

THE DATE OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

by

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## DEDICATION

To the Lamb of God who knew no sin, but none-the-less became a sin offering on my behalf, so that I could become the righteousness of God in Him.

## PREFACE

This thesis marks the climax of over two decades of formal education. It would be impossible to mention every individual who made an impact upon my life during that period, thereby contributing in some way to this project. However, it would be absolutely unforgivable of me not to mention those key individuals and groups who had a particular hand in molding my life up to this point.

I would like first to extend my undying gratitude to the instructors, both formal and otherwise, whose efforts imparted to me an unquenchable thirst for knowledge: To my parents, who taught me from infancy to believe in God and to trust His written Word; to Bob Lindsey, whose unique Sunday School lessons awakened me to the fact that the Bible stories were about real people; to Russell Wood, who repeatedly challenged me to approach every project with a "burning desire" or not at all; to Seth Wilson, who made me study for Christ and not for a grade, and in whose Life of Christ classes I first fell in love with gospel chronology; to Kenny Boles and Jim Girdwood, whose love for the original languages was contagious; and to Wilbur Fields and Jim Marcum, who showed me how the brilliant light of the new covenant cast intriguing shadows in the old.

I also owe an unrepayable debt to all those Christians who encouraged me along the way: To the people of my home congregation in Cabool, Missouri, who saw a preacher within a young boy; to the little congregation of believers in Oxford, England, who were so attentive to my first sermons; to the people in the congregation at Webb City, Missouri, who trusted me to minister to their youth; to all my friends in the congregation at Richards, Missouri, where I first experienced full time pulpit ministry; to the congregation at Hartsburg, Illinois, where I served during my seminary studies and who prayed for my safety while I was in the Persian Gulf; and to all my new friends at River Park, who have continually encouraged me throughout the actual writing of this thesis.

I would also like to thank all my professors at Ozark and Lincoln for their dedication to carefully passing the faith on to the next generation. May God grant that I be as faithful as they in passing it on to those after me.

Professors Lowery and Hall have been very gracious in their consideration of this thesis. May God give them both many more years of honing the research and writing skills of seminary students.

Finally, I could never have come this far in my academic life without the support and understanding of my wife and son. In fact, Deb has gone above and beyond the call of duty in her support of my education and ministry. She left a promising career in the Air Force to bear the bulk of our financial obligations during my undergraduate studies.

Since then she has undergone three moves related to my ministerial and educational pursuits, giving up two good jobs, and moving ever farther from friends and family. She has certainly earned the accolades found in Proverbs 31.

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life...Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Thank you, my beloved, I could never have come this far without your help.

February 1995.  
Mishawaka, Indiana.

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture has been imported into the text by means of *Bible Word Plus & Bible Word PopUp* (1992), which utilizes the International Bible Society's New International Version (1987), the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament (3rd ed., 1975), and the Septuaginta (Stuttgart: Wuerttemberg Bibelanstalt, 1935; reprinted in 9th ed., 1975).

## INTRODUCTION

Timing is everything.

The New Testament record makes it very clear that the events of the gospel did not unfold in an unplanned, sporadic way. Each stage of the Incarnation falls within a Providential time frame.

From the very beginning, Jesus' proclamation of the gospel referenced this divine timing. Like the Immerser before him (Matt 3:1), he called the people to repentance and faith with the news that the long-promised salvation of the Lord had finally arrived (Mark 1:15).

"The time (ὁ καιρὸς) has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

This concept that the gospel events represent the climax of a divine time-table for the salvation of humanity can be seen in several parts of the New Testament. Each time it is clearly marked by the use of words such as χρονός ("a period of time"), καιρός ("a point of time"), ἡμέρα ("a day"), or ὥρα ("an hour").<sup>1</sup>

In response to his mother's report that the wine had failed during the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus replied, "My time (ἡ ὥρα μου) has not yet come" (John 2:4).

To his brothers' unbelieving insistence that he quit hiding in Galilee and present himself to the people at the



upcoming feast of Tabernacles, he responded, "The right time for me (Ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς) has not yet come" (John 7:6-8).

John twice comments that the reason for failed attempts to arrest Jesus was "because his time (ἡ ὥρα αὐτοῦ) had not yet come" (John 7:30; 8:20).

As Luke moves his gospel toward the passion and resurrection narratives, he also notes God's timing. "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven (τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ), Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

That the climax of this divinely appointed schedule was about to occur is especially noticeable in the events of the twenty-four hours prior to the crucifixion.

The impending crucifixion hung over his celebration of Passover (John 13:1).

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time (ἡ ὥρα) had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

It also moved him to prayer (John 17:1; Mark 14:33-36).

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time (ἡ ὥρα) has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour (ἡ ὥρα) might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

When the atonement had been completed, and the resurrection had been offered as the final proof of Jesus'

true identity, the full gospel message was proclaimed throughout the world. In that message, God's perfect timing was not forgotten. It is specifically cited by Paul on three occasions (Rom 5:6; Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 2:4-6):

You see, at just the right time (κατὰ καιρὸν), when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

But when the time had fully come (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου), God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time (καιρὸς ἰδίους).

The efficacy of this gospel message is inextricably bound up in the veracity of the gospel record, including its chronology. Within the pages of the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as a historical person, whose ministry took place within a specific geographical area and during a specific historical period. If this record is not accurate as history, then its message of salvation is immediately rendered null and void. Since the crucifixion and resurrection are at the core of the gospel (1 Cor 15:1-4), their proper historical placement is of primary importance.

This thesis will therefore demonstrate that the crucifixion of Jesus took place on Friday, 3 April A.D. 33, by establishing the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of Jesus ministry through the exploration of relevant biblical and extra-biblical historical evidence.

## 1. ESTABLISHING THE *TERMINUS A QUO* OF JESUS' MINISTRY

### The Significance of Luke 3:1-3

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene--during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke dates the beginning of John the Immerser's ministry by relating it to the tenure of two Jewish high priests, three Tetrarchs, a Roman provincial official, and by the numbered year of a Roman *princeps*' reign. Since it is a matter of record that John's ministry predated that of Jesus',<sup>2</sup> identifying the time so precisely indicated by Luke is key to establishing a reliable *terminus a quo* for the ministry of Jesus.

To ascertain the time indicated by Luke, the tenures of the individuals mentioned must first be identified. The period of time common to all of them will significantly narrow the range of years during which John could have inaugurated his ministry.

#### Pontius Pilate

To establish the Judean tenure of Pilate, it is best to work backward from a date which can be fixed with some certainty, namely, the death of Tiberius on 16 March A.D.

37.<sup>3</sup> Regarding Pilate's dismissal, Josephus reports that the Roman *legate* of Syria removed him from office after a Samaritan delegation had accused him of a particularly bloody massacre (Antiq. 18.4.2, 1980:380).

So Vitellius sent Marcellus, a friend of his, to take care of the affairs of Judea, and ordered Pilate to go to Rome, to answer before the emperor to the accusation of the Jews. So Pilate, when he had tarried ten years in Judea, made haste to Rome, and this in obedience to the orders of Vitellius, which he durst not contradict; but before he could get to Rome, Tiberius was dead.

Since Tiberius was dead by the time Pilate arrived back in Italy, his abrupt departure must have occurred during the winter of A.D. 36/37,<sup>4</sup> after he had served as *praefect*<sup>5</sup> of the province for ten years. This would date the time of his arrival to some point in A.D. 26 or 27.

Eusebius references Josephus' record in a defense against certain persons of his time who had falsely attributed "certain spurious acts against our Savior," which were supposed to have occurred in the "fourth consulship of Tiberius, which was the seventh year of his reign" - the fourth consulship being A.D. 21. Eusebius' response to this false teaching was that such a chronology is impossible since Pilate was not appointed as Judean *praefect* until Tiberius' twelfth year,<sup>6</sup> which would be A.D. 26 by Eusebius' reckoning.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Tetrarchs Herod, Philip and Lysanius

The tetrarchies of Herod and Philip came into existence upon the death of their father, Herod the Great. It is Josephus who again provides the detailed information which

makes it possible to establish the time of Herod's death, and subsequently the beginning of these tetrarchies, with great accuracy (Antiq. 17.8.1, 1980:366).

He died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven

In this particular passage, Josephus dates Herod's reign from two separate events. The former event - the capture of Antigonus - occurred when Herod took Jerusalem during the summer of 37 B.C. (Ibid. 14.16.4, 313).

This destruction befell the city of Jerusalem when Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus<sup>8</sup> were consuls at Rome, on the hundred and eighty-fifth Olympiad,<sup>9</sup> on the third month, on the solemnity of the fast, as if a periodical revolution of calamities had returned since that which befell the Jews under Pompey; for the Jews were taken by him on the same day,<sup>10</sup> and this was after twenty-seven years time.

The latter event - the Roman declaration of Herod as King of Judea - had occurred three years previous, in 40 B.C., a date also confirmed by consular and Olympiad dating cited by Josephus (Ibid. 14.14.5, 309).

Antony feasted Herod the first day of his reign. And thus did this man receive the kingdom, having obtained it on the hundred and eighty-fourth Olympiad, when Caius Domitius Calvinus was consul the second time, and Caius Asinius Pollio [the first time.]

These two dating methods indicate that Herod died at some point in 4 B.C.. This seems even more certain due to the record of a lunar eclipse in the final days of his life (Ibid. 17.6.4, 365). Only one lunar eclipse could have been visible in Judea during the period indicated, the peak of which came at 5:06 a.m. on Tuesday, 13 March 4 B.C.,<sup>11</sup>

placing the death of Herod in late March or early April<sup>12</sup> of that year.

Upon his death, Herod's kingdom passed into the hands of his sons (Ibid. 17.8.1, 366).

He appointed Antipas, to whom he had before left the kingdom, to be tetrarch of Galilee and Berea, and granted the kingdom to Archelaus. He also gave Gaulonitis, and Trachonitis, and Paneas, to Philip.

In A.D. 6, during the tenth year of his reign, Archelaus was summoned to Rome and banished to Vienna (Ibid. 17.13.2, 375). Sulpicius Quirinius (a.k.a. Cyrenius),<sup>13</sup> the newly appointed *legate* of Syria, immediately annexed Archelaus' kingdom and installed Coponius as its very first Roman *praefect*.<sup>14</sup> Except for the short time between A.D. 41 and 44, when Claudius granted Herod Agrippa control of his grandfather's former kingdom<sup>15</sup>, Judea remained under the control of Roman officials up through the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Philip died "in the twentieth year of the reign of Tiberius," after thirty-seven years in his tetrarchy (Ibid. 18.4.6, 381). Counting thirty-seven years forward from 4 B.C. renders a date of A.D. 33 or 34. When Caius came to power following Tiberius' death, he immediately had his friend Agrippa released from custody and granted to him the tetrarchy of the late Philip, along with that of Lysanias (Ibid. 18.6.10, 388). After Caius' assassination, Claudius confirmed both of these appointments to Agrippa, adding to them Judea and Samaria (Ibid. 19.5.1, 409).

As for Lysanias, beyond what Luke writes about his tetrarchy in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, and what Josephus mentions about his tetrarchy being promised to Agrippa by Caius in A.D. 37 (an act affirmed by Claudius in A.D. 41), very little is known about this tetrarch.

Josephus does mention a ruler by the name of Lysanias, who inherited his father Ptolemy's kingdom of Chalcis, in the region of Syria (Wars 1.13.1, 1980:442). However, this man was killed by Antony, at Cleopatra's instigation (Antiq. 15.4.1, 1980:318) in 36 B.C. (Dio 49.32.5, 1917 5:407), and therefore cannot possibly be the tetrarch of Tiberius' time.

It is possible however, that the Lysianas mentioned by Luke may have been the son or grandson of this earlier Lysanias of Albia. In support of this theory, Ogg cites the previously mentioned passages from Josephus and references a medal superscription and two inscriptions, from which he infers "that the rule of this second Lysanias cannot be put earlier than the death of Augustus, A.D. 14 (1940:171-172)." Since this tetrarchy passed to Agrippa in A.D. 37, the extreme ranges of Lysanias' tetrarchy would be A.D. 14 - 37.

#### The High Priests Annas and Caiaphas

Annas was appointed as high priest by Quirinius "in the thirty-seventh year of Caesar's victory over Antony at Actium" (Antiq. 18.2.1, 1980:377), i.e. A.D. 6/7.<sup>16</sup> He remained high priest until he was removed by Valerius Gratus, Tiberius' first Judean *praefect*, in about A.D. 16 (Ibid. 18.2.2, 378).

Jeremias identifies the family of Annas as one of four priestly clans which struggled for control of the high priesthood between 37 B.C. and A.D. 70 (1969:193-195). Ultimately, Annas, five of his sons, a son-in-law, and a grandson were appointed to the office by the Roman *praefect*. Since he was the *de facto* head of such a powerful family, it is hardly surprising that Luke should make mention of him. Neither is the statement by John that after his arrest, Jesus was taken "to Annas first; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year" (John 18:14).

After removing Annas as high priest, Gratus subsequently appointed three men for periods of about a year each, before finally settling on Joseph Caiaphas. Caiaphas remained in power until, as mentioned earlier, Vitellius replaced him with Jonathan, the son of Annas, during Passover A.D. 37 (Antiq. 18.4.3, 1980:381).<sup>17</sup>

#### Summary of Common Tenure

After identifying the years of tenure common to the individuals mentioned by Luke,<sup>18</sup> it is clear that the ministry of the Immerser must have begun between A.D. 26, when Pilate was appointed *praefect* of Judea, and A.D. 34, when Philip the tetrarch died.<sup>19</sup>

#### The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius Caesar

Luke's reference to the numbered year of Tiberius' reign is one of the most precise chronological citations found in the New Testament, let alone in the gospels. As Luke no



doubt intended, this citation should have been sufficient to pinpoint the exact year in which John began to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom. Unfortunately, modern scholars have disagreed on the correct method for calculating Tiberius' reign, resulting in a wide range of suggested years. Finegan gives an exhaustive collection of these possible calculations, using systems of accession and non-accession years; singular and joint rule; and Roman, Syro-Macedonian, Egyptian and Jewish reckoning. The resulting tables, therefore, place the fifteenth year of Tiberius at various points between A.D. 26 and 29 (1964:259-273).<sup>20</sup>

Rather than individually summarizing and evaluating the methodology used by modern scholars in arriving at these dates (a task far beyond the scope of this thesis), it seems more appropriate to consult the primary sources - the histories of the first through third centuries - in order to ascertain the chronological methodologies in a period more contemporary to Luke than our own. This should also provide sufficient opportunity to touch upon relevant points of the modern methods.

