

WHICH CALENDAR HAS GOD AUTHORIZED?

Does God approve of any of the numerous "sacred calendars" now existing?

Since God commanded Israel to keep His weekly Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11), and His seven annual Holy Days (Lev. 23; Ezek. 20:12-24), of necessity He would also have given His people a reliable calendar showing when to observe those Sabbaths.

According to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, although the Bible gives numerous references to what might be called "God's Calendar," the Scriptures simply do not give adequate information for anyone to know how to make an accurate sacred calendar. "No part of the Bible or even the Bible as a whole presents a full calendar" ("Calendars:" vol. 1).

We are also informed that "modern students of the Bible should realize that it is not possible to speak of a [strictly] biblical calendar" (The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, "Calendar," vol. 1).

What are some of the problems confronting anyone who would seek to reconstruct the Sacred Calendar solely from the Bible?

PROBLEM 1: The Bible does not tell us precisely when to begin each month in the Sacred Calendar. Scripture reveals that each month must begin at the time of the "New Moon," but God's Word never sufficiently defines this term to tell us exactly when it occurs! Does the biblical New Moon refer to the astronomical New Moon (also called "conjunction" or "dark moon")? Or does New Moon refer to the new crescent moon, which always lasts "a few days"? If, for instance, the New Moon observers in ancient Israel sighted the new crescent moon above the western horizon a few minutes before the sun went down, did they declare that day - which was just ending - to be the first day of the next month? Or did they proclaim the following day the first day of the new month?

PROBLEM 2: The Scriptures never tell us how many days each month of God's Sacred Calendar should contain. Are there 29? Are there 30? Even more? We must go outside the Bible for this information.

PROBLEM 3: The Hebrew Scriptures don't even tell us how many months should be in a calendar year. Since the solar year (about 365 1/4 days) is roughly 11 days longer than the lunar year (about 354 1/4 days), how can the lunar and solar years be harmonized? By what means can the months of God's Sacred Calendar be kept in their proper seasons - so that the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread always occur in the spring, while the Feast of Tabernacles always occurs in the autumn? (all mention of the seasons refers to the Northern Hemisphere).

The answer is to add an "intercalary" month (a thirteenth month) seven times each 19-year lunar time cycle - which always contains 235 lunations or lunar months. But the Hebrew Bible does not tell us how many months the year is to have, or how long the sacred year is to be! The Bible mentions a twelfth month (Esther 3:7) - never a thirteenth month. Yet, from careful study of the time periods mentioned in the first eight chapters of Ezekiel (1:1-2; 3:15; 4:5-6; 8:1), we can deduce that a thirteenth month was definitely being used by the Jews when Ezekiel wrote in the early part of the 6th century B.C. And since the Bible doesn't even specify this intercalary month, it certainly does not say when to add it!

PROBLEM 4: The Bible does not indicate exactly when to begin the ecclesiastical year or sacred year. Though Scripture plainly reveals that the sacred year must begin around the time we call the vernal equinox [Heb. tekufahl (Ex. 12:2; 23:16; 34:22), it does not give exact instructions.

PROBLEM 5: Most insurmountable of all the problems facing those who would rely solely on the Bible to construct a sacred calendar is the undeniable fact that the lunar and solar years cannot be precisely aligned - a biblical requirement - without periodically adjusting, or "postponing," the beginning of certain months and years. The calendar must also be adjusted by one or two days under certain conditions. Otherwise, the lunar and solar years would eventually diverge.

None of the five problems mentioned above are resolved in the Bible! Since neither the Hebrew nor the Greek Scriptures give us sufficient information to know how to reconstruct the Sacred Calendar, where can we find exactly when to observe God's seven annual Holy Days?

How God Imparted the Calendar to His People

Who, if anyone, was divinely authorized to produce a sacred calendar and communicate it to God's people? In the year of Israel's Exodus from Egypt (c. 1446 B.C.), God began revealing to the Israelites certain important features of His Calendar - a calendar that made it possible for His people to observe the annual Holy Days in their proper seasons (Ex. 12; Lev. 23).

"Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you'" (Ex. 12:1-2). Notice that God gave those important instructions to both "Moses and Aaron." Aaron would later be ordained as God's high priest. Only his sons could succeed him in that office (Num. 16,17).

