

Response to Tim Hegg's critique of Michael Rood's *Chronological Gospels*
by Miles R. Jones, PhD

In January of 2014, Tim Hegg of the Torah Resource Institute harshly criticized Michael Rood's *Chronological Gospels*. Hegg had only one major argument. Hegg strongly contests Michael Rood's claim that John 6:4 ("*And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh*") was falsely inserted into the text by Eusebius.

Frankly, this was a bold declaration by Rood that goes against mainstream orthodoxy! **Rood's claim would mean the ministry of Yeshua was one year – from one Passover to the next Passover - as the early church fathers testified.** It lasted from the Passover mentioned in John 2:13, shortly after Yeshua was baptized, until his triumphant return to Jerusalem for the Passover in John 11:55, when he was crucified. Add in the weeks after Yeshua returned from the dead to instruct his disciples and you have a 70 week ministry as prophesized in Daniel. The insertion of an additional Passover into the text of the Gospels falsely extends Yeshua's ministry on earth, resulting in profound, even drastic, consequences to church doctrine.

Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea early in the fourth century - 300 years after the death of the Messiah - was the first to proclaim the 3½ year ministry of Jesus. His claim is based upon the end times prophecy, also in Daniel (7:25, 12:7) and Revelation (12:14) where Daniel refers to the end of the reign of the Anti-Christ as "*a time, two times, and half a time*", meaning a year, two years, and half a year - or 3½ years until "*all these things shall be finished*". After this "*end of prophecy*"... Christ, coming this time as the "*conquering King*", will return and sit his throne in absolute power over all the kingdoms of the earth.

Eusebius was one of the bishops present at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, presided over by Emperor Constantine where the Nicene Creed, a statement of belief required of all Christians, was codified along with the establishment of the canon of Scripture. The lucrative contract to produce 50 authoritative copies of the Bible, to be sent to all parts of the Roman Empire, was awarded to Eusebius. Eusebius not only re-edited the Bible, which was needed because there were so many corrupted versions, but he also wrote the orthodox *History of the Church*, as well as *The Life of Constantine*. One reads his fawning obsequious worship of Constantine with distaste if not disgust. **So it comes as little surprise that Eusebius novel claim of the 3½-year ministry of Jesus leads to his conclusion that, by the fourth century CE, all prophecy had been fulfilled and Christ had indeed returned in absolute power over all kingdoms of the earth in the vicarious person of... Emperor Constantine!**

Eusebius' interpretation of Jesus' [premature] return '*in absolute power over all kingdoms of the earth*', was to provide the Roman Church with doctrinal license for incredible brutality over the coming millennia. By this falsehood the seed of the Inquisition had been sown.

Hegg focuses his critique on what is called an '*argument to authority*' - "*Is it possible that Michael Rood has suddenly seen what centuries of Bible scholars have missed?*" This is a classic logical fallacy - truth is truth regardless of who speaks it. This same argument was employed against Yeshua the Messiah because he was a simple country boy, not a prominent scholar of, for example, the Hillel or Shamai schools in Jerusalem. The right way to do things was to attend those schools, convince the next generation of young scholars of your perspective, all of them from orthodox, prominent and prosperous Hebrew families destined to be the new power elite and then propagate your ideas in the proper mainstream fashion. Instead, Yeshua chose poor Galilean fishermen as directed by his Father in Heaven, to be his disciples. The Jerusalem elite held Yeshua, his preaching, and his ragtag band of students in contempt because of this.

Hegg continues, "*Rood does not give us anything new. He simply repackages older controversies and the theories these controversies generated, and then presents them to his unsuspecting audience as though he has come up with something heretofore unknown.*" This is an unfortunate statement because it dismisses the validity of Rood's work without even seriously considering it. *Rood's Chronological Gospels was a monumental project with a depth of detail that has never been achieved before. New, it is!*

"Rood invested more than 40 years attempting to solve the apparent contradictions resident in the western translations of the Gospel records. These chronological inconsistencies have plagued scholars for centuries. Rood enlisted the resources of some of the most brilliant Hebrew scholars and astronomers to solve the calendrical anomalies that plague the biblical chronologist." To do so, he had to first revive the original Hebrew calendar, another monumental project!

Rood started with the only miracle in Scripture that was mentioned in all four Gospels, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. All four Gospel writers constantly outlined the time frame of their narratives. They would cite the season,

the day of the week, or phrases such as ‘*two weeks later they came to Capernaum*’. Starting with his anchor point, the feeding of the five thousand, Rood tied all these chronological references together to nail down the 366 events of Yeshua’s ministry recorded in the four Gospels. All are put on a timeline with each correlated to the passages in the Gospels which speak of them and detail the chronological references that allow them to be so ordered.