#### *The Δεκέτη of Augustus*

Augustus' reign is usually dated from one of two events. Josephus dates it from just after Julius Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March, 44 B.C.,<sup>21</sup> while Dio preferred the date of his victory at Actium (51.1.1, 1917 6:3), calculating the length of his reign as "forty-four years lacking thirteen days" (56.30.5, 1925 7:69).

However, it is neither the beginning date, nor the length of Augustus' reign which provides, what is perhaps, the most effective tool in discovering the disputed fifteenth year of Tiberius. This chronological aide comes in the form of a practice inaugurated by Augustus himself, shortly after his victory at Actium, a practice continued during the time of Tiberius and subsequent *princeps* - the governance of the provinces in ten year periods known as a δεκέτη.<sup>22</sup>

When Augustus began his seventh consulship in January of 27 B.C.,<sup>23</sup> he did so by reading before the Senate a written text in which he relinquished all the powers of his sole rule.

I shall lead you no longer, and no one will be able to say that it was to win absolute power that I did whatever has hitherto been done. Nay, I give up my office completely, and restore to you absolutely everything, - the army, the laws, and the provinces, - not only those which you committed to me, but also those which I myself later acquired for you. Thus my very deeds also will prove to you that even at the outset I desired no position of power, but in very truth wished to avenge my father, cruelly murdered, and to extricate<sup>24</sup> the city from great evils that came on unceasingly.

While he assigns various reasons to their reactions, Dio records that the Senators begged and reasoned with Augustus to resume his sole governance (Dio 53.11.4-5, 1917 6:217-219). Although quick to accept the Senate's offer, Augustus apparently thought it prudent to retain some semblance of the fading republic. He informed the Senate that he would accept responsibility of administering those provinces where a military presence was necessary, leaving

"the weaker provinces, on the ground that they were peaceful and free from war" under the Senate's control.<sup>25</sup> But, more significant to the matter under consideration, Augustus accepted this provincial control for a ten year period only (Ibid. 53.13.1, 223).

And wishing, even then, to lead the Romans a long way from the idea that he was at all monarchical in his purposes, Caesar undertook for only ten years the government of the provinces assigned to him; for he promised to reduce them to order within this period, and boastfully added that, if they should be pacified sooner, he would the sooner restore them, too, to the senate.

By this action, Augustus laid the groundwork for a practice which became common to himself and other *princeps* - the ten year administration of the Roman provinces - as later summarized by Dio (53.16.2-3, 1917 6:233).

When his ten-year period came to an end, there was voted to him another five years, then five more, after that ten, and again another ten, and then ten for the fifth time, so that by the succession of ten-year periods he continued to be sole ruler for life. And it is for this reason that the subsequent emperors, though no longer appointed for a specified period, but for their whole life once for all, nevertheless always held a celebration every ten years, as if then renewing their sovereignty once more; and this is done to the present day.

These terms of provincial authority can be easily traced in Dio's history.

In 18 B.C., when Augustus' ten-year term as *princeps* was about to expire, he extended it for an additional five years (Ibid. 54.12.4-5, 313-315).

He therefore first added five years to his own term as *princeps*, since his ten-year period was about to expire (this was in the consulship of Publius and Gnaeus Lentulus), and then he granted to Agrippa many privileges almost equal to his own, especially the tibunician power for the same length

of time. For that number of years, he said at the time, would be enough for them; though not long afterward he obtained the other five years of his imperial power in addition, so that the total number became ten again.

At this same time he also granted to Agrippa the tribune power for the same ten year period. The timing of this second act is especially key to properly setting the parameters of Augustus' first δεκέτη.

As regards this tribunician power, Dio writes (53.17.9-10, 1917 6:239-241):

The tribunician power, as it is called, which used to be conferred only upon men of the greatest influence, gives them the right to nullify the effects of measures taken by any other official, in case they do not approve it, and makes them immune from scurrilous abuse; and if they appear to be wronged in ever the slightest degree, not merely by deed, but even by word, they may destroy the guilty party, as one accursed, without a trial. The emperors, it should be explained, do not think it right to be tribunes, inasmuch as they belong altogether to the patrician class, but they assume the power of the tribunes to its full extent, as it was when it was greatest; and in numbering the years they have held the imperial office, they use the tribunician power to mark the stages, the theory being that they receive it year by year along with those who are regularly made tribunes.

By Dio's time (c. A.D. 200), the imperial year was marked by the automatic, annual renewal of the *princeps'* tribunician authority. This practice began in 23 B.C., with the Senate voting "that Augustus should be tribune for life," and quickly became the custom for subsequent rulers (Ibid. 53.32.5-6, 277)

For Augustus this authority was reckoned from 1 July (Finegan 1964:98).<sup>26</sup> Tiberius, to whom Augustus had granted the tribunician power sixteen times prior to dying,

continued to mark the renewal of his tribunician power every 1 July. (Ibid. 103-105).

Gaius and Claudius were granted tribunician power immediately upon their individual accessions (18 March and 25 January, respectively), having it renewed on each anniversary (Ibid. 98,105-106). However, at some point during Nero's reign, the renewal of the tribunician power was evidently reordered so that it ceased to shift with the *princeps*' regnal anniversary, instead being renewed on 10 December of each year (Ibid. 107).

It would seem therefore that the *princeps*' reign was reckoned by the annual renewal of his tribunician power. For Augustus and Tiberius, this date was 1 July. In addition, each δεκέτη of provincial administration was renewed in conjunction with the tribunician power for that particular year. This would certainly explain why Augustus' first δεκέτη expired, during 18 B.C., and not in 17 B.C., as would be expected if it were being reckoned by the actual anniversary of its inception (16 January), or by the start of the Roman civil year (1 January).

As previously mentioned, Augustus' five year term, which expired in 13 B.C., was immediately extended for an additional five years (Dio 54.19.8, 1917 6:331). Together, these two five year terms became a second δεκέτη, ending in 8 B.C., "when Asinius Gallus and Gaius Marcius were consuls" (Dio 55.5.1, 1917 6:391). "After this Augustus once more accepted the supreme power, - though with a show of

reluctance, - in spite of his oft-expressed desire to lay it down" (Ibid. 55.6.1, 393). In turn, this third δεκέτη ended during A.D. 3., with Augustus accepting "the leadership for the fourth time, though ostensibly under compulsion" (Ibid. 55.12.3, 423).

It should again be noted that the renewal of each δεκέτη comes in the year previous to that expected if it were being reckoned on an annual basis from 16 January 27 B.C., or in accordance with the start of the Roman civil year. However, since it was evidently reckoned by the renewal of Augustus' tribunician power on 1 July, the dates given are exactly as would be expected.

In A.D. 13 - the consuls being Munatius and Silius - "Augustus with seeming reluctance accepted a fifth ten-year term as head of the State" and "gave Tiberius the tribunician power" (Dio 56.28.1, 1917 7:63). Note that the renewal of Augustus' δεκέτη is once more associated with the granting of tribune authority, this time to Tiberius on 1 July (Finegan 1964:104).

### *The Theorized Co-Regency of Tiberius*

#### His Rise To Prominence

In 17 B.C. Augustus adopted his infant grandsons, Gaius and Lucius, "appointing them then and there successors to his office" (Dio 54.18.1, 1917 6:327). When Agrippa, the boys' father and Augustus' most trusted aid, died suddenly in 12 B.C., Augustus settled on Tiberius to act as his new assistant in public affairs. In addition, he forced

Tiberius to divorce his wife<sup>27</sup> so that he could marry Agrippa's widow, Augustus' daughter (Ibid. 54.31.1-2, 363)

For twenty years Augustus raised his two grandsons to succeed him. Then, in the first year of Augustus' fourth δεκέτη, both heirs died - Lucius first, in August of A.D. 3, followed by Gaius in February of A.D. 4 (Syme 93).

Augustus, without a legitimate heir and in need of a competent military leader in Germany, chose Tiberius to fill both vacancies. On 26 June A.D. 4 (Ibid. 94), he adopted Tiberius as his son (Dio 55.13.1, 1917 6:425; Seutonius 2.15-16, 1979:122-123). At about the same time he granted tribunician authority to Tiberius and sent him to Germany.<sup>28</sup>

In A.D. 6 Tiberius was diverted from his operations in Germany to deal with the more immediate threat of revolt in Pannonia and Dalmatia (Dio 55.30.1, 1917 6:471). For three years Tiberius led fifteen legions and a large number of auxiliary forces in "what proved to be the most bitterly fought of all foreign wars since Rome had defeated Carthage" (Seutonius 3.16, 1979:123).

Tiberius regained full control of the region by late in A.D. 9. and returned victoriously to Rome. The Senate wished to bestow on him many distinctions beyond the triumph he was due, but Augustus vetoed all their suggestions, "promising on each occasion that Tiberius would be satisfied with that he intended to bequeath him" (Ibid. 3.17), clearly indicating that Tiberius was now Augustus' heir apparent.

At about that time, word reached Rome that the legions under Varus' command in Germany had been utterly defeated,<sup>29</sup> resulting in the postponement of Tiberius' triumph. Augustus hurriedly mustered a new army (Dio 56.23.1-2, 1924 7:51), which Tiberius led into Germany in A.D. 10 (Seutonius 3.18, 1979:124). After two years of rigorous military operations there (Ibid. 3:20), Tiberius returned to Rome to celebrate his Pannonian triumph on 23 October of A.D. 12 (Woodman 1977:212).

#### His Provincial Authority

Seutonius goes on to report that "soon afterwards the Consuls introduced a measure which gave Tiberius joint control of the provinces with Augustus" (3.21, 1985:125). Based on Velleius Paterculus' reference to this action (1.121, 1992:307), Ussher wrote that Tiberius became Augustus' co-regent in A.D. 12 (1658:808), dating John's ministry from A.D. 26.<sup>30</sup>

From whence it is gathered that Tiberius was now *Prince* in the twelfth year of Christ, two whole years before Augustus his death, and therefore there must be a distinction observed between the beginning of Tiberius his first being *Prince*, and he afterward being *Monarch*.

Following Ussher's reasoning, many have suggested that Luke reckoned Tiberius' reign from a supposed co-regency starting in A.D. 11 (Mommsen in Hoehner 1975:31) or 12.

Ogg writes (1940:173-174):

This theory appears to have originated with Ussher. Rejected by Wieseler in his *Chronologische Synopse de vier Evangelien* (1843) it was subsequently adopted by him in his *Beiträge* (1869). More recently it has been revived by Weiss, Zahn, Ramsay, and others.



Appealing to Wieseler,<sup>31</sup> Edersheim claimed provincials would reckon the fifteenth year of Tiberius "from his co-regency with Augustus (which commenced two years before his sole reign), in the year 26 A.D." (1883 1:264).

Plummer also mentions Weiseler's assertions regarding a co-regency (along with other German scholars of that period), but considers it "intrinsically less probable," and seemingly "inconsistent with the statements of Tacitus and Seutonius" (1900:81-82).<sup>32</sup>

#### Objections To A Co-Regency

Despite the fact that some extremely influential writers of the twentieth century allow for the possibility of a *de facto* co-regency,<sup>33</sup> there are several weighty objections against this theory.

1) Regardless of Woodman's claims to the contrary (1977:211-212), Velleius did not establish a clear chronology of "Germany, *imperium*, triumph," thereby dating Tiberius' joint provincial authority to A.D. 12. Rather, Velleius simply cites Tiberius' successful military operations in Germany as the reason for the decree. He then continues with his narrative of the postponed triumph, never indicating exactly when the senate issued its decree (121, 1992:307).

2) Tiberius was obviously granted this joint control of the provinces in the latter part of Augustus' reign. It makes perfect sense that the senate would do this in conjunction with the beginning of Augustus' fifth δεκέτη of

provincial authority, in the summer of A.D. 13, especially since Tiberius was granted the tribunician power at that exact time (Dio 56.28.1, 1917 7:63).

3) In direct connection to the senate's decree of joint provincial authority, Seutonius mentions that the senate also gave Tiberius the task of assisting Augustus "to carry out the next five-year census" (3.21, 1979:125). Augustus' own Res Gestae states that this census was completed in A.D. 14, "in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Apuleius" (1992:359). Tiberius' appointment to help with this census certainly did not come much earlier than the previous year.<sup>34</sup>

4) Seutonius makes it clear that very little time passed from Tiberius' assumption of joint provincial authority, his participation in the census completed in early A.D. 14, his departure for Illyricum and his immediate return to Italy because of the illness which ended with Augustus' death on 19 August A.D. 14 (3.21, 1979:125). This chronology makes much more sense if Tiberius gained joint control of the provinces in the summer of A.D. 13, rather than in A.D. 12 or earlier.

5) Although several ancient chronologers mention Tiberius' joint administration of the provinces, none of them references a co-regency. To the contrary, they date Tiberius' reign from A.D. 14, the year of Augustus death.

Josephus writes that, at his death on 16 March A.D. 37, Tiberius "had held the government twenty-two years, five

months and three days" (Antiq. 18.6.10, 1980:387), showing that his reign began in the latter part of A.D. 14.

Seutonius (3.73, 1985:150) and Tacitus (6.50, 1988:226) both state that when Tiberius died, he had reigned almost twenty-three years, which also points to an administration beginning no earlier than A.D. 14.

Even Dio, who starts from an apparently corrupted date for Tiberius' death - 26 March 37 A.D. - gives his length of reign as "twenty-two years, seven months, and seven days," (58.28.5, 1917 7:257), which still back dates perfectly to 19 August 14 A.D. - the date of Augustus' death.

6) Seutonius records that, while "Tiberius did not hesitate to exercise imperial power immediately" after Augustus' death, "a long time elapsed before he assumed the position of Emperor" (3.24, 1985:127). He even describes, in vivid detail, how Tiberius frustrated those around him by his failure to immediately assume the technical office of *princeps*.<sup>35</sup>

5) The coins from Syrian Antioch, on which Weiseler's conversion to the co-regency theory was largely based, were not apparently genuine (Hastings in Plummer 1900:82).

According to Ogg (1940:177):

Other coins, also issued at Syrian Antioch and about the authenticity of which there is no doubt, settle this matter. They bear the year numbers EM and ZM = 45 and 47 of the Actian era = A.D. 14-15 and A.D. 16-17, and the regnal year numbers A and Γ, the 1st and 3rd years of Tiberius.

Therefore, although Tiberius was clearly associated with Augustus in the administration of the provinces from the

summer of A.D. 13, there is no real evidence for a co-regency from which Luke might have dated Tiberius' fifteenth year.<sup>36</sup>

### *The Δεκέτη of Tiberius*

Unlike Augustus before him, Tiberius did not like the idea of having his control of the provinces renewed every ten years (Dio 57.24.1, 1917 7:181).

