

CHRONOLOGICAL NOTES ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

by

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The study of Chronology in the life of Jesus is a complicated and lengthy one. This paper has only studied certain issues that are of primary importance to the beginning and duration of the ministry, and therefore to the date of the crucifixion.

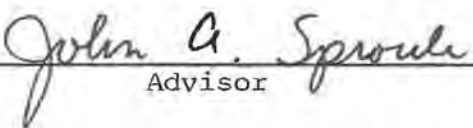
The date of the birth of Christ was briefly examined and a date of 5/4 B.C. was arrived at. The greatest objection to this is that Herod (who died in the spring of 4 B.C.) had the children two years and under killed. However, the magi probably came when Christ was a few months old, and not a few years.

The beginning of Jesus' ministry is basically dated by John 2:20 and Luke 3:1. In John 2:20 some Jews declared the Temple was built forty-six years prior. The words used make it clear that they were referring to the inner sanctuary, which was started in 20/19 B.C. and finished in 18/17 B.C. Forty-six years added to this comes to A.D. 29/30. Thus Jesus' first Passover was in the year A.D. 30, as a three and one half year duration was concluded. Luke 3:1 states that John the Baptist began his work in the fifteenth year of Tiberius' reign. Since the evidence greatly shows that Luke would have used the succession method of dating (as opposed to the co-regency method), Tiberius' first year would be A.D. 14/15 and his fifteenth year would be A.D. 28/29. This again makes a 33 A.D. date for the crucifixion possible, but omits the possibility of A.D. 30 if a three and one half year ministry is accepted.

The historical and political situation showed that before A.D. 32 Pilate would not give in to Jewish demands, but instead he ruled with inflexibility. After Sejanus was executed, Pilate was careful not to offend Tiberius and not to cause an uproar among the Jews. Thus the A.D. 33 date best fits the political situation.

Astronomy and other factors also support the A.D. 33 date but are not conclusive. Thus the A.D. 33 date was determined to best fit all the data. Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy has been interpreted in many ways, but it can be made to fit either the A.D. 30 or the A.D. 33 date. The date of Paul's conversion is important also, for some believe it conflicts with the A.D. 33 date of the crucifixion. However, A.D. 35 fits well as the date of his conversion, and some who assume an A.D. 30 crucifixion date also accept the A.D. 35 date for Paul. Again, A.D. 33 best fits in almost every situation.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus lived in history, and "history is his story" is a saying that this writer once heard from a freshman college professor. Since that time interest in the history of Jesus' time period has grown. Therefore, the writer was thankful when the opportunity to make a study of the chronology involved in Jesus' life presented itself. The King James Version or the writer's own translations are used throughout.

This study is limited in scope and deals primarily with the date of the beginning of Jesus' ministry and with the duration of it. A short chapter on the birth of Christ is given because of its connection with the beginning of Jesus' ministry by Luke 3:23, which is also examined. Nine charts (or tables) including five appendixes are also given, as they will each save many pages in the body of the paper itself.

This study has been very rewarding to the author, and it is hoped that the reader will benefit as well. Jesus lived in history, and chronology is the framework of history. One cannot learn too much about the Lord Jesus Christ, and the more one does learn about and from the master teacher, the more he appreciates and is thankful for his life, death, and resurrection.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The date of the birth of Jesus has been disputed from the earliest church fathers. This chapter will deal with the issues involved only as a survey. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the date in great detail. This is because the date of Jesus' birth is only indirectly related to the date of his crucifixion. It will be seen later that Luke 3:23 is the most direct link between the two and it is not specific enough to build a chronology upon. At best it will serve as a guideline which together with the birth date of Christ can limit extreme dates for the crucifixion.

A Spectrum of Opinion

The dates given for the birth of Jesus vary a great deal. Several opinions are given here in their chronological order. A date as early as 40 B.C. has been given¹ and also 20 B.C. has been suggested.² These dates are so early that they cannot be seriously

1

Robert Eisler, The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist, trans. by Alexander Haggerty Krappe (New York: The Dial Press, 1931), pp. 302-319.

2

A. T. Olmstead, "The Chronology of Jesus' Life," Anglican Theological Review, 24 (January, 1942), 23-26. Olmstead bases his date on John 8:57, "thou art not yet fifty years old." He obviously ignores the other data and the other scriptures.

held by anyone who accepts all the scriptural data available. Next one may note 11 B.C. has been proposed (again because of John 8:57) by Ogg¹ and c. 9 B.C. by Ruckstuhl and Power.² Other dates include 7 B.C.³ and every year down to A.D. 1⁴ The following sections will help to determine the date that Christ was born.

Latest Possible Date

Herod the Great

The latest possible date (terminus ad quem) involves Herod the Great. It is clear from Matthew 2:1 and Luke 1:5 that Jesus was born when Herod was still alive. Herod died in 4 B.C. This is known because Josephus mentioned that an eclipse of the moon took

1

George Ogg, "Chronology of the New Testament," The New Bible Dictionary, ed. by J. D. Douglas (1962), p. 223.

2

Eugen Ruckstuhl, Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus. Trans. by Victor J. Drapela (New York: Desclee Company, 1965), p. 6. This date is implied; E. Power, "John 2:20 and the Date of the Crucifixion," Biblica, IX (July, 1928), 280-81.

3

For example, see J. A. Howett, "Chronology," The Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 3, p. 736.

4

A great many advocates could be cited here, but it should be noted that Dionysius Exiguus, a Roman abbot of the sixth century fixed the date as it now is read on calendars. His obvious mistake was to put Jesus' birth after the death of Herod the Great. For a somewhat detailed account of the ancient opinions, see Jack Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 215ff.

place just before Herod died.¹ This is the only eclipse Josephus mentions and has been dated on the night of March 12/13, 4 B.C. by many scholars. Thus the date Herod died was between March 12 and April 11, 4 B.C.²

This 4 B.C. date for Herod's death is accepted by most. It has been unconvincingly challenged by a few writers.³ The conclusion of this writer is that the spring of 4 B.C. is indeed the

1

Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews (hereinafter referred to as Antiquities), xvii.6.4. (167). It might be mentioned as a side note here that Herod is called "the Great" today because Josephus called him "*ὁ πρεσβύτερος*" in Antiquities xviii.5.4. (130, 133, 136) which some believe simply meant "the elder," to distinguish him from three sons of the same name.

2

There was a Passover shortly after Herod died (Josephus, Antiquities xvii.9.3. (213) and Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews (hereinafter referred to as Wars), ii.1.3 (10)) and the first day of this Passover can be dated to April 11, 4 B.C. See Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.--A.D. 75 (2nd ed.; Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), p. 45.

3

Probably the most notable attempt has been made by W. E. Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," The Journal of Theological Studies, 17 (October, 1966), 283-298. Filmer questioned the methods of dating by Josephus, took the eclipse of Josephus to be one in 1 B.C. and changed the commonly known dates when Herod was appointed king (40 B.C.) and when he captured Jerusalem (37 B.C.) to 39 and 36 B.C. respectively. However, he failed to properly deal with the dates of Herod's successors and the other known dates of the Roman Empire at the time that must be synchronized with Herod. For a good review of Filmer's article and a discussion of Herod's death date, see Timothy D. Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," The Journal of Theological Studies, 19 (April, 1968), 204-209. Barnes arrives at the traditional date of the spring of 4 B.C., but he also suggests December of 5 B.C.

date of Herod's death.¹ Therefore, the latest that Christ could have been born is the winter of 5/4 B.C. Reynolds noted that many others have agreed with this conclusion.

Taking the synoptic narrative as a trustworthy guide, it is clear that John must have been born before the date of Herod the Great. The date of that event is accurately determined to be before the Passover of 750 A.U.C. On this Schurrer, Lichtenstein, Browne, Ellicott, Wieseler, and Greswell, agree. The birth of our Lord could not be placed later than February, 750 A.U.C.²

The winter of 5/4 B.C. is accepted as the date of Jesus' birth by many, including this writer. Unless there is good evidence to put the date earlier (and many have concluded that there is), one need not do so.

Earliest Possible Date

Many studies have been made on the possible dates of Jesus' birth. This section will briefly list the areas of study and show that most are of very little help indeed.

The Census of Quirinius

The census of Quirinius which is mentioned in Luke 2:1-2 is stated as follows:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

1

See also A. Momigliano, "Herod of Judaea," The Cambridge Ancient History, ed. by S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth (hereinafter referred to as C.A.H.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), X. pp. 336-339.

2

Henry Robert Reynolds, John the Baptist (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1874), Appendix A.

At first sight this seems to be a clear and precise chronological note, yet it has caused many problems for interpreters. The context seems to make it clear that Jesus' birth was after the decree in verse one and before or at the time of the actual registration in verse three. Thus if the date of the census can be determined, then the date of Jesus' birth would seem to be further narrowed, as it had to take place during or at about the same time of the census.

The passage can be (and has been) taken to mean several things. It could mean that this census was the first taken when Quirinius was governor, and that another one took place later in his rule. This is the view preferred by Robertson¹ and others. Some have understood Luke to be saying, "This census was made before that census that was made when Quirinius was governor."² A third view and the one preferred by this writer is that *πρὶν* here means "before." This census was made "before" Quirinius was governor. This may not be the dominant New Testament meaning of the word, but it is used in this way. In John 1:15, 30, John the Baptist said of Jesus "he was before me." In John 15:18 Jesus said that the world "hated me before it hated you."

1

See Archibald Thomas Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 657.

2

Among others this was the view (in his later writings) of Frederick Fyvie Bruce in New Testament History (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), p. 32.

Although it is not a critical point, the latter view does seem best. Therefore, this writer prefers to translate the "first" of verse two as "before." When this is done, the passage simply says that Jesus was born at a registration (or census) "before" Quirinius was governor of Syria.¹ It is known that a Quirinius was governor of Syria in A.D. 6/7 and possibly in 3-2 B.C. Therefore, this verse really proves nothing about the earliest possible date of Jesus' birth except that it was surely before 3-2 B.C. The date of the census is still unknown, and although a 5/4 B.C. date for Jesus' birth fits what few facts are known, one should not defend any view solely on this passage.

The Star of Bethlehem

It is thought by some that the so-called "star of Bethlehem" was a natural conjunction of planets. Since these conjunctions can be accurately dated, it seems natural that if there was a conjunction about the time of Christ's birth then it would help date that event. Long studies have been made on this issue² and many agree that the

1

Many lengthy articles have been written on this passage. This writer recommends the following: Leslie P. Madison, "Problems of Chronology in the Life of Christ." Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1963, pp. 34-44; George Ogg, "The Quirinius Question Today," The Expository Times, 79 (May, 1968), 231-236; Harold Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), pp. 13-23; G. H. Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration," C.A.H. X. pp. 192-198; J. G. C. Anderson, "The Position Held by Quirinius for the Homandensian War," C.A.H. X. pp. 877-878.

2

Many conclude that the star is of no real chronological help. See Madison, "Problems of Chronology in the Life of Christ," p. 33; Kenneth D. Boa, "The Star of Bethlehem." Unpublished Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972, for two good treatments of the event.

New Testament account simply indicates a supernatural phenomenon. The story is of course connected with the wise men of Matthew chapter two, and there are several reasons for assuming it was supernatural. First, there is no ancient record that anyone else saw it, so it must have been seen by the magi only. Second, the reaction of the magi in Matthew 2:10 certainly indicates that the star appeared and disappeared as God willed it to do. Thus it would have been only for the purpose of leading them to Bethlehem. Third, Matthew 2:9 says the star stood over where the young child was, which is clearly not a normal celestial phenomenon. Thus, it is concluded that there is no real chronological value in the star.

The Course of Abia

According to Luke 1:5, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was of the course of Abia. After his course was completed, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant with John and Mary became pregnant with Jesus six months later (Lk. 1:23-26). The priesthood was set up with twenty-four courses of priests who ministered one week at a time and twice a year. The obvious problem is that since they ministered twice a year, the year could not be known even if the course dates were known each year.

To make matters even more difficult, the little information that is known is interpreted differently by many writers. Josephus mentions that David had set up a twenty-four course system.¹ This

¹ Josephus, Antiquities vii.14.7.

was according to 1 Chronicles 24:7-18. After the exile and restoration, however, the priesthood courses were not the same. According to David's original system, Jehoiarib was first and Abia was eighth. Later Nehemiah gave only twenty-two courses with Jehoiarib listed as seventeenth and Abia as twelfth (Neh. 10:8; 12:1-7). After that he listed twenty-one courses with Jehoiarib as number fifteen and Abia as number eleven (Neh. 12:12-21). Thus the note about "the course of Abia" is not helpful in determining a date for the birth of Jesus.

Killing of the Infants

The Matthew account says that Herod had all the male children under three years old killed. The text literally says "from two years old and under," which would probably include those not yet three. He did this after he had inquired of the magi as to the time that they had seen the star (Mt. 2:7, 16). This would indicate that Christ was near three (or possibly near two) years old¹ when Herod had the infants killed. If this was the case, then Jesus would probably have been born in 7 or 6 B.C., as Herod may have wanted a safety margin.

1

G. Mackinlay, The Magi--How They Recognized Christ's Star (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), p. 154, makes the following comment: "Greswell states in his Dissertations upon a Harmony of the Gospels, vol. 2, p. 136, that a Jewish child who had completed one month of his second year would be reckoned as two years old; he consequently concludes that thirteen months was the utmost limit of age of the murdered children." This writer has found no solid evidence for such a claim, but it could have important consequences if it were a certain fact.

It is also commonly argued that Matthew's use of *παιδίον* "child" (in 2:8, 9, etc.) and Luke's use of *βρέφος* "baby" (at 2:12) as well as Matthew's use of "house" and Luke's use of "manger" are evidences of the view that Christ was about two (not yet three) years old.

In response to the above statements, it should first be noted that most of these who argue for the magi coming when Jesus was no longer a baby put the date of his birth at 6 or 5 B.C.¹ However, if the two or three years are accounted for, then the birth would have been in the winter of 8/7 (or 7/6) B.C. Very few are willing to go back that far. If it be stated that Herod was using a safety factor of a year or so to make sure Jesus was killed, then the argument is again weakened, because if a safety factor is allowed, there is no reason to assume Jesus was more than a few months old when the wise men came. If Herod was using a safety factor, which he probably was, then neither view is supported more than the other.

Secondly, a natural reading of the passages certainly indicates that wise men came while Jesus was still a baby.² Third, to make

1

Rarely one will see 7 B.C., but most common is 6 or 5 B.C. For an example, see James L. Boyer, "New Testament Chronological Chart" (Winona Lake, Indiana: Grace Theological Seminary, 1968), printed page one. It should be stated that Boyer and many others are not dogmatic on this.

2

Although this is not intended to be a technical argument, the fact that a surface or a casual reading gives one the impression that Jesus was still a baby is seen in the way the Christmas scenes portray the event.

Jesus a child when the wise men came, one has to divide Luke chapter two into two completely different contexts.¹

Fourth, Matthew 2:1-2 says that the wise men came when Jesus was "born." The aorist passive participle of γεννάω here seems to indicate that they came shortly "after Jesus had been born," not after he was two years old, or when he was weaned, raised, matured, etc. All that can be stated for certain is that the action of the aorist passive participle "having been born" precedes that of the main verb παρῆγοντο "they arrived (aorist/indicative). Thus a literal translation fits well here, "Now Jesus having been born . . . wise men arrived," or "Now when (or after) Jesus was born . . . wise men arrived." It does not seem best to put a two year gap between the two phrases.

Fifth, in the same passage the wise men asked, "Where is he who is born the King of the Jews?" The word for born here is an aorist passive of τέκτω which means a newborn. It is used in the gospels ten times and it is always (except at Jn. 16:21) used for Elizabeth or Mary when John or Jesus was born. This word is used nineteen times in the New Testament and is always used of someone who is giving birth or "bringing forth" a child. It is used figuratively of the earth sprouting forth plants, etc., but in every passage the "bringing forth" idea is clear. In the passive the wise

1

This division is not a critical point, but is a point of difficulty. See Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, A Harmony of the Gospels (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), p. 30 n.o.

men were saying, "Where is he who has been brought forth (born)?"¹
 The word indicates a recent birth, and it seems clear that the wise men were searching for a baby, not a child.

Sixth, when the wise men came, Joseph and his family were still in Bethlehem. Joseph's home town was Nazareth and there was no reason for them to remain in Bethlehem for two years or more, as his business was in Nazareth. Some have argued that the family had already moved to Nazareth (as Lk. 2:39 indicates) from Bethlehem, had packed their belongings, had moved back to Bethlehem to set up the new home and business there.² This they support by Matthew 2:21-22 where Joseph's intentions are to return from Egypt to Judaea. However, the reason Joseph was going back to Israel need be no other than the fact that the angel (2:19) told him to go into Israel. He actually never went to Judaea (Mt. 2:22) and if he had brought his belongings to Bethlehem he must have lost all his tools, etc., as he surely could not have taken much to Egypt with him. It seems best to simply say that the family went to Bethlehem, Christ was born, they went to Jerusalem (Lk. 2:21-38) for the presentation and back to Bethlehem to their temporary residence. Then the wise men came when Jesus was about two months or so old. Since Mary was ready to deliver

1

Some might object to Revelation 12:2,4,5,13. But here it is obvious that the word under consideration is not used to emphasize that the woman's offspring is old (i.e. Christ). The emphasis here is that the woman is "pregnant" and that she brings forth. It is of course possible (at least theoretically) that one could say anyone "has been born" (passive), but it is also interesting that the only other passive of this word in the New Testament is at Luke 2:11, "unto you is born this day."

2

See Thomas and Gundry, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 30 on this, as well as the commentaries on Luke.

when she first got to Bethlehem, she probably did so in a day or two (Lk. 2:4-7). They would have to stay there for a short time after the delivery and needed to be registered anyway, and then it would not make much sense to go all the way back to Nazareth just to come right back for Mary's purification in Jerusalem. Therefore, it seems best to take the trip to Nazareth in Luke 2:39 as a general summary statement and to be identical with the trip from Egypt to Nazareth mentioned in some detail in Matthew 2:19-23.

Seventh, the words for child, baby, and house are really no problem at all. It is natural that they would be in a house after a month or two, as opposed to still being in the manger. The boarding houses were full (because of the registration) when they came to Bethlehem, but after a month or so there would have been plenty of room, so they would of course be in a house.

The distinction of the words *βρέφος* in Luke 2:12 and *παιδίον* in Matthew 2:8,9, etc. also makes a weak argument. The former is used of a child in 2 Timothy 3:15. It is also used in Luke 18:15 where people were bringing children to Jesus. The parallels in Matthew 19:13 and Mark 10:13 both have *παιδίον* and the proof that there are not two different groups is clear from the fact that all three accounts have *παιδίον* in the verse immediately following, which all say "suffer the children to come to me." The word *παιδίον* is also used of newborns in Luke 1:59,66,76; 2:17,21, 27; John 16:21 and Hebrews 11:23. Thus while there is a definite trend to distinguish the two words, they are used interchangeably enough so no important point should be made concerning their distinctions.

Order of Events

One may then trace out the order of events of the nativity information in Matthew and Luke as follows:

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. John's birth was foretold | Luke 1:5-25 |
| 2. Jesus' birth was foretold | Luke 1:26-38 |
| 3. Mary visited Elizabeth | Luke 1:39-45 |
| 4. Mary sings for joy | Luke 1:46-56 |
| 5. John the Baptist was born | Luke 1:57-66 |
| 6. Zacharias prophesied | Luke 1:67-79 |
| 7. Jesus' birth was explained to Joseph in a dream | Matthew 1:18-25 |
| 8. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the taxation | Luke 2:1-5 |
| 9. Jesus was born in Bethlehem | Luke 2:6-7 |
| 10. The shepherds visit the manger | Luke 2:8-20 |
| 11. Jesus was circumcised when eight days old | Luke 2:21 |
| 12. Jesus was presented in the Temple when he was at least forty-one days old | Luke 2:22-24 |
| 13. Simeon gave his blessings | Luke 2:25-35 |
| 14. Anna spoke out about Jesus | Luke 2:36-38 |
| 15. The family returned to Bethlehem to their temporary residence | |
| 16. The magi arrived in Jerusalem | Matthew 2:1-7 |
| 17. The magi go to Bethlehem and visit Joseph's family in their house | Matthew 2:8-11 |
| 18. The magi return to the East | Matthew 2:12 |
| 19. Joseph and family fled to Egypt | Matthew 2:13-15 |
| 20. Herod has the infants killed | Matthew 2:16-18 |
| 21. Herod died and Joseph and family moved to Nazareth | Matthew 2:19-23; |
| | Luke 2:39 |
| 22. Jesus continued to grow | |

Conclusion

In this brief survey of Jesus' birth, this writer has suggested that Jesus was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C. There is no solid evidence for an earlier date. The reason Herod had the children killed who were under three is probably because he wanted to be sure the new king was killed. One should not assume that the wise men left the East as soon as the star first appeared to them. Since it was a supernatural event, they also may have had to wait for a supernatural explanation. However long it took for them to get the information is not known, but God knew the exact time He wanted them to arrive.

The evidence that the wise men came when Jesus was still a baby, as well as the weaknesses of the arguments that Jesus was about two years when Herod had the infants killed, seems best to fit a 5/4 B.C. date for Jesus' birth. This also fits well in the sequence of events as mentioned above. Also Luke 3:23 is important here, as will be seen later. The reader is directed to appendix IV for the various possibilities of Jesus' birth and death dates. The date of the birth of Jesus was planned, or better, the world was planned for the birth of Jesus (Galatians 4:4).

CHAPTER TWO

LENGTH OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was concluded that Jesus was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C. This chapter will deal with the duration or length of Jesus' public ministry. In the course of this study this writer has found that the most challenging portion in the life of Christ to date is the beginning of his ministry. Several times in that section attention is drawn to the length of Jesus' ministry and therefore the duration of his ministry will be examined first. The importance of this chapter is obvious, for if the length of his ministry cannot be known with a degree of certainty, then the date of the crucifixion cannot be determined.

In a harmony of the gospels one will basically find that the so-called "synoptics" give more geographical information than does John. Yet John gives more details pertaining to feasts and holy days which enable one to document more fully time periods and date specific events in Jesus' life. Thus if it were not for John, a chronology of Jesus' ministry would be nothing but guess work. This is not to say that each of the other gospels do not help, for they do, and especially when all four record a particular event as the miracle of the five thousand plus people being fed.

A survey of the literature¹ on this topic shows that almost every length of ministry from a few months to quite a few years has been proposed. A partial listing is given here, and comments on some of these are included.

One-Year View

There are those who hold to a one-year or less ministry of Christ. While this position is easily refuted if one accepts the scriptures at face value, many have still held to it as Ogg noted over thirty years ago. "The theory of a one-year ministry is not entirely new: it has emerged from time to time in the course of the last three hundred years. To-day, however, it is being urged as never before and has always won for itself the approval even of some who at first vigorously opposed it."²

The one-year view was primarily based on Luke 4:19 in ancient times, "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." However, there is no need to take this verse as support of the theory. It seems clear that "year" here is equal to "time" or "day" or "era," etc. when

¹ One of the most comprehensive studies on the duration of the ministry is George Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1940). He devotes pages 3-149. Other recommended discussions include: Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 45-63; Archibald Thomas Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels For Students of the Life of Christ (hereinafter referred to as A Harmony of the Gospels) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), pp. 42, 267-270; R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), pp. 358-360; Samuel F. Jarvis, A Chronological Introduction to the History of the Church (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), pp. 462ff; Edmund F. Sutcliffe, A Two Year Public Ministry Defended (London: Burns, Oates and Warshbourne, 1938).

² Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 3.

Jesus began his ministry. Most modern writers who hold to a one-year ministry have abandoned this position.

