in his 1940 letter, but at any rate Kenneth Herrmann had not mentioned Exodus 34:22 in ANY of his articles.

The fact that Dr. Hoeh actually devoted about five paragraphs to a discussion of Exodus 34:22 shows that in 1981 he also did not yet realize that Hillel II had placed THE ENTIRE FEAST OF TABERNACLES INTO THE SUMMER for some years, in a pattern that repeated itself for over 800 years after Hillel II introduced his fixed calendar.

However, Dr. Hoeh did at least FREELY acknowledge that Exodus 34:22 is a very clear requirement for the calendar. In the very next paragraph, after concluding his discussion of Exodus 34:22, Dr. Hoeh concluded his whole article with this sentence:

"HE (GOD) DOES REVEAL IN THE BIBLE MORE THAN YOU MAY BE AWARE ABOUT HIS CALENDAR." (my emphasis)

Let's move on to the next article.

PHILADELPHIA TRUMPET APRIL 1996: GOD'S SACRED CALENDAR by Stephen Flurry

Romans 3:1-2 = oracles of God

Genesis 1:14 = use sun and moon for calendar

Exodus 12:2 = the first month of the year

Exodus 13:4 = Abib means "an ear of corn"

Leviticus 23:4 = feasts to be kept in their seasons

1 Chronicles 12:32 = men of Issachar for the calendar

Matthew 23:2-4 = Pharisees in Moses' seat

Exodus 34:22 = Feast of Tabernacles at the Tekufah of the year

MY COMMENTS:

Stephen Flurry also used "the oracles of God" as the foundation for his whole argument. In his zeal to present as much biblical information as possible, he presented a mixture of what had been published previously. He obviously did not realize that Kenneth Herrmann had very meticulously moved away from presenting any SCRIPTURAL requirements for the calendar and instead moved totally to "the oracles". Stephen Flurry also used Dr. Hoeh's 1981 article very extensively. Thus he repeated the biblical requirement of Exodus 34:22, not realizing that since its very inception the present Jewish calendar has violated this very principle.

Stephen Flurry introduced an appeal to the supposed authority of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:2-4) into the mix. He obviously did not understand what Jesus Christ was actually telling us in these verses.

Let's look at the next item.

GLOBAL CHURCH NEWS JULY-AUGUST 1996: WHICH CALENDAR HAS GOD AUTHORIZED? by Raymond F. McNair

Exodus 12:2 = the first month of the year

Exodus 23:16 and Exodus 34:22 = Tekufah refers to the equinoxes

Exodus 12:1-2 = the first month of the year

Psalms 81:3 and Isaiah 66:23 and Ezekiel 46:1 = months begin at the "APPROXIMATE" new moon

Leviticus 23:9-14 = barley must be ripe for the wave offering

Exodus 34:22 = Feast of Tabernacles at the Tekufah of the year

Psalms 19:6 = for the meaning of Tekufah

Romans 3:2 = oracles of God

MY COMMENTS:

Like Stephen Flurry, Raymond McNair was also not aware of the fact that the present Jewish calendar has since its inception transgressed Exodus 34:22. He also relied on Dr. Hoeh's article for a part of his foundation. However, Mr. McNair did understand that the present Jewish calendar doesn't start the months with the real new moons, except in a very hit-and-miss fashion. Thus he modified the interpretation of the Scriptures to mean that a month must begin "at the APPROXIMATE new moon", because sometimes the Jewish calendar may remove the start of a month by as much as two days from the new moon, something that NEVER happened while the calendar was based on first visibility of the new crescent.

Mr. McNair's reference to the wave offering also shows that he didn't realize that the present Jewish calendar at times also violates this requirement. The article shows that Mr. McNair really thought that the present Jewish calendar DOES meet all biblical requirements; that's why he was so free in mentioning these biblical requirements as late as 1996.

Mr. McNair clearly did not really understand the statement in Psalm 81:3, which he introduced into the mix. He also did focus on the word "tekufah", something more recent writers try to avoid as much as possible.

Now we come to the next item.

UCG STUDY PAPER FEBRUARY 1997: SUMMARY OF THE HEBREW CALENDAR

John chapters 7-9 = justification for the Jewish postponement rules

MY COMMENTS:

By the early part of 1997 a great deal of material about the calendar from numerous sources had been sent to the UCG team that was looking into the calendar. I know that this included some material from me, exposing some of the weaknesses in the above articles by Dr. Hoeh and the subsequent authors.