When the ten years of his rule had expired, he did not ask any vote for its renewal, for he had no desire to receive it piecemeal, as Augustus had done; nevertheless, the decennial festival was held.

But even though Tiberius did not care for this practice, others clearly preferred that it continue. In the year A.D. 34 the renewal of Tiberius' δεκέτη was again celebrated, and this time it is clearly identified as the close of his twentieth regnal year (58.24.1, 1917 7:247).

The twentieth year of Tiberius' reign was now at hand, but he did not enter the city, although he was sojourning in the vicinity of the Alban territory and Tusculum; the consuls, however, Lucius Vitellius and Fabius Persicus, celebrated the completion of his second ten-year period. For this was the way the senators styled it, rather than as a twenty-year period, to signify that they were granting him the leadership of the State again, as had been done in the case of Augustus.

Even without reference to the second decennial celebration, this passage clearly identifies Tiberius' first year as A.D. 14/15. But when the matter of the δεκέτη of provincial authority is raised, knowing that it was customarily renewed on 1 July, in conjunction with the tribunician power, it is in perfect agreement with the historical record that Tiberius became *princeps* within a

matter of weeks after Augustus death', and not at any point prior to that time.<sup>37</sup>

#### Summary Regarding the Fifteenth Year of Tiberius

Because of the regular commemoration of the δεκάτη of provincial authority, it is highly probable that the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar should be identified as 1 July A.D. 28 through 30 June A.D. 29.<sup>38</sup> This dating agrees perfectly with other chronological evidence.

As referenced earlier, the death of Philip the tetrarch, which certainly occurred in either A.D. 33 or 34, is further dated by Josephus as being "in the twentieth year of the reign of Tiberius" (Antiq. 18.4.6, 1980:381-382). According to the reckoning under consideration, that year would have been 1 July A.D. 33, through 30 June A.D. 34.

Eusebius puts the appointment of Pilate in the twelfth year of Tiberius, i.e. A.D. 25/26 (Eccl. Hist. 9, 1988:39). He then equates the fourth year of the Judean *praefect* with the fifteenth year of Tiberius, i.e. A.D. 28/29 (Ibid. 10, 39). This certainly agrees with the dating of Pilate's tenure as discussed earlier.

Tacitus equates "the consulships of Gaius Asinius Pollio (II) and Gaius Antistius Vestus (I)" - A.D. 23 - with the ninth year of Tiberius (4.1, 1988:157) - which the δεκάτη cycle would assign to A.D. 22/23.

#### Summary

It would appear that the normal Roman means of dating the reign of the *princeps* was by the numbered years of his

δεκέτη. This method would have been used in all official government documents, including those within the provinces, and would therefore have been widely known and understood. This is certainly why Luke chose to cite the fifteenth year of Tiberius, knowing that Theophilus, wherever he might have lived, would immediately be able to pinpoint the timing of John's appearance.

#### The Significance of John 2:20

The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

When the Jews objected to Jesus' cleansing of the temple complex during the first Passover of his ministry, they demanded he provide them with an authoritative sign for doing so. His veiled prediction regarding the resurrection of his bodily temple within a three day period of time was misunderstood by the literalistic mind set of the Jews. They promptly associated his remarks with the Jerusalem temple and made the historically oriented remark cited above. Although they misunderstood Christ, their response does offer the opportunity to accurately date the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

#### Unlikely Reference to the Temples Mentioned in the O.T.

In one of the earliest commentaries composed on this text (c. A.D. 235), Origen had great difficulty in assigning a proper understanding to these forty-six years (Commentary on John 10.22-23, 1994 9:402-404). This arose from his

attempt to relate the time indicated to temple building projects contained in Scripture.

At length, Origen shows that it was not likely a reference to the building of the first temple - the temple of Solomon - which he calculates took less than eleven years to build.<sup>39</sup> He does refer to some who identified the forty-six years with the building of the second temple, but admits to being uncertain as to the number of years involved in that construction.<sup>40</sup> In the end, he came to no clear conclusion on the matter.

#### The Temple Reconstruction by Herod the Great

Modern scholars have seldom followed Origen's frustrating line of thought. Instead, they see in the Jews' use of the demonstrative pronoun "this" (οὗτος), a clear indication that the temple meant was the current building, which had been extensively renovated by Herod the Great.

About this renovation Josephus writes (Antiq. 15.11.1, 1980:334):

And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection, and this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him;

Although Josephus, as mentioned earlier, recognized two distinct beginnings to the reign of Herod, he seems to prefer that which began with Herod's taking of Jerusalem in

the summer of 37 B.C.<sup>41</sup> This date would put Herod's eighteenth<sup>42</sup> year in 20 B.C.<sup>43</sup>

Beginning from that year, forty-six years of building activity, as most English translations seem to indicate, dates this statement to the Passover of A.D. 27. However, this presents an immediate problem, since the Passover of A.D. 27 fell within the thirteenth year of Tiberius (as demonstrated in the previous section), two years before the Immerser began his public ministry.<sup>44</sup> And because there is no clear-cut evidence for a Tiberian co-regency required to allow for this early date, there must be some other understanding of John 2:20.

In this matter, the aorist passive indicative "was built" (οικοδομήθη) may provide little help, as there exists some controversy as to the proper way to understand it. As is made clear in basic Greek grammars,<sup>45</sup> the difference between the imperfect and aorist tense is one of action. The imperfect describes past action in a linear fashion - an ongoing process taking place prior to the present. On the other hand, the aorist describes past action as punctiliar - something completed prior to the present.

Since the verb in John 2:20 is aorist and not imperfect, Maier writes that it "probably denotes a *completed* building operation, not one still going on" (1968 37:70). This would certainly be the best understanding of the tense used. However, because some scholars are convinced that the building operation was still going on in the time of Christ,



they force this verb to describe the entire building process as if it were a single event - what A.T. Robertson called, "a good example of the constative aorist" (1934:833).

Newman and Nida, who acknowledge that the basic intent of the aorist "focuses attention on the completion of the act of building, rather than on the process," nevertheless do not think it possible that this is the meaning of this particular passage (1976:70).

Actually, the Temple was not completed until A.D. 63. Some scholars believe that John made a chronological error here, assuming that the Temple was completed at the time of Jesus' ministry, when actually it was not. However, it is natural to take "was built" as a summary of the whole process of building, without necessarily implying that the building was completed at the time the statement was made. It is interesting that in the Septuagint of Ezra 5:16 the same aorist form of the verb is used of the building of the Temple, and there also the Temple was not yet completed.

It should be immediately noted that the normal and ordinary understanding of the aorist passive indicative forms of οἰκοδομέω in the LXX is that of a completed building project, and not that of a continuing project. Ezra 5:16 is but one exception to that rule, based on clear context.

Since Josephus' record of the temple reconstruction appears to be the historical context of John 2:20, perhaps closer consideration of Josephus can clear up this matter.

Aware that such an immense project would suffer without wide public support, Herod addressed the Jewish people in order to explain his intention. First, he reminded them of the current temple's history (Antiq. 15.11.1, 1918 8:187).

For this was the temple which our father built to the Most Great God after their return from Babylon, but it lacks sixty cubits in height, the amount by which the first temple, built by Solomon, exceeded it. And yet no one should condemn our fathers for neglecting their pious duty, for it was not their fault that this temple is smaller. Rather it was Cyrus and Darius, the son of Hystaspes, who prescribed these dimensions for building, and since our fathers were subject to them and their descendants and after them to the Macedonians, they had no opportunity to restore this first archetype of piety to its former size.

It immediately becomes clear that Herod is specifically speaking about the temple sanctuary (ὁ ναός) and not of the general temple complex (τὸ ἱερόν).<sup>46</sup> The porch of Solomon's sanctuary had been an astonishing one hundred twenty cubits (c. 180 feet) in height (2 Chr 3:4), twice that of the facade which replaced it.<sup>47</sup> Herod skillfully lays the blame for this deficiency upon the foreign rulers of that period, and then continues with the desire of his heart.

But since, by the will of God, I am now ruler and there continues to be a long period of peace and an abundance of wealth and great revenues, and - what is of most importance - the Romans, who are, so to speak, the masters of the world, are (my) loyal friends, I will try to remedy the oversight caused by necessity and subjection of that earlier time, and by this act of piety make full return of God for the gift of this kingdom.

While the people were pleasantly surprised by Herod's proposed renovation, they were concerned that he might not have the resources available to carry out such an ambitious project. But Herod assured them "that he would not pull down the temple (τὸν ναόν) before having ready all the materials need for its completion," a promise he carefully kept (Antiq. 15.11.2, 1918 8:189).

Josephus details the entire construction process, including Herod's decision to surround the sanctuary with porticoes of proportionate size (Ibid. 15.11.3, 191). In point of fact, it is Josephus' distinction between the sanctuary construction and that of the ancillary courts and porticoes which is of prime importance. He reports that the porticoes and outer courts "were being built" (ᾠκοδόμησεν) for eight years, while the sanctuary itself "was built" (οἰκοδομηθέντος) in only a year and six months (Ibid. 15.11.5-6, 205). It should be carefully noted, that although he distinguishes between the two aspects of Herod's grand project, he clearly delineates termination points for each project.

Furthermore, the Jewish people were so overwhelmed with joy by the speedy completion of the sanctuary that they responded with a great celebration of thanksgiving and worship (Ibid.). It so happens that this celebration coincided with the anniversary of Herod's accession to the Jewish throne, a fact which allows it to be readily dated to the third Jewish month.<sup>48</sup>

Knowing in what year the temple reconstruction started, how long it took for the sanctuary to be built, and at what time of year the work was completed, it is possible to establish a chronology for Herod's renovation project. Having spent the earlier part of 20 B.C. in preparation, Herod had the actual reconstruction started in the winter of 20/19 B.C. One year and six months later, in the summer of

18 B.C., the sanctuary was completed. The renovation of the attendant porticoes and courts then continued until 12 B.C.

If there remains any doubt as to whether this renovation project was considered complete prior to the days of Jesus, the summary of Josephus in Antiquities 15.11.7, 1918 8:206-207) should suffice to remove it.

And it is said that during the time when the temple was being built no rain fell during the day, but only at night, so that there was no interruption of the work. And this story, which our fathers have handed down to us, is not at all incredible if, that is, one considers the other manifestations of power given by God. Such, then, was the way in which the temple was rebuilt.

In this final passage, there is no mistaking that the sanctuary itself is meant, both by the use of ναός and by the reference to God's divine providence in allowing the work to be done rapidly (i.e. one and a half years), without interruption. Of additional interest is the fact that the verb used to describe the finished work in the last phrase of this passage is ἐξφοδομήθη - which is, but for the prepositional prefix, a twin to the verb in John 2:20.

#### Additional Work on the Temple Complex

At about the time Florus replaced Albinus as Rome's official in Judea - A.D. 64 (McRay 1991:412), Josephus states, "Just now, too, the temple had been completed (Ἦδη δὲ τότε καὶ τὸ ἱερόν ἐτετέλεστο)" (Antiq. 20.9.7, 1965 9:504-505). He goes on to detail that the completion of work left 18,000 workers suddenly unemployed. Despite their requests for additional construction projects within the temple complex (ἱερόν),<sup>49</sup> Herod Agrippa II refused because of

the potential time and cost involved, instead putting them to work paving the city with white stone (Ibid. 507).

Since Josephus clearly stated that Herod the Great's renovation eighty-four years previous was primarily on the Sanctuary (ναός), and that his work (and the attendant work of the porticoes and courts) was completed in a matter of years, this completion of work on the temple complex in A.D. 64 can hardly reference that work. It must instead mark the completion of a later renovation.

Agrippa II, into whose care Claudius had entrusted the temple complex (Ibid), was an avid builder (Jeremias 1967:12-13). His most controversial building project - a dining room which allowed him to watch the activities within the temple as he ate - prompted the immediate construction of a wall to block his view, as well as that of a Roman guard post (Antiq. 20.8.11, 1915 9:491-493). It is likely therefore, that the completed construction mentioned by Josephus was something commissioned by him, and not by his great-great grandfather.

#### Summary

Since the work on the sanctuary was completed in the summer of 18 B.C., the forty-sixth anniversary of its completion would have come in the summer of A.D. 29. At any point between then and the forty-seventh anniversary in the summer of A.D. 30, the Jews could have appropriately said, "This sanctuary has been built for forty-six years" [trans. mine]. It would appear then, that the only Passover at

which the confrontation in John 2 could have occurred was the Passover of A.D. 30.

Summary Regarding the *Terminus a Quo*

It has been reasonably demonstrated that the tenures of the officials listed in Luke 3:1-2 immediately limit the possible starting date for John the Immerser to A.D. 26 through 34. This time frame is further reduced by ascertaining that the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, also mentioned by Luke, should properly be defined as 1 July A.D. 28 through 30 June A.D. 29. This immediately establishes a ministerial *terminus a quo* for the Immerser, and by extension also for that of Christ.

Since the Jews made a very specific chronological remark during the first Passover of Christ's ministry, it is possible to date that Passover to A.D. 30. This would agree perfectly with the timing of the Immerser's ministry and serves as an absolute *terminus a quo* for Jesus' own ministry.

## 2. ESTABLISHING THE *TERMINUS AD QUEM* OF JESUS' MINISTRY

### The Length Of Jesus' Ministry

Having determined the *terminus a quo* of Jesus' public ministry as Passover A.D. 30, simply knowing the length of this ministry would immediately render the *terminus ad quem*.

### The Error of Limiting the Ministry to a Single Year

Early on, the teaching arose that the ministry of Christ spanned but a single year. Clement of Alexandria, in his Stromata (c. 200), laid out a chronology in which Christ was immersed during Tiberius' fifteenth year and crucified in his sixteenth year (1.21, 1994 2:333). He based this idea on Jesus' immersion at age thirty, and upon an understanding of Isaiah 61:1-2 which limits Jesus' ministry to one year, each concept coming from Luke's gospel (3:23 and 4:19 respectively).<sup>50</sup>

In Against Heresies (c. A.D. 185), Irenaeus dealt with the gnostic teaching of "the disciples of Ptolemaeus, whose school may be described as a bud from that of Valentius" (Preface 1.2, 1994 1:316). Like Clement, this group used Isaiah 61:1-2 to support their teaching that it was necessary for Christ to teach for but twelve months, to then be betrayed by his twelfth apostle, and finally crucified in the twelfth month of the Jewish year (Ibid. 2.20.1, 387).

