

Earnestly Contend For The Faith Once Delivered

Moses' Seat

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Scriptures from the KJV

When I was visiting a small congregation in Kenya a while back, a young man approached me and asked if it was okay for him to read literature that other organizations put out, now that he was fellowshiping with us.

He was holding someone's magazine at the time, and he had concerns that pertained to the Holy Day Calendar. Some were teaching strict observance to what they call "The Sacred Hebrew Calendar".

He probably experienced (like many in the church) a lot of hierarchical control & restrictions, concerning what one can and cannot do, and what one believes.

Now he was curious to know our beliefs concerning not only the calendar issue, but also if it's permissible to read other organizations teachings in General.

Now I know that some feel that we should not address controversial issues, but I disagree. If we are going to become more of one mind and of one accord, then I believe we should feel free to discuss our beliefs, and the reasons why we believe the way we do.

Iron still sharpeneth Iron, but how can that happen, if we don't reason with one another in our search for Truth. One thing is for sure, Truth will prevail, whether we believe it, or follow it, or not!

My answer to the man of course was Yes, by all means. Reading and studying other organizations articles and teaching is a good thing, and anyone trying to restrict one from the freedom of doing that, is out of line to say the least.

The Scriptures are quite clear concerning controlling and lording over the brethren. In Revelation 2:15 we read about how Christ even "hates" the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (power [or rule] over the laity.)

Reading various churches literature and teachings, and hearing what others have to say is important for our growth. Even James, the Lord's half brother (speaking specifically to us, the church, God's First Fruits) says that we need to be swift to Hear what others have to say, in fact hearing what others have to say comes first.

James 1:19 says: “*Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*”

Now what we’ve experienced all too often in the church (and sometimes through our own improper behavior) is just the opposite. Some have become dull in hearing and swift to speak. Yes, swift to speak before we even hear what is being said, and that can cause one to be quick to wrath.

So I told the young man yes, by all means, read others literature, and don’t be scared of men, or ever allow others to restrict you from hearing & consider what others teach.

Then I told him (as you were probably already thinking) I reminded him about the Berean’s, and how they “*searched the Scripture daily*”, to see if what they were hearing (or reading in this man’s case) were so.

I’m sure that we are all familiar with that particular verse in Acts 17:11. (Or at least with that particular part of that verse) about how the Berean’s would “*search the Scriptures*” for verification of Truth.)

But what I want to draw our attention to here as we begin today’s message is the other part of that verse (the part that has to do with our hearing) the part that maybe didn’t come into mind, when I mentioned that it is okay (even good) to read or hear what others teach and preach.

We were told that the Berean’s were more noble than those at Thessalonica, but their “nobility” wasn’t only from “*searching the Scriptures daily*” to see if what they were hearing were so, but also because **first: “they received the word with all readiness of mind”**.

First, they were quick to hear (and they were quick to hear in a particular way). They received the Word with all “*readiness of mind*”. They were eager to hear, and then they looked to the Scriptures to verify Truth.

I bring this up, because sometimes we become so dogmatic in our beliefs, that we won’t even consider what others have to say, especially if it’s contrary to our beliefs, or goes against the norm, or maybe something new that is being introduced.

One time I was meeting with a group of about 15 brethren here in the States, and the calendar issue came up. We were approaching the Holy Day season, and even though the group was small, there were three different calendars being kept amongst them.

One lady made a suggestion (and it was music to my ears) I thought it was a great idea. She proposed that we all (one at a time) state why, yes why we keep the particular calendar that we do.

But there was another person there who instantly spoke up (one who liked to usurp authority over the others) and said no we will not allow that because it may cause a commotion and a fight.

So everyone just shrunk back into their seats. (And that group kept three different days again that Holy Day season.) Now I don't think my message today is going to cause a commotion, or a fight. But I do hope it will cause all of us to consider our stand on such an important matter.

Brethren, we're living in a time when 'up' is called "down" and "down" is called "up". A time when "good" is called "bad" and "bad" is called "good", a time when even the Way of Truth IS evil spoken of.

A time when so many pulpits are still (falsely teaching) that we need to "Hold on to the faith that was once delivered to the saints". Brethren, nothing could be further from the Truth.

