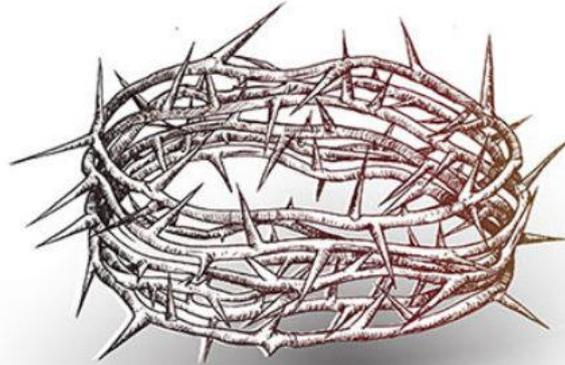


Dating the Crucifixion (Part 1)

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"And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and placed it on His head, and put a purple cloak on Him; and they repeatedly came up to Him and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and slapped Him in the face again and again" (John 19:2-3 NASB). "Crown of Thorns" image licensed from iStock by Getty images.

Dating the Crucifixion (Part 1)

April 1, 2022 Posted by MICHAEL GERMANO Feature Articles

The range of plausible dates for the Passover at Jesus' death as proposed by credible 20th and 21st century academic scholars, are 30, 31, and 33 CE with Nisan 14 (Passover) falling on either a Wednesday or Friday. There are no serious alternatives.

The general literature, for the last two or three centuries, show a confusing range of dates partially due to writers using assorted calendars, variant attempts to shorten the length of Jesus' 3½ year ministry, and different exegetical analyses of the feast described in Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; and Luke 6:1-5.

While the Gospel accounts do not convey specific dates for the birth and death of Jesus of Nazareth, they provide sufficient chronological detail to determine the years of those events (for the details of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth in 4 BCE see *The Real Christmas Story*). As to the Crucifixion, there are sufficient data to place the exact day and even the hour. The setting is the 3½ year ministry of Jesus including four identifiable Passovers in the Gospels, the 1st (Luke 6:1, Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:14-15); the second (John 5:1-47 inferred in context with Luke 6:1-5; Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 2:1-8.); the third (John 2:3; 11:55); and the fourth (John 12:12-14, Mark 14:22-26).

<i>CE Julian</i>	<i>Year AM</i>	<i>Nisan 14 Passover on Hebrew Perpetual Calendar</i>	<i>Nisan 14 Passover on the Babylonian Calendar (Parker & Dubberstein)</i>	<i>Nisan 14 in the Essene Jubilees Calendar</i>
26	3786	Fri., Mar. 22	Sun., Apr. 21	Wed., Apr. 10
27	3787	Wed., Apr. 9	Thu., Apr. 10	Wed., Apr. 9

28	3788	Mon., Mar. 29	Wed., Apr. 28	Wed., Apr. 7
29	3789	Sat., Apr. 16	Mon., Apr. 18	Wed., Apr. 6
30	3790	Wed., Apr. 5	Fri., Apr. 7	Wed., Apr. 5
31	3791	Mon., Mar. 26	Wed., Apr. 25	Wed., Apr. 11
32	3792	Mon., Apr. 14	Mon., Apr. 14	Wed., Apr. 9
33	3793	Fri., Apr. 3	Sat., May 2	Wed., Apr. 8
34	3794	Wed., Mar. 22	Thu., Apr. 22	Wed., April 7

This table above provides a comparison of three differing calendar systems which find use in contemporary biblical chronologies. In the scholarly world of biblical historical studies, the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar and the Babylonian Calendar are of material consequence. The more obscure Jubilees Calendar is for comparative purposes. The dates in bold mark hypothetical dates for the Crucifixion based on these three calendar systems.

Traditional dates for the Crucifixion are Fri., April 7, 30 CE (a general Protestant approach) and Fri., April 3, 33 CE (a Roman Catholic approach). The former relies on the Babylonian Calendar (set by observation of the new moon at Babylon in Mesopotamia). The latter relies on the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar as administered by the Aaronic priests not the Pharisees of Herodian times. The year 31 CE is understood by some as the year of the Crucifixion, but the Babylonian Calendar places the date on Wed., April 25, 31 CE and the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar 30 days later on Iyyar 14.

So it seems, the calendar dates as set forth above are not of much help. What we can do is to examine additional data to narrow down the timeframe. Let us consider seven major events that point specifically to the year of Jesus' death.

1. The Sanhedrin Expelled from the Hewn Stone-Chamber

On Av 9, 3830 AM (Sat., Aug. 4, 70 CE) Jerusalem fell to the Romans on the weekly Sabbath. On that morning, priestly course 24 (Maaziah) completed its service with the morning sacrifice. Course 1 (Jehoiarib) reported for duty as they had charge of the evening sacrifice that Sabbath (Jerusalem Talmud, *Taanit* 4:5 [24a]).

