

## Thinking to Change Times and Laws—Part Two

*Time is difficult to define and to measure. This is what we have learned by trying to understand the laws that govern our universe, the starting point by which people begin to chart their human existence and to contemplate the purpose of life. Leaving us to only mark the passage of time, often memorializing events and individuals on our calendars, which can reflect the defined and binding cultural attributes, religious beliefs and political directions of peoples and nations.*

When Julius Caesar decided that he would borrow from the Egyptians to help him establish the Julian calendar—surviving for some 16 centuries—there were problems that developed in counting the days with the seasons. In 46 BCE, Sosigenes reviewed the Roman calendar for Caesar in order to improve it, and to accomplish this the Romans were ordered to disregard the moon, and Caesar ruled that the year 46 BCE should have 445 days.

It was called the “year of confusion” by the Romans.

Nonetheless, the development of the Julian calendar was a skillful political move that

assisted the Romans in establishing their empire, and to influence changes in how other peoples would be governed—particularly conquered peoples—establishing Roman events and individuals as memorials related to the direction of the Roman Empire. It is also worth noting that the Romans took the names of their planetary gods and associated them with the days of the week, some of which were later modified by the Germanic and Norse tribes.

The influence of which is with us even to this day.

However, the inaccuracies of the newly established Julian calendar later led Pope Gregory XIII to reform the calendar, because the Egyptians and Julius Caesar didn’t allow for an accurate length of the solar year. The consequence was that by AD 1582 the vernal equinox was occurring 10 days earlier according to the calendar (March 11 instead of March 21). This led to the monumental act of removing 10 days from the calendar.

Pope Gregory declared that October 15th would follow October 4th. This restored the seasonal calendar to what it was in AD 325.

After Pope Gregory changed the way leap years were calculated, this revision became

known as the Gregorian calendar, or Christian calendar, which we still live by in the West. Interestingly, the Eastern Orthodox church has still not fully adopted this calendar in liturgical matters, revealing the separation that still exists today between Orthodox and Catholics.

However, the Gregorian calendar is one of the most accurate solar calendars today.

Interestingly, because of the nature of some landscapes, citizens in towns and villages would develop their own calendar in some parts of the world, which included their own particular festivals, and so lest we think that calendars, and the charting of people's memorials was exclusive to the West, we should take a look to the East.

The Chinese year is generally based on the moon, consisting of 12 months. Their calendar was anciently based on a nineteen-year time cycle, not unlike the Hebrew calendar. The Chinese gave names to each year in a twelve-year cycle of years, naming them after constellations and animals.

The year 2000, for example, was called the "Year of the Dragon."

Summarily, the calendar, and the way it can be used to chart human political experience and worship, becomes an integral part of any given culture. It helps people to live the way

they want to live—in terms of festivals, activities, politics and worship—and by contrast a change in a calendar and the events and memorials attached to it may well mean a major political and cultural shift for any given society or civilization.

Additionally, a calendar can have a profound effect on what people come to believe about the beginning of human civilization—particularly their own civilization.

Notably, the Chinese Calendar is said to have been invented by Emperor Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor), and this calendar is considered to be accurate dating back to the Xia Dynasty, whose first ruler was the Great Yu, King of Xia. This calendar begins in the year Huang Di invented it, 2637 BCE. (The flood story associated with Yao and the Great Yu of China has reasonable relevance to the Flood that occurred in the days of Noah, which is dated to 2325/2324 BCE.)

Comparatively, the Islamic calendar began with Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina. This flight is called the Hegira (Hijrah), and took place in AD 622, which is year one of the Islamic calendar.

The Gregorian calendar was established in the 1580s, but its year numbering was faultily based on the date of Jesus' birth. A monk named Dionysius Exiguus based the dating system starting with 532. In this system,

Jesus was born just before AD 1 (anno domini, “in the year of the Lord”), and the preceding year was 1 BC (before Christ).

Thus, Jesus was assumed to be born at the end of 1 BCE, and just prior to AD 1.

Showing that the Romans did not allow for a year zero in this calculation, and so we are obliged to account for one additional year when counting the years from AD to BCE or BCE to AD.

Now, the Hebrew calendar is associated by the Rabbis with the “year of chaos” and the creation of Adam.

In later Jewish tradition, the date for this according to the Rabbis is 3,760 years and 3 months before the birth of Christ in December of 1 BCE. To get a generally relative comparison to the Gregorian calendar, we have to add 3,760 to the date on the Gregorian calendar. For example, the year AD 2000 would be approximately the year 5760 on the Hebrew calendar.

So, once a date is established for any given calendar, then it can usually be recalculated and adjusted to another calendar. From a general perspective, even though there are different dates for different calendars, we still find that the recording and charting of human existence by calendars hasn’t been going on

for very long—generally none are older than 4000 BCE in terms of historical records.

Now, once a calendar is established, based on any given date for its origin, people may then try to figure out when they came into existence, and when such an existence may come to an end, relative to the physical universe. And in some cases people try to determine the meaning of some biblical prophecies by determining when they will begin and when they will end according to their own calendar. Therefore, with this in mind, we then find in Scripture a general principle where a day is likened to 1,000 years in regard to the existence of God. “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (II Pt. 3:8).

Simply, time has no relevance to an eternal God.

Traditionally, this concept and principle has been interpretively associated, by people who value this understanding, to the six days in which the earth was renewed by God. The account is found in the first chapter of Genesis. They then incorrectly propose that there will be a six-thousand-year period of human existence before the one-thousand-year reign of the Christ.

However, it is already possible to account for 6,000 years of human rule and world

civilization from the time of Adam to the present and assign this time to the calendar, allowing us to say that 6000 years has already elapsed since the creation of Adam.