In order to arrive at a one-year ministry, some simply throw out part of the gospel of John, but some take the Passover of 2:13 (at the cleansing of the temple) to be the same one as the Passover of 11:55 (and in the synoptic gospels), as there is another account of a cleansing of the temple there. See the note below on Finegan for this. If this be allowed, then John would contain only two Passovers. However, the Feast of John 5:1, plus evidence from the other gospels (examined later) clearly make a one-year ministry impossible unless one tampers with the texts. It might be added that the several who hold to the one-year view admit that St. John does not teach it.

Origen held a one-year ministry for the reason above (Lk. 4:19) and because the manuscript he worked with apparently did not have "the passover" in John 6:4. However, if this is true, his was different from those known today, because none of the Greek manuscripts now known omit the words.

Among the adherents to a very short ministry are: Guigneburt,¹ Windisch;² others who make the ministry closer to a year, or more accurately, one year and a small portion of another

1

Charles Guigneburt, Jesus, trans. by S. H. Hooke (New York: University Books, 1956), p. 211. He offers a ministry of only three of four months.

2

See Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 45.

year include Valentinus,¹ Petit,² Clement of Alexandria,³ Origen,⁴ (who, along with some of the earlier church fathers, are often vague, but seem to prefer a ministry which lasted exactly twelve months),

1

Valentinus was an Alexandrian and was educated there, but became famous for his teachings in Rome where he won many disciples. He was born about 100 A.D. and probably died about 160 A.D. when Ptolemaeus headed up the Valentinian school. Irenaeus was a contemporary of him and provides much information about him. Valentinus used Luke 4:19 which uses Isaiah 61:2 to support his view. This verse says, "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It is interesting that Valentinus had apparently done a lot of his study in the Gospel of John, which is the same book that Irenaeus used to refute him by pointing out the number of Passovers in it. See Irenaeus, Against Heresies ii.22.5-6; Robert M. Grant, ed., Gnosticism= A Sourcebook of Heretical Writings From the Early Christian Period (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), pp. 143ff. So many of the second century Gnostics held to a one-year view that Ogg, in Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, said, "So far as is known, the first to interest themselves in the question of Gospel chronology were the Gnostics of the second century. All the Gnostics appear to have taught that Jesus exercised his ministry but for the period of a single year." (p. 62).

2

See Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 28 for information on Samuel Petit (d. 1643) and his one-year view.

3

Clement of Alexandria, Stromata. i.21.146. His dates are about 155-220. He also used Luke 4:19 for his evidence, and notes "it was necessary for Him to preach only a year."

4

Origen, De Principiis iv.1.5. His dates are about 185-254. He stated that "He taught somewhere about a year and a few months."

Africanus,¹ Belser,² Von Soden,³ Klausner,⁴ Goguel,⁵ Olmstead,⁶

(whose chronology of the life of Jesus is certainly a radical one)

1

Africanus (Sextus Julius Africanus d. about 240), wrote a five-volume Chronographia in which he attempted to synchronize secular and sacred history. Although his dates are not certain with respect to the ministry of Jesus, Ogg, The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 65-68 argues that he held a one-year view and concluded on page sixty-eight as follows: "Therefore nothing that necessitates any abandonment of the position that Africanus is to be reckoned among the supporters of the one-year theory." Ogg also discusses several other ancients who probably held the one-year view (see pp. 62-76, 103-113).

2

Johannes Belser, "Zur Hypothese von der einjährigen Wirksamkeit Jesu," Biblische Zeitschrift, I (1903), 55-63, 160-74; Johannes Belser, "Zu der Perikope von der Speisung der Funftausend," Biblische Zeitschrift, II (1904), 153-76. As noted by Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 47.

3

Hermann von Soden, "Chronology," Encyclopaedia Biblica, ed. by T. K. Cheyne and T. S. Black, I (1899), 802-3. He does not consider the Passover of John 6:4 to actually be another year.

4

Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, trans. by Herbert Danby (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925), p. 259.

5

Maurice Goguel, The Life of Jesus, trans. by Olive Wyon (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1933), p. 252. However, he does admit (p. 234) that "according to John, the ministry of Jesus did not last one year, but, at the very least, two."

6

Olmstead, "The Chronology of Jesus' Life," 6-11; A. T. Olmstead, Jesus in the Light of History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 281. In the latter reference, Olmstead even claimed to have calculated the exact number of days in Jesus' ministry, "we can even give the exact length of Jesus' ministry-- 475 days."

Conzelmann,¹ Finegan,² and Browne.³

Two-Year View

Many have held to a two-year view and this primarily because of the three Passovers mentioned in John's gospel at 2:13, 6:4, and 11:55. However, as will be seen later, the other three gospels also give evidence for at least two years. Since the reference in John 5:1 is not specific as to which feast is in view, Ogg has well noted what many have ultimately concluded. "In its duration this ministry was not less than two years and some months is all that the chronological details of the Fourth

1

Hans Conzelmann, History of Primitive Christianity, trans. by John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), p. 30. However, he also says that John gives a longer account and that the one year conclusion is "not assured."

2

W. P. Armstrong, "Chronology of the New Testament," ed. by Jack Finegan, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, rev. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, et al., I (1979), 689. As in any encyclopedia article that has been revised and edited so many times and by so many authors it is actually difficult to determine just who is responsible for a note in the volume. However, it does seem that this is Finegan's view here as he states in the "Summary of Dates" (different from W. P. Armstrong's original), in "the fourth Gospel . . . we have in fact to reckon with only two Passovers" (emphasis mine but clearly intended in the text). Finegan also mentioned the same thing in Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 283; "It is possible that Jn transposed this event to a place near the beginning of the ministry for some symbolic reason. In that event there would be but two passovers in Jn's record: (1) that of Jn. 6:4 and (2) that described in two different places, Jn 2:13 and 11:55ff. In this way Jn might be thought to fit the pattern of a ministry of one year and some months, even as perhaps the Synoptics indicate (438)."

3

H. Browne, Ordo Saeclorum--A Treatise on the Chronology of the Holy Scriptures, as mentioned in A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 270.

Gospel, for all their abundance, enable us to conclude."¹

The problem with a two-year ministry will also be discussed with the passage of John 5:1 later. Many who hold this view reverse the order of chapters five and six of John. This reversal puts the feast of 5:1 close to the Passover of 6:4 and they are both taken to be the Passover. However, one becomes very suspect at the reversal because there is no textual support for it! Those who reverse these chapters bear the burden to prove their point and they have not convinced very many.

The reader may examine the John 5:1 section later, for if John 5:1 is taken to be the feast of Purim then a two-year ministry might become more attractive. Several notable scholars have held this to be the case. However, this writer has found many problems with the "Purim" view.

Among those who have held this view are: Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea in Syria (c. 310-390),² Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus (c. 315-404),³ possibly John Chrysostom who died

1

Ogg, The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 5. He discusses the two-year view on pages 113-119.

2

His view is found in Jerome's Commentary on Daniel ix.24.

3

His view is found in his best-known work Panarion (li.30). In this fifty-first chapter he included his attempt at a harmony of the gospels. Finegan properly analyzed Epiphanius' work (in Handbook of Biblical Chronology), but he erroneously represents his findings in his table #114 on page 253. In his detailed discussion he does list a two-year ministry but the table shows a three-year ministry and is therefore confusing and misleading. Part of this

about 407 A.D.¹ More recently, attempts to defend the two-year ministry have been made by Ellicott,² Godet,³ Plummer,⁴ Sutcliffe,⁵ Daniel-Rops,⁶ Blinzler,⁷ Caird,⁸ Westcott,⁹ Ruckstuhl,¹⁰

may be seen in that he says (p. 252), "therefore altogether the life of Jesus covered thirty-two years and seventy-four days." However, in the table (p. 253), he says A.D. 32 marked Jesus' "thirty-third Birthday, Death seventy-four days later."

1

His view is a little less certain, see Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 116-117.

2

C. J. Ellicott, Historical Lectures on the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1867), p. 145.

3

F. Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, vol. 2 trans. by M. D. Cusin and S. Taylor, (3rd ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), pp. 36, 148.

4

Alfred Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John (Cambridge: University Press, 1923), p. 122.

5

Sutcliffe, A Two-Year Public Ministry Defended, pp. 84ff. He depends upon reversing the order of John chapters five and six for his system of chronology.

6

H. Daniel-Rops, Jesus in His Time, trans. by R. W. Miller (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), pp. 172-173, 303, 475-477.

7

Josef Blinzler, The Trial of Jesus, trans. by Isabel and Florence McHugh (2nd ed., Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959), p. 75.

8

George B. Caird, "The Chronology of the New Testament," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, ed. by George A. Buttrick, et al. I (1962), 601-2.

9

Brooke F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 93 (indirectly).

10

Eugen Ruckstuhl, Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus, p. 6.

Schnackenburg,¹ Bruce,² and Duncan.³

Three-Year View

A great number of Bible scholars hold to a three-year duration of Jesus' ministry.⁴ The primary reason many hold this view is that John mentions three Passovers and there is strong evidence of another Passover season also. More will be seen on this later.

The older adherents to a three-year ministry include Melito, Bishop of Sardis in Lydia (? to c. 190),⁵ and Eusebius (c. 265-339).⁶

1

Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, trans. by Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), I, 345. He also reverses the order of John chapters five and six.

2

F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), p. 190. He states this somewhat indirectly, John "places the cleansing of the temple two years earlier than this Passover."

3

George B. Duncan, "Chronology," The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, ed. by Charles M. Laymon (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 1281. He bases his view on the three Passovers in John and in a belief that John and the synoptics "differ too much for a valid harmonizing."

4

Ogg has probably given the best summary of who has held this view; see his Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 76-103, 119-128. This work is of course over thirty years old but is still a good source book, and includes some writers not mentioned in this paper.

5

Eusebius said he was bishop in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180). He was quite involved in the early controversies over the date of Easter. His view of a three-year ministry is preserved in Anastasius Sinaita Viae Dux xiii (115).

6

This is the Eusebius of Caesarea who is called the "Father of

More recent writers include Goodenow,¹ Holzmeister,² Robertson,³ Lenski,⁴ Dana,⁵ Scroggie,⁶ Hendriksen,⁷ Madison,⁸ Finegan,⁹

Church History." See his Ecclesiastical History i.x. He had a great influence on the views of many who lived after him for several centuries.

1

Smith B. Goodenow, Bible Chronology Carefully Unfolded (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1896), pp. 68-69.

2

In his Chronologia Vitae Christi, he holds to four Passovers as implied in Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, I, p. 245.

3

Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 270.

4

Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 360.

5

H. E. Dana, A Life of Christ (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1945), pp. 22, 74.

6

W. Graham Scroggie, A Guide to the Gospels (London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1948), pp. 68-81.

7

William Hendriksen, The Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 188.

8

Madison, "Problems of Chronology in the Life of Christ," pp. 102ff.

9

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 285. Note that he does not believe the synoptics need to be reconciled to John; however, he did say: "Taken as it stands, the Fourth Gospel appears to require a ministry of three years plus a number of months (441), and there is some support for a duration of some such magnitude in Epiphanius and Eusebius (442)."

Baughman,¹ Guthrie,² Maier,³ Hoehner,⁴ and Armstrong.⁵

Four-Year View

A few have held to a four-year ministry of Christ, but apparently only a very few. As will be seen in another chapter, the possible terminal dates for the beginning and ending of Jesus' ministry could be interpreted to allow for a four-year ministry. A four-year ministry is certainly more likely than one of only one year or even two years. However, the scriptural data available has led almost everyone to assume a shorter ministry than four years.

Two who have held this view are Stauffer⁶ and Cheney.⁷ Stauffer adds another Passover before the one mentioned in John 2:13, 23, and summarized his notes on John by saying that John

¹ Ray E. Baughman, The Life of Christ Visualized (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 10-12.

² Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 294-295.

³ E. Maier, "Studies in the Chronology of Acts." Unpublished Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1974, pp. 27-28, 153.

⁴ Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 60-63.

⁵ Armstrong, "Chronology of the New Testament," p. 647.

⁶ Ethelbert Stauffer, Jesus and His Story, trans. by Dorothea M. Barton (London: SMC Press, 1960), p. 17.

⁷ Johnston M. Cheney, The Life of Christ in Stereo, ed. by Stanley A. Ellisen (Portland, Oregon: Western Baptist Press, 1969), pp. 230-240.

deals with a period of about four years (between five Passover feasts) . . . In John 1.29,41 ff., the season of the Passover is presumed. In John 2.13,23 we hear of the second Passover. . . . The third Passover is not mentioned. In John 5.1 it is autumn, the feast of Tabernacles . . . In John 6.4 the fourth Passover is at hand. In John 7.2 it is autumn once again; in John 10.22 winter again, the feast of the Dedication of the temple. In John 11.55 we hear of the fifth Passover feast, the Passover of death.¹

Cheney adds the extra time to the other end of Christ's ministry, for he believes that too many events occurred in the last six months to have a three-year system work.² For a good analysis of their views, one may see Hoehner's work.³ It is interesting that if the arguments which they put forth were both convincing, then Jesus' ministry would have been about five and a half years long.

More than Four Years View

Some have held a five year ministry of Christ, arguing that all of the Passovers just are not mentioned. McKnight is one who does this.⁴

1

Stauffer, Jesus and His Story, p. 17. The problem here is that there is very little evidence for a Passover season to be "presumed" in John 1:29, 41ff.

2

Cheney, The Life of Christ in Stereo, pp. 227, 231.

3

Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 50-55. These two arguments for a four-year ministry have weak points and the reader is encouraged to read Hoehner (above), who does a fair job of showing their weaknesses.

4

Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 270.

Perhaps it should be mentioned here that Irenaeus apparently held to a ten or twenty-year ministry. He used John 8:57 in support of his view and also claimed that Jesus would at least be a mature person of age forty.¹ In order to examine the crucial issues involved, an outline of Jesus' ministry must be established.

Chronological Outline of Jesus' Ministry

In determining the outline of Jesus' ministry, one must first start with the times that are known and relate other events to them. By using a harmony of the gospels (of which many are now available), most of the events in the gospels can be put in proper sequence. The events such as named feasts can be dated and therefore most of the material can be arranged with an acceptable degree of accuracy as to its order.

There are several holy days mentioned or implied in the gospels and these form the main points in the outline of elapsed time. Especially important is the mention of several Passovers. These are mentioned in all four gospels, but only John records Passovers other than the one at the time of Jesus' childhood and the one at the time of the crucifixion. It should be noted that all four of the gospels mention Jesus' last Passover season (at the crucifixion) several times. Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not mention any other feast by name; nor do they mention any other

¹

See Irenaeus, Against Heresies ii.22.

"feast" (ἑορτή) at all that is significant to this study.¹ In order for the reader to have the different feasts and their times in mind, a table of these will here be included in this paper. Some of these are not found in the gospels, but are included because of the importance of the unnamed feast of John 5:1. Generally, only those references important to this study are given.

Name	Date	References	Josephus
Purim (Lots)	Adar 14-15 (Feb/Mar)	Est. 9:17-28 2 Macc. 15:36	<u>Ant.</u> xi.6.13.
Passover/ Unleavened Bread	Nisan 14, 15 (Mar/Apr)	Ex. 12:6-48 Jn. 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55	<u>Wars</u> vi.9.3. <u>Ant.</u> iii.10.5.
Pentecost (Weeks)	Seven weeks after Passover (May/June)	Lev. 23:16 Dt. 16:10 Acts 2:1	<u>Ant.</u> iii.10.6 xiii.8.4.
Wood Offering	Ab 15 (August)	Neh. 10:34; 13:31	<u>Wars</u> ii.17.6.
Trumpets (New Years)	Tishri 1 (Sept/Oct)	Lev. 23:23-26 Num. 29:1-6	
Day of Atonement	Tishri 10 (Sept/Oct)	Lev. 23:27-32 Num. 29:7-11	
Tabernacles	Tishri 15 (Sept/Oct)	Lev. 23:34 1 Ki. 8:2 Jn. 5:1?; 7:2	<u>Ant.</u> iii.10.4 viii.4.1. xiii.13.5.
Dedication (Lights)	Kislev 25 (Nov/Dec)	1 Macc. 4:59 Jn. 10:22	<u>Ant.</u> xii.7.7.

1

Luke mentions a Passover (at 2:41-42) during Jesus' childhood, but none are mentioned in the time of the public ministry of Christ.

As can be seen by the preceding table, John is the important one to follow in determining the duration of Jesus' ministry. It is important to examine these, as well as the other chronological notes and mentions of "feast" to make sure the Passovers are distinguishable. This will be done in the following pages, and the sections will be divided by Passover seasons.

Before The First Passover

Jesus' baptism is the starting point for these calculations because his baptism occurred apparently soon after the chronological note in Luke 3:1-2 which will be studied in some detail later. Epiphanius (c. 315-404) says Jesus was baptized in the fall¹ and this is probably close to actuality. According to the gospels, several things happened before the first Passover of Jesus' ministry. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist east of the Jordan River and then endured the forty day-plus fasting and temptation west of the Jordan in the wilderness (Mt. 4:11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13). John then tells that he called some disciples (Jn. 1:35-51), attended the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:1-11), went to Capernaum and spent some time there (Jn. 2:12), and then traveled to Jerusalem to attend the Passover (Jn. 2:13-23). This was his first Passover as far as can be known for certain. These events which culminated in the spring (March/April) must have taken from three to six months or more to complete. This writer has found that most scholars have agreed with this last statement.

¹

Epiphanius, Panarion haer, li.16.1.

Between the First And Second Passovers

The next Passover which is actually mentioned is in John 6:4, but this writer believes that it can be shown that there was another Passover (which would be the second Passover of his ministry) between those of John 2:13 and 6:4. This is important, because if there was another Passover season there were four Passovers in Jesus' public ministry. This means that the ministry was more than three years in length. After the first Passover Jesus stayed in Judaea for a while (Jn. 3:1-36) before he went back up to Galilee (Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 4:14; Jn. 4:3). On his way he went through Samaria and ministered there (Jn. 4:4-42). While in Samaria he made mention to his disciples that there was "yet four months to harvest" (Jn. 4:35). This would have been around Shebat (January or February). Some believe this was a proverbial saying which was fairly accurate because there was approximately four or five months between planting and harvesting. It seems best, however, to conclude that he really did mean it was winter when he spoke.¹ He next came to Galilee where

1

One should note here that Jesus was making a time-oriented point with his disciples. It does not make sense to quote a proverb about sowing and harvesting and then to say, "but I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." It seems best to understand him to have meant "you say that harvest will come in four months, but I say it is ready right now." Of course Jesus was speaking of the harvest of people's spiritual lives. This follows just after the ministry to the Samaritan woman and the harvest was truly ready as Jesus brought it in (Jn. 4:39-41). One should also note that the word yet (ἔτι) is an indication of actual time. Although Westcott does not particularly favor the view, he admits (in The Gospel According to St. John, p. 75), "the form of the sentence (there are yet . . .) and the period named, which is less than the interval between seedtime and harvest, favor the literal and not the proverbial view."

he apparently stayed until spring (Mt. 4:13-17; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:14-15; Jn. 4:43-54). This full year was completed about the time of the incident of the picking of the grain on the Sabbath, which would of course have been in the spring (Mt. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-5), which is the Passover season.¹

Between The Second And Third Passovers

At about the same time of the picking of the grain incident (above), would have been another Passover. This Passover is apparently not mentioned in the gospels unless John 5:1 is a reference to it. John 5:1 simply mentions "a feast" (ἑορτή)² and there has been a great variety of opinions as to which feast it was.

1

A failure to recognize this season marked by these passages could lead one to erroneously conclude (see the next section) that the "feast" of John 5:1 was that of Purim (March) and that the Passover of John 6:4 was the second one. This would of course lead to a two and a half year ministry. This might seem likely if one read only John and ignored the other gospels; however, a great deal of material from the synoptic gospels fits between John chapters five and six. Many have ignored this in their apparent hurry to show a two-year ministry. This fact may be noticed by Plummer's comment in The Gospel According to St. John, p. 122: "We saw from iv.35 that the two days in Samaria were either in December or January. The next certain date is vi. 4, the eve of the Passover, i.e. April. Purim, which was celebrated in March (14th and 15th Adar), falls just in the right place in the interval." Plummer and many others in their comments on John 5:1 conveniently ignore the passages above that deal with the plucking of the grain.

2

There is an important textual variant here that may help determine the feast that John was speaking of. Many ancient manuscripts give the reading of ἑορτή "a feast," while many others read ἡ ἑορτή "the feast" of the Jews. The evidence for "a feast" is found in the following manuscripts and versions: p⁶⁶, 7⁵ A B D K W^{supp} Θ 0125 f¹³ 28 700 1195 1216 1241 1344 1646 2174 ByzP^t 1547 arm Diatessaronⁿ Origen Epiphanius Chrysostom Paschal Chronicle.

Almost every feast known to the Jews has been suggested, and some of those found by this writer will be listed for the reader. However, one should note that John 5:1 starts out with the words *μετὰ ταῦτα* which would indicate some time had elapsed between chapter four and chapter five. Many have noted this and as an example, one may observe how Alford quoted Lucke to express this point.

Lucke remarks that when John wishes to indicate immediate succession, he uses *μετὰ τοῦτο* ; ch. ii. 12; xi. 7, 11; xix. 28: when mediate, after an interval, *μετὰ ταῦτα* , ch. iii.22; v. 14; vi. 1; vii. 1; xix. 38. So that apart from other considerations which would lead us to the same conclusion, we may infer that some interval has elapsed since the last verse of ch. iv.¹

The reading "the feast" is supported by: *Χ* C L *X*^{comm} Δ Π Ψ f¹ 33 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1230 1242 1253 1365 1546 2148 ByzPt cop^{sa}, bo, ach² Diatessaron Origen Cyril. Note the comment in Bruce M. Metzger, ed., A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 207. "Strong external evidence favors the anarthrous *ἑορτή* (p^{66,75} A B D Θ f¹³ 28 syr^C, P); likewise, the natural tendency of scribes would have been to identify an otherwise indeterminate feast by inserting (with a reference probably to Passover), a tendency that accounts also for such supplements in isolated manuscripts as *ἀσέων* before *Ἰουδαίων* (in Λ) and *ἡ σκηνοπηγία* after *Ἰουδαίων* (in 131)." Various authors have concluded that the definite article in "the feast" was added by early copyists who wanted to show that John meant the Passover here. This reasoning seems strange because John usually mentioned the name "the Passover" when referring to that feast (2:12,23; 6:4; 11:55 (two); 12:1; 13:1; 18:39; 19:14). Hoehner, in Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 59, noted this by the statement: "In John . . . the Passover is not referred to as 'the feast,' but rather 'the Passover.'" However, one must not overlook the two cases in John 4:45 which surely refer back to the Passover of 2:13,23 as the context indicates. The point, however, is clear. John almost always refers to Passover as "the Passover" and not "the feast." More will be seen on this problem in the body of the paper.

¹

Henry Alford, The Gospel of John in Alford's Greek Testament. Vol. II. (6 vols., reprinted. Grand Rapids: The Guardian Press, 1976), p. 740.

Identity of the "feast" of John 5:1

Many are the opinions as to which feast John meant in 5:1. This writer has found at least nine suggestions which are: Purim, Passover, Pentecost, Wood Offering, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, Dedication, and a feast which is impossible to identify. These will be briefly examined and some will be noted who have held to each view. It should be noted that the passage in John 4:35 is extremely important here. This is because it dates in January or February and therefore any of the following feasts would yield a three and one half year ministry except Purim. Therefore, the discussion on Purim will be the most detailed because if the feast of Purim was meant in John 5:1, then a two and a half year ministry is supported by this reference.¹ As might be expected, those who hold to a two and a half year ministry usually favor Purim here. This is not entirely because of scholarly reasons, but is partly because it fits their two and one half year system.

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This has been stated concisely by Godet in Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, p. 148. "If we apply v. 1 to the feast of Purim, as we think should be done, the framework of the history of Jesus is contracted: two years and a half suffice to include all its dates: iv. 35, December (first year); v. 1, March; vi. 4, April; vii. 1, October; x. 22, December (second year); xii. 1, April (third Passover). If, on the contrary, v. 1 denotes a Passover feast, or one of those which followed it in the Jewish year, we are forced to fix on three years and a half as the duration of our Lord's ministry." See also Plummer's note above. If Purim was indeed the feast, then this writer would probably agree with the two year view, yet there are some who hold to Purim and still maintain a three year view (as will be seen later). This is done by making it the Purim of a year and two months (not only two months as commonly held by two year advocates) after the winter note of John 4:35.