According to the Babylonian Talmud, "Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the Sanhedrin were exiled and took up residence in Hanuth" (*Sanhedrin* 41:2); (Epstein, Tractate *Sanhedrin*, 1987); (*Avodah Zara* 8:b); (Epstein, 1988). In Herodian times, the meeting place of the Sanhedrin when functioning as a court, was the Hewn Stone-Chamber or Hall of the Hewn Stone (לשכת הגזית, *Lishkat ha-Gazit*) built into the north wall of the Temple (*Tractate Sanhedrin* 10.2); (Danby, 1933, p. 399); (Danby, 1919, p. 67); (Neusner, 2005, pp. 453, 462-463).

Forty years before the Romans destroyed the Temple, in the sacred year 70_{Ni}/71_{Ni} CE (which began in 3830 AM), the veil of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:44-45 NASB) and the Chamber suffered significant structural damage from the earthquake occurring at Jesus' death. Hebrew University archaeologist Benjamin Mazar identified the *hanuyot* with the Royal Stoa, a structure of massive columns erected by Herod the Great, at the southern end of his expansion of the Temple Mount. (Mazar B., 1975, p. 126).

Abandoning the Hewn Stone-Chamber, the Sanhedrin moved to the Royal Stoa. The *Babylonian Talmud* states that God expelled the Sanhedrin:

Forty years before the Temple was destroyed, the Sanhedrin was exiled from the chamber [of Hewn Stones] of the Temple to a store.

Tractate Sanhedrin at *Sabbat* 15a); Rodkinson, Tractate Sanhedrin, 1903, p. 121; Rodkinson, 1918, p. 121.

The William Davidson Talmud at *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a reads:

From the Chamber of Hewn Stone, its fixed seat in the Temple, to Hanut, literally, shop, a designated spot on the Temple Mount outside the Temple proper.

Rosh ha-Shanah 31a.

What this means is that the displacement of the Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stones because of earthquake damage took place in the sacred year 30_{Ni}/31_{Ni} CE (beginning in 3791 AM) at the time the veil of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:44-45 NASB). These data show the damage to the Chamber of Hewn Stones happened in 31 CE at the time of the Crucifixion, forty years before the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70_{Ti}/71_{Ti} CE (3831 AM), thereby confirming the year of Jesus' death in 31 CE and ruling out both 30 and 33 CE as the year of the Crucifixion.

2. The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius

Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus (63 BCE-14 CE) was the first emperor of the Roman Empire. He ruled from 27 BCE until his death in 14 CE. In 27 BCE, the Senate awarded him the honorific "the revered one" and consequently he became Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus. On February 5, 2 BCE, when Augustus reached the age of 60, the Roman Senate declared him *Pater Patriae*, a Latin honorific meaning "Father of the Fatherland."

In the first half of 13 CE, Augustus appointed Tiberius co-princeps, with powers equal to his own, as emperor in order to ensure continuity without an interregnum or upheaval, in the event of his death. *Princeps* was a title meaning chief or first man which Augustus had carefully crafted for himself. Augustus died August 19, 14 CE (767 AUC).

Only months prior to his death, Augustus conferred on Tiberius all powers that were invested in him as Roman Emperor, in all provinces, as co-princeps (Mommsen, 1996, p. 114). Tiberius was, in effect, co-princeps with Augustus. According to Jann Tibbetts, a military sciences researcher, *in AD 13, the powers held by Tiberius were made equal, rather than second, to Augustus' own powers, he was for all intents and purposes a "co-princeps" with Augustus, and in the event of the latter's passing, would simply continue to rule without an interregnum or possible upheaval.*

Tibbetts, 2016.

The sense co-princeps is that between them they discharged the duties of the Roman chief of state. Rick Lanser, a staff member of the Associates for Biblical Research, in his article "What was the "Fifteenth Year of Tiberius"?" explains:

Although the Romans recorded Tiberius as sole head of state beginning in AD 14, his maius imperium (highest authority to command) power over the province of Judea was actually exercised from the time he was named co-princeps with Augustus in AD 13. And this, in keeping with his recognition of the status of Annas as a de facto high priest, appears to be how Luke reckoned Tiberius' 15th year, from AD 13 rather than 14..

Lanser, 2019.

So, Tiberius' authority over the Roman province of Judea began in 13 CE upon his appointment as co-princeps. For Luke, this perspective defined his first year. The first year of Tiberius was 13 CE (766 AUC) making his fifteenth year 27 CE (780 AUC).

The Senate confirmed Tiberius, Augustus' adopted son, *princeps* on September 18, 14 CE. Tiberius Caesar ruled as co-princeps for one year and then as sole Roman emperor 14-37 CE (766-790 AUC). For Luke to cite "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (Luke 3:1 NASB) shows he reckoned the reign of Tiberius in Syria-Palestine beginning with Augustus' appointment of Tiberius as co-princeps. This is consistent with the antedating of the rule of Herod's sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip to 4 BCE following Herod's death in 1 BCE. The independent reigns of Herod's three sons began in 1 BCE. Antedating and inclusive reckoning were a common practice in the ancient world. These data rule out both 30 CE and 33 CE as possible dates for the Crucifixion.

