

COURAGEOUS ACTION OF MILLERITES ON "JEWISH CALENDAR" PROBLEM

William Miller and his associates faced an exceedingly difficult problem of far reaching import, as they sought to determine first the boundaries of the Jewish sacred year "1843," and then the civil equivalent of the precise tenth day of the seventh month in "1844." That the Jewish years did not parallel the civil year, but ran from spring to spring, was well known to them. They also knew that the 2300-year prophecy was inseparably tied to the true date of the crucifixion. This involved not only sound prophetic interpretation, but true calendation as well. Their remarkable stand of the Millerites, in 1843 and 1844, in rejecting the current Rabbinical calendation, and reviving the original Jewish year of the crucifixion period and the time of Ezra, that they might correctly determine the close of the 2300-year period, took clear, scholarly thinking, intensive research, extraordinary moral courage, and really heroic, decisive action. They risked all upon this crucial position. Note certain of the obstacles to be overcome.

Catholicism was solidly against their prophetic interpretations. Practically all Protestantism, furthermore, had succumbed to the post-millennial and return-of-the-Jews fallacies, and had adopted, perhaps unwittingly, the Roman Catholic praeterist or futurist counter-systems of interpretation. And especially they were divided and confused as regards the year-day principle and the papacy as anti-Christ. But most serious of all, Jewry had many centuries before abandoned the calendation given to Moses, which had been operative in principle and in essentially identical form in both the 5th century B. C. and the 1st century A. D. These particular centuries embrace, of course, the beginning year of the 2300-year prophecy and the certifying or sealing date of the Friday-Passover crucifixion, occurring in the midst of the 70th prophetic-week segment of the larger period.

But the Jews of the fourth century A. D., under pressure of civil and ecclesiastical Rome, adopted a new, arbitrary calendation tied to the vernal

equinox instead of the full moon of the barley harvest season. This threw the beginning of the Jewish sacred year usually one moon too early, forcing it out of alignment with that previous calendation comprising the first third of the 2300-year period. And as the lunar month averages $29\frac{1}{2}$ days, a Friday Passover placed a month later than its true position, on the basis of the modern Rabbinical calendar, could not possibly locate a Friday-passover in the preceding month, on the basis of the calendation actually in vogue--for specified dates in the month, in lunar months of 29 and 30 days, do not repeat on identical days of the week. Only a 28-day month, which the Jews do not have, could synchronize with the unvarying recurrence of the days in the 7-day week. This the Millerites learned.

Moreover, the Jews, through their governing rules in this later Rabbinical calendar, excluded all Passovers from falling on a Friday--thus precluding any possibility of locating the Friday-passover of the crucifixion by means of this changed calendar. So, its system of postponements, this Rabbinical calendar, while kept in essential step with the pace of the moon, became utterly untrustworthy for determining prophetic chronology, so far as locating either a first-century day such as the Nisan 14 Friday-passover crucifixion occurring under another calendar, or a 19th century true day of atonement on the basis of the original calendation, as in 1844. This, too, the Millerites came definitely to find out.

Such was the basic calendar situation confronting the Millerites on the 2300-year time prophecy. Miller himself was at first quite unacquainted with the involvements of the question, and merely took, in a general way, the Rabbinical calendar in vogue as the basis of his early calculations. Yet he only approximated the Rabbinical year, which he knew ran from spring to spring, by fixing merely upon the equinoxes to bound his year of expectation--"from March

21, 1843, to March 21, 1844." And he similarly took, apparently without investigation, the commonly accepted 33 A. D. date for the crucifixion, commonly offered by astronomers and theologians who had attempted to find a Friday-passover by a calendar that, first of all, excludes a Friday-passover, and secondly, was not in vogue until 3 1/3 centuries after the cross. Miller then added the 1810 remaining years to 33 A. D., and obtained his year "1843."

As the advent movement gained momentum and attracted increasing attention, the defects in these basic arguments were forced upon the attention of Miller's associates by vigorous criticisms of Miller's prophetic and calendrical calculations. Painstaking, extensive study by careful minds in the Millerite ranks established the impossibility of using this later Rabbinical calendar to determine a 1st century Jewish Passover festival that fell on Friday, or of fixing upon a 19th century Day of Atonement that must be identified in their day through definite integration with the calendation operative 18 and 23 centuries, respectively, previous thereto.

Painstakingly studying the Karaitic protest in the Middle Ages against the Rabbinical perversion of the calendar, they at last deliberately and irrevocably accepted, restored, and applied to their time-prophecy problem, the earlier calendation championed by the Karaites. And this they did in defiance of the whole body of Rabbinical scholarship and the general current practice of Jewry, which change was introduced in the same century and at approximately the same time that the Roman Church, in the Synod of Laodicea, c. 364 (later confirmed by the General Council of Calcedon in 451), changed the Sabbath by church law from the seventh to the first day of the week.