Note what A. T. Robertson said in this regard: "The Feast of Purim . . . has had great favor with modern harmonists, but apparently more on sentimental than on scholarly grounds. Meyer says, 'Without doubt it was Purim.' But it is by no means so certain as Meyer would have us believe."¹

Purim (March)

Purim has been held by a large number of scholars who wrote in the 1800's and early 1900's. The first to have held the opinion that the feast was Purim seems to have been Kepler.² Many others followed. Some of them include: Petavius, Lamy, Hug, Winer, Lucke, Meyer, Stier, Neander (who also favored Passover), and Olshausen;³ Krabbe, d'Outrein, Anger, Maier, Baumlein, Lange;⁴

¹ Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 268.

² This is according to John Peter Lange, The Gospel According to John, trans., revised, enlarged, and ed. by Philip Schaff, in vol. IX of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (12 vols., reprinted. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 180; Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 268; Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740.

³ These were noted in Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740. So many held this in Alford's day that he went on to say that it "has been the general view of the modern chronologists."

⁴ Lange, The Gospel According to John, p. 180. Lange has some good insights on this passage in general.

Godet,¹ Plummer,² Moulton and Milligan,³ Sanday,⁴ and Wieseler.⁵

The main defense of this view is that it fits well with a two and one half year ministry (see above). Those who have preferred the Purim view have usually been satisfied with trying to negate objections that have been raised against it. Some of the objections⁶ to this view, none of which are conclusive in themselves, are listed here. (1) The feast of Purim was not a pilgrim feast, but it was a voluntary time of celebration of the victory of the Jews and destruction of Haman. It was established in Esther chapter

¹ Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, p. 147.

² Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 122.

³ Wm. F. Moulton and Wm. Milligan, Commentary on the Gospel of John (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), p. 56.

⁴ William Sanday, The Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel (London: MacMillan and Company, 1872), p. 103.

⁵ Karl Wieseler, A Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels, trans. by Edmund Venables. (2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1877), pp. 205ff.

⁶ For attempts at answering some of the objections, one should see the references above of those who hold to the Purim view. It is sufficient here to note Plummer's comment in The Gospel According to St. John, p. 122. "It was a boisterous feast, and some have thought it unlikely that Christ would have anything to do with it. But we are not told that He went to Jerusalem in order to keep the feast; Purim might be kept anywhere. More probably He went because the multitudes at the feast would afford great opportunities for teaching. Moreover, it does not follow that because some made this feast a scene of unseemly jollity, therefore Christ would discountenance the feast itself." One should note that the "multitude" of John 5:13 could very well be part of a crowd which had come up for the feast.

nine, and was celebrated in local synagogues (see Est. 9:22 and Josephus, Antiquities xi.6.13), where the book of Esther was read (and still is in some synagogues). There was no reason for anyone to leave his home town, as the celebration took place in all synagogues. (2) Jesus left Judaea for a specific reason (Jn. 4:1-3, 44, 44), and it does not seem like he would have returned so soon except for one of the three Pilgrim feasts. (3) The Passover of 6:4 nears the close of the Great Galilean Ministry, and if it was Jesus' second Passover (of his ministry), this lengthy ministry would have to be crowded into a four-month period which would (in this writer's and other's opinion) be almost impossible to do.¹ (4) The feast of Purim was a boisterous and rowdy event and it is not likely that Jesus would attend it. It was noted as a time of excessive drinking and expression of hatred for the Gentiles. (5) The character of the Purim feast and the thoughts behind it had no similarity to Jesus' teaching in John chapter five. For this reason, Westcott

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See Hendriksen, The Gospel of John, p. 189 and others for this argument. Related to this is Robertson's comment in A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 268. "The Feast of Purim occurred a month before the Passover. Is it at all likely that two circuits of all Galilee were made in the meantime, besides much work of other kinds? See Luke 8:1 and Matt. 9:25-38. The three general circuits throughout Galilee, besides the mission of the twelve and a large part of their training, the general statements about the Master's work of preaching and healing, require an expansion rather than a contraction of the time for this period of his ministry. It seems then quite unreasonable, when once the mind takes in this enlarged conception of the missionary work of Jesus, as recorded by the Synoptic Gospels, to limit it to the amount of work mentioned by John, since he omits much of the early ministry, because, it would seem, the others are so full just here."

rejected Purim even though he held to a two and a half year ministry.¹

(6) Purim was never held on a Sabbath day. If it was to conflict with a Sabbath, it would be rescheduled or canceled. Since there is a Sabbath mentioned in John 5:9, it would not be Purim.² (7) It seems unlikely that Jesus would go to a lesser feast such as Purim and unnecessarily travel from Galilee to Jerusalem when he did not even go to Jerusalem for the Passover in John 6:4, which according to the Purim view, was only a month later. (8) The strongest argument for the Purim view is probably the one that several of its advocates raise against the Passover view. Godet states it as well as any when he notes in the following quote that in John's gospel at

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Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 93. Westcott not only held to a very unusual feast for John 5:1 (Trumpets), but his method of arrival at a two and one half year ministry was different from most others who hold that view. He took John 5:1 to be Trumpets (September), but he held it to be the September that occurred only six months after the Passover of John 2:13-23. This of course ignores (or explains away) the reference to winter in John 4:35, and yet Westcott gives good evidence that it was actually winter (p. 75, see this for complete discussion). To make this system work, Westcott has to deny that Jesus could have stayed in Judaea ten months (p. 75). Westcott bases this upon John 4:45 which is not only unnecessary, but is apparently not done by others who hold to a two and one half year ministry. Certainly ten months (or even ten years) would not cause one who had been an eyewitness of Jesus' miracles to forget them.

2

See Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, pp. 268-269, and note the obvious weakness of this argument is mentioned in Lange, The Gospel According to John, p. 180. "But the Sabbath spoken of, in ver. 9, may have preceded or succeeded the feast." One should note, however, that this does not destroy the Sabbath argument because 5:13 certainly indicates the lame man was not able to locate Jesus because the multitude of people were there and Jesus was able to easily escape notice by turning aside (ἐξέρευσε) in the crowd.

ch. vii (vv. 19-24), Jesus still labours to justify Himself for healing the impotent man related ch.v.: Would He return to this event after the lapse of a year and a half? Ch. iv. (ver. 35) placed us in the month of December; ch. vi. (ver. 4) indicates the month of April. Between those two dates, what more natural than to think of the feast of Purim, which was celebrated in March?¹

This argument is a legitimate one, but Godet failed to mention several things. First, the people sought to kill Jesus for the rest of his ministry after the events of John chapter five. Therefore, it is no surprise that Jesus would use this fact against them this late (six months before the crucifixion). Second, when Jesus spoke these words at the Feast of Tabernacles, Purim was itself already seven months past. It would, therefore, be most unusual or surprising that Jesus would bring up seven month old material, unless it was a timeless issue (and it was) that the Jews would not forget (and they did not). Third, while the Tabernacles (in John 7) would be "a year and a half" from a Passover in John 5:1, it would only be a year from John 5:1 if that feast was itself Tabernacles. The five months difference is hardly enough to prove a point with since the Purim view must already concede to seven months elapsed time. (9) Another argument against the Purim view is one that at first seems to be made in error. However, it does have some value to it. It was given by A. Hovey and argues that the feast of Purim view does not explain the strong ancient witness of the definite article at John 5:1.² The point is that Purim was a lesser feast

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Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, p. 147.

²

Alvah Hovey, Commentary on the Gospel of John (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1885), pp. 128-129.

and would not be called "the feast" of the Jews. The argument is not trying to show that the article has the best manuscript support, but it does have good and very old support showing that a lot of the ancients did not hold the Purim view. Thus those who do hold the Purim view must show why so many ancient authorities would include the article in their text, indicating that they did not even consider Purim or another lesser feast. Again this point alone is not conclusive, but this writer has found no Purim advocate who has offered an explanation for the article that supports his view. (1) Another negative factor about the feast of Purim is that it has been almost totally abandoned by scholars since the first decade of this century. Of course this proves nothing by itself, but it is certainly significant. Thus these ten reasons for rejecting Purim are considered by this writer as strong enough evidence (collectively) to reject it. It seems best to conclude with deWette "that there is not a single good reason to give for the feast of Purim."¹

Passover (March/April)

The feast of Passover has the strongest overall support of the ancient as well as modern writers. As has already been mentioned, the variant in the Greek was thought to have arisen out of a desire to understand this as the Passover feast. A large number of scholars have held that it was the Passover. The ancients who held to this

¹
As cited in Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, p. 148.

view include Irenaeus¹ and Eusebius,² and it was mentioned by Origen.³ Others include Luther, Greswell, Neander (see also under "Purim), Calovius, Scaliger, Grotius, Kuinoel, Lightfoot, Lampe, and Hengstenberg.⁴ More scholars also have held the Passover view and it seems to have a continual list of adherents. See also Sumner,⁵ Jacobus,⁶ Owen,⁷ Robinson,⁸ MacEvilly,⁹ Trench,¹⁰

¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies ii.22.3.

² See Westcott, The Gospel According to John, p. 92.

³ See Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740.

⁴ See Lange, The Gospel According to John, p. 180; Westcott, The Gospel According to John, p. 92; Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740.

⁵ John B. Sumner, The Gospel According to St. John (London: J. Hachard and Sons, 1835), p. 131.

⁶ Melancthon W. Jacobus, Notes On the Gospel--John (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1856), pp. 88-89.

⁷ John Owen, Commentary on the Gospel of John (New York: Charles Scribner's and Company, 1869), p. 89.

⁸ Edward Robinson, Harmony of the Four Gospels in Greek (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), p. #36 note.

⁹ John MacEvilly, An Exposition of the Gospel of John (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1889), p. 91.

¹⁰ Trench as noted in M. F. Sadler, The Gospel According to St. John (New York: James Pott and Company, 1890), p. 113.

Robertson,¹ Bernard,² Hendriksen,³ Baughman,⁴ Hobbs,⁵ Bultmann,⁶ Smith,⁷ and Michaelis.⁸ Even though the Passover view has support from these scholars, it has serious problems as well. The greatest problem is that John almost always refers to the Passover as "The Passover." Also, the textual evidence slightly favors (though it is debatable) the anarthrous reading "a feast," which would not favor the Passover, and as has already been seen, the reading "the feast" favors the feast of Tabernacles more than Passover.

¹
Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, pp. 42 n*; 269-270.

²
J. H. Bernard, A Critical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, ed. by A. H. McNeile (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), I, p. 225.

³
Hendriksen, The Gospel of John, p. 188.

⁴
Baughman, The Life of Christ Visualized, p. 51; Goodenow, Bible Chronology, p. 68.

⁵
Herschel H. Hobbs, An Exposition of the Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 112. He holds that if John 5:1 was not Passover then Jesus could not have had a three and one half year ministry.

⁶
Rudolf Bultmann, The Gospel of John, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 240.

⁷
David Smith, The Days of His Flesh (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), pp. 532-533.

⁸
Wilhelm Michaelis, "σΚ3V3'" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 7 ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 392.

Many reasons for the Passover view have been given and some of these have already been mentioned. Smith lists three arguments as follows:

(1) It is supported by the earliest tradition . . . (2) The very vagueness of the Evangelist's references indicates the Passover. It was the only feast which all Israelites were required to attend . . . had this been another feast, it must have been specially designated . . . (3) The open and murderous enmity of the rulers when Jesus went up to Jerusalem (v. 18), proves that John v must be placed not near the outset of His ministry but after the declaration of hostility.¹

Other reasons include: (1) It fits the chronology context and events in the life of Jesus best;² (2) it fits the way the Greek used the Hebrew idiom in "feast of the Jews."³

The implications of it being a Passover are obvious, for then John would have three Passovers occur in Jesus' ministry after the one at his baptism. The four (Jn. 2:13, 5:1, 6:4, and 11:55) would make three years and the time before the baptism would add six months or so. This would bring the duration of Jesus' ministry to three and one half years, plus or minus a few months. However, the Passover is not the only feast which would have the ministry lasting over three years.

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Smith, The Days of His Flesh, p. 532.

2

Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 269; Jules Lebreton, The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ Our Lord (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1934), pp. xxvii-xxviii.

3

Robinson, A Harmony of the Four Gospels in Greek, p. 215.

Pentecost (May/June)

Pentecost occurred fifty days after Passover and has been suggested by some but in recent times it has not received much support. The early advocates of Pentecost include: Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom.¹ In the Reformation era it was held by Calvin,² as well as Theodore Beza, who succeeded Calvin at Geneva, and Erasmus.³ Other writers have included Hitchcock,⁴ Bengel,⁵ Hilgenfeld,⁶ McClellan,⁷ Hovey,⁸ and Cook.⁹ Westcott noted that Pentecost "would suit well with the character of the

¹ Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 92.

² John Calvin, The Gospel According to St. John, trans. by T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), IV, p. 116.

³ Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740.

⁴ F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Dates," Hastings Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, I, 412.

⁵ John A. Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, trans. by Andrew R. Fausset, et al. (2nd ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1859), II, p. 302.

⁶ See Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, p. 148.

⁷ See Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 93.

⁸ Hovey, Commentary on the Gospel of John, pp. 128-129; however, he "hesitated" between Pentecost and Passover.

⁹ E. J. Cook, "Synoptic Indications of the Visits of Jesus to Jerusalem," Expository Times, 41 (April, 1950), 121-123. Cook also reverses chapters five and six.

discourse."¹ It was also one of the three pilgrim feasts and this lends some support. One problem some have had with this feast is that it occurred only a month after Passover. This would mean that all the events between John chapters two and five had to occur in less than a month. Therefore, some have concluded that it was the Pentecost of thirteen months after the Passover in John 2:13-23.² This writer has no objection to this latter view, but does not think it is necessarily the best one.

Pentecost was also accepted very early (see above) and some make it a second choice because they find the three most widely held views (Purim, Passover, Tabernacles) unacceptable. Pentecost is therefore possible and it would fit the three and one half year view well, but it is basically impossible to make it fit the two and one half year view because it follows Passover too closely, and of course would omit the winter season of John 4:35. It is never mentioned in the Gospels unless John 5:1 refers to it.

Wood Offering (August)

This view is held by very few. Edersheim is the only author this writer found who holds to this view, and he even considers "Trumpets" an option which is almost as good.³ His

¹ Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 93.

² Ibid. He notes that McClellan held this.

³ Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), I, 460; II, 54, 768-769.

primary argument is that he believes the feast of John 5:1 took place in the late summer or early fall. This may be true, but being alone is not strong evidence. The gathering at wood offering would hardly be the feast because of its unimportance and insignificance at the time. The fact that almost no one has held this view also suggests that there is little in favor of it.

Trumpets (September/October)

The feast of Trumpets has not received much acceptance. It has, however, been suggested by Westcott, Edersheim, Morris, and Barclay.¹ It was the Jewish Civil New Year (Tishri one) and was not well-attended, nor was it as important as the pilgrim feasts. Most of the writers who have held to it were influenced by Westcott, and none of them except Westcott accepted this view without a lot of hesitancy. Since few Jews attended the celebration, it is very speculative to suggest that Jesus did. This view, as well as the Wood Offering one could fit a three year ministry as Edersheim describes.

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The strongest supporter of "Trumpets" is Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, pp. 92-94. The view was also the second choice of Edersheim in The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, I, 460; II, 54, 768-769. Note that Edersheim said "which we must still be content to call 'the Unknown Feast.'" Morris apparently supported this view at one time (see also under "Unidentifiable Feast"), for he said concerning the gospel of John, "As to time, the seasons are mentioned frequently; the first Passover (2:13,23), the feast of the New Year (5:1), the second Passover (6:4)." See Leon Morris, Studies in the Fourth Gospel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 234. Barclay also accepted the Trumpets view but with reservations; William Barclay, An Introduction to the Fourth Gospel and to the Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 313, n. 2.

Day of Atonement (October)

There have been very few who have held this view. The Day of Atonement was a very important day for the Jews but was not designated as "a feast." C. E. Caspari held to this view.¹ However, the best defense of the Day of Atonement view has been given by Maurice J. Evans.² This view is so unlikely that the editor of The Expositor (which contains Evans' article) said at the very beginning of the article: "The weight of chronological authority inclines heavily against Mr. Evans' theory. But it is well that his theory should be stated, and I do not know that it could be more ably and succinctly stated than in the following pages."³

Tabernacles (October)

Tabernacles has a good deal of support from modern writers. Some who have preferred it include Ewald, Cocceius, Lichtenstein,

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C. E. Caspari, A Chronological and Geographical Introduction to the Life of Christ, trans. by Maurice J. Evans (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876), pp. 130-132.

2

Maurice J. Evans, "The Unnamed Feast--What Was It?" The Expositor, VIII (1878), 391-396. It is interesting that Evans was the translator of Caspari's work (previous footnote), who held the same view. Evans was probably influenced by that work, as this article came out shortly after the translation of the book. However, see Evans' note (p. 396) that Caspari actually only came to an autumn feast view, and that he himself influenced Caspari to accept the Day of Atonement view. His work is over a hundred years old and he has apparently not convinced anyone else of the Day of Atonement view.

3

Evans, "The Unnamed Feast--What Was It?" p. 391.

Patritius, Ebrard, and Riggerbach.¹ Also one may see Ogg,² Lenski,³ Finegan,⁴ Hoehner,⁵ and Stauffer.⁶ Some reasons for rejecting Tabernacles have already been given. First, it was known as "the feast" of the Jews. One may note what Josephus said concerning Tabernacles to show how the Jews favored it. "The Feast of Tabernacles . . . was kept by the Hebrews as a most holy and most eminent feast."⁷ Therefore, the anartharous reading "a feast" does not go well with Tabernacles. However, if the article is included in the text as some prefer (and which is very possible), then the reading would greatly support Tabernacles. A second problem with the Tabernacles view is that John called Tabernacles by name in 7:2.⁸

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For these as well as others not mentioned in this paper, see Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 93; Lange, The Gospel According to John, p. 180; Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740.

2

Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 298ff.

3

Lenski, The Interpretation of John's Gospel, pp. 359-360.

4

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, pp. 283-284; note that he lists this view but not it only.

5

Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 59.

6

Stauffer, Jesus and His Story, p. 17.

7

Josephus, Antiquities viii.4.1.

8

Barclay, An Introduction to the Fourth Gospel and to the Acts of the Apostles, p. 313; Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 93.

However, it should be noted that John mentions the feast of Tabernacles at least six other times (7:8 (2), 10, 11, 14, 37) and in each case simply calls it "the feast," so this argument certainly loses some of its value.

The character of the discourse in John five fits that of Tabernacles well enough and also the timing fits well. Lenski notes along this line that:

Most likely, then, the feast of 5:1 is either Pentecost or Tabernacles. The latter, by all odds, is the preferable choice. Having left Judea because of the evil agitation of the Pharisees (4:1-3) in December, Jesus would hardly return to Jerusalem in three months (April, Passover), or a few weeks later (Pentecost), but would delay till Tabernacles in October.¹

It would also be supported by the phrase "after these things" as has already been noted. Tabernacles is actually mentioned in one Greek manuscript, so the view is not a new one. Thus, this view seems the best chronologically and it is much better than one of the lesser feasts of the same time period.

Dedication (December)

This view has not received much support; however, a small number have held it.² It is clear that Jesus did attend the feast of Dedication at least once (Jn. 10:22); however, this is little

¹ Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 360; see also Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 59.

² Those who hold Dedication include Petavius (probably) as indicated in Lange, The Gospel According to John, p. 180; Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 93; Kepler as noted in Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 267, and Alford, The Gospel of John, p. 740. However, see the Purim view on Kepler.

proof for it here, as Robertson notes:

This view has met with no great amount of favor, for there is too short an interval between the first Passover and December, when it occurred. It might be a later Feast of Dedication, but this feast was not one of the great feasts and would hardly have drawn Jesus all the way from Galilee to attend it. He did attend this feast once (Jn. 10:22), but he was already in Judea at this time, having come up to attend the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2, 14). So Robinson, Clark, etc. So this feast seems to be ruled out of the question.¹

An Unidentifiable Feast

Many have concluded that the problem is just too complicated to favor one feast over another. Some say it is impossible to tell and others simply do not comment or offer an opinion. Also some people hold to an "either or" formula. The list here is only a small representation of those who say the answer cannot be known.² Leon Morris has given the thoughts of many as follows: "It does not seem possible to identify the feast with any certainty."³ Many who are uncertain on the matter still prefer (as does this writer) one of the pilgrim feasts. Madison arrived at the same conclusion.

1

Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 267.

2

E. H. Askwith, The Historical Value of the Fourth Gospel (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 282; J. C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1875), p. 268; Merrill C. Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 104; Homer A. Kent, Jr., Light in the Darkness (Winona Lake, Indiana: B.M.H. Books, 1974), p. 85; Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 299, but see Morris under "Trumpets"; Lucke, DeWette, Tholuck, and Alford in Alford, The Gospel of John, pp. 740-741.

3

Morris, The Gospel According to John, p. 299.

Therefore it is obvious that neither the presence nor the absence of the article before the feast in John 5:1 proves that that feast is or is not the Passover. It is the position of this writer that it is impossible to identify with absolute certainty the feast in question. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the feast in question must have been one of the three main pilgrimage feasts of the Jews: Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles.¹

By way of conclusion, this writer feels that it is impossible to prove (without some doubt) what the correct view is. However, Tabernacles (with its admitted problems) is the best view. It has also been shown that many who hold to a three year plus ministry hold different views as to the feast in John 5:1. Chronologically speaking, it is possible to make each view fit a three year plus ministry, but Tabernacles is most likely because of both the timing and the nature of the feast itself. Actually, some have even taken the Purim view and still held to a three year plus ministry.

The Quadri-paschal theory contends for four Passovers and a ministry of from three to three and a half years. This theory follows from making John 5:1 a Passover or Purim before or Pentecost or Tabernacles after an unnamed Passover. This seems to be the more probable length of the Saviour's public work on earth.²

This writer finds it hard to hold to a three year plus ministry and still take John 5:1 as a reference to a Purim before an unnamed Passover because of the compressing of many events into a very short time as was noted in the comments under the Purim view. In fact, for this same reason (in part) Passover (which was only

¹

Madison, "Problems of Chronology in the Life of Christ," p. 128.

²

Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 270.

shortly after Purim) seems a little less likely than Tabernacles. It is certainly clear that those who say John 5:1 must be Passover for Christ's ministry to be more than three years in length are totally in error.¹

If the reference is not the Passover, then one may conclude that an unmentioned Passover occurred (as mentioned at the beginning of this section) at the time of the plucking of the grain in Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28, and Luke 6:1-5. The feast in John 5:1 would then most likely be Tabernacles (fall), which is the last major time reference in that year. One can easily see that a Passover season had to occur between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4 by simply observing the dates of the various feasts mentioned at the beginning of this section. See the previous footnote, and the charts on pages 29 and 54.

Between The Third and Fourth Passovers

The second Passover mentioned by John is in 6:4 and would be the third one of Jesus' ministry. All four of the Gospels mention the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 at this time (Mt. 14:15-21; Mk. 6:32-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-15). Support for the Passover season (spring) is also found in that Mark 6:39 mentions that the

¹

Actually any of the feasts could fit with the three and one half year view, but this writer thinks Purim would fit a two and one half year ministry best (see above). Some of those who contend (or at least indicate) that John 5:1 must be a Passover for the ministry to be over three years in length include: Lebreton, The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. xxix; Hobbs, An Exposition of the Gospel of John, p. 112; Moulton and Milligan, Commentary on the Gospel of John, p. 56; Blinzler, The Trial of Jesus, p. 74.

grass was green¹ at the time. After many other events took place Jesus went to Jerusalem to the feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2). This was in the fall and later, in the winter, Jesus was again in Jerusalem at the feast of Dedication (Jn. 10:22). After some time in Perea (Lk. 13:22--17:10) he went to Jerusalem and raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:1-54). After a last trip to Galilee, Christ returned to Jerusalem for the fourth Passover (Jn. 11:55--12:1).