These data falsify the premise of either 30 (as it is too early) and 33 CE (as it is too late) as the year of the Crucifixion and confirm the year of Jesus' crucifixion in 31 CE.

3. The 46th Year of Temple Reconstruction

The New Cycle Sabbatic year count began with Tishri 1, 3229 AM (Mon., Sept. 20 in 533_T/532_T BCE). See New Cycle Jubilee & Sabbatical Years. This places 37_T/36_T BCE (3725 AM) as a Sabbatic year. Josephus held that:

...on the hundred eighty and fifth olympiad, on the third month, on the solemnity of the fast [the Day of Atonement], as if a periodical revolution of calamities had returned since that which befell the Jews under Pompey; for the Jews were taken by him on the same day, and this was after twenty-seven years' time. (bracketed insertion mine).

Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.16.4§§487-488); Whiston, 1987, pp. 396-397.

By the Attic calendar, or Athenian calendar, a year in an Olympiad ran from *Hekatombaion* (Ἑκατομβαιών), July/August, through *Skirophorion* (Σκιροφοριών), June/July. Jerusalem fell on the Day of Atonement, Tishri 10, 3725 AM (Oct. 5, 37 BCE), in the month of *Boedromion*, the third month, in the fourth year (37_T/36_T BCE) of the 185th Olympiad, to Marc Anthony and Herod when priestly Course 23 (Delaiah) was on duty. Antigonus' execution fell soon thereafter. This places the first regnal year of Herod the Great as 37_T/36_T BCE. Josephus reports in Herod's seventh regnal year (31_T/30_T BCE) that:

At this time it was that the fight happened at Actium, between Octavius Caesar and Antony, in the seventh year of the reign of Herod and then it was also that there was an earthquake in Judea, such a one as had not happened at any other time, and which earthquake brought a great destruction upon the cattle in that country.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.5.2§121), (Whiston, 1987, p. 405); (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 1.19.3§370), Whiston, 1987, p. 572).

The Battle of Actium occurred September 2, 31 BCE in 31_T/30_T BCE (3730 AM) about three weeks before the Sabbatic year 30_T/29_T BCE. These data confirm Herod's first regnal year in the Sabbatic year 37_T/36_T BCE (3725 AM).

However, Josephus reports that:

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

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.8.1§191 (Whiston, 1987, p. 464); (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 1.33.8§665); (Whiston, 1987, p. 596).

The de facto reign of Herod the Great was 37 years beginning with his literally becoming king at the death of Antigonus which ended Hasmonaean rule. The 34 years refers to the independent reign of Herod to the point he gave his son Herod Archelaus royal status and authority in 4_T/3_T BCE. Later, Augustus, permitted the antedating of the reigns his sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip to 4_T/3_T BCE. This accounts for Joseph giving Herod a 34 year reign as well as a 37 year reign. This explanation will not satisfy some, but it is the only explanation constant with the birth of Jesus of Nazareth in 4 BCE and remain consistent with the chronology of the New Testament text.

Josephus also pointed out that in the final assault on Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) "the Jews were taken by him [Pompey] on the same day, and this was after twenty-seven years' time" (bracketed insertion mine); (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.16.4§487), (Whiston, 1987, p. 397). Nadav Sharon writing in the *Jewish Studies Quarterly* in his analysis "The Conquests of Jerusalem by Pompey and Herod: On Sabbath or 'Sabbath of Sabbaths'?" notes the "lack of evidence for resistance by the besieged" Sharon, 2014, p. 219.

In this context, Herod the Great secured the title "King of the Jews" from the Roman Senate in 40 BCE, and with the aid of Roman military support, then secured his position in 37 BCE, ending Hasmonaean rule. This defines his first year as 37_N/36_N CE, beginning Nisan 1, 37 BCE, as the reign of Antigonus officially ended on Nisan 1, 37 BCE.

At the time of the first Passover of Jesus' ministry, Jesus came to the Temple and drove out the money changers and merchants. At that point, reconstruction of the Temple begun by Herod the Great had lasted 46 years (John 2:20). Josephus recorded that Herod the Great began its reconstruction in the 18th year of his reign (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.1§380); (Whiston, 1987, p. 423). See A Short Chronology of Jesus' Life.

The 18th eighteenth regal year of Herod's reign was 20_{TI}/19_{TI} BCE or 3742 AM. This necessitates the 46th year of reconstruction to be 27_{TI}/28_{TI} BCE or 3788 AM. This places the first Passover of Jesus' 3½ ministry in 28 CE; one he began around age 30 (Luke 3:23). Three years later, in 31 CE, on his visit for the Passover of his crucifixion, he cleansed the Temple for the second time (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46).