You can't hold on to something that you don't have. Jude 1:3 doesn't say to "hold on" to the faith that was once delivered to the saints; Jude said to "Earnestly Contend" for the faith that was once delivered. That means to get back to it, fight for that faith that was once delivered to the saints (brethren, were not there yet.)

We're still at the time when some of the "*damnable heresies*" which the false prophets and the false teachers have brought in (and have been accepted as Truth) are still lingering about, and in many cases, not even being challenged.

Brethren, our Lord and Savior will be returning to a glorious church, one not having spot or wrinkle, not even a blemish. We need to be pure, and not only from fornication, but also from false doctrine.

We may have started coming out of the false beliefs when we first came into the church, but the process isn't over yet, we need to be continuing to grown in both grace ad knowledge. We need to continue studying, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Jude instructs us to: "*earnestly contend for the faith once delivered*". We're talking about things believed here, by the "faith" is meant the doctrine of faith. Peter and Paul had foretold that false teacher would come in, and now Jude was proclaiming their arrival and what needed to be done (on our part) to escape their false teachings.

"Earnestly Contend" means to "fight for" That word "contend" is unique, and quite graphic. This is the only place that particular word is used in Scripture.

It's the Greek word used when speaking about their Olympics, and how those competing for the prize, put there all into their struggle to obtain that prize.

Well how is our struggle coming along? How is our fight for perfection, for Truth? For The Truth that will not only set us free, but will also keep us from having that “*strong delusion*” that will soon be given to those who lack a love for Truth.

Speaking about the “*man of sin*” (who is soon to be revealed) *the son of perdition*; Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2, that the reason some in God’s church will not recognize him, is because they took pleasure in “unrighteousness.”

Instead of having a love for Truth, instead of searching for Truth and correct doctrines, they spent their valuable time perusing the pleasures of this world. This world that is a façade, made to look good (and feel good) by the arch deceiver, but in reality, this world is rotten to the core.

(Remember we’re building a Temple here, a Holy Temple, and we need to have our guard up against false doctrine) (Nehemiah 4:17 please)

(In Nehemiah’s time, the laborers were both circumspect & vigilant.)

(I want to read this from the “New Living translation.”)

Nehemiah 4:1 “*those laborers who were building the wall. Carried on their work with one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon.*”

(That weapon was a sword.)

Back then, they kept a physical sword at their side at all times. We need to keep a “two-edged sword” at our side at all times, the Word, the Scriptures, The Truth.

(Let’s go to 2 Thessalonians 2:15 please) (Starting in verse 13)

2 Thessalonians 2:13 “*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*”

14 *Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”*

We have a lot of traditions in the church, but are they traditions taught by the “Word” (Logos, the Scriptures?) Are they traditions taught by the Apostles?

Or are they traditions taught by men?

Are we standing fast, and holding on to Truth? Or are we standing fast, and holding on to fables? (The arch deceiver would like to see us holding fables)

What I'm trying to get us to comprehend in today's message, is that everything we believe, we should have Scriptures that support it. I often say: "If it's Truth, there's Scriptures to back it up". If there are no Scriptures, then it's probably not Truth.

It's important for us to remember that it is "The Word of Truth" that separates God's people from the rest. John 17:17 says: "*Sanctify them **through** Thy Truth* (set them apart) ***through* Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth.**"

(The key word here is "**through**") We are sanctified or set apart from others, "through" Truth. Truth and the church of God go hand & hand. The Apostle Paul defines the church (the church of the Living God that is) as the "Pillar & Ground of The Truth."

Now to understand better how we are sanctified "through" The Truth, let's picture an automobile engine which uses oil to lubricate all its moving parts. That oil has to be kept clean & pure, or the engine will fail.

So an automobile engine is equipped with an oil filter, and every drop of the engine's oil continuously passes "**through**" the oil filter for purification.

Same with us and the Word of God, we need to filter not only all of our thoughts through the Word of God by bringing them into captivity, but also all of our beliefs need to be filtered **through** The Word of God, the Scriptures.

That's why "studying" the Scriptures and "*rightly dividing the Word of Truth*" is so important.