Conclusion

Jesus' ministry must have lasted more than three years because it covered four Passover seasons. The first one is mentioned at John 2:13, 23, another one is mentioned at John 6:4, and the last one is mentioned at John 11:55. Since there is no good reason to reverse the order of John chapters five and six then the "feast" of John 5:1 must have occurred between the Passovers of 2:13 and 6:4. Any one of the feasts could be put into John 5:1 and another Passover season would be required.² This is clearly indicated in the following chart (next page), which shows the time relationships of the various Jewish feasts.

1

This is the only mention of the word "green" (χλωρός) in the gospels, and the grass is apparently green only during springtime and early summer in Galilee where these things happened.

2

Purim might be an exception to this but it is very unlikely to be the one in view, and some even take John 5:1 to be the second Purim after John 2:13.

PASSOVER SEASONS IN JESUS' MINISTRY

1st yr.	Spring	John 2:13	Passover
	Summer		
	Fall		
	Winter	John 4:35	Winter
2nd yr.	Spring	John 5:1	Purim?
		John 5:1	Passover?
	Summer	John 5:1	Pentecost?
		John 5:1	Wood Offering?
	Fall	John 5:1	Trumpets?
		John 5:1	Day of Atonement?
		John 5:1	Tabernacles?
3rd yr.	Winter	John 5:1	Dedication?
	Spring	John 6:4	Passover
	Summer		
	Fall	John 7:2	Tabernacles
4th yr.	Winter		
	Spring	John 11:55	Passover
	Summer		
	Fall		
	Winter		

Thus in about three and one half years Jesus completed his public ministry. This was a relatively short time to accomplish so great a work and to begin a movement that would "turn the world upside down." Robertson has noted this well as follows: "How short a space was even this to compass such a marvellous work. The ministry of Jesus seems crowded beyond our comprehension."¹

¹
Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 270.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY

In the previous chapter it was determined that Christ's ministry lasted some three and one half years. That section was considered before this one because this chapter frequently refers to the duration period. The primary consideration here will be statements in John 2:20 and Luke 3:1.

John 2:20

At John 2:20 an important chronological statement is made. This statement (like the one in John 8:57) is a reply from the Jews to Jesus for some serious claims that He had just made.¹ These two statements are the only two John makes that help in establishing the beginning of Jesus' ministry. However, only John gives enough chronological details to establish the duration of Jesus' ministry.

John 2:20 is more important than 8:57 for this writer's purposes and will be treated in more detail. The times of the two incidents (see the section on the duration of Jesus' ministry) connected with the two references above occurred about two and one half years apart.

1

In both of these statements, Jesus made dogmatic and non-deniable claims to deity. The first had to do with his resurrection from the dead (2:21-22) and in the second he claimed eternality. The Jews were so outraged at this blasphemy that they took up stones to stone him to death, but Jesus escaped.

If it can be determined exactly what the Jews meant by the statement "forty and six years was this temple in building," then most would agree that the year Christ observed the first Passover of his ministry can easily be calculated. This in turn will determine the crucifixion date when the three and one half years of ministry are added.

Forty and Six Years

The term "forty and six" (τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἕξ) is a specific number and indicates that the Jews knew very well the construction history of the temple. This would be expected, since it was the holy place par excellence for the Jews of the day. All of their major religious activities centered around the temple and they were no doubt very proud of it because they had been without a respectable one for some time. The Jews were here arguing in a context of time and would have been careful about the terminology they used. These factors would indicate that the forty-six years are reliable and accurate and not just an estimate. There is therefore no reason to accept anything other than above forty-five and below forty-seven. More material will be examined concerning the forty-sixth year and the use of the dative later.

This Temple

The Jews also used the demonstrative adjective οὗτος ("this") to specify the temple of which they were talking. The context is clear. The time was during his first visit to Jerusalem after his baptism; Jesus had just driven out the money changers from the

temple (2:15-17) and then the Jews questioned his authority for such actions (2:18). He replied by saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). Then the Jews probably pointed¹ and said, "this temple . . ." They were speaking of the temple Herod had caused to be built, and obviously could not be referring to Solomon's or Zerubbabel's temple.² The word for "temple" here is *ναός* so they were speaking of the inner sanctuary. A detailed study of this will follow.

In Building

The words, "in building" are a translation of the Greek *οἰκοδομῆθι*. This is an aorist passive indicative of *οἰκοδομέω* which simply means "to build."³ The aorist passive here would

1

The demonstrative *οὗτος* has a basic meaning of pointing out or specifying. See Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 697. Despite the fact that John 2:21 and 22 say that Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body and the resurrection, Cheetham denies this fact. See F. P. Cheetham, "Destroy this Temple, and in Three Days I Will Raise it Up--St. John 2:19," Journal of Theological Studies, 24 (1923), 315-17.

2

Finegan accurately observed on this that "if the statement refers to the original construction of the Temple by Solomon, or the rebuilding of it by Zerubbabel, the text has no bearing on the chronology of Jesus' life" in Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 276. It might be added for clarity that "Herod's" Temple was actually a remodeling of Zerubbabel's and was not a totally new one. Ogg, in Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 162-165, discusses which temple was meant here. He notes how "in a contribution to the Classical Review of 1894, E. A. Abbott returns to the possibility of referring the words of the Jews to the Temple of Zerubbabel." Abbott's article is "John 2:20: *τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἕξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομῆθι ὁ ναός οὗτος*."

3

William F. Arndt and Wilbur F. Gingrich, A Greek Lexicon of New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 560-561.

translate "was built" or something similar. The English translations almost all give the idea of a recent completion or a construction job that lasted forty-six years, emphasizing the context of the Jews comparing the construction of the Temple to Christ's statement that he would raise it in three days. Note the following translations: King James Version and American Standard Version: "forty and six years was this temple in building"; Amplified Bible: "It took forty-six years to build this temple (sanctuary)"; Moffatt: "This sanctuary took forty-six years to build"; Revised Standard Version, New International Version, and The New English Bible: "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple"; Living and New American Standard Version: "It took forty-six years to build." All of these translations assume that it took forty-six years to build the temple, and most indicate that the building was completed.¹ There are two immediate problems that arise with this kind of translation.

First, the temple was not yet completed. Josephus states that "And now Caesar, upon hearing of the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judaea, as procurator . . . And now it was that the

1

In addition to the above translations, it is the reading of others such as Williams, Beck, Concordant Literal New Testament, Wuest, etc. However, note that Hoehner stated "both old and recent translations (e.g., AV, ASV, RSV, NEB, NASB, and NIV) translate it as though the building process was still continuing." Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 42. Finegan (who had some good insights to the whole discussion) said the same thing in Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 279, paragraph 424. Both of these are somewhat misleading here.

temple was finished."¹ Albinus was procurator in Judaea from A.D. 62 to A.D. 64.² Thus the Jews would not have meant that the temple (ἱερόν) was completed, for it would be some thirty years before that would be true.

Secondly, one might argue that some of these translations (Amplified, Moffatt, and some in the margin) do translate the Greek ναός properly by "sanctuary." However, this would also be incorrect because the "sanctuary" did not take forty-six years to build. Again Josephus states that "the temple itself (ναοῦ δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν) was built by the priests in a year and six months."³ Therefore, the Jews (in Jn. 2:20) could not have meant that the inner sanctuary (the ναός) took forty-six years to build.

¹ Josephus, Antiquities xx.9. Note that Josephus said the temple (ἱερόν) was completed.

² Josephus also mentions (Antiquities xx.9.1) that this was the time when James the brother of Christ was killed. On the date of Albinus, see C.A.H. X. pp. 854-55. Festus was governor in Judaea from 60 (when he succeeded Felix) until 61/62. Festus died before Albinus reached Judaea, so Albinus held office from c. 62 to 64.

³ Josephus, Antiquities xv.11.6. There is no doubt that Josephus distinguishes between the sanctuary and the temple complex here. Some manuscripts read "a year and five months," but the point is clear: the small inner sanctuary (the ναός) only took about a year and a half, which could not be confused with forty-six years. This writer has found no one who holds that the "ναός" took forty-six years to complete. Rather it was completed first so that the priestly functions, etc. could be carried out properly.

Since the Jews did not mean that the temple complex was finished in forty-six years and they did not mean the sanctuary took forty-six years to build, one might ask just what did they mean. Some of the grammars have tried to explain the meaning by word usage or classification. Winer took the dative ($\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu$) as a "dative of time" and more specifically "a space of time."¹ The result is "this temple was built in forty-six years." This concept would make the temple ($\nu\alpha\acute{o}\varsigma$) require forty-six years to build, which, as stated above, could not be correct.

Dana and Mantey² take the aorist ($\sigma\acute{\iota}\kappa\omicron\delta\omicron\mu\acute{\eta}\theta\eta$) as a constative. Robertson does the same,³ and so does Moule.⁴ In that same reference, Robertson said, "Thus in John 2:20 . . . we have a good example of the constative aorist. The whole period of forty-six years is treated as a point."⁵ In all three of the

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George B. Winer, A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament, seventh ed. (London: Trubner and Co., 1877), p. 218.

2

H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1927), p. 196.

3

Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 833; see also p. 527 for his view of the dative in John 2:20.

4

C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), p. 11.

5

Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 833. However, the constative aorist could just as easily refer to the 1½ year period in which the temple (sanctuary) was built. See Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 42.

grammars just cited, it is clear that the authors based their grammatical classifications and applications upon the supposition that the actual building time was forty-six years. As was earlier mentioned, this was not the case. It clearly seems that the best solution is to translate the οἰκοδομήθη as a normal aorist passive and translate "it was built." If one wants to give it the label of "constative," then it is better to take it as looking at the one and one half year period and not the forty-six year one. Badcock labels the translation in the King James Version and the Revised Version as misleading and commented as follows:

This is an impossible translation on two counts; the substantive is in the dative of a point, and not of duration, of time; and the verb is in the aorist and not in the imperfect, so the only possible translation is: 'This temple (or sanctuary) was built (before you were born) forty and six years ago.'¹

Although this writer would not agree that this is the "only possible" translation, it certainly is what the Jews were saying. Finegan also remarked as follows:

It is possible, however, that Jn. 2:20 has a different meaning. Perhaps οἰκοδομήθη, which is an aorist indicative passive (429) meaning literally "was built," does not refer to a building enterprise that was still going on, as it had been for forty-six years, but to a building enterprise that had been completed long before so that it could be said that the building had stood for forty-six years. On this interpretation the Jews ask Jesus in effect, "How can you possibly raise in three days a Temple which has stood for forty-six years?"²

1

F. J. Badcock, "A Note on St. John 2:20," The Expository Times, 48 (October, 1935), 40.

2

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 279. A slight bit of additional evidence for the A.D. 30 date is that the "in 46 years" surely means "46 years and some months." If it was actually 46 years and 7 months, they would still say it took 46 years.

The Forty-Sixth Year

In order to determine when the forty-sixth year was, it is necessary first to determine when the forty-sixth year started. The only time references that are available as to the starting date of the temple (the starting point for the forty-six years) mark its beginning from a certain year¹ in the reign of Herod the Great. Therefore, the first date to establish is the beginning of Herod's reign.

When Herod Became King

Josephus said that Herod became king in 40 B.C. This is calculated from his following statement: "Antony also 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 Pollia (the first time)."² The hundred and eighty-fourth Olympiad was from about the middle of 44 B.C. to about the middle of 40 B.C.³ However, it was probably already winter when Herod actually went to Rome as Josephus indicated.⁴ This is not for

¹ These will be discussed later.

² Josephus, Antiquities xiv. 14.5.

³ Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 113.

⁴ Josephus, Antiquities xiv. 14.2-3, Josephus states that: "he was conducted into the city Alexandria, and was retained there by Cleopatra, yet was she not able to prevail with him to stay there, because he was making haste to Rome, even though the weather

certain (though probable) because the very next thing Josephus said after he mentioned that Herod obtained the kingdom (c.f. above) indicated it was summer.¹ Finegan accepts the time as winter (because of Josephus as quoted above) and thus says that the Olympiad was actually number 185,1.² This is because it is known that the year of the consuls Caius Domitius Calvanus and Caius Asinius who were the consuls when Herod was named king (c.f. above), was 40 B.C.³

was stormy, and he was informed that the affairs of Italy were very tumultuous, and in great disorder. . . . So he set sail from there to Pamphylia, and falling into a violent storm, he had much ado to escape to Rhodes, with the loss of the ship's burden; . . . He also built there a three-decked ship, and then set sail with his friends for Italy, and came to the port of Brundisium: and when he was come from there to Rome, he first related to Antony what had befallen him in Judea, . . . and that he had sailed through a storm, and contemned all these terrible dangers, in order to come, as soon as possible, to him who was his hope and only succour at this time. . . ." These descriptive accounts in Josephus do indeed sound like a winter storm. See also Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, pp. 230-231 concerning these events.

1

Note that Josephus said: "All this while Antigonus besieged those that were in Masada, who had plenty of all other necessities, but were only in want of water, * insomuch that on this occasion, Joseph, Herod's brother, was contriving to run away from it, with two hundred of his dependants, to the Arabians; for he had heard that Malehus repented of the offences he had been guilty of with regard to Herod; but God, by sending rain in the nighttime, prevented his going away, for their cisterns were thereby filled." Also Whiston noted at the * as follows: "This grievous want of water at Masada, till the place had like to have been taken by the Parthians, is an indicator that it was now summer." William Whiston, The Works of Flavius Josephus, note * at Antiquities xiv. 14.6. The problem would be to determine what Josephus meant by "all this while."

2

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 230.

3

Ibid., p. 96.

Thus Herod was first named king in 40 B.C. There are many other sources that confirm this date.¹

Herod took Jerusalem in 37 B.C. in a five-month siege from February to July.² Thus it was common to date Herod's reign as beginning in 37 B.C. for that was when he actually took the throne. Josephus recognized both dates, as can be seen by the following statement: "When he had done those things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain; having reigned, since he procured Antigonus to be slain, thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven."³ These two dates would be 37 and 40 B.C. respectively, since Herod died in 4 B.C.⁴ In another place, Josephus also said that Herod took Jerusalem "when Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus were consuls at Rome, on the hundred and eighty-fifth Olympiad, on the

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See also Josephus, Wars, i.14.3-4, which is a parallel of Antiquities xiv.14.2-3 cited above; Tacitus, The Histories. 2 vols. with English translation by Clifford H. Moore. Loeb Classical Library, (London, 1925-31), 5.9 which says that "the royal power, which had been bestowed by Antony on Herod . . ."; Strabo, The Geography of Strabo. 8 vols. with English translation by Horace Leonard Jones. Loeb Classical Library, (London: 1917-32), xvi.2.46; Appian, Civil Wars. v.75; C.A.H. X. pp. 316-324.

2

C.A.H. X. 320-321.

3

Josephus, Antiquities xvii.8.1 and Wars 1.33.8.

4

See discussion under DATE OF JESUS' BIRTH.

third month."¹ Agrippa and Gallus were consuls in 37 B.C.² Thus in A.D. 37 Herod became king in fact as well as in name.

So it took five months of siege before Jerusalem surrendered to Herod and the Roman legions, in July 37. Though Antigonus' partisans were massacred, and Antigonus himself was put to death by Antony, Herod managed to save the city from general sack and to get the legions back to Syria without any further disorders. He was now, in fact as well as name, king of the Jews.³

It might be added that Dio Cassius put the fall of Jerusalem in 38 B.C.⁴ but Josephus is no doubt the correct one here.⁵

When The Temple Reconstruction Began

Josephus states that the temple reconstruction was begun in Herod's eighteenth year as follows: "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

¹ Josephus, Antiquities xiv.16.4. The 185th Olympiad was from 40 B.C. to 36 B.C.

² Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 96.

³ C.A.H. X. p. 321.

⁴ Dio Cassius, Roman History xlix. 22-23.

⁵ Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 231, well states: "The city was probably taken in the summer or fall. Dio Cassius places the event in the consulship of Claudius and Norbanus who were the predecessors in his list of Agrippa and Gallus, hence in 38 B.C., but is probably less accurate in this than Josephus. Herod therefore became king in fact by residence in Jerusalem in the summer or fall of 37 B.C."

make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude."¹ That Josephus dated from the time Herod took Jerusalem can be shown with a fairly large degree of certainty. He had said on one occasion, "Now when Herod had already reigned seventeen years, Caesar came into Syria."² The word translated as "already" is *προσέλθοντος* and this indicates that his seventeenth year was finished and he had begun his eighteenth year. Dio Cassius described the same trip.³ Finegan explains how Dio's reference shows Josephus numbered Herod's regnal years from his taking of Jerusalem as follows:

Dio says that Augustus spent the winter in Samos, then "in the spring of the year when Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls" went on into Asia and, after settling everything there and in Bithynia, came to Syria. M. Apuleius and P. Silius P. f. Nerva were the consuls of the year A.U.C. 734 = 20 B.C. (Table 38). If the eighteenth year of Herod (beginning presumably on Nisan 1) corresponded with 20 B.C., Josephus was evidently numbering the regnal years of Herod from his taking of Jerusalem (Table 108 Column 2).⁴

¹ Josephus, Antiquities xv.11.1.

² Josephus, Antiquities xv.10.3.

³ See Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 276 where he states he believes it was the same trip. Dio's reference is Dio Cassius' Roman History liv.7.4-6.

⁴ Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 276.

One other proof that Josephus was dating from Herod's taking Jerusalem in 37 B.C. is that he also noted that Caesar made Herod "procurator of all Syria, and this on the tenth year afterward, when he came again into that province."¹ Augustus had been there before in 30 B.C.,² thus the tenth year after would be in 20 B.C. As was shown above, Augustus was in Syria in Herod's eighteenth year, so Josephus was clearly measuring the dates from Herod's taking of Jerusalem in 37 B.C. and his "eighteenth" year would be 20 B.C.

A problem arises when another date given by Josephus is considered, for he also stated that "in the fifteenth year of his reign, Herod rebuilt the temple, and encompassed a piece of land about it with a wall."³ Some have attempted to reconcile the three-year difference by saying that the "eighteenth year" is from the 40 B.C. date and the "fifteenth year" is from the 37 B.C. date and thus they both come out to be the same year,⁴ namely 23/22 B.C. However, this was not the case, and Finegan properly observed:

¹ Josephus, Wars i.20.4.

² C.A.H. X. p. 325.

³ Josephus, Wars i.21.1.

⁴ This is the view of Corbishley which is given in Thomas Corbishley, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," The Journal of Theological Studies, 36 (January, 1935), 22-32. For a refutation of his view, see Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 39-40. See also Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 155.

But Ant. xv, 380 stands in sequence with Ant. xv, 354, and we have shown (430) that the reference in Ant. xv, 354 is reckoned from Herod's taking of Jerusalem. Furthermore we have shown that the reference in Ant. xv, 380 probably actually means the nineteenth year. Therefore we cannot, in the way just explored, reconcile the statement in War. I, 401 with that in Ant. xv, 380 but must recognize that as they stand they are in contradiction. Since Ant. xv, 380 is in sequence with Ant. xv, 354 and the latter is confirmed by Dio (430), it seems necessary to conclude that War. I, 401, at least in its present text, is in error.¹

Others have also agreed that the "fifteenth" year was in error.²

"In 20 B.C. he began the rebuilding of the Great Temple at Jerusalem. A proof of the magnificence of this rebuilding--which was proverbial--is its long duration; some ten years passed before it could even be inaugurated, and it was not properly finished till A.D. 64, on the very eve of the war with Rome."³ One should keep in mind that it is also probable that when Josephus wrote the Antiquities he had gotten more information over the years since

1

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 277. He also discusses the possibility of a scribal error in the "fifteenth" year reference, as well as his belief that the "eighteenth" year reference should be taken as the "nineteenth" year.

2

Godet, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, p. 36. Some have suggested a scribal error (as Finegan above) and some have thought the "15th" year was possibly the time of preparation (see below) rather than construction. See Emil Schurer, A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus, trans. by John Macpherson, et al. Revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897-98), Vol. I, p. 292.

3

C.A.H. X. p. 331.

he had written the Wars of the Jews and he may have simply clarified that date in his later book. It may be concluded that Herod began the temple in 20/19 B.C.¹

"ναός and ἔερόν"

The Jews told Jesus that the temple was in building forty-six years. Since it was begun in 20/19 B.C. they would have made that statement in the spring of A.D. 27.² However, this view has

1

Herod would have had to make many plans, speeches, etc. before work could actually begin. Josephus gives a bit of detail concerning these matters. Ogg has summed up the situation as follows in his Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 159. "It has been assumed, in the first place, that the 46 years' building period of which the Jews spoke must be reckoned strictly from the 18th year of the reign of Herod the Great. Now Josephus merely says that in this year Herod undertook (ἐπεβόλετο) a very great work, that is, to build of himself the Temple of God. The historian's language justifies our assuming no more than this, that in this 18th year of his reign Herod took this great matter in hand. It needs also to be noted that, having resolved upon the restoration of the Temple, Herod first made a speech to the people in which, with a view to allaying their fears, he promised that he would not pull down their Temple until all the materials necessary for building it up again had been assembled. This word moreover he did not break; for he got ready a thousand waggons that were to bring stones for the building, and chose out ten thousand of the most skilful workmen, and bought a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the priests, and had some of them taught the arts of stone-cutters, and others of carpenters, all before he began to build." Although it is uncertain if the preparation time is included in Josephus's "eighteenth year," it seems safest to make the year the nineteenth (see Finegan above) because the years would begin with Nisan 20/19 B.C. anyway.

2

Although Finegan calculates from Herod's nineteenth year (based on his interpolation of Josephus) and Hendriksen calculates from Herod's eighteenth year as Josephus states, both come up with a spring of A.D. 27 date. However, one should note that A.D. 27 is not necessarily Finegan's position, as he is simply giving one view. See Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, pp. 277-279; Hendriksen, The Gospel of John, p. 126.

problems which this writer believes makes it inaccurate. Some of these have been listed above under "In Building." This section will deal primarily with the words *ναός* and *ἱερόν*.

It was mentioned earlier that the Jews would not have meant the temple was completed in A.D. 27. This is because the temple (*ναός*) was completed many, many years before that date. They also knew that the temple (*ἱερόν*) was not yet completed. It in fact was not completed for almost another forty years after A.D. 27. Therefore, the best solution is to recognize that the Jews were distinguishing the sanctuary from the temple complex and to translate *οὗ κοδομίζθη* in its normal sense of "it was built." This would mean that the Jews were saying, "This temple sanctuary (*ναός*) was built forty-six years ago." More will be seen on the dative later.

As was mentioned previously, Josephus may not have always distinguished the words for temple; however, he definitely did when he said "the temple itself (*ναὸν δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν*) was built by the priests in a year and six months."¹ Since Herod had the

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Josephus, Antiquities xv.11.6. One should not think that Josephus did not normally distinguish the two words when in fact he seems to do so very sharply in most cases. The following passages from the first book of his Wars may be noted in this regard. In each case he uses both words in the same verse. At i.18.3 (1:354) he says that a crowd "rushed to see the Temple (*ἱερόν*) and the holy contents of the sanctuary (*ναός*)." At ii.16.4 (2:400) he says "spare the Temple (*ἱερόν*) and preserve for yourselves the sanctuary (*ναός*)." See also 1:39, 149, 152, 351-2, and 401. Arndt and Gingrich, in A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, p. 535, list only Wars 6:293 and Against Apion 2:119 as instances where *ναός* means the "whole temple precinct." It is interesting that Thackeray (in The Loeb Classical Library) translates the two references as "inner court" and "sanctuary"

construction of the temple started sometime in 20/19 B.C., the sanctuary was finished in 18/17 B.C. Forty-six years later would be A.D. 29/30.¹ Thus the Jews' statement was made in the spring (Passover) of A.D. 30,² which would also be the date of the first of the four Passovers in Jesus' public ministry. Jesus then would have been crucified in A.D. 33.

respectively. Thus, Josephus also shows how the two words were normally distinguished. It can, of course, be assumed that he surely must have used the words interchangeably at times, since he used *ναός* about 450 times and *ἱερόν* about 700 times.