To whom did God reveal His Holy Days? Leviticus 23 lists seven annual Holy Days that God commanded His people to observe "forever" (vv. 14, 21, 31, 41). Notice, however, that God revealed them to Moses and commanded him to give them to Israel. "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim [Heb. qara, to make known officially] to be holy convocations, these are My feasts'" (vv. 1-2). Verse 4 tells us that the Feasts were to be proclaimed in their "appointed times [Heb. moedim, "appointed seasons" JPS]." Israel's religious authorities were to declare, announce or officially proclaim the beginnings of the months and the precise days on which God's Feasts were to be observed.

What did God mean when He commanded Israel's spiritual leader, Moses, to proclaim (qara) His Festivals? Moses was in fact "summoning" God's people to keep those days. "When convocations are 'proclaimed' the sense of qara is 'summon'" (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 3). In other words, God's spiritual leaders in Israel had the authority to summon God's people when they, under God's guidance, determined the days on which God's Feasts would fall.

How did Israel's religious leaders proclaim God's Feasts in later times? The Encyclopaedia Judaica mentions that the...sanctification of the thirtieth [day] as the New Moon [was] subject to witnesses' reports of the time and circumstances of their sighting of the new crescent scrutinized by a court competent to check them, and only accepted if tallying with each other and not contrary to astronomical prediction, with the further proviso of agreement by the court and formal declaration of 'sanctification' before night set in" ("Calendar," vol. 8). Note that a special calendar court first had to sanctify or set apart the day of the new crescent moon, then had to make a "formal declaration" of sanctification before nightfall.

Both biblical and secular history reveal that the Jewish religious leaders (the priests) had a solemn duty, as well as divine authority, to make binding decisions concerning the Hebrew calendar. It was they alone who sanctified the New Moons (the first day of each month), and it was they who decided if or when to intercalate (add) a thirteenth month. "The beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the moon. The new months were sanctified and their beginnings announced [proclaimed] by the Sanhedrin" (Arthur Spier, *The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar*, 1952, p. 1).

Detailed knowledge of God's Calendar was closely guarded by the Jewish priesthood. But, as Jews migrated farther and farther from Jerusalem, it became more difficult to pass along decisions on the calendar to outlying areas. This situation led to a significant change.

"Because of the serious condition of the communities of...Israel [in the 400s A.D.] and the deterioration of the Galilaeen center, Hillel II agreed in principle to limit the authority of the nasi [the top Jewish authority] and his functions in connection with [1] the proclamation of the new moon; [2] the fixing of the festivals; and [3] the intercalation of the year. He thereupon published *Sod ha-Ibbur* (The Secret of Intercalation)... This took place in 358 C.E." (Judaica, "Hillel II" vol. 8). The *Judaica* goes on to say that before the time of Hillel II, "the Sanhedrin fixed the calendar together with the court by proclaiming the new month and intercalating the year."

When Does the Month Begin?

There is considerable confusion concerning exactly when to begin God's sacred months and years. The Bible clearly reveals that each month begins with a New Moon (Ps. 81:3; Is. 66:23; Ezek. 46: 1), or to be more exact, with the approximate New Moon. The Jews, and also the Muslims, correctly begin their months this way: "The Islamic Year is lunar and each month begins at the approximate New Moon" (Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., p. 755).

Arthur Spier says, "Since biblical times the months and years of the Jewish calendar have been established by the cycles of the moon and sun. The traditional law prescribes that the months shall follow closely the course of the moon, from its Molad (birth, conjunction) to the next moon" (p. 1). Anyone who is familiar with the Hebrew calendar will realize that quite often there are what many believe to be valid reasons for postponing the beginning of the months by one day, or in some cases even two days. In fact, in the Hebrew calendar the months begin with the observable New Moon only 40 percent of the time, and with the approximate New Moon 60 percent.

Those who object to these "postponements" need to realize that it is utterly impossible for any lunar-solar calendar to be devised that does not require various adjustments or postponements! All who are familiar with the Jewish calendar also know that from ancient times, the Jews always began each month with the observable new crescent moon – not with the astronomical New Moon (also called "dark moon"). The visible crescent can be called a "New Moon" for about three days.

Let us briefly look at some of the serious problems confronting those who assume they must use the astronomical New Moon (the conjunction, molad or dark moon), in order to know when to observe God's Holy Days in their divinely appointed seasons.

Today, there is confusion in the minds of some regarding exactly what constitutes a New Moon. "New Moon... 1: the moon's phase when it is in conjunction with the sun so that its dark side is toward the earth; also: the thin crescent moon seen shortly after sunset for a few days after the actual occurrence of the new moon phase; 2: the first day of each Jewish month marked by a special liturgy" (Webster, 10th ed.).