Irenaeus took this group to task over their misapplication of Jesus' quotation of the Isaiah text. After referencing several Biblical passages which used similar terms in a figurative manner, he concludes (Ibid. 2.22.2, 390):

The year there mentioned does not denote one which consists of twelve months, but the whole time of faith during which men hear and believe the preaching of the Gospel, and those become acceptable to God who unite themselves to Him.

He then goes on to present what is, even to this very day, the most damaging evidence against a single year ministry - the chronology of John's gospel. Carefully, he enumerates three separate Passovers within the ministry of Jesus, together representing at least two full years (Ibid. 2.22.3, 390-391).

The first is that recorded in John 2:13, as Irenaeus identifies the occasion by quoting John 3:23 - "it was written, 'For many believed in Him, when they saw the signs which He did'" (Ibid.).

As to the second Passover, Irenaeus associates it with the healing of the paralytic beside the pool, identifying it as the unnamed feast of John 5:1. This is extremely significant, since the extant Greek texts fail to term this feast a Passover. The manuscript testimony is split, even over the presence of the article. This makes the difference between the general understanding of an anarthrous construction - "a feast of the Jews" - and the more specific use of the article - "the feast of the Jews," possibly the Passover.<sup>51</sup>



Metzger writes that "strong external evidence favors the anarthrous ἑορτή" (1975:207). This evidence, which includes the second/third century manuscripts p<sup>66</sup> and p<sup>75</sup>, led the committee to favor their anarthrous reading of the text with the highest degree of probability. And yet, Irenaeus, writing from the same period as these earliest *papyri*, clearly identifies the feast in question as the Jewish Passover.

Irenaeus apparently assumed that the unnamed feast in John 5:1 was the Passover specifically mentioned within the context of the feeding of the five thousand, which he next describes (Ibid.). John 6:4 clearly reads, "The Jewish Passover Feast was near (ἦν δὲ ἐγγύς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων)," but Irenaeus treats the reference as if it had already occurred, rather than as if it were yet to occur.

This is certainly not a reasonable understanding of John's phrase. He uses it in three other places, all of which clearly describe feasts that were drawing near, and not those which had already passed.<sup>52</sup> This has resulted in some individuals favoring the transposition of these two chapters, for which there is no good evidence.<sup>53</sup>

Moving on, Irenaeus then comes to the final Passover of Jesus' ministry, the one at which he "suffered on the day following" (Ibid.). Having thus appealed to John's record, Irenaeus hoped to render the heresy of Valentius' disciples a death blow (Ibid.).

Now, that these three occasions of the passover are not included within one year, every

person whatever must acknowledge. And that the special month in which the passover was celebrated, and in which also the Lord suffered, was not the twelfth, but the first, those men who boast that they know all things, if they know not this, may learn it from Moses. Their explanation, therefore, both of the year and of the twelfth month has been proved false, and they ought to reject either their explanation or the Gospel; otherwise [this unanswerable question forces itself upon them], How is it possible that the Lord preached for one year only?

As Irenaeus demonstrated, John's gospel mentions at least three separate Passovers, proving that Jesus had at least two full years of ministry. As an additional note, he points out that it would have been impossible for Christ to die in the twelfth month of the Jewish year, when the gospels clearly show that his death happened at Passover, in the first month of the Jewish year.

Despite Irenaeus' best efforts, proponents of a single year ministry continued to exist.<sup>54</sup> In point of fact, many have arisen right through to the modern era,<sup>55</sup> although, as Hoehner is quick to point out, none of the modern scholars defend their position by appealing to Jesus' use of Isaiah 61:1-2 (1977:46-47). Regardless, the use of John's accounting of individual Passovers is sufficient to allow the rejection of any system which grants less than two full years to the ministry of Christ.

#### Difficulties in Determining a Length Beyond Two Years

If one were reduced to depending only upon the text of the gospels to determine the length of Jesus' ministry, he would be hard pressed to demonstrate with any certainty anything beyond two full years. This difficulty arises from

the uncertainties already mentioned regarding the unnamed feast of John 5:1.

Even if this feast were known to be a separate Passover, it would only indicate that Jesus' ministry lasted at least three years. It would not demonstrate beyond question that the ministry lasted only three years. Conversely, if it were known to be some other Jewish feast, this would only indicate what is already known - that the ministry of Christ was at least two years in length. It would not suffice as compelling evidence that the ministry lasted only two years.

Therefore, purely from the standpoint of the biblical text, the *terminus ad quem* can be no earlier than Passover A.D. 32.

#### The Limiting Effect of Church History

There are two things within New Testament history which limit the *terminus ad quem* of Jesus' ministry, the first being the conversion date of the Apostle Paul, and the second being the events in the books of Acts which preceded that conversion.

#### *The Conversion of Paul*

In order to come to the date of Paul's conversion with relative certainty, it is imperative that key points of his ministry be tied to events by which they can be dated.

The first such event in Acts is Herod Agrippa's death (12:20-23), also described in detail by Josephus (Antiq. 19.8.2, 1980:412-413). Both records attribute his death to an impious response to divine accolades, but Josephus

carefully dates the death as occurring after he "had reigned three years over all Judea...in the seventh year of his reign," four of which had occurred under Caius and three under Claudius (Ibid.). This regnal information puts his death in A.D. 44. Since Herod had immediately gone to Caesarea after Passover (Acts 12:3-4,18-19), it is likely then that his death occurred in the summer of that year.

The context clearly indicates that Barnabas and Paul came to Jerusalem during the Passover of A.D. 44.<sup>56</sup> They had been sent to Judea with advance aide for the believers who would soon be suffering under a famine about which God had provided prophetic insight (Acts 11:28).<sup>57</sup> Shortly after their return to Antioch, these two men were sent out on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3), which should probably be dated between A.D. 44 and 46/47.<sup>58</sup> This is important because it helps establish a workable *terminus a quo* for the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), which should not be placed any earlier than A.D. 47.

As to the *terminus ad quem* for the council, one must first ascertain the starting date for the second missionary journey. This is aided by Luke's record of accusations brought against Paul by the Corinthian Jews when Gallio was *proconsul* of Achaia (Acts 18:12). Finegan details a partial inscription from Delphi, which mentions Gallio as *proconsul* and includes an apparent reference to the twenty-sixth acclamation of Claudius as *imperator*. Comparing the data from this inscription with others of the same period,

Finegan is able to precisely date it to the first half of A.D. 52 (1964:316-318).<sup>59</sup>

Due to the past excesses of certain provincial appointees, Claudius limited most of them to a single year in office, and only permitted certain men to continue for two years (Dio 60.25.4-6, 1914 7:431-433). This would seem to limit Gallio's tenure to either A.D. 51-52 or A.D. 52-53, with his arrival, as required by another Claudian dictate,<sup>60</sup> coming not much later than early summer.

Since Paul had already been preaching in Corinth for a year and six months (Act 18:11), much to the chagrin of the unbelieving Jews, it would seem likely that the opportunity for their accusation was Gallio's arrival in the province,<sup>61</sup> which Finegan (1964:318) and Hemer (1989:252) both date as early summer A.D. 51. Counting back eighteen months would put Paul's arrival to the winter of A.D. 49/50.

Upon his arrival he took up lodging with Aquila and Priscilla, Jews recently expelled from Rome by an edict of Claudius.<sup>62</sup> Citing Orosius, who puts this edict in the ninth year of Claudius, Finegan dates their recent arrival to A.D. 49 (1964:319). While the accuracy of Orosius is uncertain, this dating certainly fits well with what is already known about the tenure of Gallio.

The itinerary of Paul prior to his arrival at Corinth is rather straight forward. He had briefly visited Athens, where he had opportunity to make an address in the Areopagus (Acts 17:19). Before Athens, he was allowed a very short

ministry in Berea before the Jews at Thessalonica came to incite the populace against him (Acts 17:13). In Thessalonica, he had spent only three Sabbaths, representing less than a month, before a great riot took place (Acts 17:2,5). Prior to that, he had spent an indeterminate period of time at Philippi, although the context seems to lend itself best to a brief ministry (Acts 16:11ff). In all, this certainly represents a matter of a few months, taking up at least part of A.D. 49.

Paul had sailed from Troas to Philippi in response to a vision (Acts 16:9-10). Previously he had experienced divine opposition to his attempts to take the gospel into Asia and into Bithynia, the combination of which had effectively herded him straight to the port city of Troas (Acts 16:6-8). Before that he had traveled overland from Syrian Antioch through Syria, Cilicia and the cities of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium, delivering the letter drafted during the Jerusalem council. It is likely that somewhere along the way the winter of A.D. 48/49 had passed, but where Paul was when this occurred is uncertain. This would indicate A.D. 48 as one of the earliest possible dates for the start of the second missionary journey.<sup>63</sup>

Knowing that the end of the first missionary journey may have come as early as the latter half of A.D. 47, and the start of the second as early as A.D. 48, it is possible to determine that the earliest likely date for the Jerusalem council is late A.D. 47. Of course, itineraries which

prefer later dates would allow for a later council, but certainly nothing later than A.D. 51. The date of this council is a key factor in the chronology of Paul, as described by him in Galatians 1:18-2:6.

The need for such a council arose when Judean teachers arrived in Antioch, teaching that Gentiles had to accept circumcision as part of their conversion to Christianity (Acts 15:1-2). Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem, accompanied by the uncircumcised Titus, to submit to the Judean leaders the divine revelation behind their Gentile evangelism (Gal 2:1-3). These two passages clearly describe the same event.

In connection with his personal account of the council, Paul remarks that it had occurred "fourteen years later (*Ἐπειτα διὰ δεκατεσσάρων ἔτων*)," referring either to a previously mentioned visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18), or, more probably,<sup>64</sup> to his own conversion (Gal 1:13-17). From the earliest date for the council - A.D. 47 - fourteen years previous would be A.D. 33 or 34, depending on whether inclusive or exclusive counting is used.

The earlier visit of Paul to Jerusalem, during which he met Cephas and James, was brief and came three years after his conversion (Gal 1:18-19). A comparison of Luke's account (Acts 9:23-30) and Paul's own testimony (2 Cor 11:32-33) reveals that this visit came immediately after his escape from Aretas' ethnarch in Damascus. While it is known that Aretas was King of Nabataean Arabia from c. 9 B.C. to

A.D. 40 (Hemer 1989:164, n7), there is some controversy as to when, if ever he actually controlled the city of Damascus. As Barrett points out, the term "ethnarch" might describe several possibilities (1973:304).

The ethnarch who sought to arrest Paul may have been Aretas's governor, or, if the Romans were still in sole authority, his chargé d'affaires in the city...or, possibly, a sheikh operating outside the city.

Therefore, when dating Paul's nocturnal escape from Aretas' ethnarch, the only certainty is that it preceded Aretas' death in A.D. 40. There is however, another historical event involving Aretas which might help better pinpoint the date of Paul's hasty departure.

In the latter half of A.D. 36, Aretas took advantage of a northern border dispute with Herod of Galilee, to avenge Herod's insolent divorce of his daughter (Antiq. 18.5.1, 1980:382). Herod's army was soundly defeated by Aretas,<sup>65</sup> with the assistance of an insurgent element drawn from the nearby tetrarchy of the late Philip (Ibid.). In his rage, Herod sought the assistance of Tiberius, which he received in the form of orders for the *legat*e Vitellius of Syria to immediately capture Aretas and send him bound to Italy or else to kill him and send his head.<sup>66</sup> News of Tiberius' death insured that this order was never carried out (Ibid.).

It is likely that during the period of this border dispute, Aretas' ethnarch in Damascus would have considered Paul - a Jew preaching a fiery message about a resurrected Galilean king - a potential threat. Caught in the middle of



this turbulent situation in northern Palestine, it would only be natural for Paul to immediately remove himself beyond the ethnarch's reach by returning to the relative calm of Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup>

By assigning a date of A.D. 36 to Paul's first Jerusalem visit, his conversion three years previous would fall in either A.D. 33 or 34.<sup>68</sup> Fourteen years after this same conversion would render a date of c. A.D. 47<sup>69</sup> - the earliest date possible for the Jerusalem council presented previously. Similar application of the latest dating of the Jerusalem council noted earlier (i.e. A.D. 51), would indicate a conversion no later than A.D. 36 or 37.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, Paul's date of conversion is put between A.D. 33 and 37, with the earliest portion of this range seeming more preferable.

#### *Events Prior to Paul's Conversion*

Having ascertained a range of dates for Paul's conversion, it becomes necessary to next review the events which transpired between the crucifixion and that conversion. This should further limit the extremes of the *terminus ad quem* for Jesus' ministry.

Obviously, the events of Pentecost preceded the conversion of Paul. So too did the earliest confrontations between the Sanhedrin and the Spirit-empowered Apostles. The earliest event with which the unconverted Paul is mentioned is the stoning of Stephen, at which he kept the garments of those who accomplished the deeds (Acts 7:58).

Stephen did not come to prominence until after he was selected as one of "the Seven" in Acts 6:1-6. There is absolutely no reason that all these events could not have taken place within the year after the crucifixion. In fact, to stretch them out over a number of years seems altogether unjustified.<sup>71</sup>

There is, in support of A.D. 33 or 34 for Stephen's ministry, the matter of the Sabbatical cycle. Tishri A.D. 33 marked the start of a Sabbatical year,<sup>72</sup> meaning that there would be no official harvest in the summer of A.D. 34. Shortly after that time, the people of Judea would resort to the food supplies laid up prior to the Sabbatical year. Needy believers, made even more so by their observance of the year of rest, would be denied access to these stores by their fellow Jews, having been cast out of the synagogues for their faith in Jesus (Luke 6:22; John 7:13; 9:22; 12:42). The fledgling Church began to pool their resources, so that the Apostles could provide help to the poorest Christians (Acts 4:32-37). But in the midst of these food distributions, it became evident that the widows in the Hellenistic community of believers was being overlooked. This was immediately resolved by the appointment of seven men to this task, among whom was Stephen (Acts 6:1-6).

Assuming that this line of thought is correct, the following chronology would be suggested: Stephen was appointed at some point in A.D. 33 or 34, and stoned shortly thereafter. Paul's Judean persecution began immediately,

and his request to extend it beyond those borders may have come in conjunction with the close of the Sabbatical year in the Fall of A.D. 34. His conversion would therefore be dated then to late A.D. 34.<sup>73</sup>

#### Summary

Paul's conversion, and the events of Acts which proceed it, suggest a *terminus ad quem* for Jesus' ministry of between A.D. 33 and 36,<sup>74</sup> with the earlier dating being made more preferable by events in Acts 1-12.

