

Introduction: Implications from John 4:1-3 and 3:26

So when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John... He left Judea and departed to Galilee. (4:1-3)

“Rabbi, the *One* who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified— look, He is baptizing, and all are going to Him!” (3:26)

How might we depict the situation described by these verses?

John 3 as a Marathon or a Sprint?

Many assume that Jesus was in rural Judea (John 3:22) for almost a year. I believe that the time frame was much shorter (less than six weeks). This will have a profound impact. To determine the time frame, we must consider five chronological issues:

1. When did John the Baptist's ministry begin?
2. When was Jesus' ministry's first Passover?
3. When was Jesus crucified?
4. How long between first and last Passovers?
5. Time limits on His early ministry.

1. When Did John the Baptist's Ministry Begin?

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar... the word of God came to John... [Luke 3:1-2]

2. When Was the First Passover (John 2:13) of Jesus' Ministry?

John's Gospel explicitly mentions the following feasts:

Passover (2:13)

Unnamed feast (5:1) [Possibly = Passover]

Passover (6:4)

Tabernacles (7:2)

Hanukkah (10:22)

Passover (19:14 and other passages). [He was crucified that day]

John mentions at least three Passovers; a minimum of two years from first to last.

English Bibles do not always distinguish two words for *temple*. *Hieron* means the temple courts; *naos* refers to the sanctuary (the holy place and holy of holies). Such sloppiness creates a chronological difficulty which they try to resolve in a misguided way in John 2:20a. Specifically, the sanctuary was built quickly, while the temple courts took many years. Thus, they mistranslate “was built” as “has been being built” (etc.).

Literally, it reads:

Smoothed out, it reads:

<u>Forty & six years was built the sanctuary this</u>								<u>This sanctuary was built forty-six years [ago]</u>				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8	7	5	1-3	4

Josephus dates the start of the sanctuary in 20-19 BC. He says that it was completed in eighteen months (ca. 18-17 BC). Forty-six years later was A.D. 30. Thus, the first Passover of Jesus' ministry was in A.D. 30.

3. When Was Jesus Crucified?

On page 1 we saw that there were at least three Passovers in His ministry. At least a two-year interval is required. Since the first Passover was A.D. 30, the last one cannot be earlier than A.D. 32. We will seek to define the date more precisely. Four questions enable this:

- 3A. Pilate, Caiaphas, and Herod Antipas were in power at time of crucifixion,
- 3B. Friday, not Wednesday or Thursday,
- 3C. Day of week for the cross was on Passover (Passover is always on a full moon),
- 3D. The cross was before date that Paul believed.

3A. The Dates when Pilate, Caiaphas, and Herod Antipas were in power

Pilate was removed from office in late A.D. 36,
Caiaphas was removed in A.D. 37,
Herod Antipas died in A.D. 42.

The cross could not be later than Passover of A.D. 36.
(The cross was between A.D. 32 and 36).

3B. Friday, not Wednesday or Thursday

Objections to a Friday crucifixion arise from only one verse: Matthew 12:40.

“For as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.”

Every other passage clearly points to Friday. English idioms and the idiomatic speech of Jewish writers using Greek or Hebrew may differ.

The passages saying He arose on the third day are: Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; and 1 Corinthians 15:4.

Until the third day is in Matthew 27:64. *In three days* appears in John 2:19-20.

Several OT passages help in considering Matthew 12:40:

Joseph Imprisoning His Brothers:

And he gathered them into prison three days. And on the third day Joseph told them, “Do this and live; I fear God.” (Gen 42:17-18)

The Battle of Aphek: Israel versus Syria:

And they encamped against one another seven days; and it happened in the 7th day that the battle was joined... (1 Kgs 20:29)

King Jereboam Meeting King Rehoboam:

And he [Rehoboam] told them, “Yet three days and return to me.”
... And Jereboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king spoke, saying, “Return to me on the third day.” (2 Chronicles 10:5a, 12)

A Famished & Abandoned Egyptian :

...[An Egyptian] had neither eaten food nor drunk water three days and three nights... he said, "...my lord abandoned me, for I had been sick three days." (1 Samuel 30:12-13)

The Talmud:

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah [ca. A.D. 100] says, "A day and a night constitute an 'ônâ [a time unit] and part of an 'ônâ is equivalent to the whole of it." *Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 9:3*

Modern Judaism:

"In Jewish communal life part of a day is at times reckoned as one day: e.g., the day of the funeral, even when the latter takes place late in the afternoon, is counted as the first of the seven days of mourning, a short time in the morning of the seventh day is counted as the seventh day; circumcision takes place on the eighth day, even though of the first day only a few minutes remained [in the day] after the birth of the child, these being counted as one day." *Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), 4:475.*

Thursday-crucifixion Advocates also consider Matthew 28:1 and John 19:14a:

Word translated *sabbath* is plural, but the plural is often interchangeable

Matt 12:1 (P) // Mark 2:23 (P) // Luke 6:1 (S)

Matt 12:2 (S) // Mark 2:24 (P) // Luke 6:2 (P)

Matt 12:10 (P) // Mark 3:2 (P) // Luke 6:7 (S)

John 19:14a refers to the preparation day for the sabbath.