These data rule out 30 and 33 CE as the year of the Crucifixion and confirm Jesus' crucifixion in 31 CE.

4. Jesus' Visit to the Synagogue at Nazareth

The only Sabbatic year during Jesus ministry fell in 27_{TI}/28_{TI} CE (see New Cycle Jubilee & Sabbatical Years). In the first year of his ministry, Jesus came to Nazareth and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom, on the Jewish high day of *Shavuoth* (Pentecost), and stood up to read (Luke 4:16). The Greek text reads τῆ τε ἡμέρα τῶν σαββάτων (*tē hēmera tōn sabbatōn*) meaning "the Day of the Sabbaths or Weeks."

This was no ordinary weekly Sabbath or high Sabbath. Jesus read from a passage in Isaiah describing the mission of the Messiah and thereby defining the mission statement of his ministry. Luke's Gospel records:

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. And He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set free those who are oppressed,
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."*

And He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all the people in the synagogue were intently directed at Him.

Luke 4:16-20 NASB

The reading, Jesus' comments, and the inherent symbolism embodied restoration by God's delivery of His people from the slavery of sin through the Lord's anointed places this event on Pentecost in the Sabbatic year 27_{TI}/28_{TI} CE (3788 AM) the first year of Jesus 3½ years of ministry. This rules out both 30 CE as too early and 33 CE too late for either the Sabbatic year or the first year of Jesus' ministry.

5. The Second-First Sabbath

The Apostle John identified three distinct Passovers during Jesus' ministry (the 1st, 3rd, and 4th) and alluded to a fourth (the 2nd) as follows:

1. He referred to the first Passover of Jesus' ministry by "The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (John 2:13 NASB).
2. John does not explicitly identify the second Passover of Jesus' ministry, but rather alludes to it at John 5:1 when it was yet future. He says, "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (John 5:1 NASB).
3. As to the third Passover, John writes, "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near" (John 6:4 NASB).
4. Of Jesus' fourth and last Passover, he writes, "Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead" (John 12:1 NASB).

In context, John 5:1 establishes that when a feast of the Jews approached Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He then explains what happened when Jesus arrived. Encountering a crippled man near the sheep's pool, Jesus healed him on a Sabbath, σάββατον (*sabbaton*), and at John 5:10 he again identifies that Sabbath as being a feast day, Σάββατόν (*sabbaton*). Juan Mateos shows that the Sabbath of John 5:9 was a feast day or annual Sabbath as follows:

The strange constructions of Jn. 5:9 (Ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) and Jn. 9:14 (ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ) do not allow the translation, "that day was the sabbath," but rather, "that was a preceptual day," being that it was a feast day (Jn 5:1: ἦν ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων). The meaning of σάββατον in these texts corresponds, therefore, to that of the Hebrew term šabbatōn.

Mateos, 1990, p. 20 (unpublished translation).

The feast day or annual Sabbath at John 9:14 mentioned by Mateos was the Last Great Day (the last of the seven annual holydays) at Jerusalem. It was a double Sabbath (both weekly and annual) occurring October 7, 30 CE (Tishri 22, 3791 AM). The task then becomes one of identifying which feast day was the annual Sabbath of John 5:9.

This we learn by identifying the feast day recorded by Luke at Luke 6:1. Using the parlance of his time, Luke referred to this annual Sabbath as the second-first Sabbath, translated into English as the second Sabbath of first rank or second-foremost Sabbath. Jews or Judeo-Christians, as both groups observed the weekly and annual Sabbaths in the Apostolic Age, reading Luke's Gospel would have known to which Sabbath day Luke referred.

In context, following the events of John 5:1-47, John discusses the feeding of the 5,000 by multiplying on the east side of Lake Tiberius. This event as described at Matthew 14:13-21 says, "about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children" (Matthew 14:21 NASB). Mark's Gospel reports the parallel account at Mark 6:33-41. Luke's Gospel describes this at Luke 9:12-17.

Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; and Luke 6:1-5 precede the passages telling of the feeding of about 5,000 men plus women and children. These passages unmistakably record the details of Jesus' activity occurring on a feast day (John 5:2-47) immediately followed by the second annual Sabbath feast day (Luke 6:1-5; Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 2:1-8). Here we see the first annual Sabbath (Nisan 15) followed by the second annual Sabbath (Nisan 21).

This identifies the feast of the Jews at John 5:1 as the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the second Passover of Jesus' ministry. This eight-day festival in 29 CE, April 16-23 (Nisan 14-21), included the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

These data show the feast of the Jews at John 5:1 was the second Passover of Jesus' ministry in the series of four. As the first year of Jesus ministry was 27/28 CE, the presence of four Passovers confirms 31 CE and rules out 30 CE as the year of the Crucifixion. See The Herodian Period.