Notice! The thin crescent moon can actually be seen for a few days. As we already noted, the biblical months always begin with the New Moon, but the Bible does not say that each month must always begin either on the molad (astronomical conjunction) or on the first day the crescent moon appears!

In fact, "to see the moon when it is less than 2 days old [less than 2 days after the conjunction or molad] is a challenge for any observer because of its nearness to the sun. The French astronomer Andre Danjon (1890-1967) apparently holds the record for sighting the moon in 1931 when it was only 16 hours, 13 minutes from new phase" (Burrus & Spiegel, *Earth in Crisis*, pp. 408-409).

Expert Hebrew Calendar Testimony

The *Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar* by Arthur Spier notes, "Lunar months must always correspond to the seasons of the year which are governed by the sun. The month of Nisan with the Passover Festival, for instance, must occur in the spring and the month of Tishri with the harvest festival of Succoth [Feast of Tabernacles] in fall " (1952, p.1). This author and Jewish scholars in general do not believe that the months must begin precisely on the day of the astronomical conjunction, which often occurs a day or so before the crescent moon is visible! Rather, the months must "follow closely the course of the moon."

Spier adds, "The Jewish calendar must meet two requirements, both solar and lunar. This accounts for its relatively complicated structure. Since the solar year of about 365 days is approximately 11 days longer than 12 lunar months [one lunar year], the Jewish calendar is faced with the problem of balancing the solar with the lunar years" (p. 1). Some mistakenly think it is a simple matter to reconcile the solar and lunar calendars.

Bear in mind that God set both the sun and the moon in the heavens to govern all calendar calculations. "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons [Heb. moedim, appointed festivals], and for days and years... (Gen. 1:14). The Moffatt translation says, "Let them be lights...to mark out the sacred seasons, the days and the years".

If one uses a purely solar calendar, then it is not possible to know when God's annual Holy Days are to be observed. The Gregorian calendar, widely used by the Christian world today, is in no way tied to the New Moons, and therefore cannot reveal when God's seven annual Holy Days are to be kept! But if one uses a purely lunar calendar (like the Islamic calendar), then in about 33 years, God's Feasts will retrogress through all 12 calendar months.

Spier continues, "In the early times of our history the solution [to balancing the solar and lunar years] was found by the following practical procedure: The beginnings of the months were determined by direct observation of the moon. The new months were sanctified [by God's duly appointed priests] and their beginnings announced [Heb. qara] by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified that they had seen the new crescent and after their testimony had been thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation and duly accepted. The Jewish communities were notified of the beginning of the months (Rosh Hodesh) in earlier times by kindling of night fires on the mountains, and later on by messengers" (p. 1).

Biblical Reasons for a 30-day Postponement

Did the Jewish priests have authority to delay (postpone) the beginning of the year by a whole month? Spier says, "A special committee of the Sanhedrin, with its president as chairman, had the mandate to regulate and balance the solar with the lunar years. This so-

called Calendar Council (Heb. Sod Haibbur) calculated the beginning of the seasons (tekufah) on the basis of astronomical figures which had been handed down as a tradition of old. Whenever, after two or three years, the annual excess of 11 days had accumulated to approximately 30 days, a thirteenth month Adar II was inserted before Nisan in order to assure that Nisan and Passover would occur in spring and not retrogress toward winter" (p. 1).

An unbroken succession of priests had received from Moses and Aaron vital information concerning how to calculate God's Sacred Calendar. And though they still relied on visual observation, they always confirmed any eyewitness accounts of those who professed to have seen the new crescent moon with their own rough astronomical calculations.

The Jewish high priests and their courts had authority to add a thirteenth month when agricultural conditions in the Holy Land indicated that if such a month was not added (thereby delaying the beginning of the new year), the barley would not be mature enough to present the required wave offering (Heb. omer) on the Sunday that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:9-14).

This agricultural consideration is corroborated by the Encyclopaedia Judaica: "The solar year is 365 days, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds, which means that a solar year exceeds a lunar one (of 12 months) by about 11 days. The cycles of 12 lunar months must therefore be adjusted to the solar year, because although the Jewish festivals are fixed according to dates in months, they must also be in specific [agricultural] seasons of the year which depend on the tropical solar year. Without any adjustment the festivals would 'wander' through the seasons and the 'spring' festival [Passover, for example], would be celebrated eventually in winter, and later in summer. The required adjustment is realized by the addition of an extra month (Adar In Temple times [until about 70 A.D.] this intercalation was decided upon in the individual years according to agricultural conditions...later, however, it was fixed to be in the years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 of the cycle" ("Calendar," vol. 5).