Now, the use of the calendars, and the charting of time, is also insightful in some other ways. Most calendars are usually helpful in determining the seasons of the year for agricultural purposes, and they mark important events and starting dates for civilizations. But of all the calendars, none is based on doctrine and influences Christian thought quite like the Hebrew calendar. It is intertwined with biblical history—Adam and Eve, the Patriarchs, ancient Israel, the ministry of Jesus, and with biblical prophecy--and the introduction of the Hebrew lunar-solar calendar is said to be at the end of summer in 3761 BCE, which traditionally places the creation of Adam in the fall of the year.

Notably, then, for Christians who follow the understood teachings of early Christianity we see that the first century church continued to memorialize the days associated with Israel's festivals and holy days marked on the Hebrew calendar, even in the absence of the sacrificial system, which was legitimately removed with the recognition that the Messiah had indeed come and was crucified and entered heaven to await the coming kingdom of God. Giving us an example of how some circumstances or situations can evolve over time, but the

memorialization of the events can remain the same, or even change as it did with the Passover, which is now understood to be the memorial to Christ our Passover (I Cor. 5:7).

Thus, from political and social traditions, we can see how the changing of times and laws from a religious perspective, that is those times and laws that are collectively accepted by peoples and nations, can be a means to alter one's beliefs or imply a change in beliefs. An example of this is found with Jeroboam, who was established as a leader over the house of Joseph by King Solomon. After leading a revolt against the rule of King Rehoboam, he recognized the significance of the seasonal festivals and holy days associated with the Commonwealth of Israel.

Consequently, Jeroboam established places of worship among the tribes of Israel to keep them from going to the Temple in Jerusalem, thinking that the people might turn again and accept the rulership of Rehoboam. Also, he went further by establishing a memorial to his new religion and priesthood by making "a feast in the eighth month, in the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah"(I Kgs. 12:32).

The result, of course, was a change in the religious times and laws, which had both political and social consequences for the house of Israel.

Now, prophetically speaking, the use of calendars and the marking of memorials is important to how some Christians understand the chronology of future events. (Israel's holy days and festivals foreshadowed the coming of a Messiah.)

So, let's again consider the prophetic statement found in Daniel. "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws" (Dan. 7:25).

This is a profound statement found in the Bible, and its intent is worth considering, for there are those who believe these are events that will directly affect the worship of Christians.

However, the context of this prophecy is of a broader political scope, and it is limited in geography by the wording found in the prophecy, and we know this from what Daniel recorded about this aggressive political power that it would "devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces" (Dan. 7:23).

We know from other accounts, and how this phrase is constructed, that this concept applies to the parts of the earth where this authority resides or projects its power. Examples of this are found with the Persian Empire and the Babylonian Empire respectively (Dan

2:39; 4:1). (An association of this political entity with the one noted in another prophecy confirms the limited scope of this authority beyond its own recognized borders (Dan. 11: 36, 41-43).)

With this in mind we should also consider that such an intent to change times and laws might not bear the markings of division or conflict when it is first proposed, but it may be seen as a solution to long-standing national problems. It may even be embraced by legislative bodies or find collusion among political groups that assist in this changing of times and laws, but its effect according to the Bible is one that ignites conflict and an on-going struggle with this authority to the point it will "wear out the saints," and these saints fall within the direct authority of this political entity—for a certain period of time.

We should also remember that turning the truth into a lie is the hallmark of a false prophet, and even a political false prophet can appear—in the eyes of believers—to have two horns like a lamb.

Thus, it is possible with the attempt to change times (appointed memorials) and laws that these efforts would conflict with the notable markers found on a nation's calendar, and so the consequence has the potential to be catastrophic as it may well represent that larger mandates and international laws will be brought to bear on domestic legal norms to


change times and laws. Such mandates could even reflect the notion of human rights law and humanitarian law in order to affect public opinion regarding such changes in times and laws. We might think about what this may mean in application if States like Iran, Iraq, the United Kingdom or even China, Russia and the United States would find their laws and memorials and constitutions under threat of unwanted change, and what that would lead to in the end.

A relative example to Daniel's prophecy would be the State of Israel, which does not officially have a written constitution, but instead has a basic set of laws and rights that have a semi-constitutional status. However, these laws and rights not only address the emblems of State and its official language, but also its national holidays, some of which correspond to the major Jewish holidays that are notably affixed to the calendar, including the Sabbath.

What would be the result of any attempt to make changes in these laws and rights?

Now, what is interesting about the changing of "times and laws" in Daniel's prophecy is that a change in some seasonal memorial observances (political and religious) are implied in the language, and some of these would expectedly be found on a calendar, which would represent their collective acceptance for a nation. Noting also that any

attempt to change times and laws to force a nation or peoples to break from their heritage or culture or political aspirations would be an attempt to fracture a society and separate it from its history. Which is linked to the land where that history took place, and in the context of Daniel's message we are led to consider this issue in regard to the Middle East, and particularly the city of Jerusalem, considered to be—according to the laws of Israel—the capital of Israel.

Therefore, it is worth considering how the use of calendars, and their observance, may at some time in the future mark an attempted change in Israel's cultural and historical heritage through the changing of times and laws affecting its future political, cultural, societal, religious and governmental structure that causes a political shift that becomes a part of a greater political conflict in the future. It is also worth considering that Daniel's prophecy describes the fate of such authorities that would trouble the saints, and that is to face the Christ at his coming, and the result will be that these kingdoms in the prophecy will become the kingdoms of the Christ, meaning that they also will become subject to the changing of times and laws as they are absorbed into the coming kingdom of God.  **(End of two-part series.)**