1

The only possible chance for the date to be placed early enough (i.e. A.D. 27) for 30 A.D. crucifixion date would be to take the aorist as an ingressive or inceptive. This would translate something like it "began to be built." This is very unlikely and this writer has found no one who holds to an A.D. 30 date that takes the aorist here to be ingressive. In fact, it is very doubtful if there even is an "ingressive" aorist and if there is, the ingressive idea comes from the meaning of the word, not from the aorist tense itself. Robertson noted this as follows: "It is not, however, . . . a tense notion at all. It is purely a matter with the individual verb." See Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 834. Thus it is doubtful if an aorist passive "was built" would be ingressive since the term "was built" would not imply it within itself. Even in English the word built normally refers to a completed process; for example, one may note phrases like "the king built a great empire" or "a carpenter built a garage."

2

Since Herod's reign was most likely measured from Nisan 1 (see Schurer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus, I, pp. 326ff.), and since Passover was very soon after Nisan 1, there is always a potential for confusion because these two events are so close on the calendar. The date could be A.D. 29 if the Jews knew that the construction began in the first half of Herod's eighteenth year (which is unlikely), but this is of course impossible to know. It does seem that A.D. 28 would be the earliest possible date but this writer thinks that A.D. 28 would be far too soon. Also A.D. 28 would give a crucifixion date of A.D. 31, which is astronomically impossible.

This reckoning goes well with the dative $\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ also. It can be taken as a dative of time or better locative of time and would be a temporal¹ and translated "this temple was (or has been) built for forty-six years." Thus when the aorist passive verb and the temporal dative are both considered, the whole thing fits well. Hoehner says concerning this view that it "does more justice to the temporal dative, $\acute{\epsilon}\tau\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ in that the completed building extended for a forty-six year time period."² Finegan also noted that this idea is possible. "On this interpretation the Jews ask Jesus in effect, 'How can you possibly raise in three days a Temple which has stood for forty-six years?'"³ The contrast the Jews were making is strong in either case, and although it might not be as strong in the view just quoted, it is sufficient and it allows the normal distinction of the words for "temple."

The real test of this view is whether or not the Gospel writers (especially John) were consistent in their distinction of $\ναός$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\rhoόν$. The two words were distinguished from each

1

See Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 87. They do not use John 2:20 but do say that the "temporal . . . signifies the time at which; i.e., point of time." Therefore the translation "has been built for forty-six years" or "was built forty-six years ago" is a possible one.

2

Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 42.

3

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 279. This writer admits that the contrast is less in this view.

other for centuries before John wrote.¹ And although it is not the purpose of this paper to do a major study of these words, a few short notes will show the distinction. Michel noted the differences as follows:

ναός is the sanctuary in the strict sense (*aedes*) as compared with the broader *τέμενος* or even *ἱερόν*. The Gnomon of the Idios Logos (ed. Schubart), 79 (BGU, 5, 1, 1919, 31) ordains: *ἐν παντὶ ἱερῷ ὅπου ναός ἐστίν, δεὸν προσῆλθην εἶναι καὶ λαμβάνειν τῶν προσόδων* (in every sanctuary where there is a *ναός* there must be a prophet who receives a fifth of the income).²

Especially important is how John used the two words, but it is also clear that there was a definite distinction between the two in the synoptic gospels. One may note the following parallel

1

For a detailed discussion of these words, see W. von Meding, "*ναός*" in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 3, ed. by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 781-785; Colin Brown, "*ἱερόν*" in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 3, ed. by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 785-794; Otto Michel, "*ναός*" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 4, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 880-890; Gottlob Schrenk, "*ἱερός*" in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 3, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 221-283; George H. Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, rev. by Henry S. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 820-823, 1160; Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek Lexicon of New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, pp. 373, 535. One should remember that this writer is not saying that the words are never used interchangeably, but only that they are distinguished in the gospels and especially by John. It should also be remembered that apart from 1 Cor. 9:13 *ἱερόν* is not used in the New Testament except by the four gospel writers. Both words are used figuratively and/or of pagan temples in the New Testament, but it cannot be shown that they are used interchangeably there.

2

Michel, "*ναός*," pp. 880-881.

accounts which use *ἔργον*. With regards to the pinnacle of the temple, Matthew 4:5 and Luke 4:9 both use this word, which is obviously not in the inner sanctuary. Matthew 21:12,14,15, Mark 11:11, 15,16 and Luke 19:45 (also John 2:14,15) are all dealing with the money changers incident (which was clearly in the larger areas) and all use the word. Matthew 21:23, Mark 11:27, and Luke 20:1 all use the word when Jesus was in the temple "teaching the people." This was obviously in the outer courts. Matthew 24:1, Mark 13:1, and Luke 21:5 use the word, and clearly the larger areas of the outer temple are referred to, for "his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple." Matthew 26:55, Mark 14:49, Luke 22:53, and John 18:20 all use the word of his teaching in the temple, which again would be in the outer areas. Again Luke 21:38 and John 8:2 used it for when Jesus was teaching the people in the temple.

Concerning the use of *ναός*, Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, and Luke 23:45 all speak of the veil of the temple which was of course the veil of the inner sanctuary. Matthew 26:61, 27:40, Mark 14:58, 15:29, and John 2:19, 2:20, 2:21 all used the word and refer to the incident in which Jesus said, "destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days." Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51 are also parallels (with Lk. 11:51 using *οἶκος*) and they both refer to the inner sanctuary.¹ Thus all the parallels in the

¹ The context here is that murders took place in the area of the temple between the altar and the sanctuary. The word between (*μεταξύ*) does not imply that the *ναός* was the outer area, but that the murders took place "in the immediate vicinity of the sanctuary" as noted by Hendriksen in The Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 839.

gospels that used either word confirm that *ναός* is the sanctuary and *ἱερόν* is the whole temple.

The passage that is sometimes used to show that *ναός* might refer to the whole temple area is Matthew 27:5. Here Judas threw the silver coins *εἰς τὸν ναόν*. The question that is asked is why would Judas be in the sanctuary, as this would be a desecration.¹ It should be remembered that Judas was in a desperate state. His guilt was haunting him so he offered the money back. When it was refused, he ran into the sanctuary wildly and threw the money. He had offered the money to the "chief priests and elders" (v. 3) but when he threw the money into the sanctuary (v. 5), only the "chief priests" are mentioned as those who took up the money (v. 6). A. B. Bruce commented on the words "in the temple" here as follows: "in the holy place itself (Meyer, Weiss, Schanz, Carr, Morison); the act of a desperate man determined that they should get the money and perhaps hoping it might be a kind of atonement for his sin."²

¹ See Schrenk, "*ἱερός*," p. 235, where he says this in a typical way. The same idea is repeated in Michel, "*ναός*," p. 884. Both list Matthew 27:5 and John 2:19.

² Alexander Balmain Bruce, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in Vol. I of Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 323. Others who insist on the meaning of "sanctuary" here but who think Judas stood in the temple court and cast the coins "into" the sanctuary include Henry Alford, The Gospel of Matthew in Alford's Greek Testament, Vol. I. 6 vols., reprinted. (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), p. 286; R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Minneapolis: The Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 1080; John Walvoord, Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 227.

John uses *ἱερόν* eleven times and *ναός* three times (only at John 2:19,20,21). The fact that he always means the outer temple complex when he uses *ἱερόν* is clear from the following look at each time he uses it. In 2:14-15 John speaks of those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and the changers of money sitting. At 5:14 Jesus found a man (whom he had healed earlier) in the temple. This could not have been in the sanctuary where only the priests went. In 7:14 John states that Jesus taught in the temple and the Jews marvelled. Again in 7:28 Jesus cried in the temple as he taught. In 8:2 and 3:20 Jesus again taught and the crowds here could not have been in the sanctuary; in fact, 8:20 mentions that he was in the treasury section of the temple. The reference in 8:59 is very clearly the outer areas. In 10:23 he was in Solomon's porch in the temple.¹ At 11:56 John tells of many Jews that looked for Jesus and talked among themselves as they stood in the temple. Finally in 18:20 Jesus declared that he had taught openly in the world, synagogue, and "in the temple where the Jews always resort."

Thus it is clear that John always distinguishes the words. Finegan also concluded this.

It may also be noticed that there seems to be a clear distinction in the fourth gospel between *ναός* and *ἱερόν*. . . Every passage suggests the more open and public outer courts; in every passage Jn. uses the word meaning the entire temple area.²

1

Solomon's porch is also mentioned at Acts 3:11 and 5:12 which was on the eastside of the outer court: 10:23 is listed mistakingly as 10:53 in Hoehner's Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 41, where he concludes that John always distinguishes the words from each other.

2

Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, pp. 279-280.

This writer believes that it cannot be shown that the words were ever used interchangeably in any of the gospels. The evidence for this is such that Power insists the gospel writers "were really speaking about the *naós*."¹ Therefore, at John 2:20 John meant only the sanctuary and not the temple as a whole.

In this section then, it has been determined that the evidence shows that the Jews asked Christ if he would raise up the part of the Temple complex (the sanctuary) which had stood for forty-six years. It cannot be determined exactly what part of the year the sanctuary was finished, but it would have been in 18/17 B.C. Therefore (according to John 2:20), the statement made was at the first Passover of Jesus' ministry in the year A.D. 29 or 30.² From this passage the crucifixion date would be A.D. 32 or 33.

1

Power, "John 2:20 and the Date of the Crucifixion," pp. 264-265.

2

Even those who take the Temple of John 2:20 to be the whole complex usually do not disagree with the 18/17 B.C. date. An argument could be made for A.D. 28 or 31 in the second date, but A.D. 29 or 30 is by far the best. Therefore, the broadest possible dates for the crucifixion would be A.D. 31-34, but A.D. 32 or 33 is far better.

Luke 3:1-2 Six Chronological Notes

Luke, who has left a great amount of chronological information, makes a six-fold chronological statement in Luke 3:1-2. This was not unknown among ancient historians and it made sure that future readers would know exactly when a special event or the beginning of their histories took place. Little did these writers know of the perplexities such documentation would cause modern researchers. Other historians who had a similar note in their works were Thucydides¹ and Polybius.² The six references in Luke 3:1-2 will be examined in reverse order, as the first is the only specific date given. The others are important, as they limit the time that John the Baptist started his ministry. John was

1

In Thucydides, Peloponnesian Wars, he makes a six-fold dating reference; see ii.2; 5.20. He thus dated the Thebans' entry to Plataea and the beginning of the Peloponnesian Wars. See Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke (hereinafter referred to as The Gospel of Luke) (10th ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), pp. 80-85.

2

Polybius also mentions similar time references. Note that such remarks as: "beginning with the 140th Olympiad," etc. are common. In the first part (1.3-6) of his "Introduction to the first Punic War" Polybius states: "I begin, therefore, with the 19th year [387/6] after the battle of Aegospotami; this was also the 16th year before the battle of Leuctra. In this same year the Spartans confirmed the so-called Peace of Antalcidas with the King of Persia, and the elder Dionysius had defeated the Italiote Greeks at the Elleporeus River and was besieging Rhegium. The Gauls had seized Rome itself by force and were in possession of all but the Capitol." See other such notes in Chambers, Mortimer, trans. Polybius: The Histories, abridged and ed. by E. Badian. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966).

approximately six months older than Jesus,¹ who was "about thirty," but this fact will not enable one to calculate (along with the duration of Jesus' ministry) the approximate date of the crucifixion. It is only the chronological note here in Luke 3:1-2 that is of specific value, and Luke 3:23, as has been seen, is only an approximation.

The High Priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas

At the time John began to preach and baptize, Luke states that the High Priesthood was in the hands of Annas and Caiaphas. Luke has been accused of error here because it is known that Caiaphas (not Annas) was the High Priest at that time.² However, what Luke is recognizing here is that Annas continued to have a strong influence on the high priesthood.³ Caiaphas' priesthood is the

1

See Luke 1:26, 36. Some have argued that Luke 3:23 means exactly thirty years old and that since it is an age marking maturity, etc., John would have begun baptizing about A.D. 26 or thirty years after Jesus' birth. However, it is best to date Tiberius' fifteenth year on historical grounds, not upon the date of Jesus' birth and Luke 3:23. Although Luke 3:23 would limit the date of Tiberius' fifteenth year to about A.D. 23--A.D. 30, which would limit the date of the crucifixion to about A.D. 27--A.D. 34.

2

Annas' high priesthood was from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15. Caiaphas was high priest from A.D. 18 to A.D. 37 (Josephus, Antiquities xviii.2.1.). Josephus says Annas was made high priest "in the thirty-seventh year of Caesar's (Augustus) victory over Antony at Actium." This date (30 B.C.) is well known.

3

Hoehner, Chronological Aspects in the Life of Christ, p. 31; R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), pp. 174-175.

important one here, and yet it is still broad, for it only limits the time that John the Baptist began his ministry to between A.D. 18 and A.D. 36.¹ Assuming a three year ministry, the dates of the crucifixion are only narrowed to between A.D. 21 and A.D. 39. Thus this time notation is of little value.

Lysanias Tetrarch of Abilene

The date of this tetrarchy is a problem. Some have thought Luke referred to an earlier person and simply made a mistake here. Robertson noted this as follows:

The difficulty about Lysanias is more acute. Plummer puts the case clearly: "Not merely Strauss, Gfrorer, B. Baur and Hilgenfeld, but even Keim and Holtzmann, attribute to Luke the gross chronological blunder of supposing that Lysanias, son of Ptolemy, who ruled this region previous to B.C. 36, when he was killed by M. Antony, is still reigning sixty years after his death."²

However, it is known that there was a later Lysanias who was a tetrarch.³ He is known from an inscription and this is dated between A.D. 14 and 29.⁴ It is best to conclude that Luke is correct that Lysanias was a tetrarch at this time but that the exact dates

1

The closing of Caiaphas' term could be A.D. 37. See Harold Hoehner, Herod Antipas (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 307.

2

A. T. Robertson, Luke the Historian in the Light of Research (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 167.

3

Ibid., pp. 167-168.

4

Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum (4521). See Ogg, The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 171-172; Hoehner, Herod Antipas, p. 307; William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 197.

of this tetrarchy are not known. It is certain that Luke does not refer to Lysanias of Syria whom Anthony had executed in 40 B.C.¹

It might be added that Luke most likely used some written sources for his Gospel (Lk. 1:1-4). Because of this, some have thought he used Josephus here. However, Cronin noted that:

Where St Luke and Josephus narrate the same event, more often than not they either differ in their details or they disagree; even the stock passage about Theudas (Ant. xx 5, 1, 2) is open to this charge; the passage about Lysanias (Ant. xx 7, 1) does not look like copying.²

He goes on to suggest that Abilene may have been the area where Luke was when he wrote the Gospel and thus he included this note of who ruled there some thirty years prior. This may be possible, and there seems to be no other explanation as to why Lysanias is mentioned or as to exactly when he was tetrarch.

Philip Tetrarch of Ituraea

The Philip that Luke mentions here is the brother of Herod Antipas.³ Philip was a son of Herod the Great and of Cleopatra

¹ For more on this earlier Lysanias, see C.A.H. X. pp. 47, 67, 115.

² H. S. Cronin, "Abilene, The Jewish Herods, and St. Luke," The Journal of Theological Studies, 18 (1917), 150. This article (pp. 146-151) was the most thorough on the topic that this writer found.

³ These two were actually half brothers. Antipas' mother was from 'the Samaritan nation' (Josephus, Antiquities xvii. 1.3.) Archelaus (Mt. 2:22) and Antipas were whole brothers and their mother's name was Malthace. Herod Philip and Archelaus were therefore not full brothers as Josephus mistakingly said, cf. Josephus, Antiquities xvii.7.1. See also C.A.H. X. p. 333 and the geneological charts at the end of that volume.

(of Jerusalem, not of Egypt) and is known as Herod Philip I. He ruled from 4 B.C. until his death in A.D. 34.¹ Thus the end of his thirty-seven year reign means that A.D. 34 is another limitation as to how late the Baptist could have started his ministry. With an approximately three year ministry, this would make the latest date for the crucifixion A.D. 37.

Herod Tetrarch of Galilee

This Herod is Antipas, the half brother of Philip mentioned above. His mother was a Samaritan whose name was Malthace and his father was Herod the Great. His tetrarchy was from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39.² In A.D. 39 he was banished by Caligula to Lyons in Gaul. He is the Herod mentioned several times in the gospels (except Lk. 1:5 and Mt. 2:1-19). It is obvious that his reign does not help here, as it was a long one.

Pontius Pilate Governor of Judaea

Pontius Pilate is mentioned in the New Testament over fifty times³ and almost all of these involve his dealings with Jesus.

1

The A.D. 34 date is quite certain (although he died in the winter of 33/34). See Josephus, Antiquities xvii.4.6. Josephus says Philip died "in the twentieth year of the reign of Tiberius." Josephus also states his period of reign as 37 years. It is very likely that Josephus used (at this reference) the Julian calendar as he usually did in Antiquities. For more on this, see Hoehner, Herod Antipas, pp. 251, 301-302.

2

C.A.H. X. p. 662. See Hoehner, Herod Antipas for an excellent and thorough examination of Antipas.

3

All of the about 56 references are in the gospels except four, also only four of the references mention the "Pontius."

Pilate was governor (or prefect) of Judaea from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36.¹ Thus his time as governor is too broad to help on the crucifixion date, except that it could scarcely be before A.D. 29 if the three year ministry of Christ is accepted.

The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius' Reign

The third chapter of Luke begins with the statement, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." Since the beginning of the ministry of John is so carefully dated, one might think that the exact date is well known. However, such is not the case. It is well known that Octavian (Caesar Augustus) died on August 19, A.D. 14.² The problem lies in determining the dating

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Actually he may have been governor until A.D. 37. Josephus says he ruled ten years, but this may be a rounded number. See Josephus, Antiquities xviii.4.2. However, Josephus also says that Valerius Gratus was governor for eleven years (Antiquities xviii.4.2.). He also notes that Gratus was appointed by Tiberius (A.D. 14--A.D. 37) and that Pilate succeeded him. It seems also that since Gratus was the first governor of Judaea appointed by Tiberius he could not have been appointed until A.D. 14 or more likely A.D. 15. Gratus would have reigned from A.D. 15 to A.D. 26, and Pilate would have reigned from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36. See also Hoehner, Herod Antipas (Appendix VIII), pp. 313-316 for a short but detailed discussion of Pilate's return to Rome. Also see the brief section in C.A.H. X., pp. 649-650.

2

On the dates of Augustus, see C.A.H. X., and for the specific date of his death see Josephus, Antiquities xviii.2.2; where Josephus says concerning Augustus, "the duration of whose reign was fifty-seven years, besides six months and two days, (of which time Antonius ruled together with him fourteen years; but the duration of his life was seventy-seven years;) upon whose death Nero, his wife Julia's son, succeeded." Also see Josephus, Wars ii.9.1, where he again mentions the fifty-seven years, six months, and two days (see Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 217 for comments on Josephus here). See also Suetonius, Augustus xcix.c.i;

system Luke was using, as there are several systems he could have used. The importance of this issue is obvious, because if one can determine when the "fifteenth" year was, then he may simply add the approximately three and a half years (of Jesus' ministry) and arrive at the crucifixion date. The methods of reckoning will be examined and evaluated and the consequences given.

This writer has found at least twenty methods of dating Tiberius' fifteenth year.¹ However, many of these are very similar and the twenty can actually be classified into two primary categories. The first of these two categories (methods one through nine) reckons from Tiberius' co-regency with Augustus and the second category (methods ten through twenty) reckons from Tiberius' succession to Augustus on August 19, A.D. 14.² It is of great importance to

Suetonius, Caesar lxxxi.2.; Dio Cassius, Roman History lvi.30.5; Appian, Civil Wars ii.149; Plutarch, Caesar lxii; G. P. Baker, Tiberius Caesar (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), p. 128. For an unconvincing but lengthy attempt to date Augustus' death in A.D. 13, see Jarvis, A Chronological Introduction to the History of the Church, pp. 244-256.

1

See Appendix II.

2

Augustus died on August 19, but his funeral was not until September 11 or 12. When Tiberius actually considered himself the new emperor (the principate) may be either of these days, or more likely, September 17 as the following quote indicates: "The first business was to arrange for the State funeral of Augustus and get the machinery of government working again. The bringing of the body to Rome must have taken some fifteen days and the first meeting of the Senate, which Tiberius had summoned by virtue of his tribunician power, cannot have taken place till early September. Some attempt was possibly made to induce Tiberius to accept the principate then and there, but he would not allow any business save that connected with the funeral of Augustus. The will of the dead ruler,

determine which of these two methods Luke used, for as Appendix II shows, the co-regency method would allow for an A.D. 30, 31, or 32 date of the crucifixion, and the succession method would allow for an A.D. 31, 32, or 33 date.

Luke's Method of Dating

Luke's Readers

Luke 1:3 reveals that Luke was writing to one Theophilus¹ (Θεόφιλε). This Theophilus was probably a Roman official, as the greeting "your excellency" (see previous footnote) indicates.

bequeathing two-thirds of his estate to Tiberius and one-third to Livia, . . . some five or six days after the funeral the Senate again met, on 17 September. . . . while Tiberius' unwillingness was genuine enough, the result of the session of the Senate was a foregone conclusion; though he was dead, Augustus imposed his will on Tiberius as effectively as in life. From 17 September the new Principate had officially begun . . . The texts are Vell. Pat. II, 123-124; Tacitus, Ann. I, 7-13; Suetonius, Tib. 22-24, and Dio LVII, 2-3. For the date here accepted see E. Hohl in Hermes, LVIII, 1933, p. 106, though it must be admitted that there is no absolutely clinching piece of evidence; for another view see A. Lang, Beitrage zur Geschichte des Kaisers Tiberius, p. 5. The position of Tiberius could be truly, though unofficially, described as imperator perpetuus, as in the Gozo inscription, Dessau 121." (from C.A.H. X. pp. 610-612). Although it will make no difference in the calculations, the date used throughout this study will be August 19, A.D. 14 unless otherwise stated.

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Some have suggested that Luke was writing not to a man named Theophilus, but to all those who love God or are "loved of God" as the name means. See Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 57-59. However, the evidence for this is non-existent and Luke not only addresses Theophilus with the second person singular personal pronoun (σὺ), but also addressed his second letter to him as what we call the book of Acts. Luke also addresses him as "most excellent" or according to Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel, pp. 24, 33, "your excellency."

This term (*κράτιστε*) was a fairly common greeting at that time when one wanted to use very polite address or when he addressed an official.¹ The beginning of chapters two and three would indicate that he might indeed be a Roman official. In Acts 1:1 the title is omitted. This may be because the two books are really one continued account and the repetition would not be necessary. It is interesting that this title does not seem to have been given to Christians before the third century A.D. Thus in Luke Theophilus may have inquired about Christianity and he may have believed before the Acts was written. This is possible, as Lenski states:

It is noteworthy that this title is not repeated in the Acts. This cannot be accidental. Throughout the first two centuries, we are assured, no Christian was ever addressed by a fellow Christian with a title that was in any way comparable to the one that is here used by Luke. We certainly have no reason to think that Luke would prove the exception in this. Hence we make the deduction from the presence of the title in the Gospel and from its absence in the Acts that Theophilus was at first not a Christian but was only interested in things Christian and had been won for the faith by Luke's Gospel before the Acts were written. Theophilus was not "probably" but most certainly a Gentile; the entire Gospel permits no other conclusion.²

Other Roman officials were addressed with the same title by Luke. In Acts 23:36 and 24:3 Felix the governor or procurator is addressed this way and in Acts 26:25 Festus received the same title. Whether or not Theophilus was a Roman official, he probably did live

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See George H. Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, revised by Henry S. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 991-992, and Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek Lexicon of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, p. 450.