#### The Day on Which Jesus was Crucified

A final step in determining the *terminus ad quem* of Jesus ministry is to identify the day of the week on which Jesus was crucified. This is important because it will severely limit the years in which the crucifixion could have taken place.

#### Identifying the Potential Years

##### *The Theories*

If there is one thing about the chronology of Christ about which we can be certain, it is the fact that he resurrected on the first day of the week. Of this there can be no doubt. It is at the core of the Christian Faith.

The New Testament further teaches that his atoning death took place within a three day period prior to his resurrection. From this information, three basic methods of calculating the crucifixion day have arisen. A very basic summary of each follows.<sup>75</sup>

Proponents of a Wednesday crucifixion, such as Scroggie (Hoehner 1975:65), hold to a very literal interpretation of Matthew 12:40.

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

It is insisted that Christ was put in the tomb at sunset on Wednesday, as 14 Nisan came to a close. The convocation of 15 Nisan (Exod 12:16) followed on Thursday, being termed by proponents of this theory as a Passover sabbath, since no work was done during it. Then, at sunset on Saturday, 17 Nisan, as the weekly Sabbath ended and the Jewish first day began, Jesus resurrected from the dead, exactly seventy-two hours after his burial. The empty tomb was subsequently discovered when the women arrived around dawn on Sunday.

Those who propose a Thursday crucifixion, probably the most well-known being Westcott,<sup>76</sup> also insist upon a literal understanding of Matthew 12:40, although they are less rigid in their timing. They also suppose that Christ was crucified and buried before the close of 14 Nisan, but on a Thursday. The brief daylight hours between his burial and sunset are counted as the first day, followed by the first night. As in the Wednesday system, the convocation rest of 15 Nisan is termed a sabbath, but in this system falls on a Friday, followed by a second night. Saturday, 16 Nisan, the weekly Sabbath, is counted as the third day, followed by the third night. Thus allowing the resurrection to occur at

dawn on the Sunday, 17 Nisan, after Jesus had spent three days and nights in the tomb.<sup>77</sup>

The concept of a Friday crucifixion, which has long enjoyed the status of majority viewpoint (i.e. "Good Friday"), treats Matthew 12:40 as an idiomatic expression regarding the passage of three calendrical days. Christ was crucified and buried on Friday, 14 Nisan. The next day was the Jewish Sabbath, 15 Nisan, and was considered a "high day" because it coincided with the convocation required on the first day of Unleavened Bread. Then followed the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week, 16 Nisan, the third Jewish day after his crucifixion.<sup>78</sup>

#### *The Potential Years*

The limits of the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* already given for Jesus' ministry put severe constraints on the year in which Christ was crucified. It must occur no earlier than Passover A.D. 32, allowing at least two full years of ministry from his cleansing of the temple in A.D. 30, but can be no later than Passover A.D. 36, since Pilate was relieved of his post prior to Passover A.D. 37.

Furthermore, to satisfy the three possible theories outlined above, Nisan 14 must occur on either Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. This immediately eliminates A.D. 32, 35 and 36, in which that date respectively fell on Sunday, Tuesday, and Monday.<sup>79</sup>

This leaves only A.D. 33 and 34 as possible dates for the final Passover of Jesus' ministry. With but these two

years left, one of the three theories is immediately rendered moot. This would be the Wednesday crucifixion, with its very rigid interpretation of Matthew 12:40.<sup>80</sup>

#### Evaluating the Evidence

##### Παρασκευή - *The Jewish Preparation Day*

Probably the most solid evidence for a Friday crucifixion is that all four gospels agree that it happened on the Jewish Preparation Day (παρασκευή). This is a technical term for the sixth day of the Jewish week, the day prior to their weekly Sabbath.<sup>81</sup> Mark makes certain that his readers understood this basic terminology (15:42).

Because it was the Preparation Day, which is the day prior to the Sabbath... (ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευή, ὅ ἐστιν προσάββατον) [trans. mine]

By referencing the days of the week involved, each of the other gospel writer's keep their readers acutely aware of the time element involved in the crucifixion and resurrection narrative.

In John 19:14, it is reported that the condemnation of Christ came at the sixth [Roman] hour, and that "it was the Preparation Day of the Passover festival (ἦν δὲ παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα)" [trans. mine]. John then relates how the Jewish authorities went to Pilate with a request that he rush the executions so the bodies could be immediately removed (John 19:31). This was because they wanted the bodies off the crosses before the Sabbath began, especially since this Sabbath also fell on 15 Nisan, the first convocation day of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:16).

Because it was Preparation Day, and so that the bodies might not remain upon the cross during the Sabbath, for that particular Sabbath was very important... (ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν, ἵνα μὴ μείνη ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ, ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου) [trans. mine]

Mark 15:42 , Luke 23:54 and John 19:42 all agree that burial arrangements were hastily made for the crucified body of Jesus, because the Preparation Day was quickly coming to a close and the Sabbath almost upon them.

It was already late, and because it was Preparation Day, which is the day prior to the Sabbath... (καὶ ἤδη ὀψίας γενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευή, ὅ ἐστιν προσάββατον) [trans. mine]

It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin... (καὶ ἡμέρα ἦν παρασκευῆς, καὶ σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν) [trans. mine]

Because it was Jewish Preparation Day (διὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων) [trans. mine]

Matthew concurs in this matter by his reference to an event which happened on the day following - the Jewish request that Pilate have the tomb guarded (27:62-66). He ties it carefully to the events of the previous day.

On the next day, that which is after Preparation Day... (Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον, ἥτις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν)

Thursday proponents interpret each gospel account of παρασκευὴ as if it were a day of preparation for the convocation rest of Exodus 12:15, assuming that such a day would be called a Sabbath. Hoehner is absolutely right when he terms this argument "a *non sequitur*" (1977:69). There is not one example of such terminology being applied to 15 Nisan anywhere.

Their claim that the John 19:31 reference to a "great Sabbath" is to be identified with a day of convocation rest

is circular - "a Sabbath rest on a weekday is called a 'great Sabbath', therefore this 'great Sabbath' is a Sabbath rest on a weekday." Since παρασκευή normally refers to the sixth day of the week, and since the gospels say that it was followed immediately by the Sabbath, this phrase would be a natural way to describe the rare occurrence of the convocation of 15 Nisan falling upon the weekly Sabbath.<sup>82</sup>

Additionally, the thought that two Sabbaths in two days is implied by the plural σαββάτων is laughable, since the New Testament often uses the plural form when a singular day is clearly indicated.<sup>83</sup>

#### *The Meaning of Matthew 12:40*

This one passage seems to be the most serious threat to the idea of a Friday crucifixion. Hoehner doubts that "anyone would hold to either a Wednesday or Thursday crucifixion date if it were not for" this passage (1977:69).

After giving a nod of acknowledgement to Westcott's adherence to a Thursday crucifixion because of Matthew 12:40, Ogg proceeds to dismiss the whole matter out of hand: "It is now recognized, however, that that verse is a gloss and no part of what Jesus actually said" (1940:205).<sup>84</sup> But since Ogg cited no evidence of this assertion, and since no textual variants exist, one can only guess as to the source of his information and proceed with a serious consideration of the matter.

By far, the most common expression used in the New Testament to describe the timing of the resurrection is that



it took place "in the third day."<sup>85</sup> The alternate means of expression is by the use of a prepositional phrase to describe the passage of time - "after three days"<sup>86</sup> or "in three days."<sup>87</sup> It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the exact same period of time is meant by each expression.

On the first day of the week, the two men on the road to Emmaus confided in Jesus that "these three days have led from that on which these things happened (τρίτην ταύτην ἡμέραν ἄγει ἀφ' οὗ ταῦτα ἐγένετο)" (Luke 24:21) [trans. mine]. The presence of the demonstrative pronoun ταύτην as a modifier to ἡμέραν indicates there is a limit placed on the three days which have passed since the events described. The third day is clearly the day on which they are speaking - the first day of the week. The second is the previous day - the Sabbath. This would mean that the first day of the three, the day on which their hopes had been dashed, was the sixth day of the Jewish week - Preparation Day.

Since all other evidence seems to support a Friday crucifixion, there can be little explanation for the comments in Matthew 12:40 other than as an idiomatic expression intended to be understood as applying to the three day period between Christ's impending death and resurrection.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps Carson puts it in the simplest way (1984 8:296).

In rabbinical thought a day and a night make an *onah*, and a part of an *onah* is as the whole (cf. SBK, 1:649, for the references; cf. further 1 Sam 30:12-13; 2 Chron 10:5,12; Esth 4:16; 5:1). Thus according to Jewish tradition, "three days and three nights" need mean no more than "three days"

or the combination of any part of three separate days.

### Other Evidences

#### *Eusebius' Use of Phlegon*

In his Chronicle, Eusebius cites the work of Phlegon of Tralles,<sup>89</sup> to support his date for the year of Christ's crucifixion being "the nineteenth year of Tiberius' kingdom" (Keller 1877 2:101).

In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad there was a great eclipse of the sun of unprecedented proportion, and it became night in the sixth hour of the day, so that even the stars in heaven shone. There was a great earthquake in Bithinia and many things in Nicaea were overturned. [trans. mine]

The fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad was from 1 July A.D. 32 until 30 June A.D. 33. By the method of imperial calculation presented in Chapter 1, the nineteenth year of Tiberius' government would have covered the exact same period. Eusebius' inference is clear - that the unnatural darkness recorded in the synoptics took place at Passover A.D. 33.

A quick calculation reveals that absolutely no eclipses, let alone one of "unprecedented proportion," took place in year indicated.<sup>90</sup> This would certainly weigh heavily in favor of associating it, as Eusebius did, with the crucifixion of Christ. However, if Phlegon was referring to the crucifixion darkness, then the word ἔκλειψις must be understood in the most generic sense, since it is impossible for the sun to be eclipsed by the full moon of Passover.

### *The Consulate of the Gemini*

There is a rather confusing<sup>91</sup> chapter in Tertullian's Answer To The Jews (18, 1994 3:158-160), in which he apparently refers to dating found in the prologue of the apocryphal Acts of Pilate, which states that the death of Jesus took place "in the consulship of Rufius and Rubellio<sup>92</sup>, in the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad" (1994 8:416) - the year A.D. 33. That neither the author of the apocryphal work, nor Tertullian himself understand the significance of this date is made clear from the actual calendar date which is then assigned to the death of Christ - 25 March. In A.D. 33 that date fell during the latter half of the twelfth month of the previous Jewish year, and not on Passover. In actual fact, Passover could never fall on 25 March since Nisan does not even begin until after the spring equinox.

#### Final Scriptural Considerations

There are two final passages which have some bearing on the dating of Christ's crucifixion.

Luke 3:23 records, "Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry (Καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν Ἰησοῦς ἀρχόμενος ὡσεὶ ἐτῶν τριάκοντα)." With the date of Jesus' birth having to occur prior to Herod's death in 4 B.C., Jesus would have certainly turned thirty by A.D. 27., making him at least 32 at Passover A.D. 30.

By Old Testament standards, thirty was the lower age limit for service as a Levite (Num 4; 1 Chr 23:3). It was

also the age at which David became King of Israel (2 Sam 5:4). These may be part of the reason Luke included this age reference in his gospel.

But with the uncertainty of ὥσεί, it is altogether unclear as to how close Jesus actually was to thirty. It is possible that Luke's term could be synonymous with the modern vernacular "thirtysomething." Because of this ambiguity in Luke, there is no conflict between it and a start date of A.D. 30 for Jesus' ministry.

In John 8:57 the Jews respond incredulously to Jesus' claim to have personal knowledge of Abraham's joy by observing, "You are not yet fifty years old." From this passage, Irenaeus held the position that Jesus was in his forties (Against Heresies 32.6, 1994 1:392). This put Irenaeus in the rather strained position of proposing a ministry of at least ten years, since he also held that Luke 3:23 should be understood "'Now Jesus was, as it were, beginning to be thirty years old' when he came to receive baptism" (Ibid. 32.5, 391).

This is not necessary. The context of the passage is one of Christ's claim to predate Abraham. It would be natural for the Jewish authorities to use the upper figure of Levitical service (Num 4) to refute his claim to such an age. If he were not even beyond the upper age for service in the Temple, how could he possibly be old enough to have personally known Abraham?

## CONCLUSION

### The Implications of Knowing the Date of the Crucifixion

Knowing the date of the crucifixion impacts upon matters of apologetics and exegesis, and can add to the sense of concord within the Christian community.

### Apologetics

In recent times, the historical accuracy of the gospel accounts has been seriously challenged, sometimes even from positions of scholarly authority within Christendom itself. This is a serious accusation indeed, for it touches upon the basic trustworthiness of the very accounts from which Christians preach the "good news" that promises to impart eternal life by means of the atoning death and bodily resurrection of Jesus (See 1 Corinthians 15). If these gospels cannot be trusted in mundane matters of historical detail, how then can they be trusted in the more important matters of salvation?

There is the natural tendency for believers to respond to such assaults by positioning themselves firmly behind texts such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

However, in view of the seriousness of the charges being leveled, it is not sufficient to respond with assertions of personal faith in divine inspiration. While this doctrine is assuredly the *a priori* presupposition by which orthodox Christians approach the gospels, it alone does nothing to effectively counter the slanderous accusations which undermine the veracity of the accounts.

Instead, Christian scholars at every level must be ready to aggressively defend every aspect of the gospels' historical accuracy. Among other things, this apologetic approach would include the area of gospel chronology, with its dramatic conclusion in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Particular care must be taken to properly interpret the historical references within the gospels to insure that the resultant chronology will stand the rigorous testing which will be put upon it by those who think the Bible unreliable in such matters.

#### Exegesis

As demonstrated in the first portion of this thesis, the exegesis of Luke 3:1-3 and John 2:20 has a direct relationship to the proper historical placement of the beginning of Jesus' ministry, and is therefore connected in a very real way to the establishment of the accurate gospel chronology needed for apologetic work. In addition, the passion narratives make frequent chronological references which can only be correctly exegeted by establishing the date of the crucifixion. This is especially true in dealing

with *prima facie* discrepancies between the synoptic and Johannine accounts regarding the celebration of Passover.

Gospel chronology may also allow an exegete to interpret certain gospel events by the postulated effects of concurrent, extra-biblical circumstances. For example, a thorough exegesis of John 19 will deal with the question of why Pilate made every effort to release Jesus from custody until the Jews said, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar" (John 19:12). Based on his own chronology, which holds to an A.D. 33 crucifixion date, Maier suggested that the fact Pilate was so quickly moved to execute a man he knew to be innocent is best understood in light of the political purges which took place after the fall of Sejanus in late A.D. 31 ("Sejanus" 1968).