3C. Day of week was on Passover (which always is on a full moon).

The first day of any Hebrew month was on a new moon (the first sliver). The 14th of any month was a full moon. Passover was on the 14th of the month of *Abib* (later called *Nisan*). *Abib/Nisan* was also the first month of the new year.

One might think that the day after the last day of the twelfth month would automatically be the start of a new year. Not so. Just as we need to add an extra day (February 29) every four years, Jews occasionally needed to add a thirteenth month to the year. *Abib* is written '*ābīb*. It means new head of barley, so Jews postponed the month of *Abib* (whenever barley was not yet ripe at the end of the twelfth month) adding a thirteenth month to the old year. We are all familiar with how Easter moves around on the calendar. The dates for Easter derive from the dating of Passover.

Passover (Nisan 14, a full moon) was on the following dates between A.D. 32 and 36:

Monday, April 14, A.D. 32,

Friday, April 3, A.D. 33,

Wednesday, March 24, A.D. 34,

Tuesday, April 12, A.D. 35,

Friday, March 30, A.D. 36.

Note that no Thursdays occur. (John 18:28 places the cross on Passover).

3D. The cross was before the date that Paul believed.

Acts and Galatians set forth the summer of A.D. as the date when he believed.

3E. The cross was on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33 (Passover).

4. How Long Between the First and Last Passovers of Jesus' Ministry?

There was a three-year interval: A.D. 30 to A.D. 33.

5. Time Limits on His Early Ministry

Three insertion points exist for the extra Passover:

It could be between John 4:54 & 5:1. If so, John 5:1 was likely the Feast of Tabernacles.

John 5:1 could refer to Passover. If so, John mentioned this Passover w/o naming it.

It could be between John 5:47 & 6:1. If so, John 5:1 was either Pentecost or Tabernacles.

How much of Matthew does 4:23-25 summarize?

Those who equate Matthew's Sermon on the Mount with Luke's Sermon on the Plain postpone the Sermon until Luke 6 (which followed Passover of A.D. 31). They have a nightmare trying to reconcile all the differences between the two sermons. They see Matthew 4:23-25 summarizing the time prior to the Sermon.

Those who distinguish Matthew's Sermon on the Mount from Luke's Sermon on the Plain view Matthew 4:23-25 summarizing ministry both before and after the Sermon. Would we not expect for Jesus to deliver similar sermons on more than one occasion?

Evidence for deciding this issue:

John 4:45 and leap-frog memory

John 4:35a is not a date-stamp

Weather issues

John 4:45 and leap-frog memory

The people recall signs from almost a year earlier (under this view's approach) while ignoring more recent signs they undoubtedly saw.

John 4:35a is not a date-stamp

"Do you not say, 'It is yet four months, and then comes reaping'?"

Three views: Date -stamp, proverb, saying of procrastinating disciples

Arguments against the proverbial view:

Why is 'yet' present? Why no reference to planting?

Wheat is six months between planting and harvest

Therefore, proponents claim Jesus said this in January or February

Responses:

'Yet' and absence of starting-point reference is a weak argument

"Yet nine months til birth"

Reaping of barley is four months after planting

Gezer Calendar and cultivation of barley

Words of procrastinating disciples (alternative to proverbial view)

Don't you say, "There's more than one way to skin a CAT®"?

Weather Issues

John 3:26 and 4:1-3 say that Jesus quickly left Judea once it was known that His ministry was bigger than John's (cf. the introduction, page 1)

If His Judean ministry were huge right before He left Judea, crowds were being baptized in very cold water (January and February)

If His Judean ministry were huge right before He left Judea, crowds traveled to rural Judea during the rainy season over miles of muddy roads.

If, instead, His Judean ministry were huge in late spring, He left right before the weather turned extremely hot. Note that crowds would have diminished in the heat.

John 3 as a sprint:

2:13-22 describes the first temple cleansing

2:23-25 summarizes the popular response during the eight-day feast

3:1-21 discusses Nicodemus coming to Jesus one night during the feast

3:22-36 shows John highlighting Jesus despite being suddenly eclipsed

4:1-3 shows Jesus leaving the Judean countryside before the heat wave

The Sources of Jesus' Crowds

A small percentage would have come from followers of John

The bigger percentage (under a sprint-model) were from John 2:23 crowds

The Meaning of John 2:24

Is belief because of signs inadequate?

John 20:30-31

Is belief in His Name inadequate?

John 1:12

John 3:18

Is John saying that they did not really believe?

Is John saying something totally different?

Would you entrust _____

When did Jesus entrust Himself? John ____:____ - ____: _____

SUMMARY

1. The Baptist's ministry began in AD 28 or 29
2. Jesus' ministry's first Passover was AD 30
3. When was Jesus crucified? April 3, A.D. 33
4. How long between first and last Passovers? Three years.
5. Time limits on His early ministry.

John 4:45 and leap-frog memory

John 4:35 is not a date-stamp

Weather issues at the time when His Judean ministry suddenly eclipsed John

Implication of the influx of great crowds from among the new believers of John 2:23 upon the interpretation of John 2:24