2

Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel, p. 33.

near Rome and his name was a common one for Romans. Hendriksen noted that:

Though it cannot be proved that Theophilus was living in or near Rome when Luke--perhaps also now at Rome; see above, Introduction, point IV B, p. 33--addressed him, neither is this idea entirely speculative. In Acts 28:15 Luke makes mention of both-- The Three Taverns and The Market of Appius (Latin: Tres Tabernae, Appii Forum). He mentions these two places close to Rome, respectively 33 and 43 miles south of the city). On the other hand, Luke is frequently more specific when he mentions places located a long distance away from Rome (Luke 1:26; 4:31; 8:26). Therefore, it may not be too risky to infer that the reason for this degree of difference in supplying geographical detail could be that Theophilus was living in or near Rome and was therefore not in need of receiving a more circumstantial report about nearby places.¹

Thus it is very likely that Luke would be using a dating system commonly used and recognized by the Romans. The evidence indicates that this method would not have been the co-regency method, for the succession method (not the co-regency) was in use then. Several reasons for this statement will be seen as the two methods are examined.

The Co-Regency Method

The co-regency method of reckoning would place Tiberius' first year of reign when he ruled the provinces jointly with Augustus. The historical background of Augustus' last year is essential to understanding this method and will be commented upon when needed, as there is some confusion as to just when the co-regency started.

There are several reasons given for suggesting the co-regency method. First, it is known that Tiberius did indeed rule as a

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Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, p. 59.

co-regent in the last years of Augustus' life.¹ Secondly, some have argued that since John the Baptist would have preached in a Sabbatical year (as crowds would be around with little to do, etc.), then the fifteenth year of Tiberius' reign must have been in A.D. 27/28. This argument, though mentioned by very few indeed, is quite complicated and this writer believes that nothing at all can be proven from it. A sample of its use is here given for the reader. Wacholder made the following notes:

What is the evidence for the likelihood that John the Baptist commenced his ministry during or near the period when the Jews celebrated the year of release? Luke 3:1-2 offers a sixfold synchronism for John's date. . . . It should be noted that this passage makes no mention of a sabbatical date, which might lead to a negative conclusion, that the sabbatical cycle played no or only a minor role in John's timing. Such a deduction is unwarranted because: a) even Graeco-Jewish historians, such as Josephus, customarily did not mention the year of the sabbatical cycle, perhaps since the Jews of the Diaspora did not observe shemittah; b) Luke addressed himself primarily to Gentile Christians; and c) conversely, Luke perhaps had no need to mention the chronomessianic link as it was taken for granted. . . . If Luke's dating was the one customary in Antioch, presumably Luke's home town, the 15th year ran from

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This fact is not disputed but it really proves nothing pertaining to the method Luke would use. This is clear because the other ancient historians knew the fact well but still used the succession method; see also under the succession method. It should be kept in mind that Suetonius and Tacitus, etc. were merely letting their readers know of Tiberius' position, but they never date any events from that time, nor do they say that anyone else does. See Tacitus, Annals i.3.3.; i.11.2; iii.56.2; Suetonius, Tiberius xxi; Velleius Paterculus, ii.121. In commenting upon these references, Plummer noted that "Tiberius was not joint Emperor with Augustus; he was associated with him only in respect of the provinces and armies" in The Gospel of Luke, p. 82. Again, in none of these references are these writers dating from the point under discussion.

Tishri 1 of year 27 to the end of Elul of year 28. . . . could John have commenced his mission anytime during the year and still coincide with the sabbatical year. . . . The tradition of chronomessianism since Daniel suggests strongly that John planned the timing of his appearance in a season when preachers customarily called on the people to repent, for the "day of the Lord" was approaching. . . . If this timing was both deliberate and consistent with popular Jewish chronomessianism, John will have begun his ministry before or during the Passover season. . . . A major festival date for John, assuming Luke's dating was intended to be precise, rather than approximate, would exclude possibility a) from the above mentioned listings. Thus Passover of 28 C.E. during the period of shemittah appears to be the most reasonable date, from a chronomessianic point of view, for the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry.¹

But even Wacholder himself said: "The fact that John began his ministry in 27/28, a year that happened to have been a shemittah, does not prove that he had deliberately planned the synchronism. . . . the coincidence might reflect an accident."²

Thirdly, some note that Tiberius was reckoned from the co-regency of Augustus because of other chronological notes such as Luke 3:23 or the doubt that John the Baptist would be so late. Thompson said along this line: "Most chronologists are unwilling to date John's ministry so late. Consequently, most scholars have adopted Ussher's suggestion that Luke was reckoning Tiberius' reign not from Augustus' death, but from the time when Augustus made Tiberius coemperor with him, or the year A.D. 11."³ However, this

¹
Ben Zion Wacholder, Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1976), pp. 252-254.

²
Ibid., p. 253.

³
W. Ralph Thompson, "Chronology of the New Testament," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (5 vols.: Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), I, 819.

is argument somewhat from silence, and many have thought that John's ministry was a year or so. See also the discussion on Luke 3:23 in this paper.

Fourthly, there are some quotes by certain early church fathers that would seem to indicate that they used (or at least had referred to) the co-regency method in dating. For example, Tertullian made two statements that seem to indicate both as follows: "The Lord has been revealed since the twelfth year of Tiberius Caesar."¹ Yet later he wrote "in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, Christ Jesus graciously decided to come down from heaven."² The second would thus be from the co-regency while the first would be from the succession to Augustus. Finegan used three passages as support for the co-regency method,³ but there is at least some doubt about the reading "12" and Ogg considers this substantial as he argued against the co-regency method as follows: "The inference from Adv. Marc. I, 15 that Tertullian himself recognised this epoch or had knowledge of some who did so, can be made by no one who accepts Kroymann's conclusion that in that passage the original reading is not XII but XV."⁴ Thus, at the very best, the sole reference by Tertullian is questionable.

¹
Tertullian, Against Marcion I. XV.

²
Ibid., I. XIX.

³
Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, pp. 263-264.

⁴
Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 179.

Clement of Alexandria used the succession method, but mentioned that some apparently used the co-regency method.¹ Again Ogg argues against this reading and says that there was probably a scribal error that mistakingly wrote $\kappa\varsigma$ (26) instead of $\kappa\beta$ (22).² Some have used a variant in Hippolytus' Commentary on Daniel as evidence for the co-regency method. However, Ogg says that this is not the case if one "recognizes that the purer form of the text of the passage is that given in the Chigi MS."³ Thus the few arguments based upon the fathers are very weak indeed when the evidence of the succession method is not doubted even by those who support the co-regency method. Ogg also gives a detailed discussion of an account in the Assumption of Moses, in which he argues for a succession method of dating Tiberius.⁴

Fifthly, some say that Luke was probably from Antioch in Syria, where the co-regency system was well known. However, this need not be the case. In Syria, the succession system was used,

¹
Clement, Stromata I.XXI. 144.

²
Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 178-179. This seems like a weak argument, but it is possible. One point of strength here is that Clement does mention several other chronological items that include his "some say" formula, but he never hints that these would date Tiberius from his co-regency, even though some involve Tiberius.

³
For the complete discussion, see Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 179.

⁴
Ibid., pp. 180-183.

and the non-accession system of dating seems to have been used. Note how Maier quoted Cichorius in implied support of the A.D. 26 date of Luke 3:1, but in actuality Cichorius did not support it. Maier was arguing for a date of A.D. 26 in which to place Luke 3:1-2, and he properly quoted Cichorius in support of the non-accession system being used in Syria. However, note that Maier assumed the co-regency method by arguing for the non-accession system in the following statement:

The question that remains is, "was the Fall of A.D. 26 in the fifteenth year of Tiberius?" The answer to this question is an emphatic yes. If the years of Tiberius are counted from the beginning of his coregency according to the non-accession year method, the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar was from October A.D. 26 to September A.D. 27 according to the Syrian calendar, or from March/April A.D. 26 to March/April A.D. 27 according to the Jewish calendar. As can be seen, the Fall of A.D. 26 would be in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, regardless whether the Jewish or the Syrian calendar is chosen. (Luke, coming from Antioch in Syria might have used the Syrian or the Jewish calendar.)¹

He then used Cichorius to support the non-accession method in Syria but immediately after his quote he said, "Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude, that John the Baptist started his ministry in the fall of A.D. 26."² This, however, is not Cichorius' view. The only real evidence Maier gave for the co-regency system is Luke 3:23 and the birth and duration of Jesus' ministry. Blinzler more accurately used Cichorius as follows:

¹ Maier, "Studies in the Chronology of Acts," p. 23.

² Ibid., p. 24.

Conrad Cichorius (ZNW, 22 [1923], 17-20) has pointed out that according to the Syrian chronology, which was also adopted by the Jews of Palestine, and may be assumed to have been used--particularly by Syrian-born Luke--the first year of a ruler's reign was reckoned from the date of his accession to the next New Year festival. As the Syrian New Year was celebrated on October first, according to this chronology, the first year of the reign of Tiberius would fall between August nineteenth and September thirtieth of the year 14 A.D., and the fifteenth year between October first of the year 27 and September thirtieth of the year 28.¹

Thus if the system of Cichorius is used, the date for the crucifixion would be A.D. 31 or A.D. 32 (assuming as Maier does a three year plus ministry of Jesus), and therefore the non-accession year argument is not conclusive. The thing that really matters is whether the co-regency or succession system was used, and Cichorius held that the succession (not co-regency) was the one used. The fact that Luke was in Syria would not prove this one way or another, especially in light of the arguments for the succession system. See also the discussion of Syrian coins, which follows shortly.

Sixthly, some draw an analogy to Annas and Caiaphas in the same passage. Here the actual reign is given and not the "formal" or legal reign. Thus it could have been the same with Tiberius.² However, Augustus was still the only emperor until his death and Tiberius did not consider himself the emperor until it was confirmed by the Senate about a month after Augustus died.³ Annas was already

¹ Elinzler, The Trial of Jesus, p. 73.

² Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 198-199.

³ Suetonius, Tiberius xxiv; Tacitus, Annals i.5-7.

"the High Priest" (deposed in A.D. 15), but Tiberius had never been the sole ruler before the death of Augustus. The translation of Luke 3:1 could actually be "the fifteenth year of Tiberius as Caesar."¹

Seventhly, some have argued from coinage that was produced about that time that the co-regency method was used. Wieseler, who for years held the succession view, argued against the co-regency system as "a shift to which writers had resorted for the smooth running of their own particular views of Gospel chronology."² Later he changed his view, mostly on the basis of two Syrian coins.³ Ogg (in the previous footnote) showed that the coins do not support the co-regency system of dating, and Plummer also noted the same basic idea as follows:

The coins of Antioch, Lk.'s own city, which helped to convert Wieseler from the one view to the other by seeming to date the reign of Tiberius from the association, are not admitted by Eckhel to be genuine. On the other hand, there are coins of Antioch which date the reign of Tiberius from the death of Augustus.⁴

¹ Plummer, The Gospel of Luke, p. 81.

² These are the words of Ogg in Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 175.

³ Ibid. Ogg goes into a long and detailed discussion of coins, which is beyond the scope of this paper, but he adequately shows that the coins totally support the succession method of dating. For further discussion, see Ogg, pp. 174-178.

⁴ Plummer, The Gospel of Luke, p. 82.

Eighthly, another argument is one based on the words involved. Since the argument has been abandoned by many recent writers, only a brief summary of it will be given here. Luke uses the words "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." It is argued that the latter word (Καίσαρος) is an expression of dignity or nobility and not a family name. If Luke had used Αὐγούστου or Σεβαστοῦ he would have measured from Tiberius' sole rule, but since he did not, he reckoned from Tiberius' co-regency by the phrase "Tiberius as Caesar."¹ It is further stated that since Luke used "reign" (ἑγεμονία) instead of "sole rule" or "monarchy" (μοναρχία) that the co-regency must have been in his mind.

However, one may note that Josephus used the same term as Luke (ἑγεμονία) when he definitely dated from Tiberius' succession to Augustus. This will be seen in the next section, "The Succession Method."

This "linguistic" argument has also been stated in more detail by Wieseler and Zahn and can be examined in Ogg's work, where he concludes: "This linguistic argument, advanced by Wieseler

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The word Caesar is used twenty-seven times in the New Testament and Luke accounts for most of these. At all of the other references (sixteen) besides Luke 3:1, he refers to an actual emperor and there is no good reason to make Luke 3:1 the only exception. Acts 11:28 is a somewhat similar passage. The famine came about "upon (the days) of Claudius Caesar." Claudius was never a co-regent but was emperor (A.D. 41-54). It should be noted that "Caesar" here is a variant reading.

and repeated by Zahn, is ignored by not a few even of those who follow these scholars in reckoning the 15th year of Tiberius from the time of the co-regency. That fact is significant."¹ It seems obvious that this argument is a very weak one and that a lot of weight should not be put on what Luke "would have said."

Thus these arguments are non-conclusive. Their greatest weakness is silence and the evidence for the succession system. It should also be pointed out that another serious problem is that "even among those who hold to the co-regency there is no agreement as to the beginning of the co-regency."² Plummer states the date as "at the end of 764 or beginning of 765, A.D. 11 or 12."³ Ramsay holds to A.D. 12.⁴ In A.D. 13 Tiberius was given Tribunical power for life and therefore some take A.D. 13 as the date Luke is dating from.⁵

¹ Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 183.

² Hoehner, Herod Antipas, p. 308.

³ Plummer, The Gospel of Luke, p. 81.

⁴ William M. Ramsay, "Numbers, Hours, Years, and Dates." A Dictionary of the Bible. Ed. by James Hastings, et al. Extra Volume (1904), 481. He took the triumph of Tiberius in the first part of A.D. 12 to be the occasion that the Senate gave the co-regency power.

⁵ See Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 174, where he cites an article by Pelham, "Augustus," in Encyclopedia Britannica (14th ed.), II, p. 689 and also J. B. Bury, Student's Roman Empire, pp. 54, 138.

Finegan also admits the confusion.

On Oct 23, A.U.C. 765 = A.D. 12, he celebrated a triumph for his military victories in Germany and Pannonia. Referring to this event, Suetonius says that 'the consuls caused a law to be passed soon after this that he should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus and hold the census with him.' The date when Tiberius thus began to govern the provinces jointly with Augustus was probably A.D. 12, although arguments have been presented for putting it in A.D. 11 or 13.¹

Note also the comment in C.A.H. X. p. 158.

In the year A.D. 13 Augustus received a fifth and final extension of his imperium for ten years 'against his will,' if Dio is to be believed. Dio adds that the tribunicia potestas of Tiberius was renewed: but this was not all, for a law was passed in due form on the proposal of the consuls granting to him equal rights with his adoptive father in the administration of the provinces and command of the armies, and empowering him to conduct the census together with Augustus. The duties of the censors closed with the celebration of the lustrum in May, A.D. 14, and Tiberius received a commission to proceed with the settlement of affairs in Illyricum.²

Hoehner notes that "on the basis of Velleius Paterculus ii.121, Mommsen dates the decree at the end of A.D. 11."³ Thus the date at which one would begin a co-regency is not agreed upon by

¹
Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 259. Also see Suetonius, Tiberius xx and xxi; C.A.H. X. pp. 157-158. Finegan takes the A.D. 12 date, but a reading of Suetonius seems (to this writer) to favor A.D. 13. Finegan's only documentation given for the A.D. 12 date is a simple side reference in the Loeb Classical Library edition of Suetonius ed. by J. C. Rolfe (Finegan, p. 259, note 3). Suetonius (in the reference above) said (in part), "After two years he returned to the city from Germany and celebrated the triumph which he had postponed, accompanied also by his generals . . . since the consuls caused a law to be passed soon after this that he should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus and hold the census with him, he set out for Illyricum on the conclusion of the lustral ceremonies; but he was at once recalled, and finding Augustus in his last illness but still alive, he spent an entire day with him in private."

²
C.A.H. X. p. 158.

³
Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 31.

by historians or even by those who date Luke 3:1 from the co-regency.

It has been seen that to date Tiberius' fifteenth year from the co-regency with Augustus, one must take a view that is weak at every point. Perhaps a comment made by Madden in Coins of the Jews and quoted by Ogg is appropriate here as a conclusion that the co-regency was not meant by Luke.

What we have sought to set forth is admirably summed up by Madden. 'The hypothesis,' he writes, 'of a dating of the years of Tiberius from an epoch earlier by three years than the death of Augustus which from the sixteenth century downwards has found favour with many learned men will not bear examination: it is unknown to the early ecclesiastical writers and nowhere in histories, on monuments, or coins is a trace of any such epoch of Tiberius to be met with.'¹

The Succession Method

There are many reasons to accept the Succession method. One of the strongest is that it was clearly the one used by historians of the day.

It is well known that Tiberius died on March 16, A.D. 37.² Josephus clearly states that Tiberius "died, after he had held the government twenty-two years, five months and three days."³ This would actually calculate to a start of his reign in the first part

¹ Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 183.

² C.A.H. X. p. 642; See Tacitus, Annals 6.51; Robert S. Rogers, Studies in the Reign of Tiberius (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), pp. 31-33, 95ff.

³ Josephus, Antiquities xviii.6.10.

of October, A.D. 14 (instead of August 19 or September 17). This would be one or two months after Augustus died, but in no way could it be reckoned to his co-regency with Augustus. However, Josephus also listed the length of Tiberius' reign as follows: " . . . Tiberius died, after he had reigned twenty-two years, and six months, and three days."¹ Here Josephus adds one month to Tiberius' reign. Actually The Wars of the Jews was written about seventeen years before the Antiquities of the Jews, and a copier probably changed one to correct it according to his own information. Thus the second reference here listed would make Tiberius' reign start at about September 13, A.D. 14. Both of these references are reckoning from the succession method.

Josephus also noted that "Philip, The Tetrarch, Herod Antipas' brother, departed this life in the twentieth year of the reign of Tiberius, after he had been tetrarch of Trachonitis, and Gaulonitis, and of the nation of Bataneans also, thirty-seven years."² (*italics mine*). It is known that Philip died in A.D. 34.³ Thus the "twentieth year" would have made Tiberius start in A.D. 14. Again it is not conceivable that Josephus could have reckoned Tiberius' reign from his co-regency with Augustus.

¹
Josephus, Wars ii.9.5.

²
Josephus, Antiquities xviii.4.6.

³
C.A.H. X. pp. 338, 649.

Suetonius also confirms that Tiberius' reign was measured from his succession to Augustus as follows: "he (Tiberius) died . . . in the seventy-eighth year of his age and the twenty-third of his reign, on the seventeenth day before the Kalends of April (March 16, A.D. 37), in the consulship of Gnaeus Acerronius Proculus and Gaius Pontius Nigrinus."¹

Dio put the death of Tiberius as follows: "The emperor himself died in the following spring, in the consulship of Gnaeus Proculus and Pontius Nigrinus."² Hence he agrees on the time of death with Suetonius; however, Dio did make a mistake in putting the death at March 26 instead of March 16.³ The important point is his next statement which was: "He had lived seventy-seven years, four months, and nine days, of which time he had been emperor twenty-two years, seven months, and seven days."⁴ Thus Dio dated Tiberius' reign from August 19, A.D. 14, at the death of Augustus. This again confirms that the succession method was the normal method in use.

¹ Suetonius, Tiberius lxxiii.

² Dio Cassius, Roman History lviii.27.1.

³ Ibid., lviii.28.5.

⁴ Ibid., lviii.28.5. From August 19, A.D. 14 to March 26, A.D. 37 is twenty-two years, seven months, and seven days, exactly as Dio said.

Tacitus gives similar information. He stated that "the year when Caius Asinius and Caius Antistius were consuls was the ninth year of Tiberius' reign."¹ Finegan notes in his discussion of this as follows: "In a critical list of consuls . . . C. Asinius C. F. Pollio et C. Antistius C. F. Vetus are the consuls of the year. A.U.C. 776 = A.D. 23. If we count full calendar years after the death of Augustus, the ninth year of Tiberius is A.U.C. 776 = A.D. 23."² Thus Tacitus reckons Tiberius' reign from Augustus' death. This is further confirmed by another comment he made, of a report that said, "Augustus was dead and that Tiberius Nero was master of the State."³ It is then concluded that Tacitus considered Tiberius to begin as Emperor only after Augustus had died. The evidence from these historians is so strong that even though Plummer said that the co-regency method "makes the Gospel chronology as a whole run more smoothly," he had to add to those words "but it is intrinsically less probable, and seems to be inconsistent with the statements of Tacitus and Suetonius."⁴

Clement of Alexandria also considered Tiberius' reign to be one of twenty-two years. He said: " . . . of the Roman Emperors, in order to the demonstration of the Saviour's birth. Augustus,

¹
Tacitus, Annals iv.1.

²
Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 271.

³
Tacitus, Annals 1.5.

⁴
Plummer, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 81-82.

fourty-three years; Tiberius, twenty-two years; . . ."¹ Note also that he added shortly afterwards, "accordingly, in the fifteen years of Tiberius and fifteen years of Augustus; so were completed the thirty years till the time he suffered. And from the time he suffered till the destruction of Jerusalem are fourty-two years and three months."²

The ancient historians Josephus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, and Tacitus all date Tiberius' reign from the death of Augustus. It seems that Luke would do the same under normal circumstances. Goguel came to the same conclusion when he wrote:

Some authors (for instance, Joh. Weiss: Die Ev. des Markus and Lukas, Comm. of Meyer, I, 2, Gottingen, 1892, p. 319) count the years of Tiberius not from his accession but from his association with the Empire (11-12). This system was not followed by Josephus nor by the Roman historians, and there is no reason to follow it now.³

Another reason to believe Luke used the succession year system in Luke 3:1 is the word *ἡγεμονία*. This same word was used by Josephus when he said the empire passed to Tiberius when Augustus died. Finegan noted this as well.⁴ This of course is not final

¹ Clement, Stromata I.xxi.144.

² Ibid.

³ Goguel, The Life of Jesus, p. 224.

⁴ Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, p. 272.

proof, but this writer agrees with Finegan here in that the word *ἡγεμονία*¹ does lend some support to the succession year method.

Another evidence for the succession year method here is the lack of evidence for the co-regency method. This has surely been seen in the section above. Thomas Lewis, who wrote in 1865 said: "The reign of Tiberius, as beginning from 19th Aug. A.D. 14, was as well-known a date in the time of Luke as the reign of Queen Victoria in our own day, and that no single case has even been or can be produced in which the years of Tiberius were reckoned in any other way."²

Also note Maier's comment:

Not only is this the method of our chief Roman sources for the early principate--Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio--but a system confirmed by the epigraphy, coinage, and papyri from the Mediterranean world during this era. It seems improbable, moreover, that an event anchored to the regnal years of a Roman emperor would use a system of reckoning those years different from that employed by the princeps and S.P.Q.R. themselves, as well as the Empire in general.³

Since the evidence is so strong for the succession method of dating, it must be concluded that it was the normal or "the usual way"⁴ of dating Tiberius' reign. Thus the interpretation that dates Luke 3:1 from Tiberius' association with Augustus in the Frontiers must at best be suspect hermeneutically.

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The word is found in the New Testament only at Luke 3:1, but the verb form is found at Luke 2:2 and also at 3:1.

2

As quoted by Hoehner, Herod Antipas, p. 308.

3

Paul L. Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate and the Date of the Crucifixion," Church History, 37 (March, 1968), 6.

4

Plummer, The Gospel of Luke, p. 82.

The date then of Tiberius' fifteenth year would be from August, A.D. 28 to August, A.D. 29. It is also possible to vary this a little because the time of the year that the New Year began was a little different with the various countries, as is noted in Appendix Two. Also, the accession year and non-accession year systems could have been used. Many studies have been made on these topics,¹ but one should note that they really affect the outcome very little in the light of other evidences, such as John 2:20 and the possible dates based on astronomy. The result of the use of the succession method by Luke has been summed up by Ogg as follows: "Understanding the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius in this way, we cannot put the first Passover of Jesus' public ministry, that of Jn. ii, 13, earlier than A.D. 29."²

Luke 3:23

Significance of this Verse

At the beginning of Luke's genealogy of Christ, he makes an important chronological note that is potentially crucial in the study of the crucifixion date. This is found in Luke 3:23 and reads as follows: "And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli."