If we accept that the Gospels were a Hebrew story about the Hebrew son of the Hebrew God sent to the Hebrews to deliver a message in Hebrew, then we need to look at the Gospels from a Hebrew perspective. To begin with, the story of the Gospels took place in Hebrew so any explanation of Hebrew words or custom, such as “*Passover, a feast day of the Jews*” **is an insertion! You did not need to explain to Hebrews what Passover was. This is clearly an insertion by the Greeks - for the Greeks.** Greek copyists were notorious for their ignorance of Hebrew language, custom, and feast days. The insertion of the word “*Passover*” into the text by a Greek copyist, either accidentally or under the direction of Eusebius, would have been of little notice.

Rood’s analysis in *The Chronological Gospels* reveals that the reference to Passover in John 6:4 is completely out of context with the timeline of the Gospels. It takes place just before the feeding of the five thousand. **Matthew, Mark and Luke in their Gospels all confirm this took place at the end of the summer, just before the Feast of Tabernacles in the Fall.** The Gospel of John also witnesses to this Feast of Tabernacles time frame as happening in the Fall - except for the bizarre insertion of “*the Passover*” in John 6:4 - disturbingly out of context! Passover is in the Spring and was already recorded as happening in John 2:13, now as we pass into Fall it seems to be happening again. Who should we accept as the authority here – Matthew, Mark & Luke - or an anonymous Greek copyist?

If “*Passover was nigh*”, why wasn’t Yeshua in Jerusalem for Passover as required for all Jewish believers? Neither in John’s Gospel, nor in any of the other Gospels, is there a record of Yeshua consequently going up to Jerusalem for the Passover inserted into John 6:4. Indeed, if ‘*the Feast of Unleavened Bread*’ was nigh – why was Jesus feeding the five thousand ‘*leavened bread*’? For the full week of the Passover all leavened bread was absent from the entire land of Israel, yet just four days after Yeshua feeds the 5,000, another 4,000 were again miraculously fed with leavened barley loaves provided by Yehovah! **Who is more likely to have made a mistake here: Yeshua, Yehovah or Eusebius?**

In order to postulate a 3½ year ministry Eusebius and his supporters had to claim that yet another verse citing a “*feast of the Jews*” in John 5:1 also referred to Passover, a fourth Passover, when the context indicates it was the Feast of Shavuot, aka Pentecost, seven weeks after the Passover in John 2:13. So, in Eusebius’ re-edited Gospel of John we have a Passover in 2:16, a presumed Passover in 5:1, the insertion of a Passover into 6:4, and the final Passover in 11:55. **The additional Passovers in John, placed at the beginning of Yeshua’s ministry are in complete contradiction to the witness of the other three Gospels!**

In fact, once the timeline of the Gospels is put into order, **the insertion of two more Passovers would mean that Yeshua for the first two full years of his ministry - after baptism by John the Baptist - did nothing at all!** All the events of Yeshua’s ministry took place in a one year period from one Passover to the next Passover. Hegg concedes that “*It is true that Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) and Origen (ca. 185–254) adopted the one-year theory, as did others of the early Church Fathers.*” **So, Hegg admits the early Church Fathers agree with Rood.**

Hegg’s major argument is that “*Rood announces that... John 6:4.. is entirely missing in the earliest Greek manuscripts of John.*” Hegg counters that the verse is present in Manuscript P66 dated to around 200 CE before Eusebius was born in 260 CE. **Hegg does not mention that the dating of Manuscript P66 has been refuted by a noted Bible expert, Brent Nongbri, who places it in the late fourth century, long after Eusebius.**

Remember that Eusebius was contracted to compile the authoritative version of the Greek Bible from all the versions extant at the time. Regular revisions were necessary as scribal errors multiplied over time as a manuscript was copied and recopied time and time again, each time adding new errors, and sometimes omitting or inserting something, until the surviving text was often replete with mistakes, mostly minor. There were so many - mostly superficially differing - manuscripts of Scripture that we have categorized them as the Caesarean tradition, the Western tradition, the Alexandrian tradition, and etcetera. Hegg does finally, and begrudgingly, concede there were various versions of John that did not include the reference to Passover. “*There are a few other very minor manuscripts which lack the verse but none earlier than the one listed...*” **Regardless of the age of these other ancient manuscripts, they are definitive proof that one or more manuscript traditions survived that did not include the insertion of John 6:4!**