I often ask brethren why they follow the particular calendar that they keep, what are their Scriptural reasons? One of the common answers concerning the Hebrew calendar, is that the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, and that according to Scripture, we are to follow what ever they say.

I'd like to look at that particular verse concerning the "Seat of Moses" it's found in Matthew 23:2 (But first I want to begin reading from verse 13 – 33 and kind of check on the credibility of the scribes & Pharisees.)

Matthew 23:13 "*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

14 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*

15 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*

16 *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!*

17 *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?*

18 *And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.*

19 *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?*

(Dropping down to verse 23)

23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

24 *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

25 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*

26 *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

27 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

28 *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

29 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,*

30 *And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*

31 *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*

32 *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*

33 *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

(Now let's read verses 2-3)

Matthew 23:2 *“The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat,*

3 Therefore whatsoever (they) bid you observe, observe and do; but do not after their works: for they say and do not.”

So I ask, what is Christ saying here, is He telling us to listen and to follow the instructions of those “Blind Guides” who are “filled with hypocrisy” and “iniquity”, “Hypocrites”, “Fools”, “Serpents” and “Vipers”?

I think not. What Christ is telling us here, is to follow the Law, it’s the “Law” the Scriptures that “Moses’ Seat” represents and that we are to adhere to, not the scribes themselves.

Many commentaries correctly note this and comment on it, but many cog pulpits like to use this verse to back up their following of the Hebrew calendar, which they like to call the: “Holy Calendar” or “The Sacred calendar”.

Telling us that the Scribes & Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, so we have to listen to them concerning the calendar.

Hogwash! Fact is, this verse is telling us that we are to follow what Moses has to say about the matter.

Pulpit Commentary says this concerning verse 3:

“**All therefore**” It is because of their official authority as appointed teachers and expositors of the Law that Christ gives the following injunction, that it is the Law (The Torah) that we are to observe and do.

(Meaning that which is written in the Law) All that they taught or commanded out of the Law, or in due accordance therewith, was to be observed and obeyed.

It was only their official injunctions, derived immediately from **Scripture**, not their glosses, evasions, and interpretations, that were to be regarded with respect.

The Lord had already taken occasion to warn against these errors (in Mathew 16:6,11-12, etc.) to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Pulpits Commentary goes on to say: “The scribes are never accused of corrupting the sacred text, which, indeed, was scrupulously guarded, and kept pure and unaltered. It was their treatment of the doctrines thereof that was censured.

Gills Commentary says this:

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, This must be restrained to things that were agreeable to the chair of Moses, in which they sat, to the law of Moses, and other parts of Scripture and truth in general; for otherwise many of their glosses and traditions were repugnant to the law, and ought not to be observed.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown:

Concerning: “Bid you observe, that observe and do” - The word "therefore" is thus, it will be seen, of great importance, as limiting those injunctions which He would have them obey to what they fetch from the law itself. In requiring implicit obedience to such injunctions.

(Yes, implicit obedience to the Law itself.)

Remember Christ told us in Matthew 5:17 That He came not to destroy the law, or the prophets. He said till heaven and earth pass, not one jot nor one tittle shall pass from the law, and whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom.”

(The Law is still in effect, it hasn't been done away, and it gives specific and explicit instructions concerning the Calendar.

(Geneva Study Bibles says this: “We ought to listen to whatever we are truly taught from the word of God, the Scriptures.)

Many pulpits in the churches of God preach and teach that the Hebrew calendar is correct, and needs to be adhered to. But the Jews themselves disagree with that assumption. They say that their calendar is wrong, and that they need to get back to the calendar that was used by Moses.

The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. In the Second Temple period, the Great Sanhedrin met in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Sanhedrin as a body claimed powers that lesser Jewish courts did not have. As such, they were the only ones who could try the king or extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem, and were the ones to whom all questions of law were finally put.

The last binding decision of the Sanhedrin was in 358, when the Hebrew calendar was adopted. The Sanhedrin was dissolved after continued persecution by the Roman Empire.

Over the centuries, there have been attempts to revive the institution, such as the Grand Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon Bonaparte.