¹ Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 184ff; Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, pp. 259-275.

² Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, p. 201.

The context of this passage is that of Jesus' baptism. His geneology follows, and the account of the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry precedes it. Several notes have already been made on this passage in chapters one and two of this paper.

It is not absolutely certain what Luke is dating in Luke 3:1-2,¹ but it is certain here (as will be seen) that he is stating Jesus' age when he was baptized and began his ministry.

The key word here is "about." Oosterzee noted this as well. "All attempts at fixing an exact chronology of our Lord's life, from this indication of Luke, have split upon this word 'about.'"² If the word translated "about" in this passage is not flexible enough for it to allow the "thirty years" that it modifies to be extended to "twenty-eight" or "thirty-two," then the date of the crucifixion must have been after A.D. 29 and before A.D. 33. This calculation is based upon the date of Christ's birth as being in the winter of 5/4 B.C. and the duration of his ministry as being about three and one half years. If Jesus was born in December of 5 B.C. he would have been age one from December of 4 B.C. to December of 3 B.C., he would have been age 27 from December of A.D. 23 to December of A.D. 24, he would have been age 30 from December of

1

There are those who insist he is dating John and those who insist that he is dating Jesus. See Ogg, Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus, pp. 192ff.

2

J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," trans. by Philip Schaff and Charles Starbuck, in vol. VIII of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. by John P. Lange (12 vols., reprinted: Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 62.

A.D. 26 to December of A.D. 27, he would have been age 33 from December of A.D. 29 to December of A.D. 30, and he would have been age 36 from December of A.D. 32 to December of A.D. 33. The chart in Appendix IV shows the various possible combinations of Jesus' birth, Luke 3:23, and the date of the crucifixion that are at all likely (based on a ministry of about three and one half years).

The Meaning of the Verse

The King James Version gives the impression that Jesus "began to be about thirty years of age" or that he was just leaving age twenty-nine about the time of his baptism. However, this is not a proper translation, and many have noted this fact. Plummer declared that it is an impossible translation.¹ A more accurate translation might be, "And Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began (his baptism and ministry)." The Revised Standard Version has " . . . when he began to teach, was about thirty." The New American Standard Bible translates, "And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age." Other modern translations as the American Standard Version, New English Bible, New International Version, etc. agree. Thus this passage is not saying that Jesus was exactly thirty years old when he was baptized, but that he was not far from that age.

¹

Alfred Plummer, The Gospel of Luke, p. 102.

A Variety of Opinions

Some believe that the word "about" which is a translation of ἄνευ is not very flexible. Some who believe it will allow only one year or less include Irenaeus,¹ Maier,² Ramsay,³ Galloway.⁴ This is an extreme limitation for the word "about" and it does not hold up (as will be seen) with the way the word is used in other places. Those who think it will allow one or two years variation include: Turner,⁵ Madison,⁶ Mackinlay,⁷ and Jarvis.⁸ Among those who conclude that it can allow a variation of up to three years

¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies ii.22.5.

² Maier, "Studies in the Chronology of Acts," p. 25.

³ William M. Ramsay, Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), p. 197.

⁴ Wm. Brown Galloway, The Chain of Ages, Traced in its Prominent Links by Holy Scriptures (London: Charles J. Thyme, n.d.), pp. 526-530.

⁵ Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, "Chronology of the New Testament," A Dictionary of the Bible. Edited by James Hastings, et al., I (1898), 405.

⁶ Madison, "Chronological Problems in the Life of Christ," p. 79.

⁷ Mackinlay, The Magi--How They Recognized Christ's Star, p. 180. He puts the age at 32.

⁸ Samuel Farmer Jarvis, A Chronological Introduction to the History of the Church (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), p. 534.

are: Olmstead,¹ Thompson,² Lovik,³ Hoehner,⁴ Hitchcock,⁵ Power,⁶ Ogg,⁷ and Cadbury.⁸

1

Olmstead, Jesus in the Light of History, pp. 1-2. His view is hardly worth consideration, as his view of the birth of Christ in 20 B.C. (also unfounded) distorts his whole chronology. Therefore, he has to resort to allowing Luke 3:23 to allow about a twenty-year variation, and since this is obviously wrong, he has to use Luke as a scapegoat for his own error and says that Luke did not understand Jesus' age and "therefore conjectures 'about thirty,' 3:23."

2

Thompson, "Chronology of the New Testament," I, 820. Note that he says this is possible if Luke was estimating, which he himself does not demand.

3

Gordon H. Lovik, "Expressing Time in the Gospels." Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1973, pp. 80-81. After examining his discussion, it seems clear that he would allow this much flexibility. After his short discussion on Luke 3:23 he concluded: "Thirty was not necessarily Jesus' nearest birthday."

4

Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 25.

5

F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Dates," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. Edited by James Hastings, et al., I (1898), 410.

6

Power, "John 2:20 and the Date of the Crucifixion," pp. 282-287. Power argues that the phrase is not so much elastic in either direction, as it is a term that means "in his thirties." Power is misrepresented by Madison, "Chronological Problems in the Life of Christ," p. 77, where he mistakingly stated that Power would allow the phrase to "include any age from twenty to forty."

7

George Ogg, "Chronology of the New Testament." Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Edited by Matthew Black. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 728.

8

Henry J. Cadbury, "Time," Journal of Biblical Literature, 82 (September, 1963), 276.

Use of $\omega\sigma\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ and $\omega\varsigma$

A study of the word $\omega\sigma\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ reveals that it is found thirty-four times in the New Testament. Of these thirty-four, it is used seventeen times (exactly half) to modify a numerical adjective. At all of these seventeen references it is translated "about" in the King James Version.

The word $\omega\sigma\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ is very similar to its synonym $\omega\varsigma$ and these should be studied together.¹ Together these words are quite numerous, but only occur with numbers thirty-one times and all of these thirty-one occurrences are found in the Gospels and Acts with but one exception.² There are several questions one should ask when examining these words. How did Luke use them? How are they used with round numbers? How much variation seems possible in normal usage? They will be examined here with their association with larger numbers first.

There are eight occurrences of these words with numbers in the thousands. All of these are rounded figures and include: The

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The word $\omega\varsigma$ is used fourteen times (out of about 455) to modify a numerical adjective. The similarity of this word to $\omega\sigma\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ can be seen in that $\omega\sigma\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ is used in all four of the gospels with regard to the feeding of "about 5,000." In Mark 8:9 $\omega\varsigma$ is used in the feeding of "about" 4,000. Another example of similarity is seen in that $\omega\sigma\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ is used in Acts 10:3 as "about" the ninth hour of the day when Peter saw his vision. In John 1:39 $\omega\varsigma$ is used to show that at "about" the tenth hour of the day two of John's disciples stayed with Jesus. For a complete comparison of the two words, see Appendix One.

2

Revelation 8:1 is the only exception. Also it is interesting that this is the shortest of the fifteen references to time; "about one-half hour."

2,000 swine of Mark 5:13, the 3,000 new believers of Acts 2:41, the 4,000 men in the feeding of Mark 8:9,¹ the 5,000 new believers of Acts 4:4, and the 5,000 in the feeding miracle found in all four gospels. In every case it can be seen that these are large and round figures. The authors simply were giving estimates by using the "about" formula. In each case a variation of 500 would not be out of the question; however, there should probably be no more than that. If one wanted to speak of about 3,600 to 4,400 people, he would obviously prefer "4,000" over "3,000" or "5,000." Thus, when dealing with numbers in the thousands, the numbers are rounded and the variation range covers a maximum span of about 1,000.

In the instances where numbers in the hundreds are used, the writers (John twice and Luke three times) were only a little more specific. These include the "about 100 pounds" of myrrh and aloes in John 19:39, the "about 400 men" who followed Theudas mentioned at Acts 5:36, and the 200 cubits from land of John 21:8. These are clearly all estimates and the range could not vary over fifty on either side. Also included in this category is Luke's mention of the "about 120" post-resurrection disciples of Acts 1:15 and the 450 of Acts 13:20. With this more specific number, the

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The parallel account in Matthew 15:38 simply states that there "were four thousand men." However, one need not conclude that this means exactly 4,000, as Matthew was speaking in a general term and a rounded figure was used to express "the multitude" of 15:36 or the "many" of 15:34.

variation might not be less than 115 nor more than 125 because Luke is using approximations divisible by ten. At Acts 13:20 Luke mentions the "about 450" year period from the Egyptian sojourn to the conquest of Canaan. Again he uses a number divisible by ten and probably has in mind an approximation of 445-455. The time in Egypt (v. 17) was 400 years (Acts 7:6 and Gen. 15:13) and the wandering period was about 40 years (v. 18). They took about seven years to conquer the land and that makes approximately 450 years.¹ It is possible to suppose that he used 450 to indicate 400-500 years, but in either case he approximates within limits.

In situations where numbers of less than 100 are used, the accuracy is usually greater. There are eighteen such cases, and fifteen have to do with measuring time. These can be put into certain categories for examination. In John 6:19 John tells the men rowed "about twenty-five or thirty furlongs." Since he would obviously not know the exact figure here, he puts a variable of five along with the "about." This does not have to mean "between" but

I

This is made more clear by the NASB translation: "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it. And for about a period of forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance--all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. And after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet." See also R.C.H. Lenski, The Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), pp. 518-520. Although it is not within the scope of this study to discuss the length of the stay in Egypt, one may see Jack R. Riggs, "The Length of Israel's Sojourn in Egypt," Grace Journal, 12 No. 1 (Winter, 1971), pp. 18-35, and Harold Hoehner, "The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage," Bibliotheca Sacra, 126, No. 504 (1969), pp. 309-312. These articles support a 430 year and a 400 year bondage respectively.

could be within the 23-33 (or even more) range. The ability to estimate distance on water would be very difficult. Then in 11:18 John mentions that Jerusalem is "about fifteen furlongs" from Bethany. A closer figure would be sixteen or seventeen. Although the distance between Bethany and Jerusalem was known, it was still only approximate and even though "15" is more specific, it still leaves a variation range of one or two on either side.¹ It would be best to assume the same was true of Acts 19:7, for Luke knew there were about a dozen men who had the experience, but he clearly did not know the exact number. Since men cannot be subdivided into lesser portions, there must be a possible variation of one or two entire units. This is in contrast to Maier, who says that the variation can be only a part of the whole unit.² Since Luke knew that there

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Both Jerusalem and Bethany are still occupied and it is difficult to know an exact figure of what John meant in such a short distance. A furlong was about 607 feet.

2

Maier, "Studies in the Chronology of Acts," pp. 24-25. Maier also uses a faulty system of deduction to prove his point. When dealing with figures in the thousands, he allows "a variation in the hundreds," which could be 4,500--5,500 (or 10%) for the 5,000 figure he is discussing. Here he allows the number to vary, but when he discusses time, he only allows the years or hours, etc. to vary and insists that the base number of those years or hours, etc. stay the same. Many references show the error here; for example, he says that when years are measured the variation can "only be in the number of months," and hours can only vary "in number of minutes," etc. Yet in John 21:8 one reads of the boat being "about two hundred cubits." If the variation was only in parts of a cubit, the exact figure would be 199-201 cubits. Considering the difficulty of estimating that distance, it seems that this is an impossible limit for *ὡσεὶ*. In John 6:19 it is even more obvious that "about" is very flexible, and in Acts 13:20 (omitted by Maier) one reads "he gave them judges 'about' the space of four hundred and fifty years," which surely is not to be limited to 449-451 years.

were "about twelve" men and since he did not know the exact number, the number could be anywhere between ten and fifteen. This is clearly seen in that a specific number as ten or fifteen would mislead the readers. "About twelve" or "about thirteen" is the best possible way to express between ten and fifteen.

There are four numbers of less than 100 that measure years, and all of these are by Luke. Luke 2:37 declares that Anna was "about eighty-four" years old and Luke 8:42 says that Jairus' daughter was "about twelve years" old. Both of these are specific numbers and yet they are both only approximations. Both could be a full year or so on either side, for Luke does not seem to be giving an age that he has documented as much as an age that he has estimated.¹ Acts 13:18 also contains an important passage. Here Luke says that the Israelites were in the wilderness (after the Exodus) "about 40 years." He no doubt had the Old Testament available to him and could have gotten this figure from several places there.² It is possible that the "about" term is here because of the various ways the "forty" is listed in the Old Testament. This is the most clear and best known time period that Luke uses.

1

One should remember that the words $\omega\sigma\epsilon\iota'$ and $\omega\varsigma$ basically mean "as" or "like" or "similar to." Anna was like or approximately eighty-four years old. How Luke knew her age is not known, but he probably had it in some of his sources (both oral and written).

2

On the "forty years," see Exodus 16:35; Numbers 33:28, Deuteronomy 2:7; 8:2-4; Nehemiah 9:20-21. Luke here mentions "suffered he their manners in the wilderness" which no doubt refers to the same references above in the Old Testament where feeding with manna and caring for is primarily in view. The Greek text has an important variant here.

In order to understand what Luke meant in Luke 3:23 when he said that Jesus was "about 30" when he began his ministry, the other time references Luke used must be examined also. Thus the reader is directed to the sections on Luke 3:1-2 and 2:2. Luke knew exactly what year Jesus was baptized, but he apparently did not know his exact age at the time of the event. When he used the number "30" he was giving an approximate age. The concept of giving approximate ages is very common today and there should be no doubt that it was common then. Cadbury noticed that these ancient approximations were usually rounded off in five-year intervals. "Having for many years read the volumes of Greek papyri as they were published, I formed the impression that the ages of adults which were given in them tended to occur for the multiples of five far out of proportion to the other numbers."¹

Certainly one can say that "about 30" is more than twenty-five and less than thirty-five, but exactly how much latitude is allowed cannot be known. It is suggested that every rounded number in the New Testament with the "about" formula definitely has some latitude. An exception might be the forty years of wandering which Luke got from the Old Testament. With very small numbers, it is usually impossible to tell how much variation should be allowed. One may see Appendix One on this. It seems best to say that *ὡσεὶ* is an elastic particle, that it means "approximately," and that it was used with round numbers when the details were not known. This writer

¹
Cadbury, "Time," 275-276.

believes that to limit the "about 30" of Luke 3:23 to a spectrum of less than 27-33 years is too much of a limitation for the evidence, based on normal usage, to bear out.

It might be stated that Luke is not omitting the possibility that Jesus was exactly thirty years old,¹ but he was definitely not saying that Jesus was exactly thirty. Since Luke knew the time Jesus' ministry began but not his exact age at that time, this writer has concluded that Luke 3:23 puts only a broad limit on the date of the crucifixion. That limit would be from A.D. 28 to A.D. 34 if the 5/4 B.C. date of Jesus' birth is accepted. Thus there is no problem at all for any date from A.D. 29 to A.D. 33.

This writer thinks the A.D. 33 date of the crucifixion best fits the evidence. The "about 30" here would actually be "32." Jesus was probably baptized and began his ministry in the late summer or early fall (August/September) of A.D. 29 when he was 32 years old.

JOHN 8:57

This passage, "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years, and hast thou seen Abraham?" is of very little value in determining Jesus' actual age at the time. However, it may have some value in that area.

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Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 38, thinks that the "about" does indicate Jesus was not thirty. This may be somewhat possible because when Jesus is said to have been "twelve" years old, there is no "about," and he was exactly twelve.

Some have actually taken this statement literally¹ and have therefore had to distort or discount other references (as Lk. 3:23). The only thing this writer would see as of chronological value here is that the Jews speaking to Jesus probably recognized he was over thirty, for it would be even more strange to tell a person in his twenties that he is not yet fifty.² This event took place in the last year of Jesus' ministry, so it really is of little help. Therefore, it is concluded that John 8:57 adds little if anything to the chronology of Jesus' life.

1

This view goes back at least to Irenaeus, Against Heresies ii.22.6. See also Power, "John 2:20 and the Date of the Crucifixion," pp. 279-281 for a discussion on this concept.

2

This is supported by Mackinlay, The Magi--How They Recognized Christ's Star, p. 180; and Power, "John 2:20 and the Date of the Crucifixion," pp. 279-281.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

The historical situation at the time of Jesus' crucifixion has been used recently as evidence for determining the date of the event.¹ The basic thought here is that Pilate acted weak and somewhat cowardly by giving in to the Jews at the trials of Jesus rather than being firm and unwavering as was known to be his way in his usual dealings with the Jews. These actions would be meaningless if the crucifixion was in A.D. 31, 30, or before, as Sejanus, an anti-Semite, was in virtual control of the Empire. However, late in A.D. 31 Sejanus was executed (for a plot against Tiberius), Tiberius was more lenient with the Jews, and those people (such as

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See F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1969), pp. 34ff, 200ff.; Blinzler, The Trial of Jesus, pp. 236ff.; Paul L. Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion," 3-13; E. Mary Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), pp. 164-169, 201-210; Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 105-113; R. Larry Overstreet, "Roman Law and the Trial of Christ," Bibliotheca Sacra, 135:540 (October-December, 1978), 323-332; A.D. Doyle, "Pilate's Career and the Date of the Crucifixion," The Journal of Theological Studies, 17 (October, 1941), 190-193; Carl H. Kraeling, "The Episode of the Roman Standards at Jerusalem," The Harvard Theological Review, 35 (October, 1942), 263-289; E. Mary Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews Under Tiberius," Latomus, 15 (Juillet-Septembre, 1956), 314-329; Paul L. Maier, "The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields at Jerusalem," The Harvard Theological Review, 62 (January, 1969), 109-121.

Pilate) who were appointed by (or who were good friends) with Sejanus were busy trying to show their loyalty to Tiberius. Therefore, the accusations against Pilate, "not Caesar's friend," etc. were serious enough for him to give in to the Jews in A.D. 32 or 33. Pilate, Sejanus, and Tiberius will each be briefly studied here to evaluate that political situation and determine what contribution the historical setting makes to the date of the crucifixion.

Tiberius

It was shown earlier that Tiberius ruled the Roman Empire as emperor from A.D. 14-37. He was not a pro-Jewish ruler, and in A.D. 19 he had most of the Jews expelled from Rome.¹ He also had 4,000 of the stronger ones sent to Sardinia as a sort of police force.

Later he had some serious family problems, and after the death of Drusus his son, he was in a state of despair. At the age of sixty-seven and "wearied with the cares of rule," he decided to withdraw from Rome.² He went to the island of Capreaeon, on which he had built several villas. With his trusted friend Sejanus in

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It is not known exactly what the reasons were for this expulsion, but they were probably serious and numerous. It is not likely that it was simply for proselyting by the Jews and the deceiving of the Roman lady Fulvia, as Josephus indicates in Antiquities xviii.3.5. Smallwood, in The Jews Under Roman Rule, pp. 203-205 shows how Josephus was probably not telling the whole story, to make it look like his people were heavily oppressed. On the A.D. 19 date, see Suetonius, Tiberius 36.1 and Tacitus, Annals, ii.85.5.

2

C.A.H. X. p. 632. Tiberius had put so much trust in Sejanus (who had killed Drusus) that he never suspected him of wrong. He left Sejanus in charge of affairs of the Empire. This murder happened in A.D. 23. See Suetonius, Tiberius lxii.1; Tacitus, Annals, iv.8; Dio Cassius, Roman History lvii.22.1-4.

charge, he stayed in withdrawal from A.D. 27-31. Sejanus had already taken on much of the responsibility of the government, and even though Tiberius was still the Emperor, he let Sejanus gain influence and power in Rome. Charlesworth noted the mistake in Tiberius' action as follows:

Yet the withdrawal was a fatal mistake and had the most serious consequences. Though Tiberius worked on steadily and remitted none of his care for the Empire, it looked like despair and desertion of duty, and while it lost him prestige with the people, its effect on the Senate was to emphasize glaringly its inferiority and dependence on the princeps. There was no longer a first citizen attending its sessions, allowing freedom of speech and calling the senators 'my good masters'; henceforward the Senate received letters and despatches, requesting, suggesting, ordering, and felt itself helpless before the will of an inaccessible despot. More ominous, the position of Sejanus was materially strengthened; Tiberius' trust in him was unbounded.¹

It was not until A.D. 31 that Tiberius finally stopped Sejanus. It should be noted that while Tiberius was not pro-Jewish, he was not anti-Semitic either. More will be seen on this later.

Sejanus

Lucius Aelius Sejanus was an equestrian who had risen to very high authority in the Roman government. He was the prefect of the Praetorian Guard of 9,000 choice soldiers and was continually edging his way up the ladder of power. Sejanus knew how to make the right friends politically to pursue his own ambitions. The Senate voted to make his birthday a public observation.² His success is seen in the following note:

¹
C.A.H. X. pp. 632-633.

²
Suetonius, Tiberius lxv; Dio Cassius, Roman History lviii.2.8.

During the year 30 all went smoothly and his position grew stronger each day; he had many supporters, he had influential connections with most of the northern armies, . . . and at last Tiberius promised him marriage with a member of the imperial family, and nominated him as consul for the year 31 with himself as colleague. Such treatment could mean only one thing, that Sejanus was destined for succession.¹

He had gone all the way to the top except for Tiberius and he even had plans to be Emperor² before his plans were discovered and he himself executed.³

It should be stated that Sejanus was very anti-Semitic.⁴ While Sejanus was in power, the Jews could do little to help their

¹
C.A.H. X. p. 636.

²
High officials considered him almost emperor by late A.D. 30, Dio Cassius, Roman History lviii.4.1.

³
Sejanus would apparently soon make a power play, as he thought he had enough support. However, one Satrius Secundus betrayed him and Tiberius was able to counter. Tiberius had Sertorius Macro take a dispatch to Rome, and he arrived on October 17, A.D. 31. Macro met Sejanus and assured him that the dispatch was Tiberius' request for the Senate to give tribunician power to Sejanus. The next day the letter was read in the Senate. It was boring (as usual) with trivia which Tiberius had put in to make sure Sejanus was relaxed and would not make a sudden move. At the end of the letter the denunciation of Sejanus came suddenly. Sejanus was executed that evening and the same fate met his oldest son six days later.

⁴
Philo, in Flaccum 1. Sejanus apparently did want to completely destroy the Jews. See also Philo, Legatio ad Gaium, 159ff. These two references and one in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History ii.5. are the only sources for this fact, but historians agree that Sejanus was a hater of the Jews.

cause. Any appeals to the emperor on their behalf would be stopped at Rome. It is in this context that Pilate, who was appointed by Sejanus and who was a friend of Sejanus, ruled in Judaea.¹

Pilate

Pontius Pilate ruled from 26 to 36 as prefect² (or governor) of Judaea. He was a stern ruler who usually did not give in to Jewish pressures. Pilate also may be classified as anti-Semitic, for there are several things which he did that greatly disturbed the Jews. These will be briefly mentioned, as they help one understand his attitude toward the Jews at the crucifixion.

The Standards

Soon after Pilate arrived in Judaea, he brought standards with figures of the emperor in to Jerusalem.³ This was either done because Pilate knew of Sejanus' anti-Jewish policy or as a part of it.⁴ Of course a great uproar occurred and after five days, Pilate had them removed, as he knew that the Jews would die before they would live with them. The Jews had allowed standards before, but

¹
Tacitus, Annals iv.41.

²
See Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate and the Date of the Crucifixion," p. 8. n. 28.

³
Josephus, Antiquities xviii.3.1; Wars ii.9.2-3.

⁴
Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, pp. 165-166.