The synchronous timing of these two vital perversions was not without significance and design. They were plainly calculated to entrench certain fundamental errors in the early church period that would make difficult and unpopular their challenge and repudiation by the reformatory advent movement of these last days,

under the acceptance and proclamation of the inseparable judgment hour and Sabbath aspects of the first, second, and third angel's messages, which in turn are themselves cumulative and inseparable. The change from Mosaic calendation would make difficult, unpopular, and "unscholarly" any acceptance of the true timing and verification of the terminus of the last great time-prophecy. This date was to mark the precise beginning of the investigative judgment, or antitypical day of atonement, in the Most Holy place of the heavenly sanctuary above, with its corresponding proclamation to men on earth.

Similarly, as we will know, the 4th century change of the Sabbath would make difficult, unpopular, and "unscholarly" the heralding of the 4th precept of the standard of that judgment, exposure of the unauthorized change of the day, the testing truths of the seal of God as against the mark of the beast, and the restoration of the true along with the rejection of the false.

It was incumbent upon the Millerites, as God's appointed heralds of the time of the judgment hour, to discover and correct, at the time appointed in 1843 and 1844, this error in calendation long ago pointed out by the Karaites (but which protest had now largely ceased), and to establish the true terminus of the time prophecy, just as it became our part and lot, in completing the arrested Reformation, to correct and restore the observance of the almost-universally abandoned seventh-day Sabbath. But we had the distinct advantage of the prophetic portrayal of both change and restoration, in Daniel 7 and Revelation 14, which error --of Sunday substitution--had been brought to the attention of the world centuries before by the Seventh Day Baptists in abstract, doctrinal form, though not connected by them with God's final prophetic message to man.

It must therefore be evident that it was part of the divine plan and expectation for the Millerites to correct the calendation by which alone they could reach such sound prophetic and calendrical conclusions that could not be contravened by

contemporary scholars, and which bear the validation of the Spirit of prophecy, as well as of sound astronomy, chronology, and true calendation. This was as necessary as it was for us to recover and espouse the seventh-day Sabbath and proclaim it to the world. Unquestionably, the changing of the "times" and the "law," in Daniel 7:25, involved and included this very feature of calendation as relating to the judgment hour, as well as to the primary change of the time in the law of the seventh-day Sabbath.

I would even go further and aver that, considering all the circumstances, it took more scholarship, more research, and more moral courage for the Millerites to break with Jewry, as well as with all Christendom, Catholic and Protestant, in coming to such revolutionary, chronological conclusions--which we have taken over bodily in our espousal of October 22, 1844--than for us to take over the seventh-day Sabbath from the long and active line of Seventh Day Baptists, and challenge the practice of merely the Catholic and Protestant worlds. We had the uniform witness of Jewry on our side, stretching back across the multiplied centuries to guide in determining the paralleling seventh and first days, while the Karaites protest against the calendar perversion had virtually ceased by 1780.

Fifteen centuries of popular Jewish precept and custom stood out against their rejection of the Rabbinical calendar and their espousal of the calendation operative prior to the fourth century--just as fifteen centuries of Christian Sunday keeping was pitted against us following the legal repudiation of the true Sabbath observed prior to the change.

The overwhelming sentiments and prejudices of Jewry stood as a deterrent against reviving and applying the true calendar by the Millerites just as the commitments of Christendom made difficult our flouting of Sunday sanctity and our revival of the true Sabbath. And the preponderent Jewish scholarship from the

4th century onward, denied and controverted the Millerites' sound historical position on the true Mosaic calendar--just as Christian scholars beyond number, likewise from the same fateful 4th century, controvert our position on the original Biblical Sabbath.

But all this powerful custom, sentiment, and scholarly witness had to be boldly and convincingly set aside by the Millerites, and unpopular prophetic and calendrical truth espoused, harmonizing with Biblical, historical, chronological, and astronomical fact. Their stand was consequently more difficult than ours, for they did not have the recognized prophetic picture of the change to guide them, as did we regarding the change of the Sabbath. And they were the pioneers. They first broke the trail. We followed on in the trail already blazed out by them--the sanctuary truth inevitably involving the Sabbath truth. Our task was much easier, once the initial effort had been made.

Truly all honor and esteem is due those really great men, in God's sight, who bequeathed this great heritage to us, for the terms and involvements of the first angel's message continue on and parallel the second and third messages, until their common terminus at the close of human probation.