6. Arrival of Pilate

In 27 CE, Emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate both procurator and prefect of the Roman provinces of Judaea, Samaria and Idumea. Pilate became the fifth governor of the Roman province of Judaea, serving under Tiberius for 10 years (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.4.2§89); (Whiston, 1987, p. 482). According to British numismatist and naturalist H. Noel Humphreys (1807–1879),

The first procurators of Judaea were not allowed a very lengthened enjoyment of office, and in the year 26 or 27 A.D., Gratus, the fifth procurator, was superseded by Pontius Pilatus, who was appointed by Tiberius, in the year 27 A.D., and held the office for ten years. The provincial coins issued by these successive procurators may be assigned to each by the aid of the Actian date, and specimens bearing Actian dates between the years 58 and 68 of that era may be considered to have been issued under the auspices of Pontius Pilate. Pilatus, as is well known, was deposed for peculation and other abuses of power, in the last year of the reign of Tiberius, 37 A.D., and died in exile.

Humphreys H. N., 1864, p. 339.

By Josephus' dating, using Hebrew ecclesiastical years (not civil AM years) and the inclusive reckoning of the era, the first year of Pilate's administration extended from March 27 (Nisan 1), 37

CE through March 15 (Adar I 29), 28 CE. This means that Pilate's arrival at Caesarea could have been anytime within his first year and yet have credit as governor for the full year.

His arrival from Rome appears to have occurred in the fall, just before the Mediterranean sailing season ended in late October. Upon taking up residence at Caesarea, Pilate dispatched the unit of Roman soldiers who had accompanied him on his journey from Rome to their assigned winter quarters in Jerusalem. The unit marched into Jerusalem at night with their decorated standards on full display. This provoked a confrontation. The context in Josephus infers the billeting of the Roman soldiers at Jerusalem occurred shortly after Pilate's arrival at Caesarea, suggests this incident took place in November of 27 CE. As Josephus related the event, the details are consistent with a fall arrival of Pilate at Judea.

Pilate's administration ended in the fall of 36 CE, in his 10th and final year (March 17, 36 CE – March 7, 37 CE) when the Roman Syrian legate Lucius Vitellius relieved him of his responsibilities. Vitellius arrived in Judaea towards the end of 36 CE, suspended Pilate for the abuse of power, and ordered him to Rome for trial before Tiberius. Vitellius appointed Marcellus as an interim caretaker. Marullus later replaced Marcellus.

By November, sailing on the Mediterranean became unsafe, suggesting Pilate remained in Judaea following his removal until sailing resumed. The departure of Pilate from Judaea was most likely in February of 37 CE. Pilate arrived in Rome after Tiberius' death on March 16, 37 CE.

In this context, John the Baptist, aged 30, began his ministry at Passover time in 27 CE, "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea" (Luke 3:1-2 NASB).

In the summer of 27 CE, John baptized Jesus of Nazareth, who then began his "forty days and forty nights" fast (Matthew 4:2). At the time, Jesus was within his 30th year (inclusive dating) during Hebrew civil year 3786 AM (26_{TI}/27_{TI} CE). The first Passover of Jesus' ministry, at age 30, then fell in 28 CE.

These data show John the Baptist began his ministry in 27 CE a few days after Pontus Pilate began his term on March 27 (Nisan 1), 27 CE, as procurator and prefect of the Roman provinces of Judaea, Samaria and Idumea. These data further confirm the baptism of Jesus in the late spring or early summer of 27 CE while Jesus was 29 years old (in his 30th year) and defines the first year of Jesus' ministry as 27_{TI}/28_{TI} CE. This is in accord with a 31 CE Crucifixion after three and a half years and eliminates 30 and 33 CE as Crucifixion dates.

7. The Lunar Eclipse at the Crucifixion

According to NASA, there was a partial lunar eclipse on Wed., April 25, 31 CE and on Fri., April 3, 33 CE. There was no lunar eclipse at Passover time on either March 26, 31 CE or April 5, 30 CE. The lunar eclipse closest to Passover (Nisan 14) in 30 CE fell on Sun., June 4, 30 CE (Sivan 15). The NASA Catalog of Solar Eclipses show none at Passover time in 30, 31 or 33 CE. NASA reports solar eclipses on May 21, 30 CE, May 10, 31 CE, and March 19, 33 CE all too late for any correlation with the Crucifixion.

At Acts 2:17-21, the Apostle Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32. According to Anthony Alfieri, the Apostle Peter in Acts 2 upheld, at the very least, that the night following the Crucifixion included a partial lunar eclipse and a blood red moon. If, indeed, Peter conveyed that thought, then he confirms 31 CE and not 30 CE as the year of the Crucifixion.