APPENDIX IV

Possible Dates of Jesus' Birth, Lk. 3:23, and Crucifixion

B.C. Date of Birth - December *	First Year of Jesus' Life - Dec. to Dec.	Year When He Was Age One - Dec. to Dec.	Luke 3:23 Age & Date Dec. to Dec.	A.D. Date of Crucifixion (3½ yr.min.)
8	8 to 7	7 to 6	28 21/22	26
8	8 to 7	7 to 6	29 22/23	27
8	8 to 7	7 to 6	30 23/24	28
8	8 to 7	7 to 6	31 24/25	29
8	8 to 7	7 to 6	32 25/26	30
8	8 to 7	7 to 6	33 26/27	31
7	7 to 6	6 to 5	28 22/23	27
7	7 to 6	6 to 5	29 23/24	28
7	7 to 6	6 to 5	30 24/25	29
7	7 to 6	6 to 5	31 25/26	30
7	7 to 6	6 to 5	32 26/27	31
7	7 to 6	6 to 5	33 27/28	32
6	6 to 5	5 to 4	28 23/24	28
6	6 to 5	5 to 4	29 24/25	29
6	6 to 5	5 to 4	30 25/26	30
6	6 to 5	5 to 4	31 26/27	31
6	6 to 5	5 to 4	32 27/28	32
6	6 to 5	5 to 4	33 28/29	33
5	5 to 4	4 to 3	28 24/25	29
5	5 to 4	4 to 3	29 25/26	30
5	5 to 4	4 to 3	30 26/27	31
5	5 to 4	4 to 3	31 27/28	32
5	5 to 4	4 to 3	32 28/29	33
5	5 to 4	4 to 3	33 29/30	34

* For the sake of simplicity, December is used for the birth date instead of "winter."

APPENDIX V

Chronology of Events Related to Jesus' Life and Ministry

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Reference</u>
5 B.C.	John the Baptist's birth	Lk. 1:35,36,57
5/4 B.C.	Jesus' birth	Mt. 1:25
4 B.C. March/ April	Herod the Great's death	Mt. 2:19
6 (A.D.)	Quirinius held a census in Syria	
9 April 29 (Passover)	Jesus in Temple at age twelve	Lk. 2:42-46
17	Major earthquake in Asia Minor	
18	Caiaphas became the High Priest	
19	The Jews banished from Rome	
26	Pontius Pilate appointed governor of Judaea	
27	Tiberius withdrew to Capreae	
28 beginning Aug. 29	Tiberius' fifteenth year	Lk. 3:1
29	John the Baptist preaching	Lk. 3:1-2
29 late summer	Jesus began his ministry	Lk. 3:23
30 April 7	First Passover of Jesus' ministry	Jn. 2:13,23
30 (late, or 31)	John the Baptist put in prison	Mt. 14:3
31 April 25	Second Passover of Jesus' ministry	
31 Oct. 18	Sejanus executed	
31 Oct. 21-28	Feast of Tabernacles	Jn. 5:1
32 (or 31)	John the Baptist's death (approximate)	Mt. 14:10
32 April 13	Third Passover of Jesus' ministry	Jn. 6:4
32 Sept. 10-17	Feast of Tabernacles	Jn. 7:2,10
32 Dec. 18	Feast of Dedication	Jn. 10:22ff.
33 March 28 (Sat)	Jesus in Bethany	Jn. 12:1
33 March 29 (Sun)	Multitudes seek Jesus & Lazarus at Bethany	Jn. 12:9
33 March 30(Mon)	Triumphal Entry	Jn. 12:12
33 March 31(Tue)	Fig Tree cursed	Mt. 11:12-14
33 April 1 (Wed)	Lament over Jerusalem	Mt. 23:37-39
33 April 2(Thur)	Betrayal, Arrest, Trials	Mt. 26
33 April 3 (Fri)	Trials, Denials, Crucifixion (9 A.M.)	Lk. 23
33 April 4 (Sat)	In the grave	Lk. 23
33 April 5 (Sun)	Resurrection	Mk. 16:1-7
33 May 14 (Thur)	Jesus' Ascension	Acts 1
33 May 24 (Sun)	Day of Pentecost	Acts 2
35	Paul's Conversion	Acts 9

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they did not have the images on them.¹ Pilate was amazed at their religious zeal. This confrontation was only the first of several.

The Aqueduct

At another time Pilate built an aqueduct to augment the water supply in Jerusalem. He used money from the Temple treasury to do this.² The water was a benefit to the Jews, as Bruce notes:

This aqueduct . . . was the one positive boon that his governorship brought to Jerusalem. The Temple in particular benefited from it, because it continually required an exceptionally large water supply--not only for the ritual ablutions prescribed for the priests but also for keeping the area clean and fresh after the incessant slaughtering and sacrifice of animals which went on there.³

However, the Jewish authorities protested that it was sacrilege to use money dedicated to God for secular purposes. The fund was money that was given by each Jewish male at the rate of half a shekel.⁴ Large crowds of Jews gathered to protest this incident when Pilate came to Jerusalem. Pilate realized that a riot could start, so he had his soldiers put on civilian clothes and mix with the mobs. When the crowds became too restless, the troops, on a pre-arranged signal, began to beat the Jews with clubs, etc. that

1

Josephus, Antiquities xviii.3.1. See also Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, p. 107, n. 59.

2

Josephus, Antiquities xviii.3.2; Wars ii.9.4.

3

Bruce, New Testament History, p. 36.

4

Ibid. However, some think it was Nazarite money to be used only for sacrifices.

they had hidden in their garments. Many were injured and many died.¹ This possibly occurred during the time of Jesus' ministry.² Pilate again showed the Jews that he would not put up with their protests.

The Galileans' Blood

In Luke 13:1 another clash between the Jews and Pilate is recorded. The passage records that Pilate had mingled Galileans' blood with the Jews' sacrifices. It seems clear that this occurred during Jesus' ministry, and it was probably at a Passover or some other major festival when Galileans would have been in Jerusalem offering sacrifices. The incident shows "the unrest of the period, and the insensitive violence with which Pilate reacted to it."³

Since the Galileans were from Herod Antipas' territory, they would have been under his jurisdiction; however, when they came into Judaea they were temporarily under the jurisdiction of Pilate. The incident undoubtedly added to the tension between Pilate and Antipas, as well as between Pilate and the Jews in general.

The Samaritans Attacked

Josephus also tells of a group of Samaritan pilgrims who were on Mt. Gerizim for religious reasons when Pilate attacked

¹
See Josephus, Wars ii.9.4.

²
Doyle, "Pilate's Career and the Date of the Crucifixion," p. 190.

³
Bruce, New Testament History, p. 37.

⁴
See Overstreet, "Roman Law and the Trial of Christ," pp. 327-8.

them.¹ Bruce calls this incident one in which Pilate "crowned his oppressive acts."² It seems clear that Pilate did not worry about trouble from Rome for these incidents.

The Coins

Pilate issued coins in 29/30 to 31-32 that were offensive to the Jews. These coins showed a crosier (lituus) stamped on them.³ These offenses were all quite bold, as Maier notes:

Whether motivated by direct order or indirect suggestion from Sejanus, Pilate's conduct appears bold, even harsh toward the Jews, with little fear of repercussions or official complaints from them. The prefect of Judea was not in a defensive posture.⁴

In all of these situations, Pilate was just as Philo had described him: self willed and not flexible.⁵

Pilate's Change

After Sejanus was executed, Tiberius set out to punish Sejanus' friends. It soon became clear that if one was a close friend of Sejanus he was in trouble. In fact, "the interrogation of the guilty and suspect (and all friends of Sejanus were suspect)

¹
Josephus, Antiquities xviii.4.1.

²
Bruce, New Testament History, p. 37.

³
Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, p. 167; Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion," pp. 9-10.

⁴
Ibid., p. 10.

⁵
Philo, Legatio ad Caium, 301.

was carried out with savage rigour, and Tiberius was pitiless."¹

This would be a good time for Pilate and other former friends of Sejanus to show their allegiance to Tiberius, and that is just what happened. Tiberius took on a more favorable attitude toward the Jews than he had earlier.² Pilate had been a friend of Sejanus, but after Sejanus was dead he made sure he did not offend Tiberius.³ This probably explains another incident which Pilate caused. He had attempted to dedicate some shields in Herod's Palace. This dedication to Tiberius was no doubt to try and show his loyalty to the emperor. This shows that the shields episode probably happened after Sejanus' fall. The shields did not have images on them, but the Jews believed Pilate was trying to cause them annoyance. They appealed to Caesar, and four sons of Herod went to Rome with the appeal.⁴ Herod Antipas was most likely one

¹
C.A.H. X. p. 640.

²
See Philo, Legatio ad Gaium, 159; 299-305.

³
Maier in "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion," p. 11 noted this. "The fact that Pilate had probably not been in personal contact with Sejanus for the last six years likely saved him at the time, though he realized his now-vulnerable position and undoubtedly strove to show his loyalty to Tiberius while also adjusting to the new directives concerning the Jews."

⁴
The fact that they could go to Rome with an appeal like this further shows that it was past A.D. 31. Smallwood noted the fact also in a comparison of the standards and the shields; see Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule, p. 166. "Far from being a variant of the episode of the standards, inspired by or implementing Sejanus' anti-Semitic policy, the episode of the shields seems to reflect an improvement in the Jews' position after his fall: they could now appeal to Tiberius, confident that, with their arch-enemy dead, he would vindicate their privileges."

of the four and this caused further strain between Pilate and Antipas (Lk. 23:12). Some have placed this incident at A.D. 32.¹ If this is the case, (and it is certainly close), then an A.D. 33 date for Jesus' trial would explain Pilate's apparent weakness and uneasiness before the Jews. He was afraid of Caesar.

No Friend of Caesar

The account at John 19:12 shows that the Jews realized Pilate's touchy position. They declared that if he released Jesus he would be "no friend of Caesar's." At this time, Pilate did not want Tiberius to suspect him of any disloyalty. Blinzler noted his predicament as well.

Paradoxical and absurd though this threat may have seemed to the procurator, he could have had no illusions whatsoever as to the Jews' ability to carry it out, and the disastrous consequences for him of such a step on their part. If he were denounced in Rome for letting off a man who had been proved guilty of claiming to be king of the Jews, he would definitely incur serious suspicion of negligence and treason.²

Probably at any time before October, A.D. 31 Pilate would have put down the threatening mob with force, but as it was, he was not able to resist.

Hence it was that Pilate's resistance finally broke down under this infamous Jewish threat. His fear of the sinister and suspicious emperor was even greater than his awe of the mysterious personality of the Accused; his own safety seemed more important to him than the sanctity of the law.³

¹
Doyle, "Pilate's Career and the Date of the Crucifixion," pp. 192-93.

²
Blinzler, The Trial of Jesus, p. 236.

³
Ibid., p. 237.

Perhaps one further quote would suffice to show the change in Pilate. He was still the same man, but the circumstances were different. Maier noted this well.

The harsh attitude still shows in his bluster with the accusatores, the Jewish religious establishment. But when the prosecution plays its trump--"If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar" (John 19:12)--Pilate's till-then resolute defense of Jesus crumbles and he gives way to the popular demand for crucifixion. What changed Pilate's mind at this point?

One fact seems abundantly clear: if Tiberius were still firmly dedicated to a Sejanus-inspired policy of anti-Semitism, the Jewish authorities would surely not have dared make such a veiled threat.¹

In conclusion, it would not seem likely that Pilate's attitude toward the Jews could have changed so in A.D. 30. Sejanus was just about at the peak of his power then. However, the attitude of Pilate as depicted in the Gospels fits the historical and political situation well if an A.D. 33 date is accepted.

¹
Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion,"
p. 10.

CHAPTER FIVE

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Astronomy

Many studies have been made on the astronomical issues involved in the crucifixion.¹ In most of the studies that are made, a Friday, Nisan 14 day is assumed as the day of the crucifixion. This writer has come to the conclusion that this was indeed the day of the crucifixion.² It is possible to calculate when Nisan 14 occurred in a given year, because Nisan 1 was begun when the moon was first visible at a predetermined time period. If the weather did not permit a sighting when it was calculated that it should have been possible, another day was allowed to pass, but apparently never two days. The whole system is very complicated but seems to be accurate enough. Boyer has put out a chart that includes the basic results of Fotheringham and others who have studied the issues.³ It is the easiest chart to read and understand

1

One of the leading studies was J. F. Fotheringham, "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," The Journal of Theological Studies, 35 (April, 1934), 142-162.

2

In another paper this writer worked on, a Wednesday crucifixion was studied. In the course of that study, which was to defend the Wednesday view, this writer concluded that Friday was the correct one.

3

James L. Boyer, "Chronology of the Crucifixion and Last Week Chart." (Winona Lake, Indiana: Grace Theological Seminary, 1975), p. 1.

that this writer has found. The conclusion can be seen in Appendix Three. Basically, A.D. 30 and 33 are the two possible dates for a Friday crucifixion that are very likely at all. Of these two possibilities, the A.D. 33 date is most likely astronomically, but either one is possible. Thus the two possible dates for the crucifixion are Friday, Nisan 14 (April 7) A.D. 30 or Friday, Nisan 14 (April 3) A.D. 33. According to the study of Luke 3:1-2, John 2:20 and the historical situation made earlier in this paper, the A.D. 33 date best fits the data.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks

For centuries students of the scriptures have tried to interpret Daniel 9:24-27 so as to date Christ's crucifixion.¹ It is not within the scope of this paper to make any calculations here, but the basic data may be mentioned.

Daniel 9:25 mentions that the prophecy of the weeks begins at the decree to go forth and build. The weeks seem to be counted as periods of seven years of 360 days each.² One simply multiplies $7 \times 360 \times 69$ weeks (as the seventieth week is separate) and adds the total (173,880 days) to the date of the decree and has the date

1

For example, Hippolytus' Commentary on Daniel, which was written in the early third century A.D. did this. See his commentary at IV. 23.

2

This idea best fits all the data; it is what Anderson in The Coming Prince, pp. 67ff. called "prophetic years." For a defense of the 360-day years, see Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 135-138.

of the crucifixion (or close to it). One problem is when to date the decree to go forth and build. It has been dated from the decree of Cyrus to the exiled Jews on October 29, 539 B.C.,¹ from the decree of Darius about 519 B.C., which is really a repeat of Cyrus' decree, from the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra in 457 B.C., and from the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 445/4 B.C. For a short but clear discussion of these possibilities, see Hoehner.² The dates of A.D. 30 and 33 have both been supported by Daniel's prophecy. This writer holds to the last decree (which in itself has been used as evidence for both dates), but it is sufficient here simply to note that this prophecy obviously is not the final answer to the problem.

Date of Paul's Conversion

One problem that has been suggested for the A.D. 33 date of Jesus' death and resurrection is the date of Paul's conversion. The situation is simple; if Paul was converted to Christianity in A.D. 31, 32, or 33 then the A.D. 33 date of the crucifixion would clearly be impossible.

It is certain that the events between the crucifixion and the conversion of Paul took some time, but the exact amount of time is not known. Although this paper cannot make a complete study of

1

On the decree see H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1949), pp. 417ff. On the date see John C. Whitcomb, Jr., Darius the Mede (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1959), pp. 70-73.

2

Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ, pp. 115-139.

all the issues involved here, it may be assumed that the events took about two or three years.¹

A wide range of dates has been given for the date of Paul's conversion.² Most extreme dates can be eliminated (as A.D. 39), but the variety does at least show that the exact date cannot (without some difficulty) be known solely from a study of history or the text. It should also be noted that one should not assume the A.D. 33 date of the crucifixion as unlikely because it would put Paul's conversion too late, for many who have held the A.D. 30 crucifixion date have suggested a date of Paul's conversion of about A.D. 35.³

1

The fact that the exact timing is not known is seen in that those who favor an A.D. 30 crucifixion date often seem to extend the period so that it is easier to harmonize with the chronology of Acts, and those who favor the A.D. 33 crucifixion date seem to shorten it for the same reason. There are of course many exceptions to this.

2

A few examples are sufficient to show this. See Boyer, "New Testament Chronological Chart," p. 1 for A.D. 32; many for A.D. 33; Gilmore H. Guyot, "The Chronology of St. Paul," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 6 (1944), 30 for A.D. 34; George Ogg, "A New Chronology of Paul's Life," Expository Times, 64 (1952-53), 123 for A.D. 35; C. J. Cadoux, "The Chronological Divisions of Acts," Journal of Theological Studies, 19 (1918), 333ff. for A.D. 36; John Knox, "The Pauline Chronology," Journal of Biblical Literature, 58 (1939), 23 for A.D. 37; Donald Fay Robinson, "A Note On Acts 11:27-30," Journal of Biblical Literature, 63 (1944), 170-171 for A.D. 39.

3

For example, see Thompson, "Chronology of the New Testament," p. 822 where he allows for A.D. 34; Michael F. Stitzinger, "Pauline Chronology of the Book of Acts." Unpublished Post Graduate paper for course in "Acts." Grace Theological Seminary, 1978, p. 6, where he says "in late A.D. 34-35"; Harold Hoehner, "Chronology of the Apostolic Age." Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965, pp. 205, 381, who arrived at A.D. 35; Cadoux, "The Chronological Divisions of Acts," pp. 333ff., where he has an A.D. 29 crucifixion date and an A.D. 35 or 36 date of

Although a detailed study is beyond the scope of this paper, a date of A.D. 35 seems very accurate. However, it seems clear that one should not alter the date of the crucifixion because a certain date for Paul's conversion is held, the latter having much less evidence as to preciseness. It is concluded then that the date for Paul's conversion is of little help for determining anything but a very broad outer limit of the crucifixion date.

Paul's conversion; D. Edmond Heibert, "Chronology, New Testament," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney, et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 165, and many others.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, it should be stated that there are several variables in the passages that bear upon the date of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. For example, some have argued that Herod had the infants killed who were less than three years old, and some say the ones thirteen months old or less were killed. Other examples could be multiplied.

This writer has concluded that Jesus was nailed to the cross on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33. Many of the issues involved were beyond the study of this paper, as it was primarily concerned with the beginning and duration of Jesus' ministry. John 2:20 and Luke 3:1 suggest A.D. 30 as Jesus' first Passover, his ministry having begun probably six months or so before that.

Since John 5:1 cannot be a reference to Purim, Jesus' ministry lasted over three years. One might ask how he could do so much in such a short time.

It was assumed that Jesus died on a Friday, as this day best fits all the biblical data. A Wednesday view forces one to adopt A.D. 28, 31, or 34 as the date for the crucifixion (see Appendix III). The A.D. 31 date is possible, but it assumes that the moon was not visible on its first day of calculated visibility (an unlikely situation). Therefore, the Friday, April 3, A.D. 33 date is found to be the best in every aspect of the study.

During the process of this study, the writer has gained appreciation both for the infallible scriptures that made the study of Jesus possible, and for the Lord Jesus Himself, who made the scriptures possible.

APPENDIX I

USE OF "ABOUT" (LUKE 3:23)

A. Use of *ῥοσέ* With Numerical Adjectives

Mt. 14:21	<u>about</u> 5,000 men
Mk. 6:44	<u>about</u> 5,000 men
Lk. 1:56	<u>about</u> 3 months (abode with her)
Lk. 3:23	<u>about</u> 30 years of age
Lk. 9:14	<u>about</u> 5,000 men
Lk. 9:28	<u>about</u> 8 days after these things
Lk. 22:59	and after <u>about</u> the space of one hour another said . . . ("Peter was with them")
Lk. 23:44	and it was <u>about</u> the sixth hour
Jn. 4:6	Jesus sat by the well and it was <u>about</u> the sixth hour
Jn. 6:10	<u>about</u> 5,000 men
Jn. 19:14	and <u>about</u> the sixth hour Jesus said to the Jews
Jn. 19:39	myrrh and aloes <u>about</u> an hundred pound weight
Acts 2:41	there were added <u>about</u> 3,000 souls
Acts 4:4	many believed, of men . . . <u>about</u> 5,000
Acts 5:36	<u>about</u> 400 men (followed Theudas)
Acts 10:3	<u>about</u> the ninth hour of the day
Acts 19:7	and all the men were <u>about</u> 12

B. Use of ^ςως With Numerical Adjectives

Mk. 5:13	the herd of swine were <u>about</u> 2,000
Mk. 8:9	they that had eaten were <u>about</u> 4,000
Lk. 2:37	Anna was a widow <u>about</u> 84 years old
Lk. 8:42	he had one daughter <u>about</u> 12 years of age
Jn. 1:39	abode with him that day, for it was <u>about</u> the tenth hour
Jn. 6:19	when they had rowed <u>about</u> twenty-five or thirty furlongs
Jn. 11:18	Bethany was near Jerusalem, <u>about</u> fifteen furlongs off
Jn. 21:8	not far from land, but <u>as it were</u> two hundred cubits
Acts 1:15	the number of names together was <u>about</u> one hundred and twenty
Acts 5:7	<u>about</u> the space of three hours (Ananias came in)
Acts 13:18	<u>about</u> the time of forty years (in the wilderness)
Acts 13:20	he gave them judges <u>about</u> the space of four hundred and fifty years
Acts 19:34	<u>about</u> the space of two hours cried out "Great is Diana"
Rev. 8:1	silence in heaven <u>about</u> one-half hour

APPENDIX II

TIBERIUS' FIFTEENTH YEAR

From Tiberius' Co-Regency with Augustus, c. A.D. 12

Actual Time		Possible			
		26	30,31		27
Julian-non-accession	Jan. 1	26	30	Dec. 31	26
Julian-Accession	Jan. 1	27	31	Dec. 31	27
Syrian-non-accession	Oct. 1	26	30,31	Sept. 30	27
Syrian-Accession	Oct. 1	27	31,32	Sept. 30	28
Jewish (Nisan)-non-accession	Apr.	26	30	April	27
Jewish (Nisan)-Accession	Apr.	27	31	April	28
Jewish (Tishri)-non-accession	Sept.	26	30,31	Oct.	27
Jewish (Tishri)-Accession	Sept.	27	31,32	Oct.	28

From Tiberius' Succession to Augustus

Actual Time	Aug.19	28	32,33	Aug. 18	29
Julian-non-accession	Jan. 1	28	32	Dec. 31	28
Julian-Accession	Jan. 1	29	33	Dec. 31	29
Egyptian-non-accession	Aug.29	27	31,32	Aug. 28	28
Egyptian-Accession	Aug.29	28	32,33	Aug. 28	29
Syrian-non-accession	Oct. 1	27	31,32	Sept. 30	28
Syrian-Accession	Oct. 1	28	32,33	Sept. 30	29
Jewish (Nisan)-non-accession	Apr.	28	32	Apr.	29
Jewish (Nisan)-Accession	Apr.	29	32,33	Apr.	30
Jewish (Tishri)-non-accession	Sept.	27	31,32	Oct.	28
Jewish (Tishri)-Accession	Sept.	28	32,33	Oct.	29

The tables show the various dates that Tiberius' fifteenth year would be dated, based on the various starting times. The Jewish calendar dates give only the time of the year.

APPENDIX III

Charts of Astronomically Calculated Dates

The first chart shows when Nisan 14 and 15 occurred, assuming a lunar sighting on the first day of calculated lunar visibility. The second chart shows the second day of calculated visibility.

A.D.	Day	Nisan 14	Day	Nisan 15
27	Friday	April 10	Saturday	April 11
28	Tuesday	March 30	Wednesday	March 31
29	Saturday	March 19	Sunday	March 20
29	Monday	April 18	Tuesday	April 19
30	Friday	April 7	Saturday	April 8
31	Tuesday	March 27	Wednesday	March 28
32	Sunday	April 13	Monday	April 14
33	Friday	April 3	Saturday	April 4
34	Tuesday	March 23	Wednesday	March 24
27	Saturday	April 11	Sunday	April 12
28	Wednesday	March 31	Thursday	April 1
29	Sunday	March 20	Monday	March 21
29	Tuesday	April 19	Wednesday	April 20
30	Saturday	April 8	Sunday	April 9
31	Wednesday	March 28	Thursday	March 29
32	Monday	April 14	Tuesday	April 15
33	Saturday	April 4	Sunday	April 5
34	Wednesday	March 24	Thursday	March 25

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