Additionally, the date of Jesus' crucifixion serves as the *terminus a quo* for the earliest events recorded in Acts and must be considered when exegeting those portions of that book. In the same way, it should be used to establish a workable chronology for New Testament history, which would include the dating of the New Testament books. Obviously, the crucifixion cannot post-date either the ministries of the apostles, nor the writing of the epistles.

#### Sense of Concord

Beyond the apologetic and exegetical implications of knowing the date of Jesus' crucifixion, there is one other matter which should be seriously considered. In every society there are certain dates which hold great symbolic

importance. These dates impart a sense of unity to the community by providing a commonly held point of reference for all the individuals members therein.

For the Jews, it was the birth of their nation in the midst of the Providential departure from Egypt. This event is referenced over and over again in their sacred writings. Even the founding of their first temple was dated by the anniversary of the Exodus (1 Kgs 6:1).

As for the ancient Greeks, their years were reckoned by the passing of the Olympiads. In the Roman Republic, years were counted from the traditional founding date of Rome, while those who lived under the boot of Imperial Rome (including Josephus) attached great importance to the Caesar's victory at Actium.

For Americans, it is 4 July 1776 which holds great symbolic importance. Just the mention of this date can arouse feelings of patriotism and national spirit.

To some extent the concordant date within Christendom has been the supposed birth year of Christ. For centuries it has been the practice of individuals to date events by the formula *Anno Domini* ("In the Year of Our Lord").<sup>93</sup> However, as important as the birth of Jesus is, it is Jesus' atoning death and bodily resurrection which comprise the watershed point of redemptive history. There is no other event in all of history more central to the plan of God. The saints who lived before the Atonement were saved by their faith in what God was yet to do, while those who have



lived since are saved by their faith in what God has already done. Therefore, every believer should be intensely interested in properly dating of this awesome event.

#### *Terminus a Quo*

The *terminus a quo* for Jesus' ministry is dependent upon the proper understanding of two things: 1) The start of John's ministry being placed by Luke in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar and 2) The fact that Jesus' first Passover occurred within forty-six years of Herod's reconstruction of the Sanctuary.

By a preponderance of evidence, the ancient chronologers all dated the start of Tiberius' government from the death of his predecessor. While there has been considerable conjecture relating to a co-regency with Augustus, the historical records show only that he was granted joint control of the provinces from c. 1 July A.D. 13, and not that he was ever made Augustus' equal in every respect. It has been shown that even after this period of joint provincial administration, that Tiberius hesitated in accepting the title *princeps*, indicating that he did not automatically assume that status upon Augustus' demise.

Furthermore, Augustus initiated the long-standing practice of provincial administration in ten year terms known as δεκάτη. Knowing that Tiberius' 2nd δεκάτη (Years 11-20) ran from 1 July A.D. 24 through 30 June A.D. 34, it is a simple matter to identify his fifteenth year as 1 July A.D. 28 through 30 June A.D. 29. Since Jesus began his

ministry no later than the first Passover after John's own ministry started, it is evident that Jesus' ministry was initiated no earlier than Passover A.D. 29.

In regard to the reconstruction work started by Herod in 20 B.C., Josephus makes it very clear that the main intention of the king was to bring the small Sanctuary of the Persian era up to the standard of Solomon's glorious building. This work was completely finished within a year and six months, with similar renovations of the adjacent courts and porticoes finished within eight years. By this, and by the use of *ναός* (not *ἱερόν*) with the aorist tense of *οἰκοδομέω*, it is evident that the Jews had in mind the completion of the Sanctuary reconstruction in the summer of 18 B.C. The forty-sixth year of commemoration for this event would be celebrated between summer A.D. 29 and summer A.D. 30. Therefore, the absolute *terminus a quo* of Jesus' ministry is Passover of A.D. 30.

#### *Terminus ad Quem*

The *terminus ad quem* lacks such clear chronological indicators. It must be based upon the consideration of three factors: 1) The record of at least three separate Passovers in John's gospel, 2) The dismissal of Pilate in the winter of A.D. 36/37, 3) The weekday on which Christ was crucified.

John's record of three Passovers indicates a ministry of not less than two years, and a crucifixion of no earlier than Passover A.D. 32.

Pilate's dismissal prior to Passover A.D. 37, shows that Christ's crucifixion could not have occurred any later than Passover A.D. 36.

Of the five years between A.D. 32 and 36, only on two occasions did Passover fall in such a way as to conform to one of the three standard theories regarding the day of Christ's death - A.D. 33 and 34. And of those two theories, the one which best fits the chronological facts from the gospels is that which puts Christ's death on a Friday, during Passover A.D. 33.

#### The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion

Therefore, based upon this consideration of biblical and extra-biblical historical evidence regarding the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of Jesus' ministry, it is reasonably certain that the crucifixion of Christ took place on Friday, 3 April A.D. 33.<sup>94</sup> Here then is the divine date from which salvation extends to all generations.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Delling's articles on these words in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup>Jesus' public ministry is commonly dated from his visit to the Jerusalem Temple during the time of Passover, as described in the second chapter of John's gospel. This visit followed a series of events preparatory to the beginning of his ministry: the performance of his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1-12); the calling of his first disciples near Bethany beyond the Jordan (John 1:19-51); his forty day fast in the Judean wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; and Luke 4:1-13); and his immersion by John (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; and Luke 3:21-22). Given the time indicated, Jesus' own ministry cannot be dated any earlier than the Passover following the year which Luke identifies as the starting point of John's ministry.

<sup>3</sup>This is the date attested to by both Seutonius (3.73, 1985:150) and Tacitus (6.50, 1988:226).

<sup>4</sup>Vitellius proceeded to visit Judea during the Passover of A.D. 37, removing Joseph Caiphas as high priest and replacing him with Jonathan, the son of Annas (Antiq. 18:4:3, 1980:381). This clearly indicates that Pilate had departed for Italy prior to the spring of that year.

<sup>5</sup>See Maier's "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion" (Church History 1968 37:8 n28) regarding the anachronistic use of "procurator" for *praefect* in Josephus and Tacitus.

<sup>6</sup>Ecclesiastical History, Chapter 9 (1988:39). The passage, attributed to the eighteenth book of Josephus' Antiquities reads thus:

...that about the twelfth year of the reign of Tiberius, (for he succeeded to the empire after Augustus, who had reigned fifty-seven years,) Pontius Pilate was appointed over Judea, and remained there upon the whole ten years, almost to the death of Tiberius.

Since it does not appear in extant copies of Josephus, this text may have come from a variant or annotated copy known to Eusebius. Or perhaps it is the fleshing out of Josephus' basic information with facts from other sources.

<sup>7</sup>There are a few modern proponents of an early chronology for both Pilate and Christ. Vardaman places Pilate's assignment to Judea as early as A.D. 15, and his dismissal no later than A.D. 25/26, with Christ's death occurring in A.D. 21 (Vardaman and Yamauchi 1989: 77-82). He, in turn, acknowledges the independent work of others (Ibid. 78).

Daniel Schwartz of the history department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has already arrived at an earlier date for the start of Pilate's career (A.D. 14/15), although he leaves Pilate in office as late as A.D. 37.

Vardaman's chronology is based, in large part, upon microletters which he has found on ancient coins (Ibid. 66-77). His work in this new field of study has caused him to radically alter the dating of several near-eastern rulers, whose activities are used to date N.T. events.

Although his microlettering is intriguing, and some of his critiques of Josephus' accounts helpful, his proposed chronology borders on the incredible. Among other things, it supposes an undocumented variant of Luke 3:1 ["reading year two instead of year fifteen" (Ibid. 77)] and considerably lengthens the ministry of Paul [starting it in A.D. 26 (Ibid. 18 n18)].

<sup>8</sup>These men were consuls in the year 37 B.C. Finegan (1964:96-97) and Syme (1986:455-458) each provide partial lists of Roman consuls. Unless otherwise annotated, all references to consular dating are from these two sources.

<sup>9</sup>Finegan (Ibid. 108-187) also provides a reference table for the Greek Olympiads. Unless otherwise indicated, the dating of specific Olympiads is from this table.

<sup>10</sup>This reference to Pompey's taking of Jerusalem twenty-seven years earlier further dates Herod's victory. Josephus dates it to "the hundred and seventy-ninth Olympiad, when Caius Antonius and Marcus Tullius Cicero were consuls" (*Antiq.* 14.4.3, 1980:292), which was 63 B.C.

<sup>11</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all astronomical observations have been confirmed by means of *Expert Astronomer for Windows* (1993).

<sup>12</sup>This upper limit is due to the arrival of the Passover celebration shortly after Herod's passing (*Antiq.* 17.9.3, 1980:368).

<sup>13</sup>This appears to be the same Quirinius who was administering Syria at the time of the census mentioned by Luke (2:2).

<sup>14</sup>Antiquities 18.1.1 (1984:377). This change from a semi-independent client kingdom to a province directly ruled and, more significantly, taxed by a resident Roman official, lead to an unsuccessful revolt by a man named Judas (cf. Acts 5:37).

<sup>15</sup>See Antiquities 19.5-9 (1984:409-413).

<sup>16</sup>As dated from the Battle of Actium on 2 September 31 B.C. See Dio 51.1.1 (1917 6:3).

<sup>17</sup>Eusebius, making use of Josephus' Antiquities, mistakenly attempted to delineate the length of Jesus' ministry by indicating he began in the last year of Annas, ended in the first year of Caiphas, with three intervening high priests who held the office less than a year each.

<sup>18</sup>See Appendix A. COMMON YEARS OF TENURE FROM LUKE 3:1-3

<sup>19</sup>Ogg arrives at these very same limits (1940:172-173), while Hoehner gives the limits as "A.D. 26 and the Passover of A.D. 37," the latter being an apparent oversight of his own conclusion that Philip died in A.D. 34 (1977:30-31).

<sup>20</sup>Toward the end of his discussion regarding the various methods, Finegan lays out his own preference for the year A.D. 29.

<sup>21</sup>In Antiquities 18:2:2 (1984:377), Josephus puts the length of Augustus' reign at "fifty-seven years, besides six months and two days, (of which time Antonius ruled together with him fourteen years...)" Back dating from his death on 19 August 14 A.D. (Seutonius 2.100, 1985:110), renders a date of 17 Mar 44 B.C., two days after the assassination. The fourteen years of concurrent rule with Antony would therefore be from that date until the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C., an important event in Josephus' chronological references elsewhere (See Antiq. 15.5.2, 1980:320).

<sup>22</sup>Despite its obvious importance in dating the reign of Tiberius, this practice is not cited by modern chronologers.

<sup>23</sup>Buchan makes the exact date "the 13th of January 27 B.C.," which he determines by means of Ovid (1937:142).

<sup>24</sup>Dio 53.3.3-4 (1917 6:201). The full address is recorded in 53.3.1-10.8. (1917 6:199-217).

<sup>25</sup>Dio 53.12.2 (1917 6:219). Additional comments by Dio, regarding the possible motive behind Augustus' action are rather interesting (53.12.3, 1917 6:219).

His professed motive in this was that the senate might fearlessly enjoy the finest portion of the empire, while he himself had the hardships and the dangers; but his real purpose was that by this arrangement the senators should be unarmed and unprepared for battle, while he alone had arms and maintained soldiers.

<sup>26</sup>Although not made clear in any of the sources consulted, it may be that the term of Augustus' tribunician power was tied to the Olympic year, which ran 1 July through 31 June.

<sup>27</sup>Ironically, Tiberius was married to Agrippa's daughter by a previous wife, whom Augustus had forced Agrippa to divorce so that he might marry Augustus' daughter Julia, the very woman Tiberius was now to marry.

<sup>28</sup>Dio puts the length of this grant of tribunician authority at ten years (55.13.2, 1917 6:425), with the next authority being granted 1 July of A.D. 13 (56.28.1, 1924 7:63). This is possible only if the first year of his authority is counted as the few days remaining in June of A.D. 4, with the second year beginning 1 July. Seutonius mentions only a three year grant of authority to pacify Germany (3.16, 1979:123).

<sup>29</sup>"The disaster took place in the latter half of September, A.D. 9" (Woodman 1977:189).

<sup>30</sup>Oddly enough, Ussher thought that Jesus was not immersed until the fourth year of John's ministry - A.D. 29 (1658:818), and that he was crucified on 3 April A.D. 33 (Ibid. 839). This is because, by his own calculation of the "forty-six years" mentioned in John 2:20, the first Passover of Jesus' ministry was A.D. 30 (Ibid. 780).

<sup>31</sup>Unfortunately, this writer had no access to Weiseler's writings.

<sup>32</sup>Plummer also offers an excellent, detailed critique of this co-regency theory by Hastings.

<sup>33</sup>Brown (Death 1994:1374), Carson, Moo and Morris (1992:54-55), Finegan (1964:259-260), Fitzmyer (1981:455), Foster (Gaebelien 1979 1:597), Shepard (1939:58) and Thomas and Gundry (1978:325).

<sup>34</sup> Augustus also performed censuses in the years 28 B.C. and 8 B.C. (1992:357). Finegan cites Roman censuses for the years 27 B.C. and 12 B.C. (1964:236-237), with Martin noting another in A.D. 33/34 (1980:99). Dio, in confirming the 28 B.C. census, states that it took place "in connection with which his title was *princeps senatus*, as had been the practice when Rome was truly a republic" (53.1.3 1917 6:195). Since the *princeps* term of office ran 1 July to 30 June during the time of Augustus and Tiberius, any regular, five year census by that office would conceivably fall within that same period. Combining the known census dates with the regnal term of Augustus and Tiberius (July-June), renders the following years for the five year Roman census: 28/27 B.C., 23/22 B.C., 18/17 B.C., 13/12 B.C., 8/7 B.C., 3/2 B.C., A.D. 3/4, A.D. 8/9, A.D. 13/14, A.D. 18/19, A.D. 23/24, A.D. 28/29 and A.D. 33/34.

<sup>35</sup> When his friends urged him to accept it he went through the farce of scolding them for the suggestion, saying that they did not realize what a monstrous beast the monarchy was; and kept the Senate guessing by his carefully evasive answers and hesitations, even when they threw themselves at his feet imploring him to change his mind. This made some of them lose patience, and in the confusion a voice was heard shouting: 'Oh, let him either take it or leave it!' And another senator openly taunted him with: 'Some people are slow to do what they promise; you are slow to promise what you have already done.' Finally, with a great show of reluctance, and complaints that they were forcing him to become a miserable and overworked slave, Tiberius accepted the title of Emperor; but hinted that he might later resign it.