The Year of the Crucifixion was 31 CE

All seven events, expelling of the Sanhedrin from the Hewn Stone-Chamber (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 41:2), the 46th Year of Temple Reconstruction, the Fifteenth Year of Tiberius, Jesus' Visit to the Synagogue at Nazareth, the Second-First Sabbath, (Luke 3:1) (Luke 6:1), the arrival of Pilate, and the Lunar Eclipse at the Crucifixion (Acts 2:17-21) all point to and collectively confirm 31 CE as the year of the Crucifixion.

The question then becomes, how are these data consistent with the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar which places Passover (Nisan 14) on Mon., Mar. 26 in 31 CE? The answer to that important question is the topic of my May 1 post – **Dating the Crucifixion (Part 2)**.

Dating the Crucifixion (Part 2)

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A Blood-Red Partial Lunar Eclipse. On Wed., April 25, 31 CE, the date of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there was a blood-red lunar eclipse from 8:26 p.m. to 11:46 p.m. at Jerusalem that Wednesday night. Image by Kevin Chung, licensed pursuant to CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 (a Creative Commons Non-Commercial-NoDerivs license).

Dating the Crucifixion (Part 2)

May 1, 2022 Posted by MICHAEL GERMANO Feature Articles

In *Dating the Crucifixion (Part 1)*, seven events all pointed to and collectively confirmed 31 CE as the year of the Crucifixion. These events were: (1) the expelling of the Sanhedrin from the Hewn Stone-Chamber (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 41:2), (2) the 46th Year of Temple Reconstruction, (3) the Fifteenth Year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1 NASB), (4) Jesus' Visit to the Synagogue at Nazareth, (5) the Second-First Sabbath (Luke 6:1 NASB), (6) the arrival of Pilate, and (7) the Lunar Eclipse at the Crucifixion (Acts 2:17-21 NASB). But the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar places the Passover in 31 CE on Mon., Mar. 26. Yet, in fact, the Passover occurred on Wed., April 25, 31 CE (that being Nisan 14, 3791 AM). The question is, Why the discrepancy?

In Jesus' day, when the sacrificial system and the Jerusalem Temple were in place, the priests utilized calculation including a rule allowing a one-month postponement when the impact of cold weather thwarted the proper observation of the Passover. At times unusually cold weather significantly impeded the ripening of the barley crop and delayed the development of fruit on the fruit trees. These two conditions, when they occurred together, allowed a one-month calendar postponement. The simple solution of dealing with late springs (when the vernal equinox fell on Nisan 16 or later), the delayed development of the fruit trees, and the impeding of the ripening of the barley crop, was that when two of these events were present the high priest could intercalate by adding Adar II (a 30-day month) to the ending sacred year. This would ensure the barley crop was ready (in the *abib* state) and the wave sheaf was ready for the required offering. The high priest took this action in 31 CE.

According to the Talmud, the priests exercised their authority to add a 30-day month (Adar II) when cold weather significantly impeded the ripening of the barley crop and delayed the development of fruit on the fruit trees (Danby, H., 1919, p. 31). These two conditions, when they occurred together, triggered authority for making a calendar postponement. In a post-sacrificial world, the reduction of calendar rules to mathematical statements yields a mathematical model providing a universal perpetual calendar for Jews and Judeo-Christians. Until the 4th century CE, the basic rules of the calculated calendar, with all its intricacies, were secret but known and presumably used only by select members of the Sanhedrin.

There are five corroborations of the addition of Adar II by intercalation of year 3791 AM such that the Passover fell on April 25, 31 CE. These are: (1) the leaved fig tree without fruit, (2) the fishing season on Lake Tiberius (the Sea of Galilee), (3) the earthquake season in the Syria Palestine,

(4) the late spring of 31 CE, and (5) the blood-red lunar eclipse from 8:26 p.m. to 11:46 p.m. Jerusalem time on April 25, 31 CE.

1. The Leaved Fig Tree

Upon leaving Bethany, Jesus being hungry, observed a fig tree which had leaves but found no fruit to eat (Matthew 21:18-19 NASB; Mark 11:12-14 NASB). This was Sunday, Nisan 11, or April 22 Julian) three days before his Crucifixion. Mark's Gospel records that in the highlands about Jerusalem the "time of figs was not yet" (Mark 11:13 NASB). Nevertheless, in this orchard there existed an isolated tree in full leaf but without any figs. Luke reports that in other orchards other kinds of trees were putting forth their leaves as well (Luke 21:29-30 NASB).

Writing in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Grace Amadon explains:

In early April, the fig trees in Palestine, around Jerusalem, have little green figs only — no leaves. If the crucifixion passover had been in early April, none of the trees would have been in leaf. Hence the fig tree with such abundant foliage, and the leafing out of other trees also, are witnesses to the lateness of the death passover of Christ. Furthermore, Jesus himself said, "Summer is now nigh at hand" (Luke 21 30).

Amadon, 1942, p. 273.