Fixing Festival Dates

Spier says, "This method of observation and intercalation was in use throughout the period of the second temple (516 B.C.E.-70 C.E.), and about three centuries after its destruction, as long as there was an independent Sanhedrin. In the fourth century [c. 358 A.D.], however, when oppression and persecution threatened the continued existence of the Sanhedrin, the patriarch Hillel II took an extraordinary step to preserve the unity of Israel. In order to prevent the Jews scattered all over the surface of the earth from celebrating their new moons, festivals and holidays at different times, he made public - the system of calendar calculation which up to then had been a closely guarded secret. It had been used in the past only to check the observations and testimonies of witnesses, and to determine the beginnings of the spring season" (p. 2).

No one can say, authoritatively, when astronomical calculations were first used in conjunction with actual visual observation. They appear to have been used from the very beginning-from the time God revealed His Sacred Calendar to His people (Ex. 12; Lev. 23; 1 Sam. 20:5, 24-27). "Although it is obvious from numerous OT passages that the ancient Hebrews possessed at least a roughly calculated calendar [see 1 Sam. 20:5-27]... they have nowhere given us a complete account of their [calendar] system" (The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, "Calendar," vol. 1).

Hillel II's extraordinary action has had far-reaching consequences for more than 16 centuries. His calendar calculations are still being used by the Jews and most of the members of God's Church scattered throughout the world. Hillel II's formally sanctified all months in advance, and intercalated all future leap years until such time as a new,

recognized Sanhedrin would be established in Israel. This is the permanent calendar according to which the new moons and Festivals are calculated and celebrated today by the Jews all over the world. Like the former system of observation, it is based on the Lunar-solar principle. It also applies certain rules by which the astronomical facts are combined with the religious requirements into an admirable calendar system" (The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar, p. 2).

The Encyclopaedia Judaica adds: "The gradual regularizing of the intervals of intercalation had to be in the terms of the seven-year-Sabbath sun, and each month begins with sabbatical cycle as none of the styles of the 19-year Metonic Cycle would have been compatible with the rule not to intercalate in sabbatical and post-sabbatical years."

Some have assumed that Hillel II's permanent Hebrew calendar somehow sets God's Holy Days on vastly different days of the month than would a Calendar Council if one were in place today. But this is not necessarily so. According to Spier, Hillel's fixed Jewish calendar incorporates essentially the same days that would now be sanctified and observed by the Jews if they had a Calendar Council to decide all Holy Day dates. It is possible that a functioning Calendar Council might adjust when to add the extra intercalated month. Such a Council's judgment of agricultural conditions could override the fixed intercalations of Hillel mentioned above (years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19). Nevertheless, the Holy Days would still fall on the same days within each month. In any case, Hillel did not set out to establish the Holy Days strictly according to the astronomical conjunctions.

"It is obviously not the intention of the calendar calculation [of Hillel II to establish Rosh Hashanah [first day of Tishri] and the beginning of the [subsequent] months on the day of the conjunction. It would rather appear that [in the permanent Hebrew calendar] the beginnings of the years and the months are generally adjusted to the days on which the Sanhedrin would have sanctified them on the basis of observation of the new crescent" (p. 219)!

When Does God Begin the Sacred Year?

According to God's Word, each day begins at sunset, each week begins immediately after the setting of the the New Moon - the crescent moon! But when does God begin the religious year?

Exodus 12:2 says, "This month [Abib or Nisan] shall be... the first month of the year to you." But the Bible does not tell us exactly when to begin that first month. Some think the first month of the sacred year begins with the New Moon that immediately precedes the vernal equinox. Other, believe it begins with the first New Moon that immediately follows that equinox. Still others think the starting point is the New Moon nearest the spring equinox.

How do the Jews, who alone have preserved God's Calendar. begin the first day of the first month of their religious year? Arthur Spier says, "The month of Nisan [or Abib with the Passover Festival, for instance, must occur in the spring" (p. 1). The fact that the Hebrew, word for the first month meaning "green ears," reveals that that particular month occurs in the spring when the green ears appear everywhere. The first month of the Hebrew calendar is also called Nisan, meaning "to start." The month of Abib or Nisan starts the ecclesiastical year (Ex. 12:2).