<sup>36</sup> Ogg deals quite adequately with several supposed examples of reckoning from a co-regency which are commonly cited from the ancient writers (1940:178-179).

<sup>37</sup> If the joint provincial authority, granted to Tiberius in the summer of A.D. 13, had been continued unbroken into his own reign, then his second decennial festival should have been celebrated in the summer of A.D. 33, which it was not. This is further evidence that Tiberius was not considered *princeps* prior to A.D. 14.

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix B. THE ΔEKETH OF AUGUSTUS AND TIBERIUS.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Kings 6:38 states that the actual building took seven years, to which Origen adds the first three years of Solomon's reign as years of preparation. The only method by which he supposed one could attain forty-six years for this temple was by calculating the preparation time from the fifth year of David's reign, a calculation which he considered quite forced.



<sup>40</sup> According to Ezra 3:8, the rebuilding of this temple began in the spring of the year following the decree of Cyrus, ordering that the work be done (Ezr 1:1-4). Since this decree came in the first year of Cyrus (538 B.C.), the work began in the second Jewish month of 537 B.C. After many delays, Ezra 6:15 reports that the work was finally completed during the sixth year of Darius. If Darius I is intended, this would be 516 B.C. and indicate a total of twenty-one years for the building. If Darius II is meant, then 418 B.C. is indicated, which renders a total of one hundred and nineteen years between foundation and completion. Neither comes anywhere near the cited forty-six years.

<sup>41</sup> This can be seen by the fact that Josephus dates the Battle of Actium - 2 September 31 B.C. - within the seventh year of Herod (Antiq. 15.5.2, 1980:320).

<sup>42</sup> Finegan (1964:276-278) makes a semi-persuasive argument for assigning the start of the temple renovation to Herod's nineteenth year.

The best part of his argument hinges on the fact that Josephus mentions Caesar's arrival in Syria "when Herod had already reigned seventeen years" ("Ἡδὴ δ' αὐτοῦ τῆς βασιλείας ἑπτακαίδεκάτου παρελθόντος ἔτους) (Antiq. 15.10.3, 1918 8:171). Dio very clearly puts this Syrian visit in the year 20 B.C. "when Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls" (54.7, 1917 6:299-301). This would put the visit in Herod's eighteenth year (as reckoned from 37 B.C.), after he had completed seventeen years of reign, as stated by Josephus. This is important in that it is devastating to those who attempt to put the start of Herod's renovation any earlier than 20 B.C. (Corbishley 1935).

However, Finegan attempts to carry forward some of the meaning of the second aorist participle "gone forward" (προελθόντος) [the Loeb text has "had completed" (παρελθόντος)] in the earlier passage, in order to apply to the meaning of the second perfect participle "had begun" (γεγονότος) in the later passage dating the start of the temple renovation. This would allow him to exchange Whiston's and Loeb's translations "in the eighteenth year" (15.11.1, 1980:334 and 1917 8:185) for an understanding that Herod's eighteenth year had already passed and that the temple work began in his nineteenth. This hardly seems reasonable given the change in vocabulary and tense.

<sup>43</sup>Both Finegan (1964:276) and Hoehner (1977:40) assume that Herod's regnal years, beyond that of his accession, began on 1 Nisan. There is a potential difficulty with this assumption. Herod was declared King of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. and subsequently ousted Antigonus in the summer of 37 B.C. Counting each of these as accession years in Josephus' dual dating, 1 Nisan of 4 B.C. would have marked the beginning of his thirty-seventh or thirty-fourth Jewish year in power, exactly as Josephus states in Antiquities 17.8.1 (1984:366). However, 1 Nisan of that year began at sunset on Wednesday, 28 March, and Herod may not have survived that long (See the discussion regarding the date of Herod's death). Given Herod's alliance with Rome, it may have been that his regnal years were aligned with the Roman calendar, which would certainly render the years indicated by Josephus.

<sup>44</sup>It is this very difficulty which often leads to the acceptance of a proposed co-regency for Tiberius, beginning in A.D. 11 or 12. This allows at least part of the fifteenth year of Tiberius (depending on the calendrical system used) to fall into A.D. 26, with Jesus beginning his ministry in the spring of A.D. 27. For a considerable time, I also held to this viewpoint, until the collective evidence against the co-regency and for an A.D. 33 crucifixion became too weighty to ignore any longer.

<sup>45</sup>See Machen (1923:81-82) and Summers (1950:66-67).

<sup>46</sup>Josephus is consistent in this use of ναός when referring to the temple sanctuary. This distinction also seems to hold true within the text of the LXX and New Testament. See ναός (Michel 1978 4:880-890) and τὸ ἱερόν (Schrenk 1978 3:230-247).

<sup>47</sup>There are some slight variations in the dimensions recorded in 1 Kings 6 and 2 Chronicles 3. The former puts the height of the sanctuary at 30 cubits (c. 45 feet), while the latter provides no figure whatsoever. Instead, the account in 2 Chronicles 3:3 focuses upon the 60 cubit height of the sanctuary porch, a dimension absent in 1 Kings 6:3. Herod's comments, as reported by Josephus, seem to focus upon the height of the facade and not the sanctuary behind it.

<sup>48</sup>That this instance of Herod's accession anniversary is reckoned from his taking of Jerusalem in Sivan 37 B.C., rather than from the Senate's declaration in 40 B.C., is surmised from the following points: 1) Herod did not gain actual control of the Jewish throne until 37 B.C., 2) The removal of Antigonus would have been far more noteworthy from the Jewish standpoint, and 3) Josephus, as a Jew, seemed to prefer this later dating of Herod's reign.

<sup>49</sup>Specifically, they wanted to add some additional height to the east portico.

<sup>50</sup> Further consideration of his chronology reveals that he equated the sixteenth year of Tiberius with A.D. 28, counting forty-two years and three months from Jesus' crucifixion until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In a similar fashion, he assigns the thirtieth year of Jesus' life to Tiberius' fifteenth year, which would be A.D. 27 by the above calculation. He then allows for fifteen full years of life under Tiberius (A.D. 13 - 27), preceded by another fifteen full years under Augustus (3 B.C. - A.D. 12), which dates the birth of Christ to 4 B.C.. Confirmation of this chronology is seen further in his citation of those who place Jesus' birth in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus' reign, the length of which Clement puts at forty-three years, i.e. from B.C. 31 (Actium) until A.D. 12. While proponents of the Tiberian co-regency may see evidence of their position in this matter, there is a difficulty in the fact that Clement only allows twenty-two years for Tiberius' reign, which translates into A.D. 13 - 34, falling short of his known date of death by three years. Suffice it to say that Clement's chronology has some serious flaws.

<sup>51</sup> Even the presence of the article does not positively identify this as the Passover, since an article is used in John 7:2, where the Jewish feast is Tabernacles.

<sup>52</sup> Upon comparing the linguistic style of John in each of these passages, there is little doubt that he intended to convey the approach of the Passover in 6:4, as surely has he had the approach of the other feasts cited below.

2:13)	Καὶ ἔγγυς ἦν τὸ πάσχα	τῶν Ἰουδαίων,
6:4)	ἦν δὲ ἔγγυς τὸ πάσχα,	ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.
7:2)	ἦν δὲ ἔγγυς	ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων
11:55)	Ἦν δὲ ἔγγυς τὸ πάσχα	τῶν Ἰουδαίων,

<sup>53</sup> Hoehner summarizes and critiques this effort to transpose chapters five and six (1977:48-50).

<sup>54</sup> Origen, who was born at about the time Irenaeus wrote Against Heresies, accepted and taught as fact that Christ taught for only a short period of time - "about a year and a few months" (De Principiis 4.1.5, 1994 4:352).

<sup>55</sup> Ogg spends considerable effort in describing and debunking the one year theory (1940:27-76).

<sup>56</sup> They may have even stayed until after the time of Herod's death, since their return to Antioch is not mentioned until afterward (Acts 12:25). This is not necessary, however, since it would be just as natural for Luke, having brought up Herod's Passover attacks on the apostles, to continue with news of his divine execution before continuing his narrative of their return.

<sup>57</sup>The first part of this devastating famine may have already been felt at the time of Herod Agrippa's death. Luke diligently points out that the people of Tyre and Sidon were extremely obsequious, even to the point of blasphemous flattery, in an attempt to gain the king's pleasure, "because they depended on the king's country for their food supply (διὰ τὸ τρέφεσθαι αὐτῶν τὴν χώραν ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλικῆς)" (Acts 12:20). The fear of an impending famine would certainly explain their actions. This ongoing famine also provides the backdrop against which Josephus tells the story of Helena, queen of Adiabene, a Jewish proselyte. After becoming aware of an ongoing famine in Judea, she had Egyptian wheat and Cyprian figs shipped in to help feed the starving people (Antiq. 20.2, 1980: 415-416). Helena's conversion is tied contextually to a letter of Claudius, dated to A.D. 45 (Antiq. 20.1.2 1915 9:397 n<sup>9</sup>).

<sup>58</sup>Reese makes this journey between three and four years in length - A.D. 45 - 48 (1980:xx). This seems perhaps a bit too long for the events mentioned. Kistemaker proposes between two and three years - A.D. 46 - 48 (1990:20) - which seems about right, although the start date seems late for the contextual connection between Acts 12 and 13. It is possible that Barnabas and Paul sailed for Cyprus before the winter of A.D. 44/45 set in, spending that time working their way through the island. The spring of A.D. 45 would permit them to sail across to Pamphylia and spend the year working their way through Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and finally to Derbe, where they could have passed the winter of A.D. 45/46. This would then allow them to revisit all the congregations established in the previous year, before sailing back to Antioch in the latter part of A.D. 46. Even if their actual departure for Cyprus were delayed until the spring of A.D. 45, this suggested itinerary would need only be shifted by a matter of six months, putting their arrival back at Syrian Antioch in early A.D. 47.

<sup>59</sup>Hemer, citing additional work with this same inscription, also dates it to either spring or summer of A.D. 52 (1989:252-253).

<sup>60</sup>Claudius required that all provincial appointees depart Rome no later than 1 April (Dio 60.11.6, 1914 7:395).

<sup>61</sup>If Gallio was already *proconsul*, the question naturally arises as to why the Jews had waited to file charges. But if a previous *proconsul* had been habitually inattentive to matters such as these, the arrival of a new official would provide the ideal opportunity to accuse Paul.

<sup>62</sup>According to Seutonius (5.25, 1985:202), the expulsion occurred because of constant disturbances incited by "Chrestus." Some have taken this for a corruption of the term Christ, and see in it a reference to Jewish persecution of Roman believers (Reese 1980; Kistemaker 1990).

<sup>63</sup>Chronologies which prefer a later dating of Paul's arraignment before Gallio, put the start of this journey proportionately later. Bruce (1968:55) and Moody (1989:231) make it A.D. 49; Kistemaker A.D. 50 (1990:20); Reese A.D. 51 (1980:xx); and Foster A.D. 52 (1979:607).

<sup>64</sup>See Carson *et al* for a full discussion of why the three years and fourteen years mentioned by Paul should be calculated concurrently and not sequentially (1992:225).

<sup>65</sup>Josephus reports that some Jews actually considered Herod's defeat a matter of divine retribution for his beheading of John (Antiq. 18.5.2, 198:382).

<sup>66</sup>Herod's defeat must have occurred in the late fall of A.D. 36, for the following chronology would indicate that his correspondence with Tiberius must have occurred during the winter of A.D. 36/37. Vitellius has visited Jerusalem during Passover (19-26 April) A.D. 37, after dismissing Pilate. Among other things, he had the high priest Caiaphas replaced with Jonathan (Antiq. 18.4.2-3, 1980:380-381). Later, Vitellius paused in his march on Aretas to visit Jerusalem for another Jewish festival, probably Pentecost (2 June), where he was informed of Tiberius' death. He immediately ordered his army back to Antioch, but before leaving Jerusalem, replaced the newly appointed high priest Jonathan with Theophilus (*Ibid.* 18.5.3, 382-383).

<sup>67</sup>Harris discusses the uncertainty of dating Paul's escape from Damascus, giving a possible date of A.D. 35 (Gaebelein 1976 10:393-394).

<sup>68</sup>Hemer argues for a conversion date range of c. A.D. 32-34, preferring to start with an A.D. 30 crucifixion date (1989:261-267). But he does not preclude an A.D. 33 crucifixion, noting that Paul's conversion would be about A.D. 34 in such a chronology (*Ibid.* 267).

<sup>69</sup>Hemer suggest c. A.D. 46 for the second Jerusalem visit (Gal 2:1), which he equates with the famine visit of Acts 11:27ff, and not the Jerusalem council (1989:261). This conclusion arises out of his conviction that Paul would not neglect mentioning the famine visit in his letter to the Galatians (*Ibid.* 265). But such a chronology raises two difficult questions: If Paul did not bring the famine aid to Jerusalem until two years after Herod's death, why does Luke bracket his account of Herod's demise with a record of Paul's famine ministry? And if this second visit was the earlier famine visit, why does Paul make such a point of the fact that Titus, his Greek companion, was not compelled to be circumcised (Gal 2:3) - the very controversy which precipitated the later Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1ff)?

<sup>70</sup>Moody dates the first Jewish persecution of the Christians, and the stoning of Stephen, to a supposed "power vacuum" after the removal of Pilate in A.D. 36 [his date], with Paul's conversion probably coming late in that year (1989:224). Knox dated Paul's conversion to A.D. 37, fourteen inclusive years prior to an A.D. 51 Jerusalem council (In Guthrie 1990:1007).

<sup>71</sup>For me this was always a troublesome aspect of the A.D. 30 crucifixion date. The fourteen years between Pentecost A.D. 30 and the execution of the first Apostle in A.D. 44., after which came the first missionary journey, seemed excessive. My own reading of the intervening events is one of almost immediate confrontation with the Jewish authorities, followed by a brief persecution at the hands of a fanatical Paul. This persecution ended with his conversion, but not before it forced the rapid expansion of believers into Judea, Samaria and beyond. This expansion led rapidly to controversy over the first conversion of an uncircumcised God-fearer, but much more slowly to the even more controversial evangelism of pure pagans.

<sup>72</sup>See APPENDIX C: THE JEWISH SABBATICAL CYCLE.

<sup>73</sup>See APPENDIX D: SHORT CHRONOLOGY FOR THE LIFE OF PAUL.

<sup>74</sup>This date, rather than the A.D. 38 mentioned earlier, is because, while Paul's conversion may have come as late as A.D. 38, Jesus's crucifixion occurred no later than Passover A.D. 36. This must be true, since Pilate was removed from office prior to Passover A.D. 37.