The UCG study group clearly realized that the present Jewish calendar does NOT meet the biblical requirements for a right calendar, listed by people like Mr. Armstrong, Kenneth Herrmann, Dr. Hoeh, etc.. This is important to understand!

THEREFORE they simply avoided making any references to ANY of these biblical requirements. Instead, they directed their entire effort at trying to support the present Jewish calendar by the route of trying to prove a 31 AD crucifixion date, with THE ASSUMPTION that such a 31 AD crucifixion date would necessitate a Wednesday Passover BASED ON POSTPONEMENTS! They did not consider that a Wednesday Passover in 31 AD is THE ONLY POSSIBILITY in a calendar based on VISUAL OBSERVATION OF THE FIRST NEW CRESCENT!

So the discussion of John chapters 7-9 is totally irrelevant in a discussion regarding the calendar that was in use during Christ's ministry. A 31 AD crucifixion date proves NOTHING AT ALL as far as a calendar is concerned.

But notice that "BIBLICAL CALENDAR REQUIREMENTS" HAVE DISAPPEARED COMPLETELY from the whole discussion about the calendar.

This is probably the weakest defense of the Jewish calendar that has been presented thus far. It is in effect a tacit acknowledgment that the objections to the Jewish calendar's violations of clear biblical requirements are indeed valid. And THAT is why this UCG paper completely avoided all Scriptures that have a real bearing on the calendar question, and opted instead to focus on a passage of Scripture that has nothing at all to do with the calendar one way or the other. Note especially that this paper made no attempt to tell us what THE BIBLE actually REQUIRES from a correct calendar.

This brings us to the last item, the series of sermons John Ritenbaugh of the Church of the Great God has given (four sermons thus far).

SERIES OF SERMONS BY JOHN RITENBAUGH OF CGG JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2000

Acts 7:38 = lively oracles

Romans 3:1,2 = oracles of God

MY COMMENTS:

John Ritenbaugh has also very carefully avoided any discussion of the BIBLICAL requirements for the correct calendar. Everything is built on "the oracles of God", and biblical information about faith and loyalty and God's faithfulness, etc. But what a correct calendar is supposed to look like according to the Bible is very carefully avoided in these sermons.

A SUMMARY OF THE PAST 60 YEARS

Since Mr. Armstrong first published his 1940 GOOD NEWS letter, there has been A VAST SHIFT AWAY FROM BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CORRECT CALENDAR. The above examples, simply examining WHICH SCRIPTURES each author appealed to for support for his statements, show this shift very clearly.

TODAY, if someone wants to INSIST on the information Mr. Armstrong published (Tabernacles at the Tekufah, the wave-sheaf, all feasts in their seasons), and the information Kenneth Herrmann published (the year must start in the spring, all feasts in their seasons), and the information Dr. Hoeh published (Tabernacles at the Tekufah), and the information Stephen Flurry and Raymond F. McNair published (Tabernacles at the Tekufah, etc.), then that person is A FANATICAL RADICAL, right? That person is SELF-WILLED, wanting to establish HIS OWN CALENDAR, right? Such a person LACKS FAITH, right?

For 56 years (from 1940 till 1996) the Church has repeatedly published BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS for the correct calendar, requirements that the present Jewish calendar has VIOLATED since its very inception in 358/359 AD. Yet now it is almost anathema to actually look at those biblical requirements, let alone to find them wanting.

It is very clear that TODAY these recent authors are fully aware of the fact that the present Jewish calendar does not really comply with these biblical requirements. That is why they are now very meticulous in avoiding any discussion of these biblical requirements. And so, where back in 1940 and even in the 1950's the Church supported the present Jewish calendar by appealing to the biblical requirements for a calendar, TODAY the present Jewish calendar is defended by nothing more than appeals to "the oracles" and to faith and loyalty and submission to government.

And the statement that Dr. Hoeh closed his article with in 1981 is willingly ignored. As Dr. Hoeh concluded:

"GOD DOES REVEAL IN THE BIBLE MORE THAN YOU MAY BE AWARE ABOUT HIS CALENDAR."

If we TODAY, while it is still called today, are not willing to openly and honestly examine ALL biblical requirements for a calendar, then we too are eventually going to be found wanting. We are in danger of "hardening our hearts" towards these biblical requirements. And sadly, I believe that many people have ALREADY hardened their hearts as far as the correct calendar is concerned.

Frank W. Nelte