

# BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

Vol. IV, No. 12

© James B. Jordan, 1992

December, 1992

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE GOSPELS

We have arrived at the tentative date of A.M. 3474 for the decree of Cyrus, and we have determined to operate as if the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 are literal years. We also decided that Messiah the Prince arrived at the beginning of the 70th week, after the 69 weeks (Dan. 9:25), being "cut off sometime thereafter (Dan. 9:26). This means that Jesus "arrived" in or around A.M. 3957.

The chronological information about Jesus' ministry comes from the gospel of John. The other gospels seem to be in chronological order, but they do not provide the chronological markers that John's gospel provides.

John shows Jesus revealing Himself openly at a Passover in Jerusalem (John 3:13ff.). This would be in the spring of 3957. Before this, Jesus had been baptized by John the Forerunner, had spent 40 days in the wilderness with the devil, and had called the disciples. The baptism of Jesus probably took place at the end of 3956. Sometime after the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus returned to the area where John was baptizing, and John pointed Jesus out to his disciples (John 1:35-51).

The call of the disciples took place at the beginning of the first month of the Jewish religious year in 3957. A few days later, Jesus changed water to wine at Capernaum, but not openly, telling Mary that His time had not yet come (the time for open ministry). A few days later came the first Passover in Jesus' ministry, the fourteenth day of the month Nisan (the first month). There Jesus openly showed Himself, cleansing the Temple for the first time (John 2; Malachi 3:1). ~~I think this is the likely time for the fulfillment of Daniel 9:25, the arrival of Messiah the Prince.~~

After the Passover of 3957, Jesus' ministry was primarily in Jerusalem (John 3:1-21) and Judea (3:22-36). With the imprisonment of John the Forerunner, Jesus moved from Judea to go to Galilee (Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 4:14; Jn. 4:3). He passed through Samaria and ministered there (Jn. 4:4-42) around January/February of the same year - John 4:35 indicates that it was four months until the next harvest. Jesus then moved into Galilee and ministered there (Mt. 4:13-17; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 4:14-15; Jn. 4:43-54).

John 5:1 says "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." What feast is this? Many have assumed it to be a second Passover, but John calls Passover by the name Passover, and calls Tabernacles "the feast" (Jn. 7:2, 10, 14, 37). Some manuscripts of John 5:1 say "the feast," which would seem to be Tabernacles, but "a feast" is the preferred reading. The evidence points to Tabernacles rather than Passover, simply because John elsewhere calls Passover by name, and because the other feasts are too minor to be considered.

nacles in the first year, because John 4:35 has already moved us past that date. Thus, the "feast" of John 5:1 must either be the Passover of 3958, or more likely the Tabernacles that came six months later (fall of 3958).

John 6:4 mentions the next Passover, which must be the Passover of 3959. The final Passover in Jesus' earthly life was the next one, in 3960.

(I have found most helpful the chapter "The Duration of Christ's Ministry," in Harold Hoehner, **Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ**. Much of this book, however, is based on dispensational misunderstandings of Daniel 9, and I cannot endorse it as a whole.)

### The Year 3960

This year is almost certainly A.D. 30. The proof for this is a bit complex, but here we go:

1. In Galatians 1:11-17, Paul discusses his conversion experience. He states that he went into Arabia for a time and then returned to Damascus. Then after three years he visited Jerusalem for the first time (Gal. 1:17-24). This may or may not be the same as the visit Paul paid to Jerusalem after he was driven out of Damascus (Acts 9:19-30).
2. Galatians 2 describes a visit Paul paid to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus, going up because of a revelation, which took place "after fourteen years." The question is: 14 years after what event?
  - 2.1 To answer that question, we have to determine which of two visits to Jerusalem this was. Paul took food to Jerusalem during a famine, in response to a revelation, in Acts 11 (Acts 11:27-30). This was the year Herod Agrippa died (Acts 12:23-25), which is known to be A.D. 44. Later Paul went to Jerusalem to participate in the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15.
  - 2.2 The book of Galatians was written to free Gentile believers from keeping the ceremonial aspects of the Old Covenant law. This was also the subject of the decrees of the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council. Paul does not mention these decrees in Galatians. Considering the intense heat surrounding the issue, Paul certainly would have mentioned these decrees if he had them in hand when he wrote Galatians. Thus, Galatians was written before the Council of Acts 15, and the visit of Galatians 2 took place before the Council of Acts 15.
  - 2.3 Thus, the visit of Galatians 2 was the famine visit of A.D. 44. This took place "after 14 years." The earliest conceivable time for Paul's conversion is 2:1

place in **A.D. 30**.

5. Therefore, Christ was crucified in **A.D. 30**.

6. Therefore, A.M. 3960 is **A.D. 30**.

#### Acts 1-9

The thought that all the events in Acts 1-9 took place in **A.D. 30** seems strange at first glance, but at second glance there is nothing strange about it. We should expect things to take place rapidly after Pentecost, and they did.

A few days after Pentecost, Peter healed a man at the Gate Beautiful and was arrested (Acts 3:1-4:4). The next day they spoke before the **Sanhedrin** and were sent home (Acts 4:5-31).

People began selling property; **Ananias** and **Sapphira** lied and died (Acts 4:32-5:11). Let's say that this happened a month after Pentecost. The disciples were still preaching

again and spoke to the **Sanhedrin** again (Acts 5:17-42).

Hellenistic Jews began to **complain** that their widows were not being cared for, so the seven deacons (or whatever you want to call them) were appointed. Stephen began to preach, and right away got into trouble and was killed (Acts 6-7). Let's say that this was at the end of two months after Pentecost.

Saul began to ravage the Church. The **believers** scattered. Churches were founded in Judea and **Samaria**. Philip spoke to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). There is **nothing** here that could not have happened in a month or two. Let's say that we are now at five months after Pentecost.

Then Saul heads for Damascus, and is struck down by Jesus and converted (Acts 9). This could easily have taken place just six months after Pentecost, and within **A.D. 30** (or within the year A.M. 3960).