(This makes me think of what Gamaliel, a doctor of the Law said concerning councils, that if they be of men, they will come to naught, but if they be of God, no one cannot overthrow them.) (The Sanhedrin came to naught.)

In recent times, in 2004 a group of seventy one rabbis formed and claimed to represent varied communities in Israel, and undertook a ceremony in Tiberius (where the original Sanhedrin was disbanded) The group claimed to re-establish the body.

At that time (back in 2004) a list was presented concerning things that needed to be addressed by the newly formed “Sanhedrin”, and one of the first things on the list was the calendar issue. The Jews know that their current calendar, made up by Hillel II is quite flawed, with all its postponements rules and such.

There was much talk about how they need to get back to the calendar found in the Torah. So far, no changes have been made that I’m aware of. But for us, the church of God, we need to make changes every time we find out were doing something wrong.

Another reason we hear voice concerning why some keep the Hebrew calendar is because the “majority” keep it, so it must be correct. But I have been told that it’s a proven fact that the ‘majority’ are always wrong.

Now I don’t know for sure if that is true or not, but what I do know, is that in Exodus 23:2 we are told not to follow the multitude to do what is wrong. I also know that the ‘majority’ follow the wide & broad path, not the straight & narrow.

I often hear men say that there is no Calendar in the Bible, but I beg to differ. There may not be an abundance of Scriptures concerning God’s “Appointed Times”.

But the Scriptures are there, and they are really quite clear and precise. And let us always remember that there is simplicity in Christ. Our Creator doesn’t command us to keep particular time (His Appointed Times) and then not clearly (and simply) tell us when those times are.

I don’t know how familiar some are with the Hebrew calendar and its “postponement” rules. But you there’s a 300 + page study on it out there, that one cog minister paid \$10,000 of Tithe & Offering money to some scholar to research.

I have that study, and tried to read it, but it’s the most difficult & confusing thing I have ever read in my life. (And everyone else that I know of who also tried reading it said the same.)

I’m going to conclude today’s message with just a few verses. Scriptures that directly address God’s Appointed Times. They may be short verses, but there quite clear.

(Genesis 1:14 for starters.)

Genesis 1:14: *“And 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 for “seasons” (Appointed Times – same exact Hebrew word used elsewhere in the Scriptures for “Feasts” like in Leviticus 23 concerning all of God’s Feast Days) and for days and years.”*

(Dropping down to verse 16)

16, “*And God made two great lights; the greater light to “rule” the day, and the lesser light to “rule” the night. The stars also.*”

That word “rule” tells us that God gave the authority to proclaim when His “Appointed Times” are (His Holy Days) to the sun & moon, not to any man.

So when some say that the calendar is not in the Bible, to a certain extent there correct, because the calendar was actually placed by God in the Heavens for all to see.

But the majority in God’s church, keep the Holy Day calendar in their back pocket, and trust others to verify the dates & times.

The second largest group in God’s church, keep the calendar according to the “new moon” But incorrectly keep a “crescent” new moon which is not according to Scripture, but according to their own reasoning.

When asked why they keep the “crescent” they say because that the “new moon” is the sign, but how can it be a sign (they reason) if you can’t see it..... Again, that is using their own reasoning, and is not Scriptural.

(Psalm 81:3 specifies “exactly” when the new moon occurs.)

Psalm 81:3 “*Blow up the Trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed.*”

That word appointed (strong’s # 3677) tells us “exactly” when the new moon is. The word means fullness, or full moon.

Now some have mistaken this to mean when the moon is full of light... But that’s not what this Scripture is referring to, and one needs only to look just a little bit deeper into this word to understand what is being said here.

The root word here (Strong’s # 3680) and means = covered, concealed & hidden. The moon is not covered, concealed or hidden when you see the crescent.

(There’s much more that can be said about what I believe to be God’s True calendar, but I think it would be better to address it further in another message.)

For today, again, my hope is that we take Jude’s strong and powerful exhortation to “Earnestly Contend” for the faith once delivered to the saints, very seriously, and that our beliefs (all of our beliefs) are supported with Scripture, with the Word of God, and not with our own reasoning or men’s fables.