According to Hegg, "*Westcott and Hort*", compilers of the definitive 1896 text of the Bible, "*postulated the possibility that the words τὸ πάσχα, "the Passover," in John 6:4, "might have been missing in the Greek texts used by some of the early Church Fathers."* Clearly Westcott and Hort had noticed that the insertion of "*the Passover*" in John 6:4 did not match the witness of Matthew, Mark and Luke. There simply was no further evidence at the time to ascertain that conclusion. **But now, however, there is new evidence!**

In my studies of the Hebrew manuscript tradition - texts of the Bible which survived outside of the Roman orthodox tradition - I have studied the Roumant New Testament. This was the Bible of the Waldensians who existed outside of the Roman Church for millenia, descended from the Paulicians who carried with them their own Scripture the Old Itala Bible, a Latin text predating Eusebius. This text was translated into the Roumant language. In the Roumant New Testament, ***John 6:4*** says that "*Scenophagia, a feast of the Jews was nigh*". "*Scenophagia*" is the ancient Latin (& Greek) word that means "*Feast of Tabernacles*". This word for the "*Feast of Tabernacles*" was used in the original Wycliff Bible and the Old French Bible as well as in numerous other ancient works. There is no doubt about its meaning! Here we have a witness from outside of the Roman orthodox tradition established by Eusebius. **In the Gospel of John extant before Eusebius, John 6:4 said it was the Feast of Tabernacles that was nigh, not Passover!**

In the doctrinal wars of the early centuries of the Christian Church, one thing seemed certain. The church whose doctrine reigned supreme was the church which would reign upon the throne of Christendom and inherit all the power and authority which that represented. In the doctrinal sweepstakes that winner was the Church of Rome. Having established an orthodox doctrine, creed and canon - Constantine then took Christianity center stage as *the* major world religion aided by his star sycophant, Bishop Eusebius. ***Symbolically, Constantine took the bishops of the Roman Church up on a high mountain top at the Council of Nicea and promised them they would reign over all the kingdoms of the earth if they would only bow down to him... and they bowed down before the Roman Emperor!*** Is it any wonder the New Testament of Eusebius blames Yashua's death all on the Jews - subtly whitewashing Rome - the power who actually crucified the Messiah.

The Roman Church was then married to the military power of the state. The Romans had maintained their power by brutality, torture and slaughter as was amply demonstrated in their persecutions of Yeshua, his disciples and followers, beginning before they were even known as Christians. Within a few years the new

Church State of Rome began to persecute all those Christians who did not adhere to their proscribed doctrine - as enthusiastically as they had once persecuted the original Messianic Church. They burned dissenting believers and their texts of the Bible along with them. The church may have changed but the Romans had not!

Other Christian churches, even those larger than the Roman Church such as the Syriac Greek Orthodox Church of the Mid East and the Nestorian Church of the Far East were declared heretical and attacked spiritually, intellectually, politically and often militarily until they all but disappeared (the Nestorian Church) or shrank in significance (the Greek Orthodox Church). The Roman Church fought continual crusades throughout the centuries against many other pre-existing churches, such as the Waldensians, which never accepted their authority to dictate doctrine or enforce it under penalty of death. Countless thousands of believers were martyred who defied the Pope as the Vicar of Christ with the power of life and death over all Christians unless they bowed down and accepted the corrupted doctrines and ultimate authority of Rome. Thus did Rome enforce their orthodoxy, all in the name of the Prince of Peace. We must never forget the awful price in blood paid by the Messiah and His martyrs that we might know the truth rather than have it dictated by authorities.

When Tim Hegg passes judgment by declaring that Rood is “*leading his followers down the path to spiritual darkness*”, his condemnation comes not from a place of factual truth but rather from authoritarian orthodoxy. If you believe other than Hegg and his kind do, you are spiritually lost. The unfortunate nature of Tim Hegg’s critique is that he is a Messianic scholar expert in biblical exegesis and the classical languages who is capable of analyzing Rood’s work on a deeper level, as I have done, in order to help ascertain if it is valid or not. That is the method of science. I pray that he might do so one day. At this point, all Hegg has done is to take a superficial swing at *The Chronological Gospels*. Hegg’s critique comes nowhere near closing the argument.

Dr. Jones is a Messianic scholar and author of *The Writing of God* which details the evidence of the Exodus. In his forthcoming book, *Sons of Zion versus Sons of Greece: History of the Hebrew Gospel*, he confronts many of the issues concerning the historical transmission of the Word of God. He has three degrees in languages and linguistics including a doctorate from the University of Texas. He studied Hebrew at Criswell Bible College in Dallas. Dr. Jones regularly writes and

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