The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar lists all of the Jewish Holy Days for the entire 20th century, from September 1899 through September 2000 A.D. It shows that for each year during this century according to the Jewish calendar the Passover always falls in the spring of the year - never in the winter. However, although the first day of Nisan usually begins after the vernal equinox, it does not always do so! In 1994, for example, the first day of Nisan fell on March 13, but spring didn't arrive until March 21.

The Bible reveals that the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread must always fall within the "first month" (Ex. 12; Lev. 23). In actual practice, they always occur after the spring equinox as well.

Tabernacles Never Occurs Wholly in Summer

Does the Bible demand that the Feast of Tabernacles must always occur around the time of the autumnal equinox? "And you shall observe... the Feast of Ingathering [Feast of Tabernacles] at the year's end" (Ex. 34:22). The JPS translation reads, "And you shall observe...the feast of ingathering at the turn of the year [tekufah, autumnal equinox]." What was the "year's end" or the "turn of the year"? This Hebrew word (tekufah or tekufot in the plural) means "a revolution, i.e [of the sun] course, [of time] lapse" (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance). The Jews have traditionally understood this to mean that the autumnal equinox is to fall on or before the Feast of Tabernacles - never after!

Only the spring and autumnal tekufot (equinoxes) are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 2 Chron. 24:23; Ex. 34:22).

"Tekufot ("Seasons"). As stated, the four seasons in the Jewish year are called tekufot... (literally "circuit... to go round"), the tekufah of Nisan denoting the mean sun at the vernal [equinox], that of Tammuz denoting it at the summer [solstice], that of Tishri, at the autumnal [equinox], and that of Tevet, at the winter [solstice]" (Judaica, "Calendar," vol. 5).

Today, our Gregorian calendar uses two words (equinox and solstice) to mark out the beginnings of the four seasons. There are two equinoxes - vernal or spring (about March 21), and autumnal (about September 23). The Gregorian calendar also has two solstices: summer (about June 21), and winter (about December 22). But the Hebrew calendar only has one word, tekufah, to refer to these four recurring phenomena.

The Jews realized there was both a spring and a fall equinox - a time when day and night were equal, when the year had made one complete revolution (from spring to spring, or from fall to fall). Psalm 19:6 further explains the meaning of tekufah. "Its [the Sun's] rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit [tekufah] to the other end."

What, then, does Exodus 34:22 really say and mean? It reveals that the "Feast of Ingathering" was to occur at or after the turn of the year (NASB) - i.e. the time when the autumnal sun completes its yearly circuit as it passes southward over the earth's equator, thereby ushering in what we call autumn or fall.

The Feast of Tabernacles, according to the permanent Hebrew calendar, always occurs at or after that time of year. Even though the beginning of the Feast sometimes occurs a few days before the autumnal equinox, the latter half of the Feast of Tabernacles always falls after the autumnal equinox thus fulfilling the biblical requirement of Exodus 23:16 and 34:22. Tabernacles must never end before the fall equinox (tekufah Tishri), which, in the Northern Hemisphere, usually occurs on September 23. That Feast must never occur wholly in summer!

Who Controlled the Calendar in Christ's Time?

Chambers Encyclopedia says, "Since the chief priests were in close alliance with them [Sadducees] it would seem natural that the ritual of the Temple should be considered on lines approved by the Sadducees" ("Sadducees:" vol. 12).

The Illustrated Bible Dictionary agrees: "Many, but not all, priests were Sadducees; nearly all Sadducees, however, appear to have been priests, especially of the most powerful priestly families...Under the Herods and Romans the Sadducees predominated in the Sanhedrin [and] their reckoning regulated the public observance so long as the Temple stood" ("Sadducees," vol. 3).

"In general, the Jewish calendar in N.T times (at least before A.D. 70) followed the Sadducean reckoning, since it was by that reckoning that the Temple services were regulated" ('Calendar," vol. 1).

Reject Unbiblical Teachings!

As "sacred calendars" proliferate is there a way to make sense of it all?

Never before have there been so many sacred-calendar "experts' " Consequently, some brethren have become confused over the resultant proliferation of contradictory "sacred calendars." Has God seen to it that His "authorized" Sacred Calendar has been made available to His people?

Ever since God gave ancient Israel His Holy Days and His Calendar, there have been those who did not want to follow the calendar He provided His people through His priests. After the Ten Tribes of Israel seceded from the throne of David in about 930 B.C., Northern Israel's King Jeroboam introduced his own humanly devised festival-along with his counterfeit calendar which he ordained to be held in the "eighth month" instead of the seventh (I Kings 12:31-33).