<sup>75</sup>Hoehner provides an excellent treatment of each theory, coming to the conclusion that the Friday theory is the most tenable (1977:65-93).

<sup>76</sup>Hoehner also mentions that Aldrich and Rusk held this viewpoint (1975:68).

<sup>77</sup>It should be immediately noted that both the Wednesday and Thursday theories share two serious difficulties. First, the lack of evidence that any day other than the seventh was ever termed a sabbath by the Jews. Second, that while each system accounts in some fashion for a literal three days and three nights, they both put the resurrection on the fourth Jewish day (17 Nisan) after the crucifixion (14 Nisan). This directly contradicts New Testament testimony that Jesus rose on the third day.

<sup>78</sup>It must be acknowledged that there is some difficulty in placing Jesus' death on 14 Nisan, as is done in each of these systems. In John's gospel it is clear that Jesus died on the afternoon of 14 Nisan, when Jews were preparing to celebrate the Passover meal after sunset that evening (John 18:28). It was Friday, known to the Jews as Preparation Day (John 19:14), and the mandatory convocation of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would coincide with the weekly Sabbath, making for an especially "high day" (John 19:31). However, in the synoptics, where it is also clearly established that Jesus was crucified on the Jewish Preparation day (Friday) and buried hastily before the start of the Sabbath, it is supposed that he had already eaten the Passover meal with his disciples on the night prior to his death (Matt 26:17; 14:12; and Luke 22:7), indicating that he was crucified on 15 Nisan.

As would be expected, this problem is very heavily discussed in most works dealing with the passion chronology. Ogg extensively considered three types of solutions, but found himself "unable to impart any note of absolute certainty" to his findings, and came to the ultimate conclusion that the traditional understanding of a 14 Nisan crucifixion should be preferred (1940:242). Carson tackles this same problem, but comes up with the opposite conclusion, that Jesus was probably crucified on 15 Nisan (1991:457).

In the second and third centuries, as the Church debated whether or not the annual commemoration of Christ's passion should be done in accordance with the Jewish lunar calendar, many of the writers touched on this very same topic. Claudius Apollinaris was vehemently opposed to anyone teaching that Jesus ate the actual Passover meal before he suffered, since he died on 14 Nisan as "the true Passover of the Lord" (1994 8:772). Clement of Alexandria specifically stated that Jesus, as the ultimate Passover lamb, was crucified on 14 Nisan (1994 2:581). Hippolytus also believed that Jesus did not actually eat of the official Passover, since he died as the Passover lamb in that year (1994 5:240).

This concept of Jesus dying on 14 Nisan, at the exact same time as the other Passover lambs has great symbolic appeal. It can certainly be seen in John's comments regarding Jesus' being exempted in the order to break the prisoners legs (John 19:36; cf. Exod 12:46), and in Paul's comments regarding the removal of "old leaven" from within the Church (1 Cor 5:7). But the synoptic Passover meal on the night prior to his death remains problematic.

It seems altogether likely that Jesus died on 14 Nisan, but that through some calendrical variation (Morris 1988:621-622; Thomas and Gundry 1978:320-322) or by divine approbation, he was permitted to celebrate a final Passover meal with his disciples before his death (Luke 22:15).

<sup>79</sup> See APPENDIX E: PASSOVER DATING FOR A.D. 32 - 36.

<sup>80</sup> For additional difficulties with this theory, see Hohner (1977:65-67).

<sup>81</sup> See Lohse (1971 7:20 n159, 32).

<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, if this was not the weekly Sabbath, why would the gospel writers fail to explain such a rare occurrence as two Sabbaths in the period of two days?

<sup>83</sup> Lohse cites the use of the the plural form for single Sabbaths in Mark 1:21; 2:23,24 (1971 7:20). Hoehner asserts that one third of all σαββατων occurrences are "in the plural form in the New Testament when only one day is in view (1977:69-70).

<sup>84</sup> Ogg believed that Luke 11:30 "may well be his genuine saying" regarding the sign of Jonah (1940:205 n3).

<sup>85</sup> A total of ten times. Τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ is used in Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 24:7,46; and Acts 10:40. Τῇ τρίτῃ τῆ ἡμέρᾳ in Luke 18:33 and 1 Corinthians 15:4. Τῆς τρίτης ἡμέρης in Matthew 27:64.

<sup>86</sup> Διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν in Matthew 26:61 and Mark 14:58.

<sup>87</sup> Ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις in Matthew 27:40; Mark 15:29; and John 2:19,20.

<sup>88</sup> Compare some of our own idiomatic expresses regarding the passage of time: "I was up all night," meaning most of the night; or "I was gone the whole weekend," meaning a substantial portion of it; or even "I worked all day," when only a large number of the daylight hours is actually meant.

<sup>89</sup> Phlegon was a freedman of emperor Hadrian (reigned A.D. 117-138). He was a chronologer who had compiled a detailed list of momentous events within the Olympiads. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few citations, his work did not survive to the present.

<sup>90</sup> Ogg mentions that the astronomer Wurm calculated only one solar eclipse (24 November A.D. 29) during the entire two hundred and second Olympiad (1940:245), which is absolutely correct.



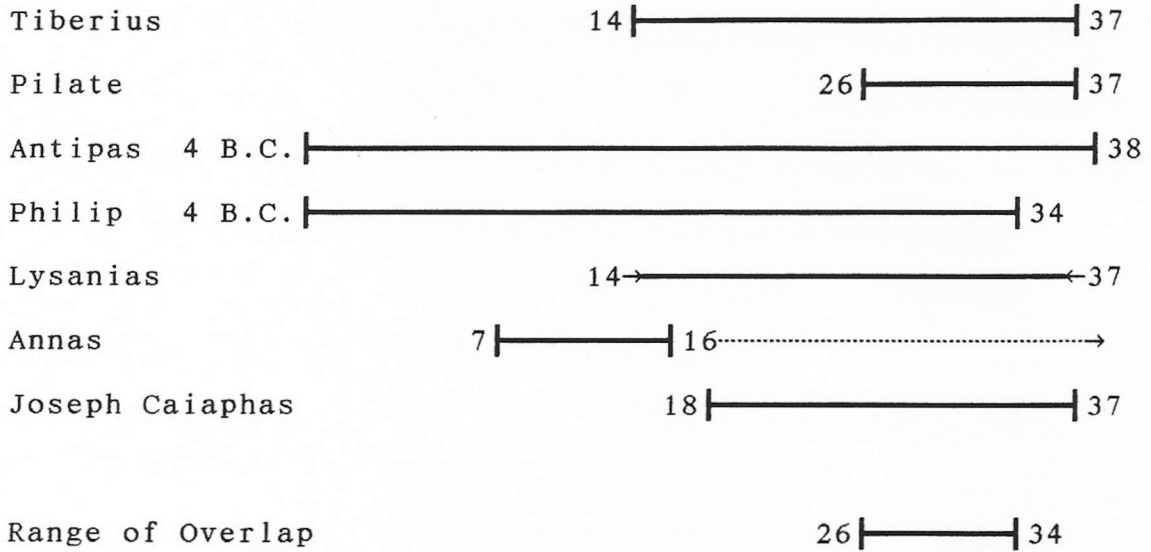
<sup>91</sup>The confusion comes out of Tertullian's attempt to ascertain the limits of Daniel 10:24-27, applying them to the advent of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. While he believes himself to be successful in accomplishing this, closer inspection of his work reveals that he has neglected to account for the entire fourteen years of Claudius' reign. While this Old Testament prophecy certainly seems to have some relationship to the timing of Christ's first coming, understanding how it should be related is not so obvious. This has resulted in nearly as many scholarly theories for counting Daniel's "sevens" as there have been scholars. The key probably lies in the proper application of the Jewish Sabbatical cycle.

<sup>92</sup>Tertullian gives the names as "Rubellius Geminus and Fufius Geminus," (Answer To The Jews 18, 1994 3:160).

<sup>93</sup>It is most unfortunate that many Christian writers have capitulated to the politically correct move to remove every vestige of Christianity from academia by abandoning the traditional terms B.C. and A.D. for the terms B.C.E. ("Before the Common Era") and C.E. ("In the Common Era").

<sup>94</sup>See APPENDIX G. SHORT CHRONOLOGY FOR LIFE OF CHRIST.

APPENDIX A. COMMON YEARS OF TENURE IN LUKE 3:1-3



APPENDIX B. THE ΔΕΚΕΤΗ OF AUGUSTUS AND TIBERIUS

15 Mar 44 B.C.	Julius Caesar assassinated
02 Sep 31 B.C.	Battle of Actium
13 Jan 27 B.C.	Augustus enters 1st δεκέτη
01 Jul 23 B.C.	Augustus made tribune for life
01 Jul 18 B.C.	Augustus begins 2nd δεκέτη
01 Jul 08 B.C.	Augustus begins 3rd δεκέτη
01 Jul A.D. 03	Augustus begins 4th δεκέτη
01 Jul A.D. 13	Augustus begins 5th δεκέτη Tiberius given tribunician power and granted joint provincial authority.
19 Aug A.D. 14	Augustus dies Tiberius enters 1st δεκέτη (Years 1-10)
01 Jul A.D. 24	Tiberius begins 2nd δεκέτη (Years 11-20)
01 Jul A.D. 28	Tiberius begins Year 15
01 Jul A.D. 29	Tiberius begins Year 16
01 Jul A.D. 34	Tiberius begins 3rd δεκέτη (Years 21-30)
16 Mar A.D. 37	Tiberius dies (In Year 24)

## APPENDIX C. THE JEWISH SABBATICAL CYCLE

The summer conquest by Herod of Jerusalem in 37 B.C. was hastened by the fact that the defenders of the city were hampered by a lack of supplies, specifically attributed to their observance of the Sabbatical year. That Sabbatical year began in Tishri of 38 B.C. (*Antiq.* 14.15.14-16.1.2, 1984:312-314).

In the 150th year of the Selucid period - Fall 163 B.C. through Fall 162 B.C., the city of Beth-zur was abandoned to the Syrian forces due to lack of provisions, brought on by the Sabbatical year (1 Mac 6:48,53). That Jewish Sabbatical year began in Tishri of 164 B.C., resulting in limited supplies during 163/162 B.C.

These two accounts allow the Jewish Sabbatical cycle to be partially reconstructed. The Year of Jubilee was to be the year following every seventh Sabbatical year. Given the spacing between these celebrations, the Year of Jubilee, if it were celebrated at all, must have been both the fiftieth year of one cycle and the first year of the next.

The chart below uses these two known examples of celebration and extrapolates the Sabbatical years between the rebuilding of the Temple and its next destruction.

514 B.C.	507	500	493	486	479	472
465	458	451	444	437	430	423
416	409	402	395	388	381	374
367	360	353	346	319	332	325
318	311	304	297	290	283	276
269	262	255	248	241	234	227
220	213	206	199	192	185	178
171	164	157	150	143	136	129
122	115	108	101	94	87	80
73	66	59	52	45	38	31
24	17	10	3	A.D. 5	12	19
26	33	40	47	54	61	68

APPENDIX D. SHORT CHRONOLOGY FOR LIFE OF PAUL

	15	Paul born (latest possible date)
Passover	33	Crucifixion/Resurrection
Pentecost	33	Start of Church
	33	Paul arrives in Jerusalem
Tishri	33	Sabbatical Year begins
	33/34	Deacons distribute food
	34	Stephen stoned/Paul persecutes
Tishri	34	Sabbatical Year ends
	34	Paul converted
	34-36	Paul in Arabia and Damascus
Fall	36	Aretas defeats Herod
Fall	36	Paul escapes from Damascus
	36	Paul meets briefly with Apostles
	36-45	Paul in Tarsus
	45	Paul in Syrian Antioch
	44	Paul takes famine aid to Jerusalem
	44-46	1st Missionary Journey
Tishri	47	Sabbatical Year begins
	47/48	Jerusalem Council
Tishri	48	Sabbatical Year ends
	48-54	2nd Missionary Journey
Tishri	54	Sabbatical Year begins
Tishri	55	Sabbatical Year ends
	56-59	3rd Missionary Journey
	59	Arrest in Jerusalem
	59-61	Imprisonment at Caesarea
Tishri	61	Sabbatical Year begins
	61/62	Journey to Rome
	62-64	Imprisonment at Rome
	64-66	Final Work
	66	Execution

APPENDIX E. PASSOVER DATING FOR A.D. 32-36

The Jewish month of Nisan began at sunset, with the sighting of the first visible crescent of the first new moon of spring. The modern style dates and times below are that of the technical new moons of spring, A.D. 32-36. The first crescent was generally visible at sunset the following day, with A.D. 32 being a rare exception in that it occurred so early in the day as to be visible that very evening.

In the following calendar, the daylight portions of the pertinent days in Nisan are indicated.

<u>SUN</u>	<u>MON</u>	<u>TUE</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THU</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>
3/30/32						
12:10a	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
3/19/33						
				2:58p		1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
7/7/34						
			4:01p		1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
3/28/35						
	8:24p		1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
4/15/36						
7:07a		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19

APPENDIX F. SHORT CHRONOLOGY FOR LIFE OF CHRIST

Unknown	5? B.C.	In Bethlehem (Jesus born)
Passover	A.D. 8?	At Jerusalem (Jesus left behind)
Fall?	A.D. 29	At Jordan River (Immersed by John)
Fall/Winter		In Judea (Tempted by Satan)
Winter		At Bethany, Perea (First disciples)
Winter		At Cana (First miracle)
Passover	A.D. 30	At Jerusalem (Temple cleansed)
Spring-Winter		In Judea
Winter		At Sychar, Samaria (Many believe)
Winter		In Galilee
Passover?	A.D. 31	At Jerusalem (Lame man healed)
All Year		In Galilee
Passover	A.D. 32	At Bethsaida Julias (Feeds 5,000)
Spring		In Tyre & Sidon
Spring-Fall		In Galilee
Tabernacles		At Jerusalem (Blind man healed)
Fall-Winter		In Perea
Dedication		At Jerusalem (Nearly stoned)
Winter		In Perea
Winter		At Bethany (Lazarus raised)
Winter-Spring		At Ephraim (With disciples)
10 Nisan	A.D. 33	At Jerusalem (Triumphal Entry)
14 Nisan		At Jerusalem (Crucified by Romans)
15 Nisan		At Jerusalem (Sabbath rest in Hades)
16 Nisan		At Jerusalem (Resurrected from Dead)
26 Iyyar		At Jerusalem (Returned to Glory)

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