In early April, the fig trees around Jerusalem first developed little green figs but no leaves. These starchy vegetable-tasting small knobs, called *taqsh* by the Arabs, are a sort of forerunner of the real figs. The consumers of these *taqsh* are peasants as well as others when hungry. The *taqsh* drop off before formation of the real fig.

This evidence eliminates both April 5, 30 CE and March 26, 31 CE as possible Passover dates in the year of the Crucifixion because there would be no leaves just the *taqsh*.

2. The Fishing Season on Lake Tiberius

Following the Resurrection, Peter and several friends went fishing on the Lake Tiberius. About the second week of May, the group caught nothing after fishing all-night. In the morning, Jesus performed a miracle providing them with fish (John 21:3-8 NASB).

The fact that fishing was not good in waters which in season teems with large fish a few yards out from shore, suggests Passover was late in 31 CE, that is, at the end of the fishing season. According to Amadon:

There is uniform testimony that the Galilean fishing season is from mid- December or January to April. In the very early spring before the crucifixion, Peter could readily hook up a fish off the shore of Galilee (Mat 17 27), "where the shallows swarm with small fish fry." In the second week after the crucifixion, Peter and his comrades caught nothing after an all night attempt on the lake. Then came the early morning catch at the command of the Master.

Amadon, 1942, p. 273.

If the Nisan 14 Passover had occurred Mon., March 26 as the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar places it in 31 CE or Wednesday, April 5 in 30 CE, then fishing would still have been good for a few weeks. Adding the intercalary month of Adar II before Nisan placed the Nisan 14 Passover on Wednesday, April 25.

Amadon concludes that:

If the crucifixion had occurred early in April, as would necessarily have been the case in 30 A.D., then fishing would still have been good for a few weeks. But the fact that it was not good in water that in season teems with large fish a few yards out from shore, is an indication that the passover was late, that is, that the fishing period was coming to its end. Hence the occurrence of the miracle.

Amadon, 1942, p. 273.

This evidence eliminates both April 5, 30 CE and March 26, 31 CE as possible Passover dates in the year of the Crucifixion. The evidence verifies the priestly declaration of a leap year in 31 CE.

3. The Earthquake Season in Syria Palestine

The Gospels record an earthquake at the death of Christ and another in the early hours of Sunday morning on the day after his Resurrection. Amadon recognized the significance of these earthquakes for they attest that the annual earthquake season in Syria Palestine had begun thereby evidencing a late Passover. In her words:

The biblical earthquakes outline a period from the end of the paschal season to the middle of summer, or not long after. At the dividing of the Red Sea, and of the Jordan river, the mountains "trembled" (Hab 2 10); at the giving of the law at Sinai, the "earth shook" (Ps 68 8); the fall of Jericho, Jonathan's victory at Michmash, the presumption of Uzziah, Paul and Silas in stocks at Philippi — these are other Incidents accompanied by earthquake It can be shown that all of these were after-passover or summer events. And to this series belong the two crucifixion earthquakes — one at the death of Christ, and the other at the resurrection. They obviously mark an early beginning for the earthquake season in that year, and are witness to the lateness of the crucifixion passover.*

Amadon, 1942, p. 273.

Known biblical earthquakes define a season spanning the end of the paschal season to about the middle of summer.

4. The Late Spring of 31 CE

The spring equinox in 31 CE was Wed., March 21 (Julian) and Nisan 9, well before the Passover of Nisan 14. There was no late equinox in 31 CE.

Did you ever notice, however, that on the eve of the Crucifixion that it was so cold that Peter "sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire?" (Mark 14:54 NASB; Luke 22:55-60 NASB) and "the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself" (John 18:18 NASB).

If it was that cold on April 25, consider how cold it was about six weeks earlier when the high priest had to come to a decision on whether to proclaim a new year or declare a postponement. Such intercalation was sometimes enjoined only late in First Adar.

By Monday, March 12 (Julian), the 29th of Adar I, the high priest had to be ready to proclaim the following day (Tuesday, March 13) either a new year or a postponement. By the last day of First Adar I (Adar I) the high priest had to determine if the spring barley crop would be ready for harvest by Passover. The evidence of the fig tree, the fishing season and the earthquake season suggest the decision he made was that the barley would not be ready for harvest for a March 26 Passover.

There is some evidence that the weather preceding the Crucifixion Passover may also have delayed the lambing season. This would have occurred if the mating date was later than normal. Considering the importance of an adequate supply of Passover lambs, experienced shepherd-priests of *Migdal Eder* were not only aware of when the mating of their ewes began in the late summer and the gestation period of ewes but would certainly closely watch the ewe flocks in the days running up to the start of lambing. The high priest would expect to learn from the Temple's priest-shepherds if they expected such a delay.

As a practical matter, the priest-shepherds would keep watch for swelling of the ewes' udders, for a few days before the ewe gives birth her udder swells as milk production begins. Her vulva becomes pink and expands in readiness for birth.