Secular historians of ancient biblical times tell us that, even among the Jews, numerous sects refused to follow the official Jewish calendar - published by the priesthood - and instead devised their own sectarian calendars. "There is evidence that the authority of the normative calendar was never universally accepted, but that always there were individuals or groups who were promoting their own special calendars" (The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, "Calendar," vol. 1, p. 487). We should not, therefore, be surprised to learn that, from time immemorial, this "calendar problem" has plagued God's people.

Which calendar did the early New Testament Christians use? Some wrongly think that Gentile Christians in the New Testament Church used only Greco-Roman calendars: "It may be understood that Jews and Jewish Christians, even when far from Palestine, continued to employ the official calendar of Jewish orthodoxy, particularly for observing the religious festivals (cf. Acts 20:6, 16)" (p. 483). And we know that the Apostle Paul taught Gentiles to observe God's Holy Days just as he did the Jews (Acts 20:6; 1 Cor 5:7-8; 16:8). Therefore, the Gentile Christians could not have properly observed God's Festivals without also using the Hebrew calendar!

But what about God's Church in modern times? In the early 1930s, Almighty God raised up a remarkable man, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, to restore the knowledge of the Holy Days to His people. Satan, however, immediately began muddying the waters by introducing confusion over the calendar among some of the brethren.

When confronted with such a potentially divisive "calendar problem" in early 1940, Mr. Armstrong wrote the brethren saying, "In conclusion, unless God has preserved His Sacred Calendar through the Jews, then we do not know how to figure Passover or any of the Holy Days this year. For there is no authority for any other way. There is no Bible authority whatsoever for figuring the first day of the first month from the new moon nearest the spring equinox" (Good News Letter).

We have concluded, as did Mr. Armstrong and the brethren in 1940, that the Hebrew calendar is indeed the only calendar that God's people should follow in observing His Holy Days today!

When we rightly understand the Hebrew Scriptures, we see that God gave His Calendar to "Moses and Aaron" (brothers of the tribe of Levi). Aaron and his descendants were later chosen to be God's priestly family (all the high priests were from Aaron's family). It was solely to them that the Lord committed the "oracles of God" for safekeeping -including the preservation of His true Calendar. Without such a calendar, God's people would not know when to observe His seven annual Holy Days in their proper seasons, as required by the Hebrew Scriptures.

Regrettably, some of God's people are being confused by false teachings concerning God's Sacred Calendar. Today, at least half a dozen different calendars are being circulated - all of them purporting to be "God's Calendar" - yet no two of them agree! Some who have devised their own calendars say you must observe the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month that falls on or after the spring equinox. Yet those who go by that rule sometimes end up keeping the entire seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, as well as the "eighth day" that follows (Lev. 23:36), in the summer, rather than in the autumn season as demanded by Exodus 34:22!

People sometimes cite Ambassador College's booklet, How Often Should We Partake of the Lord's Supper? to support their claim that "the first day of the new year always begins with the day nearest the spring equinox when the New Moon is first visible to the naked eye at Jerusalem" (1952, p. 6). That statement is generally true - but not always! If that rule had been in effect during the following years of this century - 1905, 1932, 1943, 1951, 1970, 1989, 2000 - then the entire Feast of Tabernacles would have occurred in late summer, which we've just seen must never happen!

Consequently, those who follow the rule that the Passover must always fall on the first full moon after the spring equinox - or who say that the new year always begins with the day nearest the spring equinox when the New Moon is first visible to the naked eye at Jerusalem - will find themselves in quite a dilemma.

What does this all add up to? God has preserved His Sacred Calendar (commonly called the Hebrew or Jewish calendar) through the Jews (Rom. 3:2) - among whom are included Levites, as well as many priests - the latter being descendants of Aaron. God committed to them the preservation and teaching of His "oracles" - His Word, the Hebrew Bible - as well as the preservation of His Calendar, which is necessary to properly keep God's commanded Festivals in their appointed seasons.

Any man who would appoint himself to devise his own calendar rejecting the Jews to whom God entrusted the oracles-would do well. to remember what God thinks of those who arrogate to themselves the office or function of God's priests, when God has not called them to that office (cf. Num. 16,17)!

God's people ought to use the calendar that He caused the Jews to preserve for the benefit of all who wish to obey Him and keep His commanded Festivals. That was basically the same calendar used by Christ and His disciples in New Testament times!