Lambs had to be at least 8 days old and in sufficient quantity by Nisan 14 for Passover sacrifice. This would require the birth of a Passover lamb no later than March 15, 31 CE. A breeding date of October 19, 30 CE would give an expected lambing/kidding date of March 15, 31 CE (based on 147-day gestation). Birthing could occur March 5-27 (the range based on 138 days to 159 days). "The net effect of the slow onset of mating and low conception rates is to delay the median lambing date, and it contributes to a large spread in lambing" (Knight, 1980, p. 281).

Shepherds know that a cold spell in the autumn may "bring ewes on" sooner than when the weather is warmer. The converse is that any unusually warmer autumn postponed mating. This means that if breeding began late, after November 1, it would push the beginning of the lambing season into April. Breeding ewes in late October through early December ensures that all ewes of

any merit are fertile. Rams are also more fertile in this time period. Spring lambing coincides with the natural breeding and lambing seasons.

Such calendar adjustments are no longer necessary in traditional Judaism as the Temple sacrificial and offerings system no longer exists. This permits the use of the perpetual calendar in present-day Judaism. When a new Third Temple is built and sanctified, the Jews will reinstitute the sacrifices and offering system. They may decide to adjust their use of the Hebrew Perpetual Calendar to deal with the realities of the weather at Jerusalem at Passover.

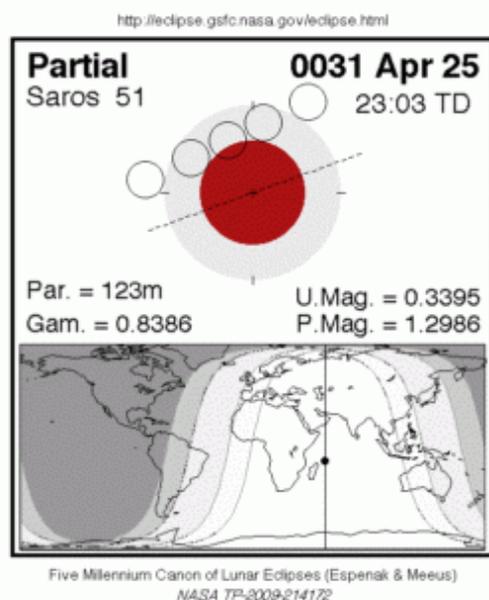
5. Blood-Red Lunar Eclipse

Some proponents of the Wednesday, April 25, 31 CE date for the Crucifixion point out a blood-red lunar eclipse from 8:26 p.m. to 11:46 p.m. that Wednesday night. Similarly, some advocates of a Friday, April 3, 33 CE Crucifixion refer to the blood-red moon and partial lunar eclipse that Friday night. While there was a partial lunar eclipse on April 25, 31 CE and on Friday, April 3, 33 CE. There was no lunar eclipse at Passover time on either March 26, 31 CE or April 5, 30 CE.

At Acts 2:17-21 NASB, the Apostle Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 NASB. According to Anthony Alfieri, the Apostle Peter in Acts 2 upheld, at the very least, that the night following the Crucifixion included a partial lunar eclipse and a blood red moon. If, indeed, Peter conveyed that thought, then he confirms 31 CE and not 30 CE as the year of the Crucifixion.

Alfieri, as some others, argue that the blood-red moon of April 25, 31 CE, following Jesus' death, was "virtually centered over Jerusalem by the time it finished, but not exactly" (Alfieri, 2005, p. 407). You can verify the lunar eclipse on the NASA Eclipse Website See <https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>. The duration of its blood-red eclipse phase was about 2 hours and 4 minutes peaking in color at approximately 9:40 p.m. (Alfieri, 2005, pp. 392, 395).

Joel 2:30-32 NASB refers to the Day of the Lord wherein "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31 NASB). This prophecy tells of the blocking of the sun's light and the moon having a reddish appearance, like blood suggesting an eclipse visible in Israel just before the second coming of Christ.



Jesus spoke of this event in: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matthew 24:29-30 NASB).

The language of Joel 2:31 NASB, however, about the darkening of the sun, a blood-red moon, and "the Day of the Lord" coincide better with Revelation 6:12 NASB, which addresses the end of the age when Christ returns to establish his kingdom. Thus, some have misgivings about Joel's prophecy being fulfilled at the time of the Crucifixion.

Image taken from the NASA Technical Publication "Five Millennium Canon of Lunar Eclipses: -1999 to +3000" by Fred Espenak and Jean Meeus.) NASA TP-2009-214172. Image public domain, courtesy NASA, as a U.S. Federal Government "work prepared by an officer or employee of the United States Government as part of that person's official duties" 17 U.S.C. § 101.

Serious arguments exist for and against the prophetic necessity of a blood-red moon the evening of the partial lunar eclipse. So, in this case, confirmation remains an open question.

In conclusion, several first-century events pointed to and collectively confirm 31 CE as the year of the